



Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Briefing

Economic Sanctions: Lessons Learned and Best Practices

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11:30 – 12:30 AM

441 Cannon House Office Building

Opening Remarks

Good morning. On behalf of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, I would like to welcome you to this briefing on sanctions. I thank our speaker, Dr. George Lopez, for taking the time to join us today. I'd also like to thank the Commission staff for organizing this session.

The United States has frequently employed sanctions, in particular economic sanctions, in pursuit of foreign policy goals, including human rights goals. On the sign-in table you'll find a memo by the Congressional Research Service that provides a snapshot of the economic sanctions that were in place against foreign governments as well as non-state entities, as of January of this year.

Sanctions are not by any means the only tools available to the United States government to try to influence the behavior of foreign governments. There are a variety of diplomatic, political, cultural and even military tools that the president can use, generally in consultation with the Congress, to engage other governments and try to shape their behavior.

But when it comes to human rights violations, efforts to persuade governments usually aren't enough to change the situation. International condemnation of human rights abuses and behind the scenes diplomacy are important; sometimes they save lives. But it's hard to think of a case when severe human rights violations ended solely due to international criticism, without the country in question having suffered serious costs. When human rights violations occur in countries with authoritarian regimes or failed judicial systems, economic sanctions often seem to be one of the few available options for imposing real consequences on abusive officials and

governments. I have supported sanctions in these cases. Just a few months ago, I co-sponsored the Global Magnitsky Accountability Act, which would require restrictions on property transactions in the U.S. for people credibly found to be responsible for gross human rights violations or corruption, anywhere in the world.

That said, we know that sanctions do not offer a quick solution to human rights problems. It can take years for countries to make the necessary changes. So at a minimum, we need to make sure that the sanctions we put in place are as well designed and potentially effective as possible. We need to understand how to maximize their impact, even if that impact will always be more limited than we would like.

For that reason, we've invited Dr. George Lopez, one of the world's ranking experts on economic sanctions, to speak with us today. As you can see from his biography, Dr. Lopez has written extensively on this topic, and has advised various international agencies and governments on sanctions issues, ranging from limiting humanitarian impact to the design of targeted financial sanctions. From October 2010 until July 2011, he served on the United Nations Panel of Experts for monitoring and implementing U.N. Sanctions on North Korea.

Dr. Lopez, you have the floor.