





The Impact of Sanctions on the Socio-Political Rights of Somali Citizens

Sara Mousavi¹ 
Ali Bagheri Dolatabadi² 
Reza Eltiaminia³ 
Mojtaba Shariati⁴ 

1-Introduction

While sanctions have been used for over a century as a tool to pursue national interests and prevent conflict, their unintended consequences on civilian populations have raised ethical concerns. The widespread use of sanctions in the 19th and 20th centuries caused the United Nations to use it as a tool to punish violators of peace and human rights and as an alternative to military action in the event of a threat to international peace and security .

The persistence of sanctions as a preferred tool of foreign policy, despite their potential harm to innocent civilians, suggests a need for greater scrutiny and evaluation of their effectiveness and ethical implications. The outdated nature of some sanction policies, which may have originated during the Cold War era, highlights the need for a reassessment of strategies in light of contemporary global challenges.

Today, the United States is at the top of the countries that have imposed the most sanctions against others by sanctioning 10,000 different individuals and organizations in the world. As one of the leading practitioners of sanctions, the United States' approach and impact on affected populations warrant critical examination to ensure that policy decisions align with humanitarian principles and international norms.

Sanctions are often imposed with the intention of pressuring governments or leaders to change their behavior or policies. However, the collateral damage of sanctions can disproportionately impact vulnerable populations,

¹ Ph.D. in Political Scinece from Yasouj University, Yasouj, Iran sara.71mousavi@gmail.com

² Professor, Department of Political Science, Faculty of Humanities, Yasouj University, Yasouj (Corresponding Author). Iran abagheri@yu.ac.ir

³ Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Yasouj University, Yasouj, Iran R.eltyami@yu.ac.ir

⁴ Assistant Professor , Department of Political Science, Yasouj University, Yasouj, Iran M.shariati17@gmail.com



The Impact of Sanctions on the Socio-Political Rights of Somali Citizens

exacerbating existing social and economic challenges. In the case of Somalia, a country already grappling with political instability and violence, the prolonged imposition of sanctions may have further marginalized and disadvantaged ordinary citizens.

Somalia is one of the countries that has experienced the most bilateral and multilateral sanctions. This country has been involved in political instability and violence for more than three decades. The United Nations Security Council has played an active role in Somalia since the establishment of the arms embargo in 1992. The United Nations Security Council has issued various sanctions against this country in response to violence and civilians casualties, so that this country is currently experiencing one of the longest periods of multilateral sanctions in the world. The main purposes of imposing these sanctions are forcing Somali leaders to talk with their opponents, establishing political stability and good governance, ending civil war and observing the standards of human rights. These sanctions have continued for more than three decades, and no official assessment of their human rights impacts has been published. By focusing on the socio-political rights of Somali citizens, this research seeks to answer the question of how sanctions have influenced the daily lives, freedoms, and opportunities of individuals within the country? The hypothesis presented in the research is that is that "sanctions affect ordinary citizens more than the political system and leaders, so, they violate the socio-political rights of Somali citizens".

2-Method and Theoretical Framework

The current research has focused on the most basic social right of every citizen, including the right to life and health and the right to enjoy their chosen political system. In this regard, the right to have a suitable standard of living in article 11 and the right to health in article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the right to life in article 6 of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights is clearly stated

To assess the impact of sanctions on the aforementioned rights in Somalia, a descriptive-documentary approach was employed. This method entailed referencing official reports released by the United Nations and its affiliated bodies, insights from experts and local authorities, and credible statistics from international organizations concerning Somalia's health and nutrition indicators. Additionally, to investigate the governance standards in the nation, reports on political and religious liberties, corruption levels, and the state of political parties were scrutinized. The article's theoretical framework draws



DOI: 10.27834/CSIW.2312.1332.4.31.7

Crisis Studies of the Islamic World

from an examination of past theories that explore the repercussions of sanctions on societies.

3-Discussion

The findings of the present research can be summarized in two points:

1 .Theoretical confirmation of the destructive impact of sanctions on human rights in target countries, aligning with previous research on the subject.

2 .Empirical evidence demonstrating that the human rights situation in Somalia deteriorated during the sanctions period, contradicting expectations of improvement. The research indicates that sanctions not only fail to facilitate a peaceful transfer of power but also exacerbate civil unrest and power struggles, particularly in countries with ethnic and tribal divisions like Somalia. Over the past three decades, Somalia has experienced regression in economic, social, and political indicators, with the healthcare system suffering due to increased costs of medicine and treatment following the overthrow of Mohammed Siad Barre and the imposition of sanctions, so that the government was not able to support them due to the decrease in its income .

The findings suggest that the impact of sanctions on Somalia has been devastating, leading to a significant deterioration in the government's ability to provide essential services such as healthcare, resulting in a high prevalence of diseases and mortality rates among vulnerable groups like children and women. This situation represents a clear violation of the right to life and health as outlined in international human rights documents.

Moreover, politically, Somalia has not made substantial progress since the imposition of sanctions, and the country continues to struggle with issues such as corruption, lawlessness, political instability, violence, and violations of various freedoms. These challenges have further exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in Somalia and hindered the country's ability to achieve stability and development.

Overall, the study underscores the urgent need for a reevaluation of the effectiveness and impact of sanctions on Somalia, emphasizing the importance of prioritizing the well-being and rights of the population while addressing the underlying issues contributing to reduce the country's instability and suffering.

4- Conclusion and Suggestions

Sanctions, whether comprehensive or specific, have not had the necessary impact on changing the political behavior of the Somali government and

The Impact of Sanctions on the Socio-Political Rights of Somali Citizens

instead have exposed ordinary citizens to harm. Empowering citizens to pursue their political rights and create a civil society is indeed crucial in bringing about positive change in countries affected by sanctions. By promoting democracy, human rights, and good governance, citizens can play an active role in holding their governments accountable and advocating for policies that benefit the entire population.

Also, only the sanctions that are imposed in legal and legitimate contexts and in the framework of international institutions, can be initially accepted by the world community. Unilateral, illegal, and illegitimate sanctions by certain governments, such as the United States, England, and France, are deemed unacceptable as they can exacerbate the situation and pave the way for further illegal political-military interventions.

5- Translated References to English

- Bokat-Lindell, S. (2022). Putin's Getting Sanctioned, but Russia's Getting Canceled. *The New York Times*, 9 march, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/09/opinion/ukraine-russia-cancel-culture-putin.html?searchResultPosition=2>
- Ascherio, Alberto et. al. (1992). Effect of the Gulf War on Infant and Child Mortality in Iraq. *The New England Journal of Medicine*, Vol. 327, No. 13, pp.931-936.
- Bossuyt, M. (2012). The Adverse Consequences of Economic Sanctions on the Enjoyment of Human Rights. *Working paper prepared for the Commission on Human Rights*, (E/CN.4/Sub.2/2000/33), https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Events/WCM/MarcBossuyt_WorkshopUnilateralCoerciveSeminar.pdf
- Care Organization. (2022). Somalia Food Insecurity Crisis. *Care Organization*, <https://www.care.org/our-work/disaster-response/emergencies/somalia-food-insecurity-crisis/>
- Concerns Worldwide. (2023). .Hunger in Somalia: Where We Are in 2023 and How We Got There. *Care Organization*, <https://www.concern.net/news/hunger-in-somalia>
- Cortright David; Lopez, George A. (2009). .Human Right and Targeted Sanctions, Sanctions and Security Research Program, An Action Agenda for Strengthening Due Process Procedures. *Sanctions and Security Research Project*, <https://sanctionsandsecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Human-rights-and-Targeted-Sanctions-1.pdf>
- Cortright, David; L'opez, George A. (2000). *The Sanctions Decade: Assessing UN Strategies in the 1990s*. Boulder, COL: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Davenport, Christian; Armstrong, David A. (2004). .Democracy and the Violation of Human Rights: A Statistical Analysis from 1976 to 1996. *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 48, No.3, pp. 538–554.

Crisis Studies of the Islamic World

- Drezner, Daniel W. (2011). Sanctions Sometimes Smart: Targeted Sanctions in Theory and Practice. *International Studies Review*, Vol.13, No.1, pp.96–108.
- Fearon, James D. (1994). Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes. *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 88, No. 3, pp. 577–592.
- Freedom H. (2023). Somalia: Freedom in the World 2022 Countries. *Freedom House*, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/somalia/freedom-world/2022>
- Gibbons, E. D.; Garfield, R. (1999). The Impact of Economic Sanctions on Health and Human Rights in Haiti, 1991-1994. *American Journal of Public Health*, Vol.89, No.10, pp.1499–1504.
- Gordon, M. (2023). Somaliland's Case for International Recognition Is Getting Complicated. *World Politics Review*, <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/somaliland-democracy-somalia-recognition-independence-military/>
- Hosseini, M.J. (2008). The crisis of piracy on the coast of Somalia and examining the role of extra-regional powers. *African Studies*, 8(19), 111-168 **(In Persian)**
- Human Rights Watch. (2022). World Report 2022: Somalia Events of 2021. *Human Rights Watch*, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/somalia>
- Ingiriis, M.H. (2016). *The Suicidal State in Somalia: The Rise and Fall of the Siad Barre Regime, 1969-1991*. Lanham: University Press of America.
- Ingold, E. (2013). The Impact of Economic Sanctions on Respect for Human Rights after the End of the Cold War. *APSA 2013 Annual Meeting Paper*, American Political Science Association 2013 Annual Meeting, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2299765>
- Karimi Pashaki, S., Yahyapour, M.S., and Kazemipour, A. (2015). The effect of piracy on the security of the maritime areas of Somalia. *New Perspectives in Human Geography*, 8(3), 67-84 **(In Persian)**
- Kelly, E. (2022). How the Ukraine Crisis is Fueling a “Perfect Storm” for Food Insecurity. *Concerns Worldwide*, 25 April, <https://www.concern.net/news/how-ukraine-crisis-fuelling-perfect-storm-food-insecurity>
- Lewis, I. M. (2021). Somalia: History, Geography, Culture, & Facts. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Somalia>.
- Lewis, M. (2003). *A Modern History of Somalia. Nation and State in the Horn of Africa*. 4th edition, Ohio: Ohio University Press.
- Marinov, N. (2005). Do Economic Sanctions Destabilize Country Leaders?. *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 49, No.3, pp. 564–576
- Massoudnia, H., Foroughi, A. (2012). A comment on the role of Islamist groups in Somalia. *Islamic World Studies*, 1(3), 122-97 **(In Persian)**
- Menkhaus, K. (2006). Governance without Government in Somalia Spoilers, State Building, and the Politics of Coping. *International Security*, Vol.31, No.3, pp. 74–106.
- Micek, P. (2023). When Sanctions Undermine Human Rights Online. *Access Now*, 17 March, <https://www.accessnow.org/sanctions-undermining-human-rights/>

The Impact of Sanctions on the Socio-Political Rights of Somali Citizens

- Musau, S.M. (2021). Ineffectiveness of Sanctions: A Case Study of Somalia. *Intergovernmental research and policy Journal*, <https://irpj.euclid.int/articles/ineffectiveness-of-sanctions-a-case-study-of-somalia/>
- musavi, S., bagheri dolatabadi, A. (2021). The impact of economic sanctions on political and economic rights and the health of North Korean citizens. *World Politics*, 10(1), 221-254 (In Persian)
- Ngila, F. (2023). Somalia Is the Most Corrupt Country in the World. *Quartz*, 2 February, <https://qz.com/somalia-is-the-most-corrupt-country-in-the-world-1850063626>
- OCHA. (2022). Somalia Prices Are Soaring amid the Loss of livelihoods and The Impact of the Ukraine Crisis Last Updated. *OCHA*, 18 Sep 2022", <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/somalia/card/6k0xfZv5ip/>
- OHCHR. (1966a). International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. *OHCHR*, 16 December 1966, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>
- OHCHR. (1966b). International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. *OHCHR*, 16 December 1966, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx>
- Osman, A.N. (2022). Somalia's Healthcare System: The Current Landscape and the Solution We Need. *Garowe Online*, 1 May, <https://www.garoweonline.com/en/opinions/somalia-s-healthcare-system-the-current-landscape-and-the-solutions-we-need>
- Peksen, D. (2009). Better or Worse? The Effects of Economic Sanctions on Human Rights. *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 46, No.1, pp.59-77.
- Peksen, D. (2009). Better or Worse? The Effect of Economic Sanctions on Human Rights. *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol.46, No.1, pp.59-77.
- Peksen, Dursun; Cooper, Drury A. (2010). Coercive or Corrosive: The Negative Impact of Economic Sanctions on Democracy. *International Interactions*, Vol.36, No.1, pp. 240-264.
- Radcliffe, B. (2022). How Economic Sanctions Work. *Investopedia*, 6 July, <https://www.investopedia.com/articles/economics/10/economic-sanctions.asp>
- The Economist. (2023). Western Sanctions on Russia are Like None the World Has Seen. *The Economist*, 5 March 2022, <https://www.economist.com/briefing/2022/03/05/western-sanctions-on-russia-are-like-none-the-world-has-seen>
- The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). (2022). Somalia: UN Expert Warns Health Care Standards "Dangerously Low". *OHCHR*, 5 April, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/04/somalia-un-expert-warns-health-care-standards-dangerously-low>
- Trading Economics. (2023). Somalia Food Inflation. *Trading Economics*, <https://tradingeconomics.com/somalia/food-inflation>
- Transparency Organization. (2023). Corruption Interceptions Index 2022. *Transparency Organization*, <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2022>

Crisis Studies of the Islamic World

- UN Security Council. (1992). Resolution 733 (1992) / Adopted by the Security Council at its 3039th Meeting. *UNSC*, 23 January, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/135713?ln=en>
- UN Security Council. (2019). Resolution 2498 (2019) / Adopted by the Security Council at its 8665th Meeting. *UNSC*, 15 November, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3836082?ln=en>
- UNHR. (2016). Somalia: Freedom of Expression Critical to Ongoing Political Transition – UN Report. *UNHR*, 4 September, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2016/09/somalia-freedom-expression-critical-ongoing-political-transition-un-report>
- UNICEF. (2023). Health: UNICEF Somalia. *UNICEF*, <https://www.unicef.org/somalia/health>
- United Nations. (2023). Briefing Security Council, Chair of Somalia's Sanctions Regime Committee Details Need for Proceedings' Confidentiality, Recommendations on Humanitarian Matters. *SC/15323*, 15 June 2023, <https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15323.doc.htm>
- United Nations. (2023). Recent Meetings of 751 Sanctions Committee Took Up Investigations into Al-Shabaab's Finances, Weapons Smuggling between Somalia, Yemen, Chair Tells Security Council. *SC/15213*, 27 February, <https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15213.doc.htm>
- UNHRC (2012). Thematic Study of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the Impact of Unilateral Coercive Measures on the Enjoyment of Human Rights, Including Recommendations on Actions Aimed at Ending such Measures. *A/HRC/19/33*, 11 January, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G12/100/67/PDF/G1210067.pdf?OpenElement>
- US Department of State. (2023). 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Somalia. *US Department of State*, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/somalia/>
- USAid. (2023). Bringing Unity, Integrity and Legitimacy to Democracy (BUILD). *USAid*, <https://www.usaid.gov/somalia/fact-sheet/bringing-unity-integrity-and-legitimacy-democracy-build>
- Van Genugten, Willem J. M. (1999). *United Nations Sanctions: Effectiveness and Effects, Especially in the Field of Human Rights: A Multidisciplinary Approach*. Antwerpen: Intersentia.
- Wallenstein, Peter; Staibano, Carina. (2005). *International Sanctions: Between Words and Wars in the Global System, the Cass Series on Peacekeeping 21*. New York: Routledge.
- WHO. (1 March, 2023). Somalia calls for help as 1.8 million Somali children under 5 experience acute malnutrition and health complications. *WHO*, <https://www.emro.who.int/somalia/news/somalia-calls-for-help-as-18-million-somali-children-under-5-experience-acute-malnutrition-and-health-complications.html>

The Impact of Sanctions on the Socio-Political Rights of Somali Citizens

- Wood, Reed M. (2008). A Hand upon the Throat of the Nation': Economic Sanctions and State Repression, 1976–2001. *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 3, pp.489–513.
- World Bank. (2022a). Prevalence of Undernourishment (% of Population) – Somalia. *World Bank*,
<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SN.ITK.DEFC.ZS?locations=SO>
- World Bank. (2022b). Worldwide Governance Indicators: Somalia. *World Bank*,
<https://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/Home/Reports>



DOI: 10.27834/CSIW.2312.1332.4.31.7