**U.N. Agency to Examine If Western Sanctions Violate Human Rights**

March 23, 2015

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CNSNews.com

<http://cnsnews.com/news/article/patrick-goodenough/un-agency-examine-if-western-sanctions-violate-human-rights>

The U.N. Human Rights Council this week will appoint an official whose job is to examine Western sanctions, viewed as constituting human rights violations against the targeted countries.

The newly-created post, established by a resolution introduced by Iran, will go to a veteran Algerian diplomat who in his application expressed concern about U.S. and European sanctions against Russia over the Ukraine crisis.

The move comes three weeks after Secretary of State John Kerry in an [address](http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/03/238065.htm) to the Geneva-based HRC praised it for the “historic progress” it has made since the Obama administration joined in 2009.

An HRC committee recommended that Idriss Jazairy of Algeria get the post over 16 other candidates, and in a letter to council members on Friday HRC president Joachim Ruecker confirmed he support it.

So before the council ends its current session on Friday, Jazairy will become the latest of its several dozen expert “thematic mandate” holders, with the title “special rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights.”

The new mandate was created in an HRC resolution last fall that was introduced by Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and passed by a vote that reflected the deep divisions among the HRC’s 47 members.

The 31 votes in favor came from African, Asian and Latin American members including Cuba, China, Pakistan Russia, Saudi Arabia, Venezuela and Vietnam. The 14 opposing votes came from the U.S., European democracies, South Korea and Japan.

“Unilateral coercive measures” -– UCMs in the U.N.’s jargon –- are sanctions or similar actions imposed by one country on another aimed at putting pressure on regimes to change direction or institute reforms, without U.N. Security Council authorization.

The U.S. imposes such measures against a number of countries, including Russia, Cuba, Venezuela, Iran, Syria and North Korea, in response to issues ranging from human rights and violations to proliferation and support for terrorism. European Union targets include Iran and Zimbabwe.

The resolution condemned “the continued unilateral application and enforcement by certain powers of such measures as tools of political or economic pressure against any country, particularly against developing countries, with a view to preventing these countries from exercising their right to decide, of their own free will, their own political, economic and social systems.”

It called for UCMs to stop.

In a debate before the vote, the representatives of several democracies said the HRC was not the appropriate place for issues like sanctions to be discussed.

The U.S. delegate said Washington had opposed such a resolution for years, calling it politicized and saying it would divert the HRC’s attention and resources from pressing issues facing it.

But Cuba’s ambassador said the countries that were opposing it were those that were responsible for imposing UCMs in the first place, pointing to the U.S. embargo against the communist-ruled nation.

In his application for the position that he will take up this week, Jazairy wrote that countries in the “south” were the most vulnerable to UCMs imposed by countries of the “north,” although he also held up President Obama’s recent outreach to Cuba as “opening a window of opportunity.”

In the past, he said, the issue had more often been one between the “east” and “west.”

“Alas! Increased tension over Crimea and Ukraine has all but revived this situation.”

Were he to be selected for the post, Jazairy wrote, “I will be guided by the fact that states resorting to UCMs must accept responsibility, accountability and liability therefor.”

He also hinted at the need for compensation or reparations for sanctioned countries. As the former head of a U.N. development body, he said, “I am able to assist in the elaboration of assistance packages for affected countries.”

**Representing ‘not free’ Algeria at HRC**

Jazairy, 78, served as Algeria’s ambassador to the HRC until 2012, representing a government that is designated “not free” by the democracy watchdog, Freedom House.

Soon after the council was created in 2006 – to replace the 60-year-old U.N. Commission on Human Rights which had become increasingly discredited – he led African opposition to taking a tough stance towards Sudan over the deadly humanitarian crisis in Darfur.

Speaking on behalf of the Africa group late that year, Jazairy said the new U.N. rights body should avoid “a wrong-footed or heavy-handed response” towards the Islamist regime in Khartoum.

Two years later, Jazairy raised eyebrows when during preparations for a [controversial anti-racism conference](http://cnsnews.com/node/18536) he played down concerns that it may be used as a platform for anti-semitism by saying, “Anti-semitism targets Arabs who are also Semites – and by extension, the whole Muslim community.”

In 2010 Jazairy accused Israel of international piracy after an Israeli [commando raid](http://cnsnews.com/news/article/un-human-rights-council-condemns-israel-then-calls-investigation-flotilla-raid) on a Turkish ship carrying pro-Palestinian activists to Gaza in May 2010.

Later that year, the Algerian diplomat praised the Libyan regime for its efforts “to promote human rights.” Three months later Muammar Gaddafi harshly suppressed protests against his 41-year rule, and within another six months the regime had fallen.

In 2011, Jazairy recommended that the United States start to include its own record in the annual report on global human rights, compiled by the State Department.