*****Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV)***

**ODVV reply to the call for inputs for a report "** **on older persons in the context of climate change-induced disasters and building back better", issued by, the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, to inform his report to the 78th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations**

*Intersectionality: How do climate change-related disasters affect specific groups of older persons in all their diversity (including older women, older LGBTI persons, older persons belonging to national, religious, and linguistic minorities and older indigenous people, refugees and internally displaced persons, older persons with disabilities, older persons based in urban and rural areas, among others). Please provide detailed information.*

**Impact of Climate Change on Older Persons and Unilateral Coercive Measures**

Climate change impacts the social and environmental conditions of older persons in various ways. Clean air, clean drinking water, enough food and safe shelter, get affected by climate change. One of the most important human rights which is affected by climate change is the right to health. Some negative impacts of climate change and events related to it on older persons – such as rise in temperature – are linked to diseases (cardiovascular, respiratory) and increase in infectious diseases. In addition, climate change can lead to more economic instability and can have negative impact on mental health and welfare.

**Rise in Temperature**

Since 2000, the mortality rate related to heat has increased by 53.7 percent among people over 65 and it is estimated that 67 percent of the healthcare system will be threatened to fall apart due to the damaging impact of climate change on human health.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The impact of rising temperature is more on older persons, compared to other age groups, mostly due to limited social support as well as economic and social inequalities. Physiologically, the ability of older persons to regulate body temperature reduces which results in chronic diseases. Sharp rise in temperature directly linked to death caused by cardiovascular and respiratory diseases among older persons. In the summer of 2003, Europe experienced unprecedented heat. The lengthy and high heat killed between 22 to 35 thousand people, most of which were older persons.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Furthermore, older persons, especially those who have dementia, might have problems in communication related to climate change. Because of social distancing, older persons might have lesser access to public warnings and the use of text messaging and be less informed of the latest news and may have more social vulnerability against climate change. They might also have limited income which might increase the dangers of living in unsuitable housing without access to enough air-conditioning. Consequently, a lot of older persons do not have access to enough healthcare for medical treatment caused by heat.

According to the assessment of the World Health Organization, climate change leaves a collective of health impacts on older persons. It is estimated that there will be more than 250 thousand deaths between 2030 and 2050 due to climate change, 38 thousand of which will be older persons that have been exposed to heat.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Climate related challenges threaten the elderly while, imposition of economic sanctions, beyond the authority of the UN and the international rule of law, exacerbate the social welfare of older persons. For example, the older persons’ medical needs, are processed at a much slower rate and higher costs due to the impact of sanctions. In addition, many senior citizen's need are de-prioritized, under sanctions. For example, in senior citizens' homes, air-conditioning get lesser priority and some of these homes, located in sanctioned countries, are not be able to purchase air-conditioning systems.

**Drought, Dust Storms and Air Pollution**

Another consequence of climate change is drought and its effect on people’s health. Dust storms and air pollution can increase asthma, respiratory and heart diseases. According to reports, air pollution causes a rise in the respiratory and other diseases among people, especially among older persons which is annually estimated to have caused 4000 premature deaths in the Iran capital, Tehran and 40,000 deaths across the country.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Sanctions imposed on the banking system disrupt the imports of drugs to targeted countries, threaten the health of people, especially older persons and violate the right to an adequate living standard as well as the right to health.

Also, sanctions restrict access to necessary technology for combating dust storms for safeguarding the health of people, especially the elderly. In spite of presenting suitable solutions by governments, due to the imposition of sanctions on targeted countries, there is no possibility of putting the solutions into practice and making investment in relevant sectors for the reduction of dust storms.

**Preparedness of the Medical System**

Another impact of climate change on older persons is seen in the readiness of the healthcare system and pre and post crisis service providers, which in countries under sanctions are faced with further challenges and problems. Sanctions on drugs and banking transactions have resulted in medical centers inability to upgrade and update their equipment and this itself causes disruption in the provision of services to patients, particularly the older persons.

**Internal Migration**

The impact of internal migration, displacement or resettlement due to harsh climate conditions affect the health conditions of the middle-aged and older years. Due to displacement, older persons are forced to leave their home towns, where they have lived for long, migrate, get separated from their children. The speration can affect their mental health and social welfare. This is while, imposition of unilateral coercive measures affect implementation of policies for improvement of physical and mental health of older persons as well as their financial and economic situation.

**Financial Situation**

Climate change impacts the financial stability ad security of older persons. It seems that older persons have lower resistance against harsh climate conditions and natural disasters related to the climate. In comparison with younger adults, older persons usually recover much slower and lesser following natural disasters. Natural disasters can inflict damage to properties that older persons may struggle to get repairs done with fixed or low incomes, and potentially use up retirement savings. compensating the negative impacts of displacement might be financially impossible. Older persons might also lose short and long term care and social support systems during or following catastrophic events and overall become more vulnerable.

Economic sanctions and their impact on the international banking system, economy and trade and access to technology and technical knowledge, limit environment protection programs, which have major consequences on the environment, and as a result amplify damages caused by climate crisis. Sanctions, practically limit the economic growth of target countries and their ability to decrease the reliance of economy on limited natural resources, and as a result increase the role of natural resources on the economic policies, and make economic production very costly for the environment. Sanctions can also de-prioritize environment protection in sanctioned countries for policy makers and give priority to other issues such as employment, economic growth, defense systems, national security, food, energy and housing.

**Psychological Factors and Stress**

Also, the psychological impacts of climate change on older persons, stressful factors related to the climate such as temperature rises, poor air quality repeating natural disasters related to the climate, all disproportionately worsen psychological health among older persons. Excruciating heat, particularly at night, can disrupt peaceful sleep and undermine cognitive and psychological health. Physical movement difficulties common among older persons create obstacles in active and reactive readiness to catastrophic climate events such as floods which result in further stress and weaken their cognitive health.

Shortage in financial resources caused by sanctions shove aside programs to address older persons’ problems, marginalize them and leaves them to deal with their problems on their own and without sufficient and adequate support.

We request the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons to discuss the negative impacts of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of the rights of older persons in the annual reports presented to the UN Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly, presenting recommendations on how to alleviate or eliminate these effects.

1. https://www.odvv.org/blog-3475-ODVV-Interview-Climate-change-makes-the-global-socioeconomic-challenges-more-severe [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. http://www.sepehr.org/article\_26294\_025463a7246d9ecf6a0f702bb803f8.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://b2n.ir/g26851 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/12/1131887 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)