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Answer given by Ms Albuquerque
on behalf of the European Commission
(20.2.2026)

EU sanctions are targeted instruments of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, adopted in full compliance with international law. They are specifically designed to bring about a change in the behaviour of those responsible for serious violations of international law or human rights. EU sanctions are never aimed at the civilian population, nor at food, medicine, emergency supplies or humanitarian aid or its delivery.

The Commission relies on a multifaceted monitoring framework to ensure that EU sanctions remain proportionate and legally robust. Sanctions are based on specific listing criteria and require legally solid evidence and are subject to judicial review by the Court of Justice of the European Union. Furthermore, the EU has pioneered broad humanitarian 'carve-outs' from asset-freezing measures (inspired by UN Security Council Resolution 2664) to allow unimpeded humanitarian action.

Feedback from humanitarian partners indicate that impediments to public health often stem from the wrongful conduct by the targeted regimes, such as the diversion of resources, rather than the sanctions themselves. To prevent unintended 'over-compliance', the Commission issues extensive technical guidance and operates a dedicated contact point for humanitarian operators. As the world's largest donor of humanitarian aid, the EU remains committed to mitigating any unintended negative impacts on the most vulnerable while upholding the integrity of its restrictive measures.