



## TO WHOM AND WHY DOES THE UNITED STATES IMPOSE SANCTIONS?

Source: Telesur, official sources and agencies

*The U.S. most frequent excuse in order to impose sanctions on countries is Washington's accusations and "concerns" about alleged violations of human rights, absence of democracy and terrorism. The policy of imposing unilateral coercive measures, known as "sanctions" - devised during the First World War - violates the Charter of the United Nations, and conceals an aggressive model of intervention. It involves the use of coercion and pressure on the economies of those countries that Washington deems as "foes." It is the repetition of the old hegemonic ambition, the new big stick of the North American diplomacy, in a context in which the U.S. does not control the world at its will. Beyond the rhetoric that justifies it in the name of "democracy", sanctions are an instrument of war, designed to make people suffer in order to bend sovereign States. Learn here about some of the countries affected by this perverse strategy.*



## ***Sanctions: a war policy***

*The policy of sanctions was born in 1917 during the First World War, legitimized by the US Law on "trade with the enemy" that punished countries, individuals and companies that did business with the nations with which the US had come into conflict.*

From the end of the Second World War, - taking advantage of the weakness of most countries in the world and hiding behind anti-communism - the United States used its economic, military power and financial agencies to sanction States that did not align themselves with its economic and strategic interests.

The most frequent excuse to impose sanctions, that is to say, to take retaliation and aggression measures against a country's economy, has been the alleged violation of human rights, the accusations of "failed State", the absence of "democracy" and terrorism. That discourse has been applied to justify unilateral and coercive measures in many countries in which the United States has encouraged, financed and protected dictatorial regimes.

The farthest antecedent in the implementation of this policy dates back to the First World War, when the U.S. imposed "sanctions for transactions with the enemy" to several countries, through the Trading with the Enemy Act (TWEA, 1917).

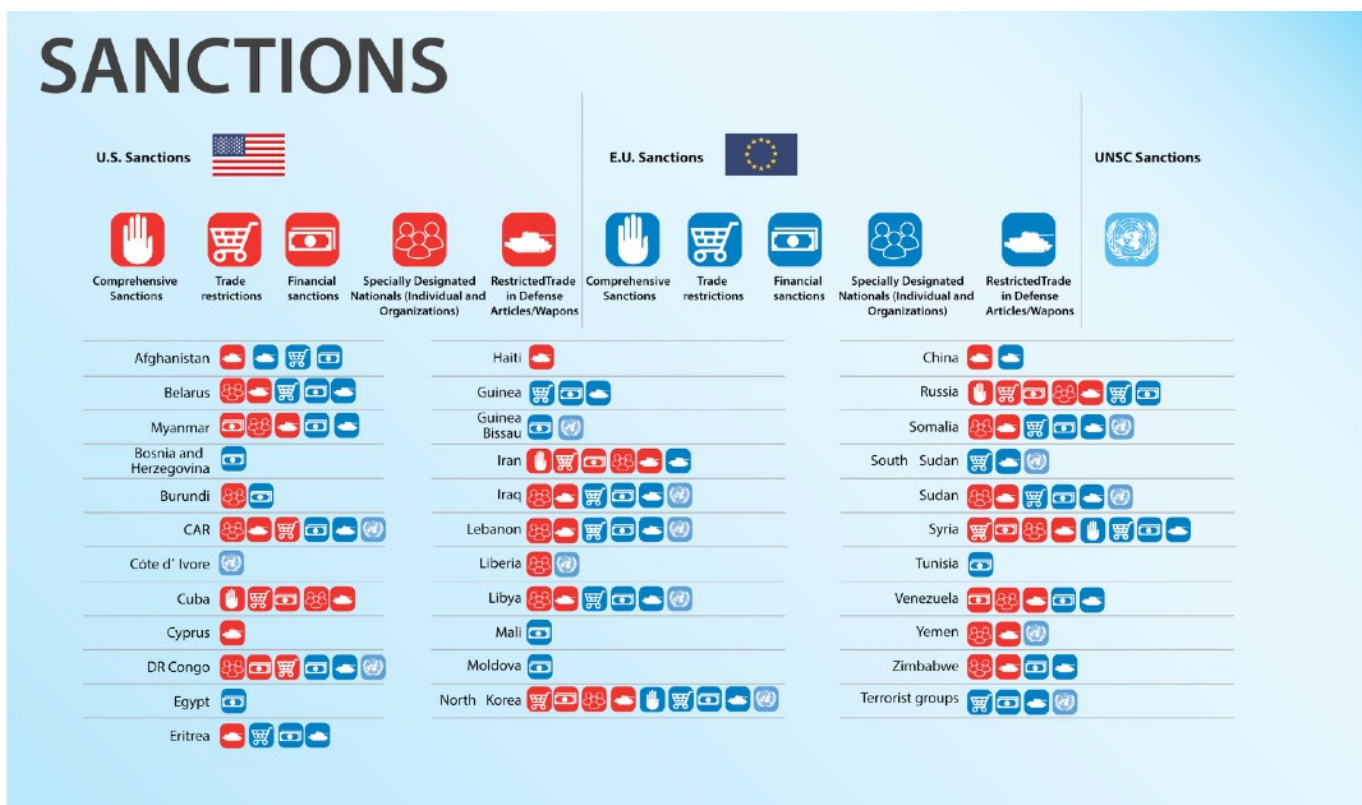
Since 1977, the imposition of "sanctions" is legally framed in the statute provided by the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) of the United States, which authorizes the president to apply said measures, and in the National Emergency Law of 1976 that formalizes the Congress's power to exercise control over the President's Emergency Powers.


In Latin America, during the post-war period, economic sanctions have been an instrument of intervention and interference, used to "punish", extort and destabilize governments that posed some kind of obstacle to the expansion of U.S. interests. Such are the cases of the government of Arbenz in Guatemala in 1954, Cuba since the victory of the Cuban Revolution, the government of

Joao Goulart in Brazil, Salvador Allende in Chile in the 1970-1973 period, or Nicaragua in the 80s.

A large part of these sanctions were formally applied under the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, which continued to be the umbrella for sanctions applied to countries in conflict with the United States in the Middle East, former Soviet Union and Africa, among others, between the 1980s and 1990s. Cuba is one of the countries where sanctions are based on multiple laws and precedents, among others, the FAA and TWEA.

## GLOBAL POLICY: IMPLEMENTATION OF UNILATERAL AND COERCIVE MEASURES





## **COUNTRIES WHERE THE UNITED STATES HAS APPLIED UNILATERAL MEASURES (SANCTIONS)**

### **DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF KOREA**

In 1950, with the entry of the United States into the Korean War (between North Korea and South Korea), the first economic sanctions were introduced against the Democratic Republic of Korea (North Korea), one of the most affected countries by the U.S. sanction policy.

Sanctions against the DPRK remain in force to this day. In 1995 and 1996, sanctions were relatively "softened" in terms of energy supply and access to financing. However, in 2013, after the expansion of the peaceful nuclear program, sanctions were reinforced, focusing on the supply of weapons and the financial system. The U.S. aimed at increasing pressure on Pyongyang and forcing the North Korean government to negotiate under the excuse of "preventing that country's nuclear intentions from consolidating." The DPRK has never given in to Washington's blackmail.



## CUBA

More than merely administrative sanctions, the U.S. Government maintains an economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba since the beginning of the 1960's.

In February 1959, with the victory of the *Cuban Revolution*, which was not willing to comply with Washington's opinions, *Dwight Eisenhower's*

Administration imposed the first sanctions against the island, which were maintained and extended by *John F. Kennedy* in response to the control measures that were taken and the nationalization of strategic companies of the State and U.S. companies in the island.

### ***The blockade against Cuba***


*From the beginning of the 1960s, the United States imposed a fierce economic, financial and commercial blockade on Cuba in order to choke the island's economy and foster the collapse of the Cuban Revolution. From then on, every year, the United Nations has voted on a Resolution that demands the elimination of the blockade and it obtains massive support with the sole exception of the U.S. and Israel.*

At the beginning, these sanctions were associated with the island's sugar import decrease. The U.S. withdrew its political and military support to all countries that supported Cuba. A few months later the shipment of all kinds of articles, except for food and medicine, was forbidden.

In February 1962, the White House intensified the measures and it became almost a complete blockade. That same year, Cuba – under U.S. pressures and demands – was expelled from the Organization of American States (OAS). Since 1966, U.S. citizens were prevented from visiting Cuba under threat up to 10 years of imprisonment and considerable fines.

In 1996, an act that included sanctions against foreign companies having commercial relations with Cuba, was approved (*Helms-Burton Act*). In 2000 the decision was made to use the frozen accounts, which amounted up to





120 million dollars, for the “compensation payment to the victims of the Cuban terrorism”.

According to Cuban authorities, the economic damage caused to the country represents more than a trillion of trillions. A report by the Cuban Government indicates that only since 2009 to June 2014, Barack Obama’s Administration had forced 36 U.S. and foreign entities to pay almost 2.6 billion dollars for being related to Cuba and other countries.

On November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2013, the Cuban Interest Section in Washington announced the temporary closing of consular services due to the refusal of the U.S. M&T Bank to operate the accounts of Cuban diplomatic representations in the U.S. In February 2014, branches of the company Pricesmart in several Caribbean countries refused to conduct sells to non-resident Cuban citizens, including accredited diplomatic staff, thus evidencing the blockade’s extraterritoriality.

By the end of 2014, the U.S. had recognized the failure of the blockade against Cuba and agreed with the revolutionary government the resumption of talks in order to normalize diplomatic relations. However, with *Donald Trump’s* arrival in the White House, the agreements reached during *Barack Obama’s* administration were no longer enforced.



## IRAN

The Islamic Revolution that deposed *Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlevi* on February 11<sup>th</sup>, 1979 was subject to sanctions by the U.S., which supported the bloody regime of the Iranian Shah, due to the huge oil businesses that the ruler allowed with transnational companies. In 1979, the U.S.

froze the Iranian assets and gold reserves in its banks, in response to the seizure of the U.S. Embassy in Teheran and imposed sanctions to foreign companies which violated such restrictions.

In 1984, a prohibition over the issuance of credits to Iran was imposed by international financial institutions. In 1987, trade between the U.S. and Iran was completely canceled.

By 1995, sanctions were “softened” and Iran began to receive North American products through third parties. In 1996, Washington decided that any country investing more than 20 million dollars in the Iranian energy sector was going to be subject of sanctions, including the prohibition of inter-bank activity, the loss of export licenses and the export of equipment to the U.S., among others. In 2012, there was another set of sanctions targeted at Iranian banks, companies and individuals related to Iran's peaceful nuclear program. After the agreement reached on such program, Obama's Administration intended to alleviate the sanctions, though Donald Trump has announced its increase.



## IRAQ

Commercial sanctions against Iraq were imposed in 1990 –amidst the *Gulf War*- by prohibiting the import of any good, except foods and medicines, and the export of oil and its derivatives.

As from the called *first Gulf War of 1991*, the UN Security Council virtually prevented the country to control ample areas of its Northern and Southern territories, where “demilitarized zones” were crated.


In 2003, once Iraq was invaded under pretext of possession of mass destruction weapons, the U.S. announced a possible lifting of unilateral sanctions to avoid the UN sanctions. Notwithstanding, the UN sanctions were lifted in 2010; 12 years of hard sanctions (1991 – 2003) represented a way of weakening the economic and military ability of the Iraqi government, just until the U.S. and its allies assured their capacity to invade the country.

## YUGOSLAVIA

In 1991, during the Balkans conflict –destruction of the former-Yugoslavia), the **UN Security Council** adopted a set of resolutions imposing sanctions against Yugoslavia, which were endorsed by the U.S. Weapons purchases were blocked and foreign bank accounts were frozen.

For its part, the U.S. imposed a set of sanctions against determined nationals in 1998, thus blocking all permits, licenses, assets and bank accounts of these persons in its country. Furthermore, were established fines of over 500,000 dollars or the double of the amount received in benefits for those companies that fail to comply with such sanctions, and individuals could be fined with up to





250,000 dollars or the double of the amount received in benefits in case of violation.

## BURMA

In 1997, U.S. companies lost their right to invest in this country and the members of the military junta were prevented to entry in the U.S. because of the sanctions imposed for alleged human rights violations.

In 2003, sanctions become stricter. All imports from Burma were prohibited and the assets of its government in the U.S. were frozen. Moreover, the U.S. representatives to the international financial institutions were ordered to vote against the loans request of this Asian country. However, the general license No. 14B allows alleged non-profit humanitarian and religious organizations in Burma to receive funding from the U.S. government.


## ZIMBABWE

Sanctions against this country were imposed in 2002. Its assets were frozen and its nationals were banned to entry in the U.S. territory, but they didn't achieve their intended purpose though.

Zimbabwe's authorities affirm that the economic crisis in their country derives from sanctions imposed by international community led by the U.S. and Europe.

## BELARUS

In 2004, U.S. Senate passed the "Bill for Democracy in Belarus" whereby the lawmakers illegitimately and illegally urged that Belarus should informed them about its weapons and technologies supply. It was also offered



funds to “support the democratic processes” in the country, for the purpose of destabilize the legitimately constituted government. Over time, the sanctions have been constantly strengthened.

In 2011, was increased the number of Belarusians officials under a regime of financial sanctions and banning of visa. Among the affected people are found the President **Alexander Lukashenko**, his sons Victor and Dmitri, and journalists, officials, prosecutors and judges as well.

## SYRIA


In 2004, the restrictions were related to groundless accusations of alleged support to terrorist organizations. The Syrian government was accused of developing mass destruction weapons and provide support to rebels in Iraq; all this, in spite of the known support and funding of terrorist groups as Daesh by the United States.

The bank accounts of several individuals and companies in the U.S. were frozen and the export of almost any kind of goods -except food, medicines and some spare parts- were prohibited as well. The air traffic was also interrupted.

In 2010, President Obama endorsed the sanctions, and at the same time expressed that Syrian policies “pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy and economy of the united States.”

## DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Sanctions were introduced in 2006 and extended several times. In 2010, the United Nations special envoy



*Margot Wallström*, accused the military forces of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo of being guilty of rapes and murders. Sanctions were imposed on assets and transactions of the persons considered as human rights violators.

## SUDAN

In 2007, around 30 Sudanese companies lost the possibility to maintain trade relations with United States as well as to receive funds from U.S. banks. They also had frozen assets in U.S. banks.

In February 2015, the Government of Sudan exhorted the United States to reconsider their unilateral sanctions against the country because they affected the interest of the Sudanese people and the economic situation in such country.


On the other hand, the United States announced the easing of sanctions by allowing the export of personal communication equipment and software, including smart phones and laptops.

The U.S. Government also added Sudan to its 'list of countries sponsoring terrorism'.

## SOMALIA

The sanctions against Somalia arose as a result of U.S. accusations concerning the actions by the extremist group Al-Shabab. Such sanctions were introduced in 2010.

The extremist group Al-Shabab controlled, by that time, the country's capital and the entire south of Somalia. U.S. officials suspected that the group had relations with



Al Qaeda, a terrorist group created by the U.S. Government, indeed.

Civilians suspected of supporting the militant group were denied entry to the United States and their assets were frozen.

## LIBYA


In 2011, President Barack Obama imposed commercial and financial sanctions against Libya. Such restrictions affected several banks and State-owned companies which were not authorized to do business on U.S. territory. These sanctions were part of an assault plan against Libya by the Western Coalition, which also put together and trained the terrorist group that helped to overthrow and assassinate President *Muammar Gaddafi*, in connection with NATO'S military forces.

Libya is plunged into chaos and political violence, while Western powers do businesses with this African country's oil and natural resources through transnational companies.

## CÔTE D'IVOIRE

In 2011, the United States imposed sanctions against the president of Côte d'Ivoire, *Laurent Gbagbo*, his wife and his supporters, after elections were cancelled in some cities of this African country and after alleged human rights violations.

In the 1970s, Côte d'Ivoire was one of the strongest economies in Africa. In the 1980s and 1990s, economic and political problems arose and caused a civil war in 1999. The U.S. sanctions prevented trade with



individuals or organizations providing arms or assistance to the country.

## LEBANON

In 2012, sanctions were imposed under the pretext of counteract persons who “undermined Lebanon’s sovereignty”. Such sanctions stipulated the prevention of entry into U.S. territory, as well as the freezing of assets and financial transactions.

## UKRAINE

In 2014, sanctions were imposed against President *Víktor Yanukóvich* and the politician *Víktor Medvedchuk*, such as the prevention of entry into U.S. territory, as well as the freezing of assets.

In February, a visa ban was imposed to 20 high-level Ukrainian Government officials and other citizens. The sanctions arose after the coup d'État perpetrated by Obama’s Administration and which overthrow Yanukovych and divided the country.

## YEMEN

In 2012, during the civil war in that country, the U.S. imposed sanctions against people who were part of the government. They were denied entry into the United States and their assets in the U.S. were frozen.

In November 2014, Obama imposed new sanctions against Yemen, including the freezing of assets that Yemeni government officials may have under U.S. jurisdiction; likewise, U.S. citizens and entities were prevented from conducting financial transaction



## SOUTH SUDAN

In 2014, the U.S. issued sanctions against a background of confrontation between the Government of South Sudan and rebel groups.

Limitations included the freezing and confiscation of assets of persons "involved in illicit activities." Also, citizens and businesses in the United States were prevented from having financial relations with these individuals.

## RUSSIA

When the coup d'État against Yanukovich was consummated some regions in eastern and southern Ukraine claimed for independence. In this sense, Russian President Vladimir Putin promulgated the incorporation of the Republic of Crimea and the port of Sevastopol to the Russian Federation, previously ratified by the Council of the Federation, reunifying the country with this region that belonged to it until 1954.

In March 2014, the United States announced the imposition of restrictive measures against Russian authorities. Washington and the European Union justified the sanctions following the accusation against Moscow of "violating" the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Russia rejected the accusations and assured that the referendum on the independence of Crimea was made under the observation of international entities, therefore, it complied with all the regulations in this regard. The new Prime Minister of Crimea, Serguei Axionov, was subject to sanctions. He was denied entry to the U.S. and his assets abroad were frozen.



In 2017, Donald Trump imposed sanctions against Russia because it “interferes” in the presidential election where he was elected, without providing evidence.

The list of people who are prohibited from entering the U.S. contains the names of several dozens of Russian state officials.

In August 2014, Russia responded with sanctions against the EU and the U.S. with restrictive measures over the agricultural and food sector.

On September 12<sup>th</sup>, U.S. President Barack Obama stated that his government was going to impose new sectoral sanctions against Russia. "We are going to deepen and broaden the sanctions against Russia's financial, energy and defense sector, which will increase Russia's political isolation as well as economic costs," Obama said at the time. The U.S. President accused Moscow of destabilizing, "including the presence of heavily armed Russian troops in eastern Ukraine”.

Among the companies sanctioned by Obama are: Gazprom Neft, Lukoil, Rosneft, Gazprom, Surgutneftegaz, Transneft, Rostec and the aerospace corporation Oboronprom.

Access to the capital market for several Russian banks was also restricted, reducing the term of the loans up to 90 days. These measures will cover the financial entities Sberbank, Bank of Moscow, Gazprombank, Rosseljozbank, Vneshekonobank and VTB. Additionally, several defense, scientific and research and development companies were listed.

For its part, the EU also imposed sanctions on the loan and investment service of five Russian banks: Sberbank, VTB, Gazprombank, VEB and Rosseljozbank. Companies based in the EU will no longer be able to apply for credits



## ***Russia: A dangerous game***

*Despite the fact that Europe, following the U.S., has issued diplomatic sanctions against the Russian Federation, countries such as Germany have strengthened their ties to the Russian economy and particularly to the development of gigantic energy projects.*

to these Russian banking entities. In addition, operations to issue bonds and other securities with maturities of more than 30 days are prohibited.

Likewise, the European Union brought to 119 the names on its sanction list for Russia by including 24 other people.

On March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015 the president of the United States announced the extension of the sanctions against Russia for a year, as a mechanism of pressure to force the Kremlin to accept the policies developed by the West in Ukraine, threatening the Russian state's sovereignty.

On March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016, the sanctions imposed by the U.S. against Russia for the conflict in Ukraine were extended by President Barack Obama until March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

According to a presidential decree, Russia's actions represent "an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States."



The aggression against Venezuela has only one objective: to take control of the oil and the great natural resources of the country.

## VENEZUELA

U.S. President Barack Obama issued sanctions against Venezuela on December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2014, after the approval of an act by the U.S. Congress. Then, the massive and systematic implementation of measures of aggression, harassment and persecution against the Venezuelan economy began.

The sanctions consist on the freezing of assets and the prohibition of visas for Venezuelan officials, whom the U.S. authorities finger as alleged responsible for human rights violations in the attempted coup protests that took place between February and May of that year in Venezuela. The violent protests whose objective was to overthrow President Nicolas Maduro, left a balance of 43 dead people.

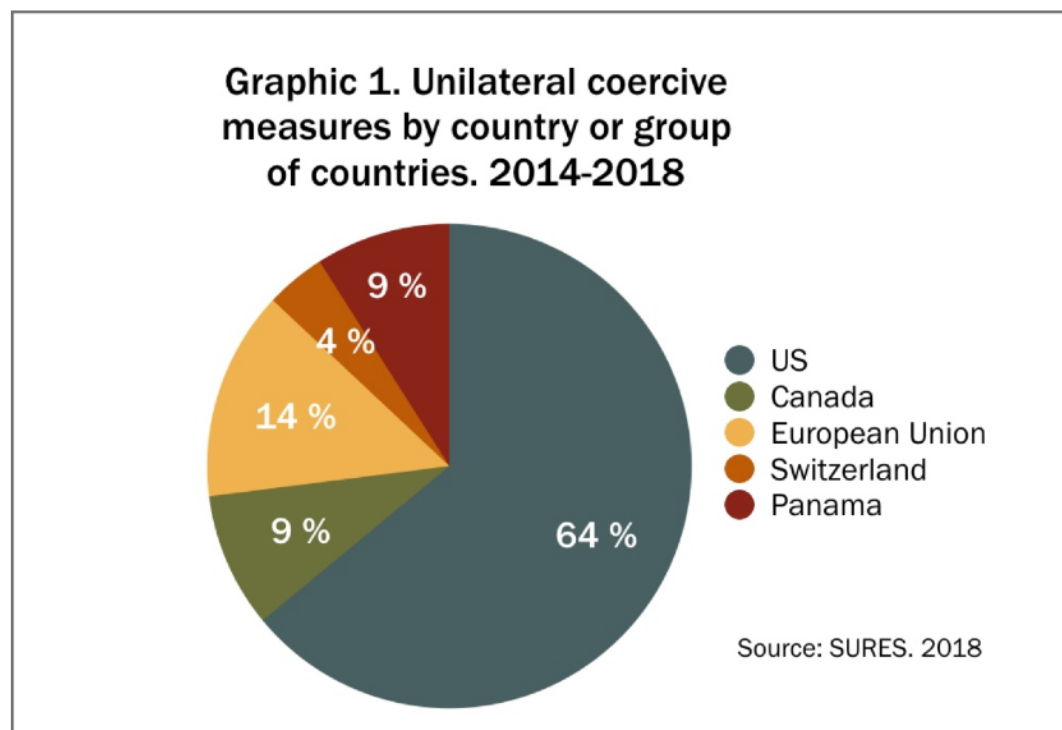
In March 2015, Barack Obama issued an executive order in which he declared the "*national emergency*" for the "*unusual and extraordinary threat*" that Venezuela represents to the "US security" and was "worried" by what he called "the efforts of the Venezuelan government to increase intimidation on political opponents", in a clear interference in the Venezuela's domestic affairs.

These measures are another sign of the hostile US policy against Venezuela, since Commander *Hugo Chavez* became President along with the *Bolivarian Revolution*.

In 2016, *Barack Obama* extended the declaration of "national emergency" on Venezuela for one year, alleging that this country "erodes human rights" and "persecutes its political leaders."

In a letter addressed to the leaders of the House of Representatives and the Senate, Obama said it is "necessary to continue the national emergency declared in the executive order No. 13692 regarding the situation in Venezuela," which the president had ordered in March 2015.

From then on, unilateral coercive measures against Venezuela have only increased, including against people, officials and public bodies, as well as public and private companies, including their governing bodies.

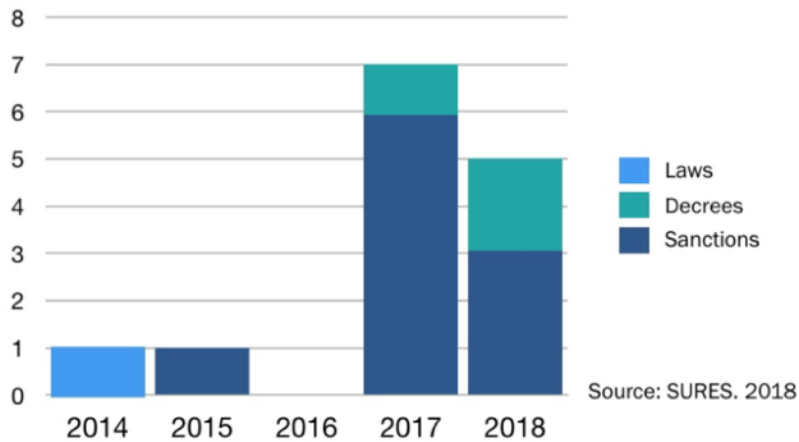


During Trump's administration, U.S. has implemented four rounds of sanctions against Venezuela in two years, improving the policy started by Barack Obama.

On February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2017, the Treasury Department decided to revoke the visa to the Venezuelan Vice President *Tareck El Aissami*, confiscate property and forbid him to carry out financial or commercial transactions with U.S. institutions.



**Graphic 2. Types of unilateral coercive measures. 2014-2018**



Since 2014, fourteen legal acts have been issued: laws, decrees or sanctions against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

The same has been done by the U.S. with high representatives of the Venezuelan State, such as the President of the Supreme Court of Justice, the president of the Electoral Power, the Minister of Defense, and the President of the National Constituent Assembly.

Donald Trump's Government has twice ratified Barack Obama's Decree and has executed four rounds of sanctions against Venezuela in less than two years,

including to the President of the Republic, *Nicolas Maduro*

U.S. has implemented financial blockade measures for all Venezuelan debt operations and has ordered U.S. banks to close accounts that this Republic has for its foreign trade operations.

#### **MEDICINE ACCESS BLOCKING**

**The 2017-2018 vaccination cycle experienced a delay of four months due to the blockade that has delayed the purchase of vaccines. As a result, Venezuela has seen the rate rise in some diseases**

The restrictive and blockade measures in the financial system have affected the acquisition of shipments of food and medicines, as well as other essential goods for the country, as raw material for the national industry.

Canada and the European Union have joined the unilateral and coercive measures, imposing restrictive measures against high State authorities and have endorsed the sabotage of the economy and international trade of Venezuela.