



Donald J. Trump
President
United States of America

9 April 2020

Mr President,

In this Easter season, the central point in the annual church calendar for Christians around the world, and as Muslims approach the holy month of Ramadan, we confront a challenging new reality requiring us to refrain from gathering together in our faith communities, in order to protect ourselves and our societies from illness and harm. In this unprecedented situation, we have a special opportunity and responsibility for deep reflection, and for renewal and seeking new beginnings.

The novel coronavirus is a common enemy of humanity everywhere. It threatens all people regardless of nationality, ethnicity, religion, politics or any other human affiliation, discriminating only in the severity of its impact on people and communities already made vulnerable by pre-existing health conditions and/or poverty. An effective response to the pandemic demands an unprecedented degree of global solidarity and cooperation, special care for the most vulnerable, and swift action to mitigate the conditions which create additional vulnerability.

In this context, the World Council of Churches (WCC), ACT (Action by Churches Together) Alliance, and the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCCUSA) share a deep concern for the impact on the people of Iran of the sanctions imposed by the United States. Iran, currently with over 67,000 confirmed cases and more than 4,000 documented deaths due to COVID-19, is by far the most affected country in the Eastern Mediterranean region, and one of the most affected countries in the world. But its public health response is severely impeded by the strict sanctions regime imposed on the country unilaterally by the United States since May 2019, resulting in an almost total economic blockade.

According to a recent article published in The Lancet, "All aspects of prevention, diagnosis, and treatment are directly and indirectly hampered, and the country is falling short in combating the crisis. Lack of medical, pharmaceutical, and laboratory equipment such as protective gowns and necessary medication has been scaling up the burden of the epidemic and the number of casualties. Despite WHO and other international humanitarian organisations dispatching supplies and medical necessities, the speed of the outbreak and the detrimental effects of sanctions have resulted reduced access to life-

saving medicines and equipment, adding to the health sector's pre-existing requirements for other difficult health conditions.”

As a matter of international solidarity and humanitarian principle, and in the spirit of the UN Secretary-General's appeal for a global ceasefire in order to strengthen efforts against the pandemic, WCC, ACT Alliance and NCCCUSA jointly appeal to you to lift the crippling sanctions against Iran, including the financial sanctions that impact Iran's ability to import medical supplies and equipment, and to allow the International Monetary Fund to grant Iran's request for an emergency loan to assist it in its response to this crisis.

In this moment of global crisis, we make the same appeal in relation to sanctions impeding public health responses in other parts of the world – including Syria, Gaza, Venezuela and Cuba – whose people, already victimized by conflict and geo-political confrontation, are being deprived of badly-needed medicines, medical supplies and equipment as a consequence of sanctions and blockades supported by the United States.

Now is not the moment for pursuing grievances belonging to the politics of the world before COVID-19. In our new reality, any notion of national security is contingent on an effective response to the virus globally. Now is the moment for international solidarity and cooperation in controlling the spread of the virus, protecting the most vulnerable, and defeating this common enemy.

Yours in Christian solidarity and care,



Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca
Acting General Secretary, World Council of Churches



Mr. Rudelmar Bueno de Faria
General Secretary, ACT Alliance



Mr. Jim Winkler
General Secretary, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA