

# EU imposes new raft of sanctions on Venezuela



Children look at books donated by the Venezuelan charity, “Feed the Solidarity”, at a home where children are tutored by volunteers, in the San Agustin neighborhood of Caracas, Venezuela

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ANew raft of EU sanctions on Venezuela came into force today, despite President Nicolas Maduro warning that the punitive actions are harming his country’s citizens.

The measures, first implemented by the neoliberal economic bloc in 2017, have been extended for a further year and now include 36 named officials, ostensibly “because of their role in acts and decisions undermining democracy and the rule of law.”

EU officials had joined the United States and Britain in recognizing hapless former National Assembly President Juan Guaido as Venezuela’s interim leader.

But Mr. Guaido has since been voted out of that position after Venezuela’s opposition branded him “a dream that turned into a nightmare” following a series of embarrassing failed coup attempts.

Despite EU claims that its sanctions “are flexible and reversible and designed not to harm the Venezuelan population,” the country remains short of essential items.

The EU has followed the path of the US, which has ratcheted up pressure on Venezuela by imposing what has been described as a total embargo to try to force Mr. Maduro from office.

Former United Nations special rapporteur Alfred de Zayas warned last year that the measures are killing ordinary Venezuelans and accused Washington of “waging economic warfare.”

He said that the poorest people in the country were suffering the most, comparing the sanctions to a “modern-day medieval siege” which could amount to crimes against humanity.

Earlier this year, Venezuelan Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza asked the International Criminal Court to investigate US officials over the sanctions.

A 60-page dossier lodged with the court, based at The Hague in the Netherlands, alleges that Washington’s punitive measures have been “a death sentence for tens of thousands of Venezuelans per year.”

Last month, Venezuela’s government scored a victory at the High Court in London court in its battle for the return of \$1 billion of the country’s gold, which is stored in the Bank of England’s vaults.

Mr. Maduro has demanded the release of the gold to help fund efforts to combat the coronavirus pandemic.

But the bank refused — reportedly under pressure from US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. It then asked the High Court to determine who the British government recognizes as the legitimate leader of Venezuela, Mr. Maduro, or Mr. Guaido.

Judges ruled that the government’s position was ambiguous and the case will return to the High Court.

The new sanctions will last until November next year.

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