

**THE INTERNATIONAL PEOPLE'S  
TRIBUNAL ON US IMPERIALISM:  
SANCTIONS, BLOCKADES, AND ECONOMIC COERCIVE MEASURES**

- Website: <https://sanctionstribunal.org/>  
Twitter & IG: @SanctionsTrib

**We are a group  
of internationalist  
activists located in  
the United States  
and Canada, and we  
consider ourselves  
part of the anti-  
imperialist and anti-  
war movements  
throughout the world.**

**We support the right of people and nations to build their own societies free from the terror of imperialist war and violence.**

We are deeply concerned by the impact of U.S. sanctions on the peoples of Latin America, Africa, and Asia, and believe that the only way to defeat the United States' unlawful sanctions regimes is to rise up collectively against them. The People's Tribunal is an international effort to undermine sanctions and challenge U.S. imperialism. We have three goals:

# 1.

Build international consensus around the illegality of sanctions and against U.S. imperialism.

# 2.

Distinguish sanctions against Israel and South Africa from sanctions as a tool of imperialism (such as sanctions against Iran, Venezuela, Palestine, Syria, Cuba, Zimbabwe, etc.)

# 3.

Build an international anti-imperialist movement targeting the U.S.

# **We will use the tribunal as an organizing, political education, and legal tool.**

We will use the tribunal as an organizing, political education, and legal tool. We have two legal objectives: to identify legal causes of action to deploy in international and U.S. courts, and to challenge both unilateral coercive measures (including targeted sanctions) and multilateral coercive measures brought under Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter. Our political objectives involve laying the groundwork for an international campaign against economic coercive measures, and using grassroots activism such as protests and direct actions to support the work of the tribunal.

We view sanctions as one of the key tools of U.S. imperialism. In order to uncover the depth and breadth of U.S. imperialism, we will determine the impact of sanctions on various aspects of life, with a focus on social, political, economic, and ecological issues.

We will hold hearings on the impact of sanctions on 16 countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. The opening session of the Tribunal will take place in January 2023 and the closing session will be held in July 2023. Both will be held in person. The remaining sessions will be held online, from winter 2023 to summer 2023.

The nations represented in the Tribunal are Ethiopia, Eritrea, Haiti, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Palestine, Nicaragua, North Korea, Sudan, Syria, Cuba, Venezuela, Yemen, and Zimbabwe.

Targeted sanctions and blockades impact every aspect of life. We have therefore selected 15 themes to cover in the Tribunal, though not all nations will discuss all themes. This will be left to the discretion of experts and witnesses representing each nation. The themes are public health, financial systems, refugees and migration, exports and tourism, education, technology development, infrastructure, agriculture, civil society, development, women empowerment, macroeconomics, manufacturing and industry, environmental impact, and welfare and employment.

During the country hearings, expert witnesses, victims and legal experts will present evidence against the U.S. The countries chosen are not exhaustive of states impacted by U.S. sanctions but are emblematic of the role and function of imperialist sanctions as well as the multiple levels and forms of impact.

### CO-ORGANIZERS

Al-Awda: The Palestine Right to Return Coalition	DSA International Committee
Al Massar Althawri Alfalstini Albadeel – The Palestinian Alternative Revolutionary Path Movement	Frantz Fanon Foundation
Alliance for Global Justice	International Association of Democratic Lawyers
ANSWER Coalition	National Lawyers Guild
Black Alliance for Peace	Qiao Collective
Committee of Anti-Imperialists in Solidarity with Iran (CASI)	Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network
Confederation of Lawyers of Asia and the Pacific	Sanctions Kill
CODEPINK	Simón Bolívar Institute for Peace and Solidarity Among Peoples
Communist Party of Kenya	The People's Forum
	Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research

### ENDORSERS

Canadian Federation of Students	Nodutdol for Korean Community Development
Communist Party of Canada – Parti Communiste du Canada	OPIRG Guelph
Carleton University Graduate Students' Association	OPIRG Carleton
Hamilton Coalition to Stop the War	Popular Resistance
International Commission for Solidarity with Yemen	The Ottawa CUPE District Council
Labour 4 Palestine	United National Antiwar Coalition
Labor Against Racism and War	Within Our Lifetime
	Zimbabwe Movement of Pan African Socialists

# Country Hearings Schedule

Country Hearing	Date & Time (EST)
<b>Zimbabwe</b>	Feb 4th   10:30 am
<b>Korea</b>	Feb 17th   11 pm
<b>Libya</b>	Mar 4th   10:30 am
<b>Syria</b>	Mar 18th   10:30 am
<b>Lebanon</b>	April 1st   10:30 am
<b>Gaza</b>	April 8th   10:30 am
<b>Iran</b>	April 14th   10:30 am
<b>Sudan</b>	April 22nd   10:30 am
<b>Eritrea</b>	April 29th   10:30 am
<b>Ethiopia</b>	May 6th   10:30 am
<b>Iraq</b>	May 13th   10:30 am
<b>Yemen</b>	May 19th   10:30 am
<b>Haiti</b>	May 27th   10:30 am
<b>Nicaragua</b>	June 3rd   11:00 am
<b>Cuba</b>	June 10th   11:00 am
<b>Venezuela</b>	July 25,26 (in person, Caracas)





# STEERING COMMITTEE



## Suzanne Adely

is a labor organizer, lawyer and longtime Arab community organizer. She is the president of the National Lawyers Guild (NLG) and a member of the bureau of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADI) Through the NLG's international committee she has worked to use the law to expose and build accountability for U.S. Imperialist policies. Suzanne is a long-time member of the NY Chapter of Al-Awda, the Palestine Right to Return Coalition, a member of the U.S. Palestine Community Network and CASI.



## Max Ajl

is a Senior Fellow at the Department of Conflict and Development Studies at Ghent University and a researcher with the Tunisian Observatory for Food Sovereignty and the Environment. He is an editor at *Agrarian South* and *Journal of Labor and Society*, and has written for the *Journal of Peasant Studies*, *Globalizations*, *Review of African Political Economy*, *Middle East Report*, and other scholarly and popular journals. He has been active in anti-war and anti-Zionist politics and is the author of a recent book, *A People's Green New Deal*.



## **Matthew Almonte**

is a member of the Committee of Anti-Imperialists in Solidarity with Iran (CASI), DSA International Committee, and co-coordinator of the Black Alliance for Peace (BAP) Solidarity Network.



## **Helyeh Doutaghi**

is an adjunct professor and a doctoral candidate in Law and Legal Studies at Carleton University. Prior to her doctoral studies, she completed her LLM in Transnational Law at King's College London. Her research explores the intersections of sanctions regimes, imperialism, and international law. Helyeh is a policy associate at Legal Centre for Palestine, and an anti-imperialist organizer in the student movement on the traditional unceded Territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin Nation. Helyeh's work has appeared in *Leiden Journal of International Law*, *The Conversation*, *rabble.ca*, *Black Agenda Report*, and others.





## **Nina Farnia**

is an assistant professor at Albany Law School. As a Critical Race Theory scholar, she is especially interested in the legal history of U.S. imperialism. Her publications have appeared in a wide range of academic journals and popular media outlets including *Stanford Law Review*, *UCLA Women's Law Journal*, *Middle East Inquiry*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Black Agenda Report*, and others. Her forthcoming book is entitled *Imperialism in the Making of U.S. Law*. As an Equal Justice Works fellow, Dr. Farnia participated on the legal teams for two Supreme Court cases: *Dukes v. Wal-Mart*, the largest civil rights class action in U.S. history and her fellowship case, *Fazaga v. FBI*, which challenged the use of government informants in mosques in Southern California. During law school she clerked for Nobel Laureate Shirin Ebadi and women's rights attorney Nasrin Sotoodeh in Iran. Prior to attending law school, she was a community organizer in Chicago, and focused on issues of police violence against youth.



## **Anisa Hosseinnezhad**

is an Iranian artist and filmmaker. Her film and video work focuses on issues of displacement, immigration, and the militaristic U.S. imaginary. Her research is centered on West Asia, as rendered through by western media and its frequent collaborator the U.S. military industrial complex.



## **Charlotte Kates**

is the international coordinator of Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network and has organized delegations, actions, reports and articles that highlight the struggle for the liberation of Palestine and the Palestinian prisoners. She coordinates the National Lawyers Guild International Committee and is also a member of Al-Awda, The Palestine Right to Return Coalition, the Canada Palestine Association and the Organizing Collective of the US Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel.



## **Corinna Mullin**

is an anti-imperialist and anti-colonial academic and organizer based in New York. She is a professor in global politics and political economy at the City University of New York (CUNY). In addition to her work with CASI, Corinna is part of the steering committee of the International Committee of the Professional Staff Congress (PSC) union and serves on the International Advisory Committee of the Observatory of Food Sovereignty and the Environment (OSAE). She is also active in anti-racist, abolitionist and Palestine solidarity organizing within CUNY and beyond.



## **Jeremy Miller**

is part of the POOR Magazine family and an organizer with the Black Alliance for Peace.



## **Vladimir Martinez**

is a queer internationalist lawyer from New York City. He is a co-chair of the Subcommittee on Cuba of the National Lawyers Guild (NLG). Vladimir is a graduate of the City University of New York (CUNY) School of Law, Human Rights and Gender Justice Clinic. He is interested in defending the rights of sexual and gender minorities, especially in the Latin American region.

# JURORS



## Charlotte Kates

is the international coordinator of Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network and has organized delegations, actions, reports and articles that highlight the struggle for the liberation of Palestine and the Palestinian prisoners. She coordinates the National Lawyers Guild International Committee and is also a member of Al-Awda, The Palestine Right to Return Coalition, the Canada Palestine Association and the Organizing Collective of the US Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel.



## Willy Mutunga

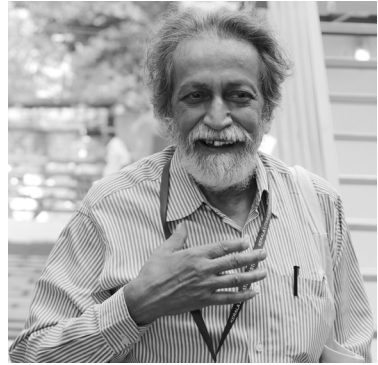
was Kenya's 14th Chief Justice since independence and first President of the Supreme Court under the 2010 Constitution. He served in that capacity from 2011 to 2016. Since October 2021 he is an Adjunct Professor of Public Law, Kabarak Law School, Kabarak University. In 2019 he served as consultant with the Constitution Review Commission of The Gambia; Secretary General of the Commonwealth special envoy to the Maldives (2016); and a distinguished scholar-in-residence at Fordham Law's Leitner Center for international Law and Justice School (2016-17).

Willy Mutunga has been since 2003 a Senior Counsel, an honour bestowed upon him by President Kibaki, President of the Republic of Kenya 2003-2013. He has advocated for a progressive jurisprudence for Africa and the global south as part of their significant contribution in the struggle for a new just, peaceful, gender just, non-sexist, non-racist, non-ethnic, non-militaristic, ecologically safe, prosperous, egalitarian, and equitable socialist world.



## Edre Olalia

is an activist and anti-imperialist lawyer, with years of experience in peoples's struggles. He has practised pro bono human rights and public interest law for more than 30 years and appears as counsel before all level courts and agencies in the Philippines including on petitions of constitutionality before the Supreme Court. Edre has acted as prosecutor, chief clerk of court, and helped craft Verdicts in international peoples' tribunals on migrants, refugees, war crimes, violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in Brussels, Guadalajara, the Hague, Manila, New York, and Washington DC. Edre was the lead private prosecutor against army Gen. Jovito Palparan, the highest ranking Philippine military officer ever convicted and now serving life in prison for the disappearance of student activists.



## Prabhat Patnaik

is Professor Emeritus at the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. His books include *Accumulation and Stability Under Capitalism*, *The Value of Money*, *Re-envisioning Socialism*, and, most recently, *Capitalism and Imperialism: Theory, History, and the Present*, co-authored with Utsa Patnaik.



## Eva Nanopoulos

is a Senior Lecturer in Law at Queen Mary, University of London. Her first monograph *The Juridification of Sanctions and the Politics of EU Law* (Hart, 2020) offered a novel interpretation of international smart sanctions as tools of imperial policing designed to manage the global capitalist order in its post-colonial neoliberal form. She is currently working on a new book project, 'Decolonising Sanctions: A Legal History and Theory' which seeks to a) draw the connections between the history of sanctions under international law and the histories of capitalism, colonialism, and Western imperialism, and b) understand how international law helps to enable and legitimise new forms of economic imperial violence. She is co-director of the Queen Mary Centre of Law and Society in a Global Context, and member of the editorial collective of the blog *Legal Form: A Forum for Marxist Analysis and Critique*.



## Michael Deutsch

has been a lawyer with the People's Law Office in Chicago and a member of the National Lawyers Guild since 1970. From 1991 - 1996, he was the Legal Director of the Center for Constitutional Rights in New York. His legal career has been devoted to the representation and defense of political activists opposing U.S government policies, political prisoners, and all prisoners subjected to inhumane treatment. He was one of the criminal defense lawyers for the rebelling Attica prisoners and attorney for the five Puerto Rican Nationalist prisoners imprisoned in the 1950s who later won an unconditional sentence commutation.

He has defended the Black Panthers and Black prisoners facing the death penalty. Michael successfully defended Chicago Palestinian community activist Muhammad Salah, Palestinian community organizers targeted by the FBI, and Rasmea Odeh of the Arab-American Action Network (AAAN), a former Palestinian political prisoner and torture survivor.





## **Mohammad Tay**

is the chair of the Qana Observatory of Human Rights. Professor of constitutional law, labor law and private administrative law at the Lebanese University, he holds a doctorate of constitutional law from the University of Paris X. He is also a professor of constitutional law at the Islamic University of Lebanon. He is a former member of the Lebanese University Council and the Association of Instructors at the Lebanese University, and a member of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers.



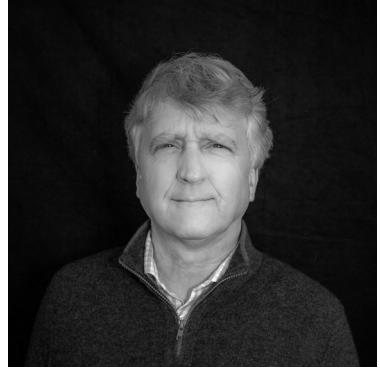
## **Max Boqwana**

has been Senior Partner of Law Firms Boqwana Loon & Connellan and Boqwana Burns, where his areas of practice involved Constitutional and Administrative Law. He was appointed by the Ministry of Justice of South Africa as a Vice-Chair of the National Forum for preparation and drafting of the Legal Practice Act. He is also the Chief Executive Officer of The Thabo Mbeki Foundation. He occupied various leadership positions in the legal profession as the General Secretary and later President of Nadel (National Association of Democratic Lawyers), Chairperson for three terms of the Law Society of South Africa and a Chairperson of the Board of Control of Attorneys Fidelity Fund. He is the current Vice President of SADC Lawyers Association and a Bureau Member of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers. He is a visiting fellow of Rhodes University for Constitutional and International Human Rights Law.



## Marjorie Cohn

is a legal scholar and retired criminal defense attorney. She is professor emerita at Thomas Jefferson School of Law, former president of the National Lawyers Guild, and a member of the Bureau of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers. Professor Cohn debated the legality of the war in Afghanistan at the Oxford Union and has testified at military hearings about the duty to disobey unlawful orders. She writes frequent articles about human rights, U.S. foreign policy, and the contradiction between the two. Professor Cohn does legal and political analysis for local, regional, national and international media outlets. Her books include "The United States and Torture: Interrogation, Incarceration, and Abuse;" "Cowboy Republic: Six Ways the Bush Gang Has Defied the Law;" "Rules of Disengagement: The Politics and Honor of Military Dissent;" and "Drones and Targeted Killing: Legal, Moral and Geopolitical Issues."



## Bruce Nestor

is a criminal defense, immigration and civil rights attorney in Minneapolis, MN. He graduated from the University of Iowa Law School in 1992, with highest honors. Bruce is the past President of the National Lawyers Guild (2000-2003), a national bar association of progressive attorneys, law students, and legal workers, founded in 1937 as the first racially integrated bar association in the United States. He is a past president of the M

innesota Chapter of the NLG, a member of the National Immigration Project of the NLG, and a member of the Minnesota Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers. His community work and political organizing focuses on immigrant rights, criminal justice reform, and racial justice. He has also traveled to Nicaragua, Cuba, Palestine, Arizona, Haiti, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Egypt as a member of human rights delegations.



## **Jaribu Hill**

is a civil and human rights attorney. She is Founder and Executive Director of the Mississippi Workers' Center for Human Rights.

In support of the human rights struggles of workers across the globe, Jaribu has traveled to Asia, Africa, Europe and the Caribbean. Through her organization, Hill has provided legal representation and advocacy for hundreds of workers in the state. Her efforts have led to the adoption of "Zero Tolerance Against Hate" workplace policies. Hill also won an important judgment against the Ku Klux Klan in Pelion, South Carolina and has assisted Mississippi Delta parents in their fight for school equity.

She has written numerous articles and is published in law reviews and journals, including Southern University Law Review, Columbia University Black Law Journal, and Columbia University Law Review. She is the author of Knowledge is Power - A Know Your Rights Manual and co-author of The Black College Guide.



## **Mireille Fanon Mendès-France**

is the founder and co-chair of the Frantz Fanon Foundation. A professor at Paris Descartes University, she served as former expert chair of the United Nations Working Group on People of African Descent. Mireille works on issues of international law and has worked as professor at different levels of the National Education, at UNESCO and as legal adviser at the French National Assembly. Mireille Fanon Mendès-France is the daughter of the world renowned revolutionary, psychiatrist and political author, Frantz Fanon.



## **Osamu Niikura**

is a distinguished international human rights lawyer, Professor Emeritus of Aoyama Gakuin University, Japan and former president of Japan Lawyers International Solidarity Association (JALISA). He served as Secretary General in the International Lawyers Fact-Finding Mission to Okinawa and other USF facilities in Japan in 1996, as well as Japanese Lawyers Missions to the USA for Okinawa in 1996, 1997, 1998, and 1999. He was also presiding Judge at the International People's Tribunal for Afghanistan in 2003. He made a Keynote Remark "Impact and Implication of Global Economic Crisis and Conflicts to Peace and Human Development in Asia-Pacific," at the 5th Conference of Lawyers in Asia and the Pacific, Manila, 2010. He gave a speech on "Elimination of Nuclear Weapons and Weapons of Mass Destruction" at the International Conference to Celebrate the 60th Anniversary of Stockholm Appeal for Peace 1950-2010 in Paris.



## **Maria Lahood**

is the Deputy Legal Director at the Center for Constitutional Rights, a New York-based nonprofit which works with communities under threat to fight for justice and liberation through litigation, advocacy, and strategic communications. Maria joined the Center in 2003, where she has sought accountability for international law violations, and defended Palestinian rights advocates under attack in the United States.



## Jeanne Mirer

is a 1971 graduate of Boston University School of Law. Jeanne is the President of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, the President of the Board of the International Commission for Labor Rights and a member of the Executive Committee of the National Lawyers Guild where she represents the International Committee of the NLG. She has spoken and written on a variety of subjects and has devoted her life and work to the fight against racism and other forms of oppression.

Jeanne is a partner in the law firm of Julien, Mirer, & Singla PLLC., A Working People's Law Center. She specializes in labor, employment, and civil rights law. She has handled numerous class actions and multi-party actions for victims of discrimination and wage theft. Her clients include various worker centers, the New York Taxi Workers Alliance, Amazon Labor Union and other labor organizations.



## Alfred De Zayas

US and Swiss citizen, is a professor of international law at the Geneva School of Diplomacy, former UN Independent Expert on International Order, former senior lawyer with the UN Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. Author of 12 books, including "Building a Just World Order" Clarity Press 2021, with its 25 Principles of International Order.



## Victor Goode

earned a B.A. from Northwestern University in 1970 and a J.D. from Rutgers Law School in 1973. He has practiced civil rights law, including the areas of affirmative action, housing discrimination and criminal justice reform. In 1975 he became the Associate Director of the National Conference of Black Lawyers, and served as its National Director from 1978 to 1982. At NCBL, he founded the Affirmative Action Coordinating Center along with the Center for Constitutional Rights and the National Lawyers Guild, filing amicus briefs in three landmark affirmative action cases.

In 1983 he was one of the founding faculty members of the CUNY School of Law and served for five years as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. He has taught at the City College of New York and as Visiting Clinical Professor at Columbia University Law School. He retired from CUNY in 2020.



## Vijay Prashad

is an Indian historian and journalist. Prashad is the author of thirty books, including *Washington Bullets*, *Red Star Over the Third World*, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* and *The Poorer Nations: A Possible History of the Global South*. He is the Chief Correspondent for Globetrotter and a Columnist for Frontline (India). He is the Chief Editor of LeftWord Books (New Delhi). He has appeared in two films – *Shadow World* (2016) and *Two Meetings* (2017).





## **Charisse Burden-Stelly**

is an Associate Professor of African American Studies at Wayne State University. A scholar of critical Black studies, political theory, and intellectual history, she is the co-author, with Gerald Horne, of *W.E.B. Du Bois: A Life in American History*. Burden-Stelly's book, *Black Scare/Red Scare*, will be published with University of Chicago Press in 2023. She is also the co-editor of two edited collections: *Organize, Fight, Win: Black Communist Women's Political Writings* with Jodi Dean and *Reproducing Domination: On the Caribbean Postcolonial State* with Percy C. Hintzen and Aaron Kamugisha. She is currently working on a book project, under contract with University of California Press, titled *Mutual Comradeship: The Ethical Practice of Radical Blackness Against State Repression*. Dr. Burden-Stelly has presented more than fifty invited talks, public lectures, and conference papers and has been the recipient of numerous grants, fellowships, and travel awards.

# WE CHARGE IMPERIALISM

## Position Paper & Working Framework

By: Helyeh Doutaghi, Corinna Mullin, Nina Farnia

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Since the end of the Cold War, the world has witnessed an unprecedented proliferation of sanctions regimes, particularly by the United Nations Security Council, the European Union, and the United States.<sup>1</sup> This is due in part to the collapse of the Soviet Union, which ended the deadlock between superpowers at the Security Council.<sup>2</sup> Over the past few decades, sanctions were slowly reconfigured from war time weapons into peacetime policy instruments. In order for this effort to materialize, policymakers, legal scholars, and government officials campaigned to legitimate sanctions as a lawful weapon to punish nations who refuse to submit to the United States and Europe.

A rich body of literature investigates the use of multilateral coercive measures by the Security Council, and the bilateral and unilateral measures exercised by regional and state actors.<sup>3</sup> This body of literature can generally be divided into two categories, 'mainstream' and 'critical' approaches, both of which are inadequate to capture the violence and true political-economic function of sanctions.

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<sup>1</sup> Elliott, Kimberly Ann. "Trends in economic sanctions policy: challenges to conventional wisdom." *International Sanctions*. Routledge, 2005. 21-32. Pg. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Tzanakopoulos, Antonios. "We Who are Not as Others: Sanctions and (Global) Security Governance." (2020). Pg. 6-7.

<sup>3</sup> Carter, Barry E., and Ryan M. Farha. "Overview and operation of US financial sanctions, including the example of Iran." *Geo. J. Int'l L.* 44 (2012): 903.

Menkes, Marcin J. "The Legality of US Investment Sanctions against Iran before the ICJ: A Watershed Moment for the Essential Security and Necessity Exceptions." *Canadian Yearbook of International Law/Annuaire canadien de droit international* 56 (2019): 328-364.

**The International People’s Tribunal on U.S. Imperialism: Sanctions, Blockades, and Economic Coercive Measures** approaches economic coercive measures as inherently violent, designed to maintain economic inequality, continue the theft of wealth from the Global South, and preserve racial hierarchy in the international system. Such measures are structurally incapable of reform, and cannot incorporate humanitarian concerns. The Tribunal is a collective effort to build systems of accountability—rooted in global cross-movement solidarity—both within and outside of the law, to challenge the violence of imperialism through sanctions. We interrogate sanctions not from the perspective of those who enforce them, but from the perspective of those most impacted by them, namely the peoples of Asia, Africa, and South America.

*Our broad position is that economic sanctions constitute, and are constituted by, structures of imperialism designed to maintain the neocolonial capitalist order through Global South wealth transfer, income deflation, underdevelopment, and the massive empowerment of western monopolies.*<sup>4</sup> We utilize this approach to disturb and reject the conventional wisdom, reinforced through hegemonic knowledge production, that characterizes economic sanctions, especially those in their ‘smart’ or ‘individual’ forms, as ‘peaceful alternatives to war.’<sup>5</sup> We unsettle this conceptualization by deconstructing the structures that economic sanctions are built upon and through which economic sanctions reproduce themselves.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> In making this argument, we draw on the work of critical scholars such as Eva Nanopoulos, who has conceptualized sanctions regime ‘as a form of policing, [...] as tools implicated in the fabrication and management of the capitalist order in its present post-colonial and neoliberal form. Nanopoulos, Eva, *The Juridification of Individual Sanctions and the Politics of EU Law*. Hart Publishing. 2020. Pg. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Our analysis of coercive economic measures relies on the Third World Approaches to International Law (TWAIL) scholarship, including Marxian and postcolonial critiques of law, rooted in the assertion that colonialism and imperialism are central to the foundation and formulation of international law. Anghie, Antony, and Bhupinder S. Chimni. “Third World Approaches to International Law and Individual Responsibility in Internal Conflicts.” *Chinese J. int’l L.* 2 (2003): 77. Pg. 84.

<sup>6</sup> Lewis, Thea. *The peaceful, deadly violence of embargo: denaturalizing hegemonic discourses in international relations theory*. Diss. 2019. Pg. 83.

Sanctions are a means of disciplining and controlling Global South sovereignty and blocking the emergence of a multipolar world order. In analyzing sanctions, it is important to understand where, how and by whom they are utilized. Thus, an analysis of the political economy of sanctions and the structural, spatial, temporal, and racial configuration of the actors that deploy these measures is necessary.

The three main bodies acting as enforcing institutional mechanisms of economic sanctions include the United States, United Nations Security Council, and the European Union. We pay special attention to the structural, spatial, and racial significance of each enforcing body and the interconnections between them in order to understand the role of these powerful institutions in sustaining relations of domination and exploitation. *We have concluded that sanctions regimes require the continuous development of new legal mechanisms, techniques, and technologies to manufacture international consent for their imposition. Thus, an inquiry into and an interrogation of these legal mechanisms is a necessary step toward ultimately dismantling sanctions regimes.*

Furthermore, in unearthing the legal and historical processes that led to the current construction of sanctions as peaceful policy instruments, we argue that while the legal concept of war is formulated to acknowledge military intervention and territorial control, it remains blind to economic intervention.<sup>7</sup> It is therefore necessary to unsettle the normalized dichotomy of peace and war to understand the ways in which ‘war’ as it is currently deployed by scholars and analysts fails to account for certain forms of violence, including the violence of capitalism and imperialism, particularly through legal regimes of sanctions against the Global South.

By investigating sanctions through the lens of capitalism and imperialism, and in considering their significance to our current conceptualizations of war and peace, we join those who reject the dominant characterization of sanctions as ‘peaceful’ or ‘non-violent’ measures that are ‘alternatives to war’.

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<sup>7</sup> Id. at 85. See also, Gordon, Todd. *Imperialist Canada*. Arbeiter Ring Pub., 2010.

However, we move beyond the understanding of sanctions as a form of warfare merely because of their ‘war-like’ humanitarian consequences, as the critical scholars tend to suggest.<sup>8</sup> To identify economic sanctions as ‘war’ because they, too, kill people, is to completely miss the broader context through which economic sanctions exist and operate.

In making this argument, we do not overlook the significance of the humanitarian costs of economic sanctions but identify them as epiphenomenal to the central question, which is the uneven development of capitalism. This uneven development fortifies a small number of advanced capitalist states (the imperialist core), by virtue of their power over the global economy,<sup>9</sup> to enforce economic coercive measures for the purpose of material exploitation, political subordination, and cultural domination of the Global South and to maintain the current capitalist order. We therefore argue that we cannot understand or contextualize economic sanctions outside of imperialism in international law or in isolation from the developments of capitalism in the global legal order.

Ultimately, we contend that placing ‘war’ as our frame of reference for conceptualizing violence, albeit in an attempt to show that economic sanctions can be as destructive as military aggressions, is instructive but incomplete. We should not neglect the fact that economic sanctions are in fact distinct, in their form, nature, and structure from military interventions and can therefore inflict and embody different forms of violence from those deployed in armed conflicts. This distinction is important, and it does not render economic sanctions as ‘peaceful alternatives’ to military force. Richard Nephew, a research scholar and policy analyst who has played an important role in designing and implementing United States sanctions against Iran in recent years, argues: ‘just because the damage wrought by sanctions may be less visible (at least with some sanctions regimes), it need not be less destructive, particularly for economically vulnerable populations that may be affected.’<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Jasper, Daniel. “Civil Society Groups Urge Immediate Sanctions Relief and Legal Reform.” *LIFT SANCTIONS, SAVE LIVES*, 23 Apr. 2020, [www.liftsanctionssavelives.org/pressrelease42320.html](http://www.liftsanctionssavelives.org/pressrelease42320.html).

<sup>9</sup> Miéville, China. “Between equal rights: a Marxist theory of international law.” *Historical Materialism Book Series*, Leiden: Brill (2005). Pg. 228

<sup>10</sup> Nephew, Richard. *The art of sanctions: A view from the field*. Columbia University Press, 2017. Pg. 10-11

This highlights the need to move beyond the conventional narratives that identify victims within the selective frames of war. It is only by delving beneath this surface and applying an anti-imperialist framework that we can fully grasp and therefore resist the oppressive, exploitative, and destructive nature of economic sanctions. The organizers have chosen the “People’s Tribunal” as the organizing framework as it is a model that has long roots in anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist organizing. People’s Tribunals capture the ethos of self-determination and internationalism that was expressed through twentieth century anti-colonial struggles and was institutionalized in the 1966 Tricontinental Conference in Cuba. They bring together movement lawyers and organizers from around the world and are designed by and accountable to the social movements and communities in which they are rooted. Operating outside of the logics and institutions of capitalist and imperialist law, People’s Tribunals make decisions that may not be binding and do not have the force of law, but their achievements in a political and discursive register inspire and provide the tools necessary for present and future organizing. People’s Tribunals allow the oppressed to judge the powerful, defining the content as well as the scope of the procedures, which reverses the norm of the powerful creating and implementing the law.

There is a long tradition of radical organizers using the law to put capitalism and imperialism on trial. Organized by the Civil Rights Congress, and supported by the Communist Party as well as a host of Black leftist luminaries, including W. E. B. Du Bois, Claudia Jones, and Paul Robeson, *We Charge Genocide: The Historic Petition to the United Nations for Relief of a Crime of the United States against the Negro People*, indicted the political-economic system of capitalism and white supremacy for inflicting numerous forms of structural and physical violence on Black people in the U.S. as well as drawing parallels to U.S. imperialist violence abroad. The Russell Tribunal was set up in 1966 to judge U.S. military intervention and war crimes in Vietnam.

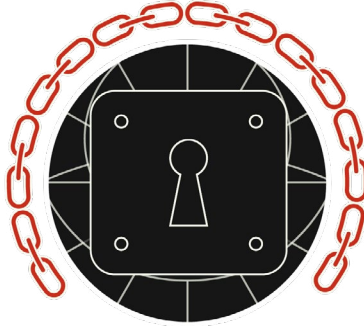


The same format reemerged in later Russell Tribunals dealing with the U.S.-backed Brazilian and Argentinian military dictatorships (1964 and 1976, respectively), the U.S.-backed coup in Chile (1973), and the U.S.-European interventions against Iraq (1990, 2003). The 2016 International Tribunal for Democracy in Brazil critically examined the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff and the role of the U.S. government. Organized in Brussels by both Philippine and international groups, the 2018 International People's Tribunal on the Philippines exposed and condemned the multiple forms of state violence visited on the people of the Philippines since Rodrigo Duterte became president in 2016. And finally, the U.S. government was put directly on trial by a pair of innovative People's Tribunals, including the 2007 International Tribunal on Katrina and Rita and the 2018 International Tribunal on U.S. Colonial Crimes Against Puerto Rico.

The International People's Tribunal on U.S. Imperialism: Sanctions, Blockades, and Economic Coercive Measures draws from and contributes to this radical tradition of using international law against the very hierarchies and systems of oppression it was designed to uphold.

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**INTERNATIONAL  
PEOPLE'S TRIBUNAL ON  
U.S. IMPERIALISM**

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