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## UN experts denounce US ship seizures near Venezuela as 'maritime blockade' and violation of international law

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UN experts on Wednesday **declared** that the partial US maritime blockade on Venezuela is violating fundamental rules of international law. The US has been attempting to seize sanctioned vessels headed to or from the South American country since mid-December.

On December 10, the US **seized** an oil tanker off the coast of Venezuela after President Donald

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into, and out of, Venezuela.” This followed the deployment of a large military force in the Caribbean near Venezuela.

The UN experts said, “There is no right to enforce unilateral sanctions through an armed blockade.” A blockade is a prohibited use of military force against another country under **Article 2(4) of the UN Charter**. “It is such a serious use of force that it is also expressly recognised as illegal armed aggression under the General Assembly’s 1974 Definition of Aggression,” the experts said.

The experts continued: “The illegal use of force, and threats to use further force at sea and on land, gravely endanger the human right to life and other rights in Venezuela and the region.”

The issuance of these sanctions follows the US designation of the Venezuelan president and government figures as part of an alleged “foreign terrorist organization” known as Cartel de los Soles—despite the apparent lack of evidence for the existence of such a cartel. The blockade also follows the US Navy’s **strikes** on vessels suspected of trafficking drugs into the US, resulting in the deaths of 104 individuals. The UN has counted 28 such attacks on civilian vessels since early September.

The experts argued, “These killings amount to violations of the right to life. They must be investigated and those responsible held accountable. Meanwhile, the US Congress should intervene to prevent further attacks and lift the blockade.”

Urging States to prevent the blockades through methods such as diplomatic protest, General Assembly resolutions, and peaceful counter-measures, UN experts also stated, “Collective action by States is essential to uphold international law. Respect for the rule of law, sovereignty, non-use of force, non-intervention and the peaceful settlement of disputes are essential to preserving peace and stability worldwide.”

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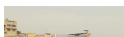
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