

# Iran, sanctions, and the COVID-19 crisis

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## **ABSTRACT**

With an over 80 million population, Iran is the second-largest country in the Middle East. The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has spread over all 31 provinces of Iran, leading to the most cases and death among the Eastern Mediterranean countries. At the same time, Iran is under the United States political and economic sanctions that compromised Iran's health system. Although medicines and basic medical equipment exempted from the economic sanctions, direct and indirect effects of sanctions have restricted Iran's banking system, and consequently has led to a wide range of limitation on trade, manufacturing sector, insurance and ventures. All these circumstances have meant that Iran is restricted to provide the essential basic medical equipment for diagnosis, treatment and prevention of the COVID-19. Although sanctions are not the sole reason for this high rate of mortality and morbidity in a short time period, the chronic and long-term effects of sanctions may be more tangible than their acute impact. In conclusion, providing health services is one of the major problems of Iran's health system during this pandemic that potentially influence on morbidity and mortality of the COVID-19. Iran needs to be free from sanctions for battling against this crisis.

## **KEY MESSAGES**

Iran is one of the countries that significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. ☐ Iran is under political and economic sanctions that consequently influence on their health system during the COVID-19 crisis. ☐ The chronic and long-term effects of sanctions may be more tangible than their acute impact.