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## US blockade of Cuba killing children – UN commissioner

The sanctions imposed on the island nation by Washington are incompatible with international human rights law, according to Volker Turk

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UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk. © Krishan Kariyawasam / NurPhoto via Getty Images

Children in Cuba are dying amid acute shortages of essential medical supplies caused by US-imposed economic sanctions, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk has said.

The island nation has endured daily blackouts and severe fuel deficits in recent months after Venezuela, once Havana's main oil supplier, stopped crude shipments under pressure from the US in early 2026. This was preceded by the abduction of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro by American commandos in January.

US President Donald Trump has since repeatedly stated that he intends to *"take" Cuba "one way or another."*

Turk described the plight of ordinary Cubans as *"unacceptable,"* warning that *"children are dying because doctors lack access to essential medical supplies and medicines,"* as quoted in a

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statement issued on Monday. According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), infant mortality in Cuba has doubled to 9.9 per 1,000 births, with childhood cancer survival rates down from 85% to 65% since the US imposed a fuel blockade on the Caribbean country.

*“Critical medical services such as oncology, dialysis, and maternal health are under severe strain,” with essential medicines in “critical short supply,” the report warned.*



International humanitarian efforts to alleviate the situation are being hampered by US extraterritorial sanctions, with private companies refusing to deliver such shipments for fear of running afoul of them, OHCHR stated.

*“Such severe sanctions packages that target entire sectors of an economy and produce broad, indiscriminate and harsh effects on populations are incompatible with basic principles of international human rights law,” Turk charged.*

Last month, Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla accused the US of meting out *“collective punishment”* in that Cubans are being subjected to conditions *“that violate their human rights and cause pain, suffering, and anguish.”*

Axios, citing several anonymous US officials, reported in late May that the White House was looking to further ramp up the pressure on Cuba in the hope that worsening economic conditions would eventually lead to regime change.

Russia, China, Mexico, and several other countries have been supplying Cuba with humanitarian aid. Moscow sent a shipment of around 700,000 barrels of crude oil in late March.

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