

US Should Stop Sanctions Against Iran Amidst Coronavirus Pandemic

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Washington is not willing to delay its plans to eternalize its hegemonic power, even in the face of an unprecedented global crisis. Currently, one of the main American targets is Iran, which, in the midst of the devastating crisis of COVID-19, will now have to face the fury of the US, which do not intend to retreat in the imposition of international sanctions against Tehran.

The Persian country is one of the most affected by the catastrophe. With more than 2,700 dead, Iran is trying to survive the pandemic. Despite the huge number of victims, the country is already beginning to show signs of stability. President Hassan Rouhani assured the world that the country has a strong health system and is able to cope with the rapid progression of the disease. State health insurance would cover 90% of coronavirus-related patient costs, including donations and low-interest loans to those affected by COVID-19. Altogether, 20% of the national budget is being directed towards controlling the pandemic.

However, this priority given to fighting the pandemic is not universal, with some countries more concerned with continuing their geopolitical ambitions to the detriment of human well-being. The United States has repeatedly announced that international sanctions against Iran will not end, regardless of the state of crisis caused by the global pandemic. In the past three months, US sanctions against Iran's oil and industry have increased exponentially, due to escalating tensions between the two countries. US State Secretary Mike Pompeo has publicly stated that Washington intends to recover global restrictions on Tehran because of the alleged "violation of its nuclear commitments".

Previously, American sanctions had been imposed in 2018, following the unilateral withdrawal of the US from the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran. Reasonably claiming that Tehran had violated the terms of the agreement, Washington initiated a series of coercive measures that, over the past few two years, cost Iran about \$200 billion, according to official Tehran data, directly damaging the country's economy and weakening strategic sectors.

In a situation of humanitarian catastrophe, secondary tensions are expected to be minimized in favor of international cooperation against a common problem. Taking into account that the US has an even greater number of cases than Iran and that everything indicates that it will surpass the number of deaths, it would be reasonable that the Trump administration was less concerned with punishing another country and more interested in acting against the virus, be it helping other countries or just increasing their efforts to control internal chaos. However, the White House and the Pentagon do the exactly opposite.

Sanctions against Iran not only continued but increased, with the US on March 26 adding a list of 5 organizations and 15 individual people to the list of those sanctioned for “collaboration with Iran”. Clearly, the United States is interested in increasing and aggravating the crisis, not in reducing it.

Despite this, Iran has shown itself to be increasingly strong. Foreign sanctions, although cruel to the country’s economy, have forced Iran to develop previously weaker sectors, strengthening the country as a whole. The Iranian supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, spoke in this regard, stating that “Iran has benefited from US sanctions. This made us self-sufficient in all areas”. Looking at it comparatively, the US, being the largest economy in the world, demonstrates a much greater strategic fragility, since the pandemic grows exponentially in its territory, even under conditions much more economically favorable than Iran.

Indeed, economic sanctions play a unique strategic role on the international scenario: generating instability and damaging the lives of the people affected by the measures. However, this seems to be a weak and inefficient formula when applied to strong and organically structured nations, with millennia of tradition and nurtured by great popular support for their governments, as is the case with the Islamic Republic of Iran. As Jeffrey Sachs, professor of sustainable development at Columbia University, wrote to [Chinese media](#):

“The US should immediately suspend all economic sanctions on countries that are struggling to deal with the disease (...) US economic sanctions have caused millions of people to suffer, and soon they could kill tens of thousands, if not far more. Exacerbating civilians’ suffering to try to change their government’s conduct is ethically wrong and prohibited by international law. Pursuing this strategy during the worst health crisis the world has faced in modern times demonstrates reckless disregard for human life and contempt for the norms of civilized behavior. ”

Finally, we must wait to see what will be the next steps of the US in its desperate search for the preservation of the global hegemony. If the American government is more interested in taking care of its own people and fighting the virus than punishing foreign nations, the most correct measure is an immediate end to sanctions.

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