

The siege of Iran: Giuliani boasts that sanctions are ‘working’

written by Gary Wilson
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A worker walks past the Mahshahr petrochemical complex in Iran's Khuzestan province, part of the nationalized energy sector targeted by U.S. sanctions designed to choke Iran's economy.

On Jan. 11, at a high-priced gala in a carpeted ballroom, [Rudy Giuliani](#) let the mask slip. Speaking to a group of well-funded exiles, the former New York mayor and longtime fixer for the powerful didn't talk about "human rights" or "democracy." He talked about hunger.

"The sanctions are working," Giuliani gloated. "The currency is going to nothing. We see signs of young men and women saying, 'Give me some food.' These are the kinds of conditions that lead to successful revolution."

He wasn't expressing horror at the sight of starving youth. He was bragging about it. For the billionaire class and the generals in Washington, a hungry child in Tehran is not a tragedy; it is a metric of success. This is the reality of U.S. sanctions. They are not a "peaceful alternative" to war. They are war conducted without uniforms or front lines — a calculated, systematic attempt to break a working-class population until it submits to a harsher, imperialist-backed order.

Hunger as policy

The people Giuliani addressed are a collection of former royalist exiles being groomed by the Pentagon and Wall Street to oversee the recolonization of Iran. Long promoted as a replacement government, these figures represent a bridge for foreign corporations to return to the oil fields and banks they once owned.

They aren't looking to free the Iranian people; they are looking to hand Iran's oil and gas back to the same Western billionaires and bankers who used to treat the country as their private gas station.

For more than 40 years, the U.S. military and financial centers have surrounded

Iran. They use sanctions when a direct invasion is too risky and a permanent occupation too unstable. This allows the centers of power in Washington and Wall Street to impose their will without the political cost of a body count of their own soldiers. Instead, they let the bodies pile up in the hospitals and marketplaces of the target nation.

Since the 1979 Revolution, every U.S. administration — regardless of party — has tightened the noose. The excuses change like the weather: Sometimes it is nuclear technology, other times it is “terrorism” or “regional stability.” But the underlying demand remains fixed: Iran must surrender control of its oil, its banks, and its future.

Iran’s real “crime” was the 1979 Revolution itself. That year, the people overthrew a U.S.-installed dictator, the Shah, who had been placed on the throne by a CIA-led coup in 1953 to ensure that Iranian oil enriched foreign corporations rather than the Iranian people. By reclaiming their resources, Iran did the one thing the imperialist system cannot tolerate: It existed outside of their control.

What independence made possible

What followed the revolution was a demonstration of what independence makes possible. Despite the hostility, the new order reduced poverty and expanded health care into rural areas that the Shah had treated as mere extraction zones. Literacy rates climbed as education became a right, not a privilege for the elite. Life expectancy rose. Electricity and clean water reached millions for the first time.

These advances did not erase class contradictions or eliminate struggle inside Iran. But they were real, and they mattered. They showed that an oppressed nation, even developing unevenly under constant imperialist pressure, could use its own resources to raise living standards without submitting to foreign control.

These gains showed that an oppressed nation could develop its own life, even under constraint, without taking orders from the World Bank or the Pentagon. And that is exactly why those gains had to be destroyed.

Sanctions strike at the kitchen table

Sanctions are designed to strike at the kitchen table. This is not a side effect. It is written into sanctions design.

When the U.S. Treasury Department blocks a bank, it isn't "pressuring a regime." It is devaluing the paycheck of a factory worker in Isfahan. It is making sure a mother in Shiraz cannot find specialized medicine for her child. It is ensuring that spare parts for power plants don't arrive, so the lights go out in working-class neighborhoods.

This suffering is the intended output of the system. In the 1970s, the Nixon administration explicitly set out to "make the economy scream" in Chile to topple the Salvador Allende government that dared to nationalize its copper mines. In the 1990s, U.S.-led sanctions destroyed the industrial base of Iraq, leading to the deaths of half a million children. When asked if that price was worth it, then-Secretary of State Madeleine Albright didn't flinch. She said it was.

Today, the same script is being played out. Since late December, the collapse of the rial and the rising cost of bread have driven people into the streets of Tehran and beyond. Western media outlets, acting as the public relations arm of the State Department, rushed to frame these as "freedom protests." They ignore the fact that the "food riots" they celebrate are the direct result of the economic blockade they support.

The grievances are real, but they are being selectively amplified and repackaged to divert attention from the imperialist siege itself.

Washington creates the misery, and then points to that misery as proof that the Iranian people need “saving” by the very people who are starving them.

But the goal is not to “save” anyone. The goal is submission. When a country is placed under siege, the margins for survival shrink. The government is forced to make impossible choices: Cut subsidies for the poor or watch the currency evaporate. This is how the imperialist system weaponizes the internal life of a nation, forcing workers to choose between the slow death of a blockade or the sudden death of a puppet government that will hand the country back to the oil companies.

Despite this, the siege has not produced the surrender Washington expects. Instead, it has forced a different kind of growth. Iran has been forced to build its own refineries, its own medicines, and its own industrial base because it had no other choice. It has also found allies in the same boat — forging ties with Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua. These are not ordinary trade deals; they are acts of mutual survival among nations that refuse to be colonies.

Sanctions are a globalized form of class war. The same forces that use the dollar to strangle Iran are the ones that use the police to break strikes at home, allow landlords to hike rents until families are on the street, and shut down hospitals in our own neighborhoods.

The struggle of the Iranian worker to afford bread and the struggle of the worker in the United States to afford rent are the same struggle. Both are being squeezed by a system that prioritizes the expansion of profit over the maintenance of life. Breaking the siege on Iran is not just a matter of “foreign policy.” It is an essential step in dismantling a system that enforces profit through sanctions abroad and repression at home.

