

Why No Economic Sanctions against the US?

A Long and Bloody Record of "Crimes against Peace".

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President Obama presents former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright with a Presidential Medal of Freedom, May 29, 2012, despite her role in and public defense of the war crimes of the Clinton administration.

July 1 marked the start of a new round of sanctions designed to destroy the economy of Iran, create widespread suffering among the Iranian people, and thereby effect regime change in that country. The ostensible reason for the sanctions is that Iran has a nuclear program, which Washington and its allies allege is leading to the development of nuclear weapons. The Iranian government has denied any such intention, stating that its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes.

Iran is far from the first country to suffer from a cutoff or sharp reduction in trade due to sanctions. Over the past several decades, the U.S.—sometimes through the United Nations Security Council, sometimes in coordination with its imperialist allies, sometimes on its own—has imposed sanctions, embargoes and blockades on dozens of countries. Some of the sanctions regimes have lasted for decades, in the case of Cuba a half-century.

The justifications for imposing sanctions have included alleged human rights violations, lack of democracy, military aggression in violation of international law, and engaging in terrorist acts. But a giant asterisk must be attached here, with a notation reading: “Not applicable to the United States, its imperialist allies, surrogates and puppets.”

At Washington’s prompting, the UNSC imposed a blockade on Iraq in 1990. The blockade, which was enforced by the U.S. Navy, lasted 13 years and took over a million Iraqi lives, half of them children under the age of five years. The pretext for the most stringent sanctions regime in modern history was Iraq’s invasion and occupation of Kuwait in August 1990, after a long dispute between the two states. Iraq charged that Kuwait, which it had long claimed as part of its national territory, was stealing Iraqi oil and undermining its economy.

After Iraq was driven out of Kuwait by a six-week U.S.-led bombing campaign that destroyed most of the country’s civilian infrastructure, the sanctions were kept in place. A new pretext was now needed and quickly found: Iraq’s alleged “weapons of mass destruction.”

Why are there no sanctions against the U.S.? Why are no U.S. leaders—past or present—currently occupying prison cells or awaiting trial?

Top U.S. officials were well aware of the devastating impact on the Iraqi population. When

asked on CBS's "60 Minutes" in May 1996, whether the deaths of a half-million Iraq children due to the sanctions were "worth the price," U.S. ambassador to the U.N. Madeleine Albright replied, "we think the price is worth it." Albright's remarks actually constituted a confession to war crimes.

In 1998, President Bill Clinton declared that "some want to see the sanctions ended, I am not one of them," and signed the "Iraq Liberation Act," declaring the official policy of the U.S. to be what it had actually been all along: regime change in Iraq. The new justification was a supposed concern for "human rights."

Five years later, having not achieved its goal by other means, the U.S. invaded and occupied Iraq under the resurrected claims of Iraqi "weapons of mass destruction." It was not some "intelligence failure," as later claimed by neo-con and liberal imperialists alike.

The U.S. occupation cost a million more Iraqi lives and thousands of U.S. lives. At least 4.5 million Iraqis were displaced and Iraqi society torn apart. Torture was commonplace for the tens of thousands of Iraqis imprisoned. Taken together, the Twenty Years War the U.S. waged on Iraq killed, wounded or forced into exile more than one-third of Iraq's population. All of this death and destruction in a war justified on fabricated pretenses, also known as lies.

Then, there is the on-going U.S. war and occupation in Afghanistan, and the drone missile strikes killing people every day in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia. In the 1990s, there was the bombing and blockade of the former Yugoslavia as well as Iraq, and in the 1980s the invasions and interventions in Central America and the Caribbean. And before that came Vietnam, Chile, Korea, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Congo, Iran, Guatemala, etc., etc.—a long and bloody history. Where the U.S. succeeded in overthrowing revolutionary or progressive governments, they were replaced with right-wing, police-state dictatorships.

None of the above countries threatened or could threaten the United States, meaning that all of those wars and interventions were the most serious violations of international law—crimes against peace.

Washington has sent hundreds of billions of dollars and vast amounts of military aid making possible Israel's ethnic cleansing of Palestine. The U.S. has propped up and protected the most repressive and anti-democratic regimes in the world, like Saudi Arabia and the other hereditary monarchies in the Middle East.

And, of course, the U.S., which possesses thousands of nuclear warheads, is the only country that has actually used those weapons, destroying the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and killing hundreds of thousands of Japanese civilians near the end of World War II.

So why are there no sanctions against the U.S.? Why are no U.S. leaders—past or present—currently occupying prison cells or awaiting trial?

The answer is that the international "justice" system operates much like the domestic one. The rich administer punishment on the poor. The notion of "equal justice before the law" is as mythical internationally as it is domestically. Who ends up in prison or under sanctions has nothing to do with real justice and everything to do with real power.

The Obama administration and congressional leaders are today trying to win popular

support for sanctions and other forms of intervention in Iran and Syria by presenting themselves as concerned about “human rights” and “democracy.

No one should be fooled.

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