

More pressure on Iran as US imposes new sanctions

Sat, 2019-11-02 00:55

WASHINGTON: The US said on Thursday it had imposed sanctions on the Iranian construction sector and trade in four materials used in its military or nuclear programs, even as it waived sanctions to let foreign firms continue nonproliferation work in Iran.

The decisions announced by the US State Department reflect an effort to increase pressure on Iran by putting wider swaths of its economy under sanctions, while leaving a door open to diplomacy by allowing work to proceed at Iranian nuclear facilities that makes it harder for Iran to develop a nuclear bomb.

US President Donald Trump's administration last year pulled out of the 2015 nuclear deal in which Iran agreed to limit its nuclear program in return for the lifting of sanctions that crippled its economy.

The administration has since restored and tightened US sanctions to try to force Iran to negotiate a broader deal that would also limit its ballistic missile program and regional activities.

The State Department said Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had determined Iran's construction sector was controlled directly or indirectly by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), which Washington regards as a foreign terrorist organization.

As a result, the sale of raw and semi-finished metals, graphite, coal, and software for integrating industrial purposes will be sanctionable if the materials are to be used in Iran's construction sector, the department said in a fact sheet.

In a second determination, Pompeo identified four "strategic materials" as being used in connection with nuclear, military, or ballistic missile programs, making trade in them subject to sanctions.

The fact sheet identified the materials as: "Stainless steel 304L tubes; MN40 manganese brazing foil; MN70 manganese brazing foil; and stainless steel CrNi60WTi ESR + VAR (chromium, nickel, 60 percent tungsten, titanium, electro-slag remelting, vacuum arc remelting)."

In a separate statement, State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus said the determinations gave Washington the ability "to prevent Iran from acquiring strategic materials for the IRGC, its construction sector, and its proliferation programs."

Waiver renewal

Reuters reported on Wednesday that the US planned to allow Russian, Chinese

and European companies to continue work at Iranian nuclear facilities to make it harder for Iran to develop a nuclear weapon.

The Trump administration would let the work go forward by issuing waivers to sanctions that bar non-US firms from dealing with the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI).

A source familiar with the matter said on Thursday that the State Department had indeed renewed the waivers for 90 days.

The work to continue includes redesigning Iran's heavy water Arak research reactor to render it unable to make bomb-grade plutonium under normal operation and modification of centrifuges at Iran's Fordow fuel enrichment plant, the source said.

The waivers also cover support for Iran's existing nuclear reactor at Bushehr, the provision of enriched uranium for the Tehran Research Reactor and the transfer of spent and scrap nuclear fuel out of Iran, the source added.

Chinese state-owned China National Nuclear Corp. has done non-proliferation work at Arak, and Russia's Rosatom has done it at Fordow as well as provided uranium fuel to Iran.

Responding to Reuters' story that the waivers were to be renewed, a China National Nuclear Corp. spokesman said by email that it was "starting to cooperate with the Iranian side under guidance from Beijing on seeking a positive solution to the Iran nuclear problem." It did not give further details.

When Trump abandoned the 2015 nuclear deal last year, he began a "maximum pressure" campaign designed to force Iran to return to the negotiating table.

Iran has demanded the US first resume complying with the 2015 deal.

France has sought to bring the two into talks but has so far failed, suggesting neither is willing to abandon core elements of policy – the US belief that pressure will bring Iran to its knees, and Iran's refusal to capitulate to US duress.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Iran](#)

[iran sanctions](#)

Saudi Arabia remains South Korea's top oil supplier after Iran sanctions
US will enforce Iran sanctions: Pompeo

[Iraqis defy protest curbs after cleric calls for 'end to chaos'](#)

Author:

Sat, 2019-11-02 00:43

BAGDHDad: Iraqis have defied a crackdown to stage their biggest protests yet after the country's leading Shiite cleric warned the government against the use of violence to curb demonstrations.

The number of protesters on the streets of Baghdad and Iraq's southern provinces more than doubled in the past 24 hours, security officials and eyewitnesses told Arab News.

On Wednesday two people died in clashes between security forces and protesters who ignored a curfew in the capital.

Almost 150 demonstrators have been killed and another 7,000 injured since Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi and his allies led a brutal crackdown on the demonstrations.

Protests were halted for two weeks, but resumed on Friday after the government promised live ammunition would not be used against demonstrators.

Public anger at corruption, unemployment and lack of basic daily services in the country have left Abdul Mahdi's political future in limbo. Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani, leader of the world's Shiite community and Iraq's most influential cleric, urged the Iraqi government and its allies not to involve troops in dealing with protesters.

In an open letter read by his representative Sayyed Ahmed Al-Safi during Friday prayers, Al-Sistani said: "The blood that has flowed over the past few weeks is precious to us all. It is necessary to work to prevent further bloodshed and never allow the country to slide into internal fighting, chaos and devastation.

"The Marjiya (Al-Sistani) urges the concerned authorities not to involve any combat forces in dealing with demonstrators and sit-ins for fear of being drawn into further violence."

The cleric also sent "a powerful and clear message" to Iraq's regional and international allies, and to Iran's supreme religious leader, Ali Khamenei, who called for an end to demonstrations in Iraq and Lebanon on Wednesday.

"Respecting the will of the Iraqis to determine their political and administrative system of their country by holding a referendum on the constitution and the periodic elections for the Parliament – this is the principle that the religious authority has committed to since the change of (Saddam's regime).

"Today it also affirms that reform, although inevitable, is the choice of the Iraqi people," Al-Sistani's letter read.

"No person, group, or regional or international party has the right to confiscate the will of Iraqis and impose their opinion on them," it added.

In Baghdad, hundreds of families joined protesters in Tahrir Square on Friday, while others shared their food with demonstrators on the sidewalks.

Iraqi intelligence officials told Arab News that the number of protesters grew after Friday sermons with women and the elderly making up the bulk of the newcomers, especially in the capital.

"These demonstrations will not end soon and it is very difficult for the government to use force to end them anymore," a senior intelligence official said.

"No sane person can ignore these people, especially after Al-Sistani's comments," he added.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Iraq protests](#)

Iraqi Kurds boycott Turkish goods after Syria assault
Representatives of top Shiite cleric Al-Sistani urge followers to join protests in Iraq

[A counselling service tackles scourge of harassment in Egypt](#)

Fri, 2019-11-01 22:58

CAIRO: Abuse of women and children is a topic that has long been silenced or tabooed in many cultures worldwide, including in the Middle East.

Social entrepreneur Laila Risgallah has made it her life's work to try to stem the blight of abuse in her native country Egypt.

Violence against women is rampant in the most populous Arab country. A 2013 UN study revealed that 99.3 percent of Egyptian women had experienced harassment in some form.

About a decade ago, Risgallah founded Not Guilty, an education and counselling service with a mission to stop the abuse and bullying of children and adolescents.

“Violence against females is based on pervasive and deep-seated beliefs and behaviors, making it difficult to root out with legal penalties or superficial changes in society,” she said.

According to research by the Population Council, nearly two-thirds of Egyptian men surveyed admitted to harassing women, and nearly 80 percent of Egyptian males aged 15–29 said a woman who is harassed “deserves it.”

Just over 70 percent of women in the same survey said “immodestly dressed” women deserve being abused.

“Child sexual abuse occurs at all socioeconomic levels, across all ethnic and cultural lines, within all religions and at all levels of education,” said Risgallah. “By making sure that we’re educated and informed on this issue, we can prevent children from going through this heinous experience.”

Through training held by Not Guilty in schools, she discovered that up to 15 percent of children have been exposed to abuse.

But as little as 10 percent of overall abuse cases are reported due to the shame, guilt and stigma associated with reporting, Risgallah said.

With the issue of abuse being so complex and endemic in society, she believes that ending harassment will not be achieved simply by implementing sterner laws. “Prevention is always easier, better and less costly than rehabilitation and treatment,” said Risgallah

“Our goal is to raise a generation of kids, youth, parents, leaders and teachers who hate, refuse and fight abuse,” she said.

“Not Guilty is working toward achieving this goal through raising awareness of the dangers and consequences of sexual harassment in order to achieve a safe environment.”

Risgallah, who has a Ph.D. in childhood studies and a bachelor’s degree in psychotherapy, said the sentiment of her organization is crystalized in its name. “The name realizes and underlines that abuse has never, ever been the victim’s fault,” she said.

Not Guilty uses a three-pronged approach to address abusive relationships.

The NGO trains children aged 3-18 on how to respond if abuse happens, advises parents on how to protect their children against abuse, and shows teachers and caregivers how to spot abuse and what to do if a case is reported.

“Pre-training children is a unique approach since most people work on sexual abuse after it happens,” Risgallah said.

“Most schools hold earthquake drills and fire drills, so why not hold an

anti-sexual abuse drill?”

Not Guilty trains children on how to protect themselves through the interactive program SKIT, using songs, skits, games, coloring and puppets.

Risgallah said her organization faces constant opposition from stakeholders on all sides. “People don’t know that sexual abuse is rampant, and if they do know, they don’t think it’s such a big deal,” she added.

“The damage wrought by sexual harassment is never spoken about. It’s a taboo subject, so it’s hardly ever reported,” she said.

“Wherever we go – whether we go to schools, nurseries, orphanages or other non-profits – we’re greeted with the same words: ‘We have no cases of sexual abuse here’.”

But Risgallah has no plans to give up on changing attitudes in Egypt and beyond anytime soon.

Not Guilty has so far trained more than 9,000 children and teens, 4,000 parents, 1,000 teachers and 230 factory workers – both male and female. The NGO also continues to provide counselling and support services for victims of abuse.

“Children need to know that they’re not alone if they face sexual abuse,” Risgallah said. “We’re witnessing a true impact and change in many parts of the world.”

- *The Middle East Exchange is one of the Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum Global Initiatives that was launched to reflect the vision of the UAE prime minister and ruler of Dubai in the field of humanitarian and global development, to explore the possibility of changing the status of the Arab region. The initiative offers the press a series of articles on issues affecting Arab societies.*



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Abuse of women and children](#)

[Laila Risgallah](#)

[Editor's Choice](#)

Saudi Arabia pledges to fight child abuse during UN meeting
Al-Azhar launches child abuse campaign after young girl's death sparks outrage in Egypt

[**'Biggest terrorism sponsor' Iran**](#)

spends \$1 billion a year on global proxies: US report

Author:

Reuters

ID:

1572629409345761600

Fri, 2019-11-01 17:17

WASHINGTON: Iran remained a top state sponsor of terrorism around the world in 2018, the State Department said in its annual terrorism report on Friday. A briefing by the department's counter-terrorism spokesman Nathan Sales showed the regime funnels nearly a billion dollars a year to support its proxies in the region despite Washington having significantly ramped up its sanctions against Tehran.

The report also showed global presence of Daesh continued to advance in 2018 through networks and affiliates, even though the Trump administration declared it defeated the jihadi group in Syria and killed its leader last month in a US raid.

Terrorism tactics and the use of technologies have also evolved in 2018, while war-hardened fighters from groups such as Daesh returning to their home countries began raising fresh threats, the report said.

Today, [@StateDeptCT](#) Ambassador Nathan Sales briefed the media on the release of the Country Reports on Terrorism 2018. Watch his full remarks. <https://t.co/re88smFd4I> #CRT2018
<pic.twitter.com/2jNTN1epTF>

– Department of State (@StateDept) [November 1, 2019](#)

“Even as Daesh lost almost all its physical territory, the group proved its ability to adapt, especially through its efforts to inspire or direct followers online,” said Sales using an acronym for Daesh, the US counter-terrorism coordinator, whose office produced the congressionally mandated report.

“Additionally, battle-hardened terrorists headed home from the war zone in Syria and Iraq or traveled to third countries, posing new dangers,” he said. Daesh declared its so-called “caliphate” in 2014 after seizing large swathes of Syria and Iraq. The hard-line group established its de facto capital in the Syrian city of Raqqa, using it as a base to plot attacks in Europe.

In 2017, Daesh lost control of Mosul in Iraq and Raqqa in Syria, and quickly thereafter almost all of its territory as a result of operations by US-backed forces. Its leader, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, was killed last month in Syria in a raid by US Special forces.

World leaders welcomed his death, but they and security experts warned that the group, which carried out atrocities against religious minorities and horrified most Muslims, remained a security threat in Syria and beyond.

The group on Thursday confirmed his death in an audio tape posted online and said a successor, identified as Abu Ibrahim Al-Hashemi Al-Quraishi, had been appointed. It vowed revenge against the US.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Middle East](#)

[Iran](#)

[Daesh](#)

[terrorism](#)

[US](#)

[US State Department](#)

US targets Iran construction sector with new sanctions
US and Gulf countries sanction individuals and businesses linked to Iran and Hezbollah

[Lebanese man sentenced to death in 2013 mosque bombing](#)

Author:

AP

ID:

1572627206855627200

Fri, 2019-11-01 16:50

BEIRUT: A Lebanese court has sentenced a man to death for twin car bombings in 2013 that targeted two mosques in the northern city of Tripoli, killing 47 people.

State-run National News Agency says the Judicial Council sentenced Youssef Diab on Friday.

NNA gave no further details regarding the sentence over the near-simultaneous bombings that targeted Sunni mosques in Lebanon's second largest city. Police said at the time that the bombings wounded some 300 others.

The coordinated bombings in the predominantly Sunni city came amid sectarian violence in Lebanon at the time that spilled over from neighboring war-torn Syria.

According to the indictment released years ago, Diab detonated one of the bombs remotely.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Lebanon](#)

[Tripoli](#)

Lebanon sentences UK diplomat's murderer to death 'Loyal' Tripoli turns its back on Lebanon's Hariri