

IN BLOW TO TRUMP, UN COURT TELLS U.S. TO EASE IRAN SANCTIONS

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: United Nations (UNO)

The UN's top court ordered the U.S. on Wednesday to lift sanctions on humanitarian goods for Iran in a stunning setback for U.S. President Donald Trump.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague handed Iran a major victory, saying the stinging economic sanctions put Iranian lives at risk.

Mr. Trump reimposed the sanctions in May after pulling out of Iran's international nuclear deal to the dismay of his allies.

But it was unclear whether the judgment will be anything more than symbolic, because both Washington and Tehran have ignored them in the past.

The ICJ judges ruled that the sanctions on some goods breached a 1955 "Treaty of Amity" between Iran and the U.S. that predates Iran's Islamic Revolution.

"The court finds unanimously that... the United States of America... shall remove by means of its choosing any impediments arising from the measures announced on 8 May to the free exportation to Iran of medicines and medical devices, food and agricultural commodities" as well as airplane parts, chief judge Abdulqawi Ahmed Yusuf said.

The court said sanctions on goods "required for humanitarian needs... may have a serious detrimental impact on the health and lives of individuals on the territory of Iran."

U.S. sanctions also had the "potential to endanger civil aviation safety in Iran and the lives of its users."

'In the right'

Iran's Foreign Ministry hailed the shock judgment as proof that Tehran was "in the right".

Ahead of the decision, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said the sanctions were a form of "psychological warfare" aimed at regime change.

Mr. Trump slapped a first round of sanctions on Iran in August after pulling out in May of the international deal aimed at curbing Tehran's nuclear ambitions, to the dismay of his European allies. A second round of punitive measures is due in November.

Iran dragged the U.S. to the ICJ in July, and during four days of hearings in late August, its lawyers accused Washington of "strangling" its economy.

The U.S. criticised the verdict, saying the case was "meritless" and the court had "no jurisdiction".

"This is a meritless case over which the court has no jurisdiction," U.S. Ambassador to the Netherlands Pete Hoekstra tweeted, shortly after a ruling at the International Court of Justice.

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