

Iran's president claims 'big victory' in legal efforts to end US sanctions

Rouhani applauds UN court's decision to hear case filed in 2018 over the legality of sanctions reimposed by Trump.



Iranian President Hassan Rouhani delivers a speech before the heads of banks, in Tehran, Iran, January 16, 2020. (Office of the Iranian Presidency via AP)

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran's president Thursday applauded a ruling by the International Court of Justice that it can hear Iran's case against the US seeking to end sanctions, calling it a "big victory" for the Islamic Republic.

A report by state-run IRNA news agency said President Hassan Rouhani congratulated the nation on its legal "victory" over the US.

"I congratulate the Iranian people on a very big victory the government achieved yesterday at the Hague, and this is one of several victories that the government

has gained against America at the tribunal,” he said in remarks carried by State TV.

The United Nations’ highest court ruled Wednesday that it can hear a case brought by Iran against the United States. It seeks to end sanctions the administration of former President Donald Trump re-imposed in 2018 after pulling out of an international deal aimed at curtailing Tehran’s nuclear program.



US President Donald Trump signs a document reinstating sanctions against Iran after announcing the US withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal, in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House in Washington, DC, on May 8, 2018. (AFP PHOTO / SAUL LOEB)

Lawyers for the US argued at hearings last year that the case should be thrown out by the court for lack of jurisdiction and admissibility.

Iran filed the case in July 2018, a few months after then-President Donald Trump said he was pulling the US out of the 2015 international agreement and would re-impose sanctions on Tehran. Washington also threatened other countries with sanctions if they didn’t cut off Iranian oil imports by early November.

Iran alleges the sanctions breach a 1955 bilateral agreement known as the Treaty of Amity that regulates and promotes economic and consular ties between the two countries.

The ruling Wednesday came as US President Joe Biden is seeking to enhance diplomacy toward Iran.

The court based in The Hague, Netherlands, had ruled in favor of Iran in a preliminary ruling in October 2018, saying that Washington should “remove, by means of its choosing, any impediments arising from” the re-imposition of sanctions to the export to Iran of medicine and medical devices, food and agricultural commodities and spare parts and equipment necessary to ensure the safety of civil aviation.

The US sanctions do have specific carve-outs for medicine and humanitarian aid to Iran. However, international banks and financial institutions hesitate in dealing with Iran transactions for fear of being fined or locked out of the American market.

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