

Washington menaces Iran at UN Security Council amid mounting signs of an impending US military strike

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US Ambassador to the United Nations Mike Waltz declared threateningly that “all options are on the table” at an emergency UN Security Council meeting called by the United States Thursday on the protests in Iran. Amid a brutal crackdown by the bourgeois-clerical regime in Tehran following the outbreak of protests on December 28, US President Donald Trump is setting the stage for a second American bombardment of the country in just over six months.

“President Trump is a man of action, not endless talk like we see at the United Nations. He has made it clear all options are on the table to stop the slaughter,” asserted Waltz. Media reports indicate that Trump has ordered the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier strike group to deploy to the Persian Gulf, which will take approximately a week from its previous position in the South China Sea.

Washington’s preparations for a military onslaught on Iran have nothing to do with alleged concern for the democratic rights of its 93-million-strong population. On the contrary, Trump, senior officials in his administration, the corporate-controlled media and political leaders from the imperialist powers in Europe are cynically exploiting Tehran’s crackdown on protests to justify an imperialist-orchestrated “regime change” operation to bring to power a pro-Western government in Tehran. This is viewed as an essential step in the consolidation of American imperialist hegemony over the oil-rich Middle East, and the sidelining of China and Russia, which have significant economic and military ties respectively with Tehran.

With its championing of Israel’s genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza, Washington has worked systematically since late 2023 to weaken the Iranian regime and its influence across the region. The tens of billions of dollars in weaponry funnelled to the criminal Zionist regime under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s far-right government allowed Israel not only to butcher Palestinian civilians but decimate the military infrastructure of Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon, two close Iranian allies. US and Israeli strikes on Yemen also significantly damaged the capabilities of the Houthis, who rely on military backing from Tehran. In late 2024, a US-backed

offensive by former al-Qaida fighters in Syria toppled the Assad regime, another close Iranian ally.

Then in June 2025, the US and Israel conducted a 12-day war against Iran, repeatedly striking its military and nuclear facilities. This was followed in September by the decision of the European imperialist powers to impose the “snapback” mechanism to reintroduce UN sanctions on Iran that had been suspended under the nuclear accord with the US and European powers. Trump unilaterally withdrew from the agreement and reimposed sanctions on Iran during his first term in 2018.

The latest round of protests initially broke out among the bazaar merchants, shopkeepers and small business proprietors, who have traditionally served as a key pillar of support for the regime, but have been hit hard by the collapse in the Iranian currency’s value and the broader economic crisis. They spread in some areas to include university students and drew in some workers as individual participants. However, the longer the protests went on, the more right-wing and explicitly pro-imperialist they became. Although accurate reports are sparse due to the regime’s imposition of an internet blackout over a week ago, the government’s admission that over 100 security personnel were killed, including in armed attacks on police stations, indicates a significant level of armed violence among the protesters.

A wave of ruthless repression was launched by the regime resulting, according to one government official’s account cited by Reuters this week, in the deaths of 2,000 people. A US-based human rights group, HRANA, puts the death toll even higher at over 2,600. Estimates of the numbers detained range from an official Iranian government figure of 3,000 to 22,000, according to human rights observers.

While there can be no doubt about the brutality of the regime’s repression, the fact that media outlets have reported a subsiding of protests over the course of this week also points to the lack of social support they enjoyed from the working class and rural toilers. Iranian workers did not participate in the demonstrations en masse and as a class, a reflection of the pro-imperialist, bourgeois character of the movement’s demands. The main spokesman in the foreign media for the protests has

been Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi, the son of the hated Shah, who ruled the country with an iron fist as a US puppet prior to the 1979 Iranian Revolution.

At a press conference held in Washington Friday, Pahlavi underscored his endorsement of a violent imperialist-orchestrated overturn in Iran, calling for “surgical strikes” targeting the regime and pledging to return to the country with a new constitution. “The Iranian people are taking decisive action on the ground,” he continued. “It is now time for the international community to join them fully. ... I believe that President Trump is a man of his word, and, ultimately, he will stand with the Iranian people.”

Millions of people throughout the Middle East have made bitter experiences with the claim that American imperialism can serve as a liberator, from Iran’s neighbours Iraq and Syria, to Libya, Somalia, and Yemen. As the *World Socialist Web Site* explained in an earlier perspective, “[A]ny progressive tendency in Iran would have to immediately repudiate Trump’s ‘support,’ denounce the threat of imminent US military action and call for the immediate lifting of the punitive sanctions that are strangling Iran’s economy.”

Nonetheless, the Iranian regime has itself been forced to acknowledge the deep economic and social crisis in the country, which has fueled a series of strikes by workers over recent months and undoubtedly drove some of the protesters to demonstrate. President Masoud Pezeshkian declared on Thursday that Tehran was working to combat some of the economic problems underlying the demonstrations, citing foreign currency exchange rates and corruption.

In reality, the bourgeois-clerical regime has presided over a devastating collapse of the Iranian economy over recent years, albeit one for which the imperialist powers bear primary responsibility. The concessions made to the working class following the 1979 revolution, which were from the outset combined with the ruthless suppression of left-wing organizations, have long since been eliminated.

American and now UN sanctions have caused the value of the rial, Iran’s currency, to plunge. From around 800,000 to the dollar at the beginning of 2025, the rial was trading at over 1.4 million to the dollar by year’s end. This has fueled an increase in prices for basic foodstuffs by about 72 percent over the past year.

High inflation is hitting other parts of the economy as well, which is under-performing due to a lack of investment and import restrictions caused by sanctions. Unemployment has increased as a result. The social crisis facing the vast majority of the population is further compounded by a sustained drought, now in its sixth year, which has driven water levels in dozens of dams across the country to record low levels and even raised the fear that Tehran may need to be evacuated unless rainfall occurs in the coming months.

None of these social ills will be resolved by lending any support to protests calling for a US “regime change” operation,

which would result in the establishment of a neocolonial regime under Pahlavi’s dictatorship. Iran would be thrown open to the tender mercies of global finance capital, which would seize control of Iran’s oil and gas sector, privatise any remaining public services, and ratchet up the exploitation of Iranian workers to fill the pockets of American and European investors, as well as their Iranian puppets in pro-monarchist bourgeois and petty-bourgeois circles.

Iranian workers require first and foremost their unconditional political independence from all factions of the bourgeoisie, including those championing imperialist intervention and those still loyal to the Islamic Republic. The most important precondition for this is unflinching opposition to all forms of imperialist intervention. Workers must oppose imperialist-orchestrated “regime change” and call for the immediate lifting of all punitive sanctions against Iran. This fight demands the closest unity between Iranian workers and the working class throughout the region, which has long suffered the predations of imperialist wars, and divide-and-rule tactics that have fueled fratricidal religious, ethnic and national conflicts. It also necessitates an appeal for class unity with workers in the imperialist centers of North America and Europe, where Trump and the European imperialists are making workers pay for the imperialists’ war machines and bullying tactics against Iran by slashing jobs, banning strikes and destroying public services.

Developing this struggle is possible only on the basis of a socialist and internationalist program, which is implacably hostile to imperialism and the bourgeois nationalism of the clerical regime in Tehran. The Iranian regime ultimately seeks to cut a deal with imperialism, or to maneuver between it and its rivals like China, which has bought up large quantities of Iranian oil over recent years and supplied Tehran with a critical economic lifeline. But under conditions of a rapidly escalating redivision of the world among the major powers, which is leading towards a third global imperialist war, such a policy is no longer viable.

The alternative lies in the repudiation of bourgeois nationalism and a turn by workers in Iran to the fight for a workers’ government as part of the United Socialist States of the Middle East. This is the program fought for by the *World Socialist Web Site* and the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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