

Is Washington Serious About Iran? Marandi on Sanctions, Epstein & the Asia

In this in-depth conversation, Iranian academic and political analyst Mohammad Marandi discusses the current socio-political mood inside Iran amid ongoing sanctions and economic pressure. Support Independent media to remain bold: <https://patreon.com/IndiaGlobalLeft> Link for donation: <https://paypal.me/sankymudiar> We explore: What everyday life looks like for Iranians facing inflation The impact of U.S. sanctions and currency pressure Whether the ongoing U.S.–Iran talks are genuine diplomacy or strategic maneuvering The role of settler colonial politics and elite power networks in shaping U.S. foreign policy The shifting global balance toward Asia — including China, Russia, India, and Iran As the geopolitical center of gravity moves eastward, we ask: Can Asia create a new framework beyond colonialism and imperial domination? And what does this mean for the future of global power? This conversation offers rare insight into Iran’s internal debates, economic realities, and its strategic outlook in a rapidly transforming world order. Follow us on Substack: <https://substack.com/@indiagloballeft> Twitter: <https://twitter.com/Indiagloballeft> Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/indiagloballeft/> Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61559411353392> Spotify: <https://open.spotify.com/show/69Y9iCWUv8ha3ATsPWtWk0?si=ee1f0de3de094f17> Telegram: <https://t.me/+WNIqoiv1Rhg5NjEx>

#Mudiar

Hello and welcome to another episode of *India and Global Left*. If you’re new to the show, please smash the subscribe button. Also, consider becoming a YouTube member or a patron through the link in the description box. Let me welcome our guest tonight, Professor Mohammad Marandi. Professor Marandi teaches at the University of Tehran in Iran. Professor Marandi, welcome back to *India and Global Left*.

#Guest

Thank you very much for having me again. It’s always a pleasure.

#Mudiar

I wanted to quickly discuss the domestic situation in Iran before moving to geopolitics. The last time we had you on, we were toward the end of the protests that had turned into riots. So, could you update us on the current social and political mood in Iran? Is it recalibrating? Is it stabilizing? What’s going on?

#Guest

Everything is stable and normal right now, and it has been since January 9th. As your viewers know, we have more information now. The United States carried out a conspiracy with the Israeli regime. According to the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury—he said this on multiple occasions, gloatingly—the United States brought down the Iranian currency and attacked the Iranian economy to bring people into the streets. And when people did come to the streets, not in large numbers, and carried out peaceful protests, there were no arrests, no harassment, no issues. The government said their protests were legitimate. These businesspeople had concerns about the fall of the currency—it went down 30 to 40 percent. But then, on day three, we saw a sudden influx of very well-trained rioters and terrorists who started creating destruction.

And then, on the 8th and 9th of January, things became very violent. On the 8th, they killed a large number of police officers. The officers that day didn't have the weapons necessary to defend themselves. And on the 9th, there were effectively street battles in different cities and in different parts of big cities. Three thousand one hundred eleven people died. Well over 300 police officers and security officials were killed—which, if that had happened in the United States or anywhere in Europe, they would have declared a state of emergency or imposed curfews. But we didn't have that here; that didn't happen. So many innocent bystanders were killed, mostly at the hands of these terrorists and the very violent rioters, because they wanted the casualty numbers to go up. They wanted chaos.

That's why they burned down hundreds of ambulances, many fire engines, many public vehicles, and hundreds of banks, schools, and mosques. They burned many people alive. They cut people's throats and smashed people's heads. The video evidence is there. Also, the Israelis and the Americans basically took responsibility for it. We know what the Treasury Secretary said, but Pompeo, who was the former head of the CIA, tweeted that Mossad was on the ground. More recently, Pompeo, on Channel 13—I think it was—said that American CIA people were on the ground. This is Pompeo. Then Mossad itself put out a statement in Persian, and Channel 14 of the Israeli regime said that they brought weapons into the country that killed hundreds of police officers and security officials.

So they're bragging about it, gloating about it. The footage is all there, but Western media—or Epstein-class owned media—they're completely silent. They go with the narrative that these were just peaceful protesters, as if the government was gunning down ordinary people, which is, of course, the story they want in order to justify aggression. So this whole conspiracy was meant to create an environment for the United States to attack. Fortunately, the riots failed. On the 9th, they ended, and on the 12th, we had mass demonstrations across the country. Now, this is important: we had millions of people on the streets of Tehran, and tens of millions across the country, protesting against the rioters and the terrorists. Western media ignored it.

They even tried to pretend that this was AI, including Musk and his people. On February 11th, the anniversary of the revolution, people were called to come to the streets again, and the numbers this

time were even larger. Four million came to Tehran, and there were lots of foreign journalists there from across the world, so this time around Musk, The Guardian, The New York Times, or Fox News—none of them could lie about the numbers. It's very clear where public opinion stands. They are completely opposed to the terrorists, completely opposed to aggression, and completely opposed to any U.S.-led war or the Israeli regime carrying out a war against the Iranian people. But again, this just shows that Western media is completely discredited.

And we saw that during the entire Gaza genocide. But one thing that was interesting was that Western media, while we didn't have internet in Iran, kept increasing the number of casualties—10,000, 20,000, 50,000, 80,000, and even higher, probably. And then, when the Iranians put out the numbers—3,117—with their ID numbers, full names, all their profiles of the police officers and innocent people killed by the rioters, the terrorists themselves, the rioters couldn't sustain their numbers. So they had to bring them down to around 6,000. They couldn't accept the real numbers, so they still give these fabricated ones. But in any case, the guilty party is the West. They brag about it; their intelligence agencies brag about what they did, but they pretend they can't hear anything.

#Mudiar

Talking about the Western media, they've been telling us about the uncontrolled inflation and unemployment situation in Iran. Of course, they don't mention that this has mostly been a result of Western sanctions and currency manipulation in international markets. But could you tell us a little about the lived experience of people in Iranian cities regarding inflation? How bad is it for ordinary people?

#Guest

Well, I did a program on Al Mayadeen TV last week—a half-hour show on what sanctions really are. Sanctions are basically meant to kill people; that's the objective—to destroy societies. For example, right now the Trump regime, or the Epstein regime, is strangling Cuba, and Western media isn't complaining about it. They're not screaming and yelling about the children of Cuba, because they don't care about the children of Cuba. They don't care about human life. What they say about Iran is basically just to pull public opinion into supporting another war. The objective, whether in Cuba or earlier in Syria, is to bring down and destroy a society.

It's to crush a society. It's to make people lose their jobs, to make people suffer, to make them unable to buy adequate food or continue farming, to keep them from living in a house or purchasing medicine if someone is very sick. That is the objective. It's to break up society, to bring people to their knees. Whether it's Cuba, Venezuela, Syria, Iran, Yemen, or anywhere else, that is the goal. It's a silent war to kill kids. One American official who was behind the sanctions regime on Iran even wrote a book called **The Art of Sanctions**, which I think is a very monstrous title for a book.

It's *The Art of Killing Kids.* I think the title of that program on Al Mayadeen was *The Art of Silently Killing Kids.* That's basically it. You destroy societies, you crush people without bombs, without the media being forced to show any interest. So, for example, you may have a relative who has cancer, and you have to purchase expensive medicine. But those medicines are so costly because of the sanctions that you have to sell something—your car, let's say. And then you sell the car, buy some of the medicine, and suddenly the medicine is no longer available because of the sanctions.

It's not easy to bring them in. It's not easy to send money abroad. So you spend money, your relative suffers, the medicine is no longer there, and your relative dies. And that's basically the objective—to do that sort of thing. And if someone says, "This can't be true," all they have to do is watch Gaza. All they have to do is watch Lebanon. Today, last night, they murdered four Lebanese citizens. Is that in the news anywhere? This morning, they murdered a man as he was picking up children—he was their driver to school. Does anyone speak of that? Every day, they're murdering Palestinians.

As I said, the people of Cuba right now are under siege. This is not of interest in the West because Western media—it doesn't care. It doesn't matter if the outlet in the West is The Guardian, The Independent, the BBC, Sky News, Fox News, or Breitbart. They're all the same. One is more subtle, more sophisticated; the other more bombastic and crude. But in essence, they're all the same. They belong to the Epstein class. And we're learning a lot about the Epstein class nowadays—well, a lot, relatively speaking. They've only allowed us a very small window into that reality, but still, it's quite stunning.

#Mudiar

I wanted to come to the U.S.—Iran talks. They've been going on—we've seen the conclusion of the Muscat round, and the Geneva round has begun amid a buildup of U.S. military assets in the region. One aircraft carrier has been deployed, and another is reportedly on its way. Iran has been responding by showcasing its missile capabilities, drones, and conducting drills in the Indian Ocean. What are your thoughts? We went through a similar situation last year—this cat-and-mouse kind of game of talks, blackmail, and threats. From your perspective, what's your reading of the talks currently taking place between Iran and the United States?

#Guest

Well, as I'm sure you know, the Americans set conditions for the talks, and Iran rejected all of them. They wanted the talks to be in Turkey, and they wanted to discuss Iran's missile program, Iran's regional alliances, and also Iran's nuclear program—or rather, the shutting down of Iran's nuclear program. We also heard from Al Jazeera—not the most credible source—but Al Jazeera claimed that the Turkish, Qatari, and Egyptian governments put out a proposal where Iran would limit its missile capabilities and its regional alliances. Which, of course, is ridiculous, and it's a sad reality that these

regimes are so bound to the West, so weak and ineffective, and unwilling to take any stance against the Netanyahu and Trump regimes.

But that's for another day. The Iranians rejected American demands and said, "We will negotiate in Oman indirectly, as we did before the war. We'll only discuss the nuclear program, and there's not a chance in the world that we'll shut down enrichment. We are willing to discuss a framework to reach a deal ultimately like the JCPOA, but a better one, because Iran has advanced its nuclear program over the last decade, and those advances need to be accepted. There's no other path that would be acceptable for the Iranians." And the Americans had to accept. The talks were held in Oman, and only the nuclear issue was discussed.

The next round, as you pointed out, will be tomorrow. It will be held at the embassy of the Omani government, so they'll continue to be the mediators. No one from Europe will mediate, and the talks will be indirect. The Iranians have been very clear that the only thing they will discuss is the nuclear program, but they will not accept, under any circumstances, zero enrichment. They will only accept a deal where Iran's sovereignty is fully recognized. Now, Netanyahu says he won't accept that. Iran doesn't care—that's Iran's sovereignty, and those are Iran's red lines. Iran is, unlike any other country in the region, a country that is fully independent.

And, of course, it will not forsake the Palestinian people—like Yemen, like the rest of the axis of resistance. And if the Americans choose military confrontation, the Iranians have said they will strike back very hard, and it will become a regional war. What is a regional war? That means all of Iran's allies, who would also be facing an existential threat from the regime in Washington, will engage in the fight. So Yemen, which has already fought the United States for seven weeks and forced the Americans to back down; the Iraqi resistance, the same people who defeated ISIS; and others—Lebanon and elsewhere—everyone will be joining the battle. And the Iranians will block oil and gas from West Asia and the Caucasus.

And there's nothing the Americans can do about it. U.S. allies in the Persian Gulf region host U.S. bases—bases that, as we speak, are conspiring against our country. So they are complicit. And, of course, the regime in Baku is an ally of the Israeli regime. So, you know, imagine if there were no more oil and gas exports. The Emirates, with a population of about 1.4 million, would collapse—same with the regime in Oman or Qatar—and the list goes on. This would be a very, very complicated and messy situation. It's not something the Americans would be able to manage. And this would lead to a global economic collapse—not a recession, but a collapse. I think that would end Trump's presidency, because Trump is already in serious trouble. Because of Epstein and a host of other issues, he's becoming deeply unpopular.

And if the economy collapses under these circumstances—when it's already doing quite poorly—that will be the end of Trump. So, Iran doesn't want war. Iran wants a decent deal, a just deal. But for Iran, this would be a fight for its survival. It would be an existential war. For the United States, it would be a war of choice. One would think the United States would not engage in war with Iran

because it cannot win. But we have to keep in mind that they have seen class rules in the West, and for them, Israel—the Israeli regime—is the priority. Not the American people, not the American economy, not Europeans, and not the European economies. The people who surround Trump are mostly, if not all, Israel-firsters. And Congress and the Senate are dominated by Israel-firsters. So, who knows what will happen.

#Mudiar

Ali Larijani, the Iranian spokesperson for the Supreme Council for National Security, summarized what you said about the talks, highlighting two specific points. First, that Iran will continue the talks but will not give up its preparations for deterrence. And second, that the talks will be only about the nuclear program, under the NPT, which means that demands for zero enrichment and so on are off the table.

Talking about the Epstein class, I wanted to come to Palestine, since that's at the heart of these escalations—however we might like to understand or define them. As you said, the Epstein class controls the U.S. regime, and they've been escalating in Area C. They've opened up land records and documents to legalize massive settlements in al-Khalil, in Area C, which according to Oslo II in 1995 were controlled by Israel but, even under Oslo II, were not legally given to Israel. And now they're legalizing them. Meanwhile, Rafah has been partially closed; whatever was promised in terms of food and aid hasn't been going through, and they've been killing children and civilians daily in Palestine. Given all this—given the expansion of settler colonialism—are these talks really meaningful? Given the expansion of settler colonialism and given the control of the...

#Guest

Well, basically, what you're saying is that the United States is untrustworthy. Why? Because—let's look at the ceasefire in Gaza. Trump claimed he was behind it, and we had that huge show in Egypt where he brought in all those regional leaders, basically to express their respect for him and to whitewash the genocide and his role in it. But ever since the ceasefire, the Israeli regime has been murdering Palestinians on a daily basis, as you rightly point out. So this is an American ceasefire—this is Trump's ceasefire. Yet he just said a couple of days ago that we have "peace in the Middle East," as he calls it.

I call it West Asia, but in any case, he says there's peace. So obviously, for him, the Palestinians who are being murdered every day are worthless—just as we've seen in the Epstein files, where human beings are worthless to this class of people. Children are worthless. So Palestinian children are worthless. Then again, we saw it in Lebanon. We saw a ceasefire there between Hezbollah and the Israeli regime, and the West—Western governments—are the guarantors. Yet again, we're seeing daily murders and assassinations of ordinary people, like this morning, the murder of a man who was taking children to school.

It's not even reported in the Western media—none of this—because the Western media is controlled by the Epstein class. These journalists, they're all employees of that class, so you're not going to hear any of it. The ceasefire in Lebanon is useless and worthless. The ceasefire in Gaza is worthless. The West Bank is being colonized in violation of UN Security Council resolutions and in violation of previous agreements. So basically, what you're saying is that the United States is not trustworthy enough. But I can go even further—that is, the nuclear deal between Iran and the P5+1. That deal, which was signed in 2015, I was part of the negotiating team.

I was Dr. Zarif's media advisor for international media. The Iranians gave many concessions—too many, in my opinion—and there was a nuclear deal. Who violated that deal? It was Obama. He first violated the spirit of the deal, and then he began to violate the deal itself. And then Trump tore it up. So Iran's agreements, the agreements with the Palestinians, the Lebanese, the Russians—the United States is not trustworthy. And let me take this a step further: even if we do have a deal, which doesn't look likely, who says that Trump is going to abide by it? Who says Trump will even abide by his own deals?

There's no reason to believe it, so I'm not optimistic about a deal. Iran is preparing itself for war. I'm not saying there will be a war. I have a view on this—I don't usually give my view because it's not really relevant, and people will interpret it, many will interpret it, as being the government's view, which it's not. But in any case, I do have a view on this. Iran doesn't know—no one knows—if there's going to be a war, but Iran is assuming that there will be one. In other words, it's planning as if there will be a war. So the military is being prepared, and Iran is much better prepared now to fight against the United States. It has much more—let me put it this way—Iran has much more firepower to direct toward the United States than toward Israel or toward Palestine. Why is that the case?

The Israeli regime is far away, and Iran strikes it with long-range missiles, of which Iran has tens of thousands. What Iran used last time was just the tip of the iceberg. Over the past nine months or so, Iran has been working on its missiles—making them more precise, better able to maneuver around air defenses, and capable of carrying heavier payloads. But in any case, Iran still relies on long-range missiles. As for the Americans, Iran has many options and much greater firepower. Why? Because ever since the United States invaded Iraq and Afghanistan and surrounded Iran in 2002 and 2003—and ever since U.S. presidents, whether Bush or Obama, began saying “all options are on the table” regarding Iran, and of course labeled Iran part of the “axis of evil”—the Iranians have been preparing themselves for war.

So Iran has countless underground bases for drones, short-range missiles, and medium-range missiles directed toward the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. Iran also has a navy designed for asymmetrical warfare. It doesn't just have surface-to-surface missiles—it has surface-to-ship missiles, air-to-ship missiles, underwater drones, torpedoes, and all sorts of capabilities it's been developing for two and a half decades. So if the United States chooses to fight Iran, Iran can destroy everything in the Persian Gulf. It doesn't just have to shut the Strait of Hormuz; it can also sink all the ships, both inside and outside the Strait. It can destroy the ports.

It can destroy the oil and gas installations. It can do all of this at the same time. It would end the oil trade. Then Iran's allies in Iraq would make their own moves, and the same in Yemen. The same is true in the Caucasus. So it's not a smart thing for the Americans to do. Iran has been preparing for this day for a very long time. I have no doubt that Trump is worried about this. His talks with Netanyahu—well, from what we know of those talks—it seems he's cautious, because sane people have been telling him this could be disastrous. But again, since he's surrounded by certain people, and it's quite possible they have a lot of dirt on him from the Epstein files, who knows what will happen.

#Mudiar

I wanted to go a little beyond the U.S. and bring Asia into the conversation, because this is very important, I feel, to decenter the West—to decenter Western narratives. One of the most remarkable things we've seen in the last 30 or 40 years is a gradual, or maybe even rapid, shift of the geoeconomic and, in the future, geopolitical center toward the East. China is the most remarkable example, but in recent years we've also seen Russia reestablish itself as a power, or even a superpower, on the world stage. India has been growing fast—maybe not as fast as China did 20 or 30 years ago, and not necessarily with as much equality, and so on.

We still have a lot of poverty and misery and so on. But still, India is growing—growing rapidly. All this is to say that the center of world economics, and in the future politics, I suppose, is shifting toward the East. So I guess we should talk about Asia and Iran's role in that. Iran has had very good relationships with China and Russia. It also has a good relationship with India. I'm curious to hear your thoughts about the future of Asia—particularly China, Russia, India, and Iran—and how important it is to sideline the West, to sideline colonialism and imperialism in our region.

#Guest

Well, I don't know if you saw the U.S. Secretary of State's speech the other day, where he was basically mourning decolonization and praising 500 years of colonization. He basically said that we must revive Western domination. And that, I think, is a threat to the entire world. What's interesting is that all those European leaders stood up and gave him a standing ovation for a speech directed against the Global South—against the global majority. So Iran is at the forefront of this struggle.

Today, Iran is the most important country in this struggle—not just because it supports the people of Latin America, but because it's targeted more than any other nation for its independence and its support for the Palestinian people. In other words, it's part of the same struggle that people in the subcontinent went through when they expelled British colonization. But one thing we should all keep in mind is that what the United States and the Israeli regime are doing today is a threat to India. If there's a war, the Indian economy will collapse, just like all the others. In fact, India is even more vulnerable than most, because the Americans are forcing it to stop buying Russian oil.

So that will probably go to China increasingly, and Russia has very close relations with China. So there will be a huge deficit in the oil market. The price of oil could go up into the hundreds of dollars a barrel. And of course, gas will have the same problem. So while the U.S. and Western economies will collapse under those circumstances, so will economies across the world. And India—the Indian economy—is one of the most vulnerable. So those Indians who seem to think that Israel is a good partner should realize that Israel does not care about India, because it's willing to destroy and sacrifice the Indian economy for its own selfish purposes, just as it doesn't care about the United States.

Iran, again—as I've stressed before, more than once—does not want war. It's negotiating to avoid war. Negotiating, though, doesn't mean Iran believes there will necessarily be a positive outcome. Iran is negotiating for two reasons. One, if the United States behaves reasonably and there's room for a deal, then Iran will move in that direction. But two, if the United States remains irrational and continues with its imperial ambitions, Iran wants the world to see that we're not the problem—that we tried. We didn't want this war. But if war is imposed on us, we will fight to the finish. And that would be, as I've said multiple times, catastrophic for the world, but catastrophic for India in particular.

#Mudiar

Yes, absolutely. One of the surveys by Sea Voters says about 50 to 52 percent of people in India don't want a war between Israel and Iran. More than a fifth are vocal supporters of Iran because they think what the Israeli regime does in the region is a colonial extension of the British Empire. Of course, we have a segment of the far-right BJP supporters who think they should support Israel, although they have no idea how Israel supports India or what that really means—except perhaps giving them weapons, reportedly to contain militancy in Kashmir. But that's for another day. Anyway, all that said, I guess there are very few people in India, in percentage terms, who want a war between Iran and the United States.

But I guess the more important point for us is to think about how we can go beyond Western frameworks of constant hostilities and belligerence between nation-states, because these are the remnants, if you like, of the Westphalian model. You have to fight for borders, you have to fight for people, and so on. We've inherited these divisions in the Indian subcontinent; in your region, there are internal divisions too. And given that it's very, very likely Asia will be the center of the world in the coming future, we should rethink our relationships. We should stop fighting and go beyond these Western frameworks, think about how we can make a better world for ourselves—and maybe the West will follow someday, if they like. But yeah, that's my view. Yes, I think there's no doubt that the West, being on the decline, would like to use the fractures and differences that currently exist and are...

#Guest

Problems in Asia are seen as opportunities to undermine the region's growth. The empire itself is becoming less influential, so the only way forward for it is to use various means to hurt those that are growing. ISIS and Al Qaeda, which they created in Syria and are still based there, could tomorrow be sent to Afghanistan or Central Asia to expand terrorism. That way, the networks connecting Asia could be undermined, or countries could be pushed toward confrontation. There are many things the West could do, and that's why it's very important for countries across the global majority—and Asia in particular, which is on the rise—to be aware that many of the problems we see today involve external actors interested in exploiting them to the detriment of the people in our part of the world.

#Mudiar

We'll leave it there, Professor Marandi. Thank you so much for your time.

#Ayushman

Hi, my name is Ayushman. I, along with Mudiar Jyotishman, have started this platform. Over the last two years, we've tried to build content for the left and progressive forces. We've interviewed economists, historians, political commentators, and activists so far. If you've liked our content and want us to build an archive for the left, I have two requests for you. Please consider donating to the cause—the link is in the description below. And if you're not able to, don't feel bad. You can always like our videos and share them with your comrades. Finally, don't forget to hit the subscribe button.