

The US government is trying to starve Venezuelans

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Ben Norton (BN): It is not hyperbole to say that Washington is trying to starve Venezuelans. That is not just my opinion, that is not just some insane exaggeration. All you have to do is look at what the US government has been doing to try to crush the Venezuelan government's CLAP food programme, that is CLAP. That stands for local committees of food and production. This is a programme that was created by the Venezuelan government. I've seen it with my own eyes in Venezuela numerous times in which the Venezuelan government buys food with government money and then distributes that food for basically free, a few pennies, it's a symbolic payment, but basically free, to millions of families across Venezuela. In fact, over three quarters of the Venezuelan population receive these food boxes from the government, which include basic staples like rice, wheat, corn meal, oil, beans, powdered milk, noodles, so all of the basic necessities so people don't go hungry in Venezuela. The government has put a lot of resources into this programme, and meanwhile, Washington, the US government has put a lot of energy into trying to destroy this Venezuelan government programme because they want Venezuelans to go hungry. That is why the US government has imposed sanctions and an illegal blockade, crippling illegal sanctions and a murderous US blockade on Venezuela, like the murderous illegal US blockade on Cuba that has gone on now for over 60 years. This is not just my opinion. My colleague, Max Blumenthal at The Grayzone published an article about a book called The Art of Sanctions by US envoy Richard Nephew, who was appointed by the Biden administration an envoy for Iran. Now in this book, The Art of Sadism, I'm sorry, I mean, The Art of Sanctions, he boasted that the explicitly stated goal of US sanctions on Iran is to make Iranians go hungry. Here is the book, the article with my colleague Max, The Art of Sadism, The Art of Sanctions, sorry, that's the Photoshop we did. The book is called The Art of Sanctions. Here's the title of Max's article: Biden Iran envoy boasted of depriving civilians of food, driving up Iranian inequality in sadistic sanctions manual. Richard Nephew has taken personal credit for depriving Iranians of food and driving up their unemployment rates, celebrating the economic destruction he caused as a quote, "tremendous success". Under Biden he will help direct policy on Iran. Right here, Nephew has described the destruction of Iran's economy as a quote, "tremendous success" and lamented during a visit to Russia that food was still plentiful in the country's

capital despite mounting US sanctions. Specifically, Max highlighted this part from this book. Again this is by someone who was in the Obama administration and is now in the Biden administration and overseeing sanctions policy on Iran. Dick Nephew, a really, a real dick man, Nephew also patted himself on the back for tripling the price of chicken during important Iranian holiday periods, which they're talking about Ramadan and Eid. So he's bragging about tripling the price of chicken in Iran and thereby quote, contributing to more popular frustration in one bank shot than years of financial restrictions. This is sadism. This is criminal. This is against international law. This is a crime against humanity. The explicitly stated goal of the US rogue regime, according to its own officials, is to make countries suffer, to destroy their economies and to make their people go hungry. That is the explicitly stated goal of one of the people who oversaw US sanctions on Iran. And that's exactly now what the US government is doing against the CLAP food programme, going back to Venezuela, Venezuela's food programme that provides food boxes to over 75 percent, around 80 percent of the population. Here is on October 21st, the US department of "In"justice announcing five individuals charged with so-called money laundering, in scare quotes, in connection with alleged Venezuelan quote, bribery scheme. Now this is the new tactic of the US rogue regime when it wants to imprison foreign nationals who have nothing to do with the US government, who don't even have US citizenship. They accuse them of so-called money laundering if they violate Washington's illegal unilateral sanctions. And then the US tries to extradite those people and imprison them by a kangaroo court for violating US domestic law, even though they're not US citizens. We are talking about a global dictatorship. The United States is a global dictatorship. There's no way around, it is a global dictatorship. And here is yet another example of this. A federal grand jury in Florida, now why is a jury in Florida indicting three Colombian nationals and two Venezuelan nationals? They're not US citizens, why is the US imprisoning foreigners, trying to imprison foreigners? The US is not the world's judge. There's an international criminal court which the US refuses to be part of because it's a dictatorial, authoritarian rogue regime and the US actually passed legislation that is called The Hague Invasion Act and if a US official was ever tried at the International Criminal Court, the US reserves itself the unilateral so-called right to invade the International Criminal Court, militarily invade, and take its US officials so they cannot be tried in an international court. We're talking about a dystopian, authoritarian dictatorship that controls the entire world. Anyone pretending that the US is a model of democracy and freedom is on drugs. Why can Washington do this? You should be angry about this, especially if you're a US citizen. This is insane. This is worse than any dictatorship that's ever existed in US and in world history, because no dictatorship, even the worst dictatorship you can think of ever said that we controlled the entire planet and we can imprison anyone out of the seven billion people on Earth whenever we want. It doesn't matter if they don't have US citizenship, we can imprison anyone we want on Earth, including diplomats, which I'm going to talk about in a second with Alex Saab, including diplomats. Washington says it has the so-called right to imprison anyone for violating its domestic laws. No country on Earth except Washington claims that. This is insane. This is a global dictatorship. Anyway, let me continue here. For their alleged roles in laundering the proceeds of contracts to provide food and medicine to

Venezuela, they were supposedly obtained through bribes. Now that's just the US government with its typical lies. Read carefully, what is the so-called crime of so-called money laundering of these non US nationals of these Colombian and Venezuelan nationals? Their so-called crime is contracts to provide food and medicine to Venezuela. The US rogue regime, the US global dictatorship is trying to prevent the Venezuelan people from having food and medicine. If this doesn't make you angry, you have no heart. This should make you furious. This is an insane global dictatorship. And here are the people's names. Again, they are not US citizens, they are Venezuelan and Colombian. They were charged in an indictment for their alleged roles in laundering the proceeds of a so-called bribery scheme to obtain and retain contracts through the Comité Local. It's the Comité Local de Abastecimiento y Producción (CLAP), that is the local committees for food and production, the CLAP programme, a Venezuelan state owned and state controlled food and medicine distribution programme for the people of Venezuela. They admit that this is about their contracts to get food and medicine for the people of Venezuela, for the Venezuelan government. This is the US Department of "In"justice, this global dictatorship admitting, again, just as the US special envoy on Iran admitted that Washington's explicitly stated goal is to make Iranians go hungry and to destroy their economy, this is the US rogue regime admitting that its goal is to prevent Venezuelans from having food and medicine. This is beyond criminal, we are talking about a global dictatorship. And anyone who claims to have a progressive bone in their body, anyone who claims to support sovereignty, or even a modicum of human rights, of the rights of countries to be able to live freely, needs to oppose this global dictatorship that Washington exercises. It is a global dictatorship. There is no other term for it. And we see this so clearly in another very related issue, which is the announcement this October, this past week, that the US rogue regime has successfully extradited, that is kidnapped, a Venezuelan diplomat. And in this photo here on the right, you can see his name is Alex Saab, who is now being extradited, he is a Venezuelan diplomat being extradited to the United States. And what was his so-called crime? Again the US government, the US rogue regime claims his so-called crime was money laundering because Washington claims that anyone that violates its illegal unilateral sanctions that are illegal under international law is guilty of so-called money laundering. Here in this photo, you can see, this is an article we published at the Grayzone called World Police. It should be called the World Dictator actually. Maybe I should change the title. Washington seeks to imprison foreign businesspeople for violating illegal US Sanctions. Here you can see Meng Wanzhou, who is the CFO of Huawei, who the US was trying to extradite, that is kidnap, to Washington. Again, this is a non-US citizen, to try her, to throw her in a dungeon, in a prison and throw away the key for the so-called crime of so-called money laundering. And what was the so-called money laundering that Huawei supposedly did? It was to sell technology to Iran. So the US global dictatorship says that it has the right to impose illegal unilateral sanctions, which is exactly what the US did in Iran. The US tore up the Iran nuclear deal. It was agreed to by the five permanent members of the Security Council and even its own puppets in the European Union. It was also supported by a UN Security Council resolution. So the US rogue regime unilaterally tore up the nuclear deal with Iran in blatant violation of international law and a UN Security Council resolution. And

then, now the US government says that it has these so-called right to imprison anyone in the entire world that does business with Iran. Because the US dictatorship imposed sanctions on Iran in violation of international law and the nuclear deal that it originally helped broker. I mean, I just can't- if this happened in a sci-fi movie, people would say it's too on the nose. This is a global dictatorship. There's no other term. The US is the most authoritarian regime on planet Earth. There is no parallel because despite how authoritarian even whatever, talk about whatever you want to say about North Korea or whatever, none of these countries claim to be able- the right to imprison a US citizen for violating North Korean law. Imagine if Syria said we want to imprison US top officials for violating our domestic law for, I mean, this would be a much more justified claim. What if the Syrian government said, the US government, including President Barack Obama, including President Donald Trump, supported fascist death squads, al Qaeda and Isis in our country. Head shopping, Salafi jihadist, fascist death squads that massacred our people, that took over territory, that stole property of the government, that committed genocide against ethnic and religious minorities from the Shia community and the Druze community and the Christian community, that enslaved women into sex trafficking, that put Alawite women in cages. Those are all facts. Those are all things that the US government supported in its dirty war on Syria for the past ten years, and it's still supporting. What if the Syrian government wanted to try and imprison US government officials in its own prisons? Now, that would honestly be much more justified than what the US government is trying to do. The US rogue regime. But of course, Washington would laugh and say, What authority? What right does Syria have to imprison US nationals? Well to extradite, kidnap and then imprison US nationals. That is exactly what the US rogue regime is doing. And the explicitly stated goal of these policies is to make the Venezuelan people, the Iranian people, the Syrian people, the Nicaraguan people, the Yemeni people, the people of Zimbabwe, the people of now, Eritrea and Ethiopia, the US government wants them to suffer. It wants them to go hungry. It wants them to not have medicine. This is a global dictatorship and we need to be talking about that. We need to be speaking against it, because for me, I can't think of an issue that's more important. This is the most important issue. Especially if you're a US citizen like I am. I mean, it is, it is absolutely incredible and the last note I'm going to end on before I end the segment talking about how Washington wants to make people suffer, starve, go hungry and die. And US sanctions, according to a report from the Centre for Economic and Policy Research, CEPR, US sanctions have already resulted in the deaths of more than 40000 civilians in Venezuela, and that's a conservative estimate because they can't get access to medicine. The former UN special rapporteur Alfred de Zayas has said that actually there's probably more than one hundred thousand Venezuelans who have died because of sanctions. And meanwhile, the US just kidnapped Venezuelan diplomat Alex Saab because of the so-called crime of him going to Iran to buy food and medicine for the Venezuelan people. The last thing I'm going to end on here is that this policy is not even new, every single US president since the 1960s has carried out this policy of trying to starve, Cubans specifically, to bring about, as they say, hunger, desperation and overthrow of government, that is the explicitly stated goal of the US dictatorship, the US rogue regime. Here is a document directly from the US Office of the Historian. This is the US

State Department. This is a diplomatic cable, an internal diplomatic cable, a memo from the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs back in 1960, the beginning of the US blockade on Cuba that has gone on over 60 years now. This cable shows, I'm going to actually put this, I'm going to zoom in more so people can see, this is official evidence directly from the mouth of the US government. It admits that back in 1960, the majority of Cubans supported Fidel Castro and the socialist revolution in Cuba, and there was no effective political opposition. So they say, this is the US State Department admitting explicitly quote, the only foreseeable means of alienating internal support is through disenchantment and disaffection based on economic dissatisfaction and hardship. This is the US government admitting that it wants to create economic dissatisfaction and hardship. The US rogue regime wants to make the Cuban people suffer, and they say, quote, every possible means should be undertaken promptly to weaken the economic life of Cuba. This is, Washington wants to weaken the economic life of Cubans and quote, make the greatest inroads in denying money and supplies to Cuba to decrease monetary and real wages to bring about hunger, desperation and overthrow of government. This is Washington admitting from the mouth of the US State Department that its goal is to bring about hunger, desperation and overthrow of government in Cuba. That has been the policy since 1960, it is still the policy against Cuba today and now it's also the policy against Venezuela and Iran and Yemen and Zimbabwe and Nicaragua and Syria and so many countries. This is a global dictatorship, and the most important thing that you can do is organise against that global dictatorship. The US is in no way resembling a democracy. The US is a dictatorship in terms of the one percent, in terms of the capitalist elites from Wall Street who control all of the wealth, who control politics, have politicians eating out of their hands, the vast majority of people in the Senate, almost all of them are millionaires, and the majority in the Congress, in the House, are millionaires as well. So not only is the US a fake democracy, a plutocracy, a capitalist dictatorship domestically, on the international stage it is a rogue regime, a dictatorship that believes it has the right to imprison anyone it wants in the world, including journalists like Julian Assange, who's being tortured in a British prison right now because the US rogue regime claims that he violated its domestic national law. So the US rogue regime, the US dictatorship is trying to kidnap, that is, extradite, kidnap Julian Assange, an Australian national, and throw him in a dungeon in the US rogue regime. After a show trial, a kangaroo court. That's what they're going to do now to Alex Saab, a Venezuelan diplomat who was just trying to get food for the Venezuelan people. That is what they tried to do to Meng Wanzhou, but did not succeed, the Chinese Huawei executive. That's what they're also trying to do right now against a North Korean executive, a North Korean businessman rather, in Malaysia. The US is trying to kidnap a North Korean businessman in Malaysia and extradite him, kidnap him and send him to the US to be thrown into prison for violating its sanctions on North Korea. There's no other word for this, it's a global dictatorship. And if you're not opposing the world's global dictatorship, then I guess you don't actually care about freedom. I guess you don't actually care about human rights. And it really shows the insane hypocrisy of the US government talking about freedom and human rights while supporting all of these horrific regimes, the Saudi dictatorship, that blood soaked narco dictatorship in Colombia and then

trying to imprison anyone it wants anywhere around the world for violating its arbitrary laws written by a bunch of billionaires and corporations.

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