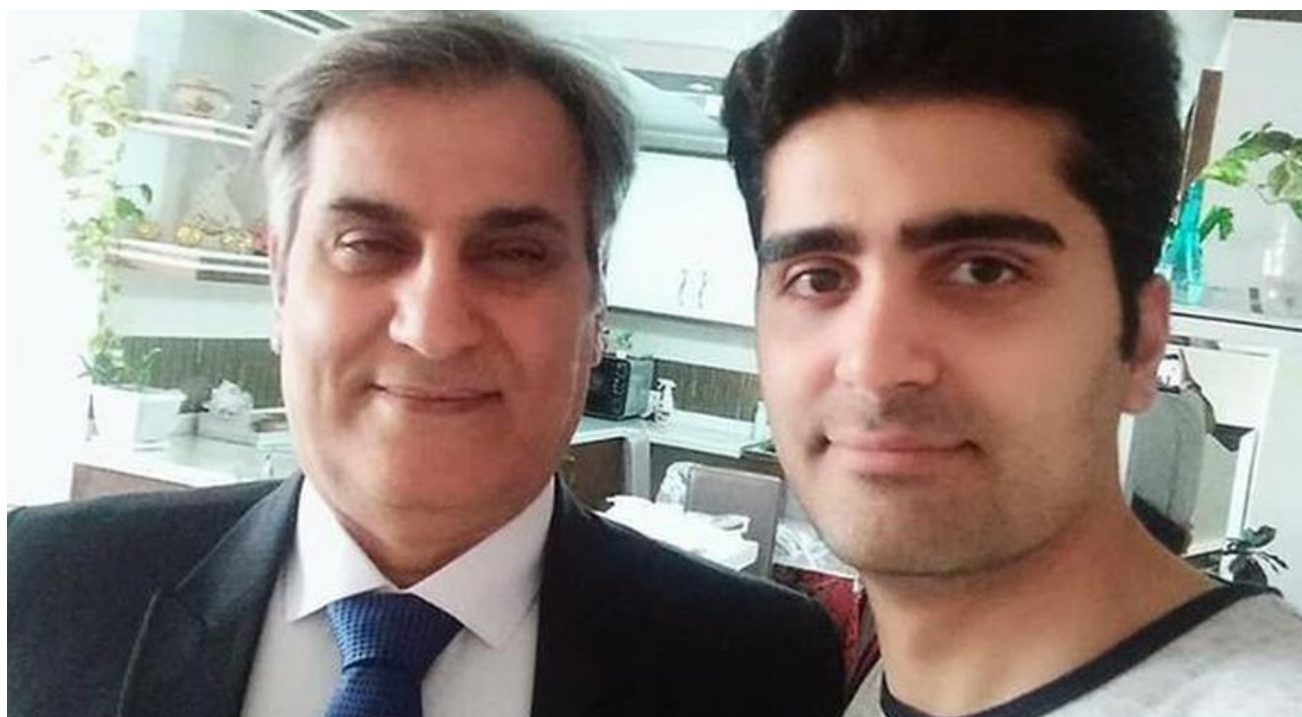


# Iranian Whose Son was Murdered by the Regime: Sanctions Relief Will Aid the Mullahs, Not the People

by Hugh Fitzgerald



An Iranian father whose son was murdered by Iran's security forces last November while protesting against a rise in gas prices has a message for the world. While some American politicians, such as Ilhan Omar and Bernie Sanders, have "demanded" that President Trump lift sanctions on Iran "because of the coronavirus," Manouchehr Bakhtiari urges quite the opposite: he asks that there be no lifting of sanctions because he knows what the regime will spend most of its restored revenue on.

The story is from the [Jerusalem Post](#):

*Manouchehr Bakhtiari, whose son Pouya was gunned down by the*

*security of forces of the Islamic Republic for his protest against rising gasoline prices, urged on Friday that sanctions relief not be provided to Tehran's rulers.*

*"If sanctions are lifted, the regime will sell oil and other natural resources of Iran to buy guns to kill our children with them," said Manouchehr Bakhtiari.*

*The Iranian human rights activist and dissident Masih Alinejad tweeted on Friday: "He is the father of Pouya Bakhtiyari, a young Iranian mercilessly killed by the Revolutionary Guards during Iran Protests of November 2019.*

*"He asked me to relay this video to Persian-speaking and international news outlets.*

*"He has a few words on sanctions on the Islamic Republic."*

*Bakhtiari said in the video that "The regime will spend that money [from a lifting of American sanctions] on relatives of officials. They will spend the money in Iraq, Yemen, Lebanon and Palestine. They will not spend it on Iranians," adding that "any money the Islamic Republic receives, it spends it on its own needs rather than on the people."*

As Bakhtiari knows, and Omar and Sanders do not, the men who rule Iran have only two interests. One is their own economic well-being. The Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, has amassed the hallucinatory fortune of \$95 billion; lesser leaders, including clerics and IRGC leaders, have managed to acquire tens of millions of dollars apiece. Colossal sums have been diverted from the national treasury into the pockets of these grasping theocrats and generals. The protests that began last November were not only against a surprise rise in the prices of gasoline, but even more widely, a cry of rage against the massive corruption. The regime, Bakhtiari warns the West, "will spend that money on relatives of officials," that is, after they have first diverted goodly sums to

themselves, they like to take care of their extended family.

For the Iranian regime, the second great expenditure is buying weapons for, and otherwise supporting, the fighters who belong to Iran's proxies and allies abroad. These include the Houthi rebels in Yemen, the Shi'a militias in Iraq, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Gaza, and Bashar al-Assad's Alawite forces in Syria. Despite the plummeting Iranian revenues, the financial support for foreign adventurism has been the last item on the budget (Grand Theft by the rulers is an off-line item) to suffer cuts. The continued creation of a Shi'a crescent is more important to the clerics than relieving the economic anguish of the Iranian people.

*He noted that "If the international community and the UN really want to help Iranians, they should help directly. I ask the World Health Organization to designate a representative in Iran and help Iranians directly."*

The WHO could supply testing kits, PPE (masks, gloves, gowns), and ventilators directly to Iranian hospitals and medical personnel, instead of handing hundreds of millions of dollars to the Tehran government, and trusting it to spend that money on what it was intended for – the health care system. Mr. Bakhtiari is sure that Tehran would spend that money, or most of it, not on medical care but, as it has been doing for years, on allies and proxies in Yemen, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and "Palestine."

Would Iran allow the WHO to distribute its medical supplies directly? The first instinct of the regime in Tehran is to furiously resist any demands from the outside world. But if the World Health Organization stands firm, and does not relent in demanding that it be allowed to distribute Personal Protective Equipment (masks, gloves, gowns), and medical equipment (including ventilators) directly to hospitals and medical staff without the regime's interference, Iran will

have to acquiesce. That will happen sooner if the cases continue to spike upwards. The Iranian regime claims, as of mid-April, that there are 66,220 confirmed cases and 4,110 deaths, but opposition groups claim that the real figures have been covered up, alleging that more than 20,000 have died. For the regime, tens of thousands more deaths from coronavirus, and protests by Iranians against the refusal of their leaders to allow WHO to distribute its medical supplies directly, would be a nightmare scenario, with unforeseeable, and possibly regime-changing, results.

Mr. Bakhtiari, having lost his son, has nothing further to lose and in his despair is determined to tell the truth. He knows that the lifting of sanctions would bring increased revenues to Iran, but only very little of that would be applied by this grasping and cruel regime to health care for the people. He has lived under that regime for forty years and observed its priorities. First come the colossal handouts for the leaders, and fat sinecures for their family members, of a size that would make even Tammany Hall blush. The biggest crooks in the Western world could never rival Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, with his \$95 billion fortune. Second, vast sums will go to supplying weapons, and giving financial support, to Houthis, Hezbollah, the Syrian army, the Shia militias in Iraq and even – a special exception to the general Shi'a-only rule – money for the Sunnis in Hamas, given that they are involved in the most important Jihad of all, that waged against the "Zionists." And only then would the regime's attention be focussed on the coronavirus pandemic, and what's left in the government coffers would be used to buy those masks, those gloves, those medical gowns and even, perhaps, a few dozen ventilators.

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