

UN General Assembly calls on U.S. to lift restrictions on Iranian diplomats



United Nations, December 20 (RHC)-- The United Nations General Assembly has passed a resolution calling on the United States, the host of its headquarters, to lift restrictions on Iranian diplomats. The resolution was proposed by Cyprus on behalf of Canada, Bulgaria, Costa Rica and Ivory Coast, and approved by consensus without being put to a vote on Wednesday.

The resolution also condemned the denial of visas to Russian diplomats. The text of the resolution does not specifically name any country, but diplomats say it was mainly aimed at lifting restrictions imposed on Iran, as well as the visa denials to Russia's delegation during last September's General Assembly.

The UNGA resolution "urges the host country to remove all remaining travel restrictions imposed by it on staff of certain missions and staff members of the secretariat of certain nationalities," the resolution reads. It also says that the UN "takes seriously" the travel restrictions and arguments of the "two Missions" that say they are hindered in their functions, the text added.

Since the summer, the U.S. has imposed strict movement restrictions on Iranian diplomats and ministers during their visit to the United States. They are limited largely to the area around the UN headquarters in

New York, the Iranian mission and the residence of the country's ambassador to the UN.

In September, the U.S. rejected a request by Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif to visit Iranian Ambassador to the United Nations Majid Takht-Ravanchi, who was being treated for cancer in a hospital in New York.

Due to U.S. sanctions and travel restrictions placed on Zarif in July, the foreign minister could only travel between the John F. Kennedy airport and a limited area surrounding the UN building in New York.

Travel restrictions targeting Iran's top diplomat were also imposed on other Iranian diplomats and their families in New York. The measure, described as "basically inhuman" by Zarif, is part of a growing list of measures adopted by the Trump administration in a bid impose "maximum pressure" on Tehran.

The UN General Assembly resolution also "expresses serious concern regarding the non-issuance of entry visas to certain representatives of certain Member States," referring to 18 Russian diplomats who were denied U.S. visas, also in September. They were supposed to participate in various UN committees until December, and the visa refusals have led to work delays for the concerned committees.

The United Nations is considering the possibility of hosting sessions in the Geneva or Vienna headquarters in 2020 if the problem continues.

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