

Washington imposes fresh sanctions on Iran amid coronavirus outbreak



Washington, March 18 (RHC)-- The United States has announced a new round of sanctions against Iran as part of its so-called "maximum pressure" campaign against the Islamic Republic. U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Tuesday that Washington had blacklisted three Iranian entities for engaging in what he called "significant transactions" to trade in Iranian petrochemicals.

While he did not name any firms or individuals, Pompeo said the measure included blacklisting Iran's armed forces social security investment company and its director for investing in the sanctioned entities.

In a separate statement, the U.S. Commerce Department also said it would boycott a number of entities, including five Iranian nuclear scientists, for aiding Tehran's nuclear program.

President Donald Trump reinstated U.S. sanctions on Iran in May 2018 after he unilaterally left the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), signed between Iran and major world powers.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) — known as the World Court — has ordered the US to lift the sanctions it has illegally re-imposed on humanitarian supplies to Iran. Over the past weeks, calls have been growing on the world stage for the US to lift its illegal sanctions, which have severely affected Iran's healthcare systems at a time when all countries are trying to join forces against the pandemic.

The new sanctions come as China and Russia, in particular, have urged the U.S. to remove its sanctions on Tehran since the restrictions could interfere with Iran's efforts to contain the coronavirus outbreak in the country.

The coronavirus, which causes a respiratory disease known as COVID-19, emerged in the central Chinese city of Wuhan in Hubei Province late last year and is currently affecting more than 160 countries and territories across the globe. It has so far infected over 180,000 people and killed more than 7,400 others.

In Iran, the total number of infections has reached 16,169. Also, the fatality count increased on Tuesday to 988, with 135 news deaths, according to the latest figures provided by the Health Ministry. A total of 5,389 patients have fully recovered.

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