

Envoy to Madrid says Iran can't buy medical items from abroad



Madrid, March 23 (RHC)-- Tehran's ambassador to Madrid says Iran is the only country in the world that cannot buy medicine and medical equipment from the global market because of America's "cruel and inhumane" sanctions, which are hindering the country's fight against a coronavirus outbreak.

Hassan Qashqavi made the remarks in an interview with Spain's La Razon newspaper. He further said that any banking transaction requires permission from the U.S. Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), which blocks foreign firms from engaging in transactions and trade with countries on the US's sanctions list.

The Iranian official described the bans as an "outright cruelty and a serious violation of humanitarian principles by a bullying and unilateralist power." The Americans have taken advantage of the coronavirus outbreak to make the "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran more effective, he said.

By using "unfounded and fabricated" news and spreading rumors through their affiliated media empire, including the anti-Iran Persian-language media based abroad, the Americans are working hard to divert the world's public opinion from their inhumane acts, he said.

The virus first emerged in China last December and later spread to other countries in all continents. Iran has reported 1,284 fatalities and 1,8407 cases of infection so far. Over 5,970 people have also recovered.

Similarly, Head of the Iranian Judiciary's High Council for Human Rights Ali Baqeri Kani slammed Washington's anti-Iran sanctions and bullying, saying most of the European countries are abiding by the bans, which are throwing a wrench in the Islamic Republic's fight against COVID-19.

The Europeans who claim to be advocates of human rights should be ashamed of their behavior at a time when Iran is grappling with the fast-spreading-virus, he said. "The countries that do not cooperate with Iran in the coronavirus issue should be aware that they will be the cause of the spread and the international community should not remain silent on it," he said.

Meanwhile, Iran's Ambassador to Pakistan Mohammad Ali Hosseini, called on the international community to take actions against U.S. anti-Iran sanctions. "Leaders of world states, particularly those in the region, should immediately react to America's bullying measures and sanctions, which have blocked the Iranian nation's access to medical supplies," he said in an article published in Pakistani press on Thursday.

Meanwhile, a senior official with the International Committee of the Red Cross raised alarm at the "massive impact" the virus on Iranians in a tweet on Wednesday.

Separately, the Lebanese al-Mayadeen television channel quoted Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO) Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus as saying that Washington has agreed to remove part of sanctions against Iran.

The WHO's chief said that he had stressed Iran's need for protection against the coronavirus during a Tuesday phone conversation with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. The U.S. has agreed to suspend certain parts of the bans, particularly in the banking sector, during the global emergency situation, he said.

Meanwhile, Mike Ryan, executive director of the WHO's emergencies program, said that the organization would constantly continue its cooperation with Iran. He further called on the world nations to refrain from politicizing the crisis.

Iranian officials say the continued imposition of sanctions on Iran is contrary to the spirit of humanitarianism. Hundreds of thousands of trained foot soldiers, volunteers, public health workers and specialists have been dispatched to affected regions up and down the country to identify people with this new infectious disease.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has ordered the US to lift the sanctions it has illegally re-imposed on humanitarian supplies to Iran. The U.S. claims it does not get in the way of food and medicine exports to Iran, but Tehran says Washington has been creating problems for a Swiss humanitarian channel launched to enable the transfer of commodities to Iran.

Over the past weeks, calls have been growing on the world stage for the U.S. to lift its illegal sanctions amid the coronavirus pandemic. Many governments say the sanctions regime had severely affected Iran's healthcare system at a time when all countries need to join forces against the pandemic.

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