

# *Washington slaps more sanctions on Iran, instead of alleviating suffering from COVID-19*

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Tehran, March 27 (RHC)-- The U.S. Treasury Department has slapped fresh sanctions on Iran, accusing several Iranian firms of aiding terrorism. Meanwhile, Tehran and the UN have called for the easing of sanctions amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Treasury sanctioned 15 individuals and five companies on Thursday, accusing them of supporting and acting “on behalf of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps-Qods Force,” considered by Washington to be a terrorist organization. Three construction companies, a petrochemical firm and a religious organization are included on the list.

The sanctions come as Iran’s death toll from the COVID-19 coronavirus passes 2,000. Nearly 30,000 people in the Islamic Republic have been infected in Iran, which is among the worst-hit countries in the world by the deadly illness.

As part of its “maximum pressure” campaign against the government in Tehran, the Trump administration has applied over one thousand individual Iran-related sanctions since its withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA, or Iran nuclear deal) in 2018.

However, UN Human Rights Commissioner Michelle Bachelet called for the easing of these penalties on Tuesday, given the ongoing pandemic. “It is vital to avoid the collapse of any country’s medical system – given the explosive impact that will have on death, suffering and wider contagion,” Bachelet said in a statement. “In a context of global pandemic, impeding medical efforts in one country heightens the risk for all of us.”

U.S. President Donald Trump offered at the beginning of this month to help Iran deal with its COVID-19 outbreak, should Tehran request aid. Iranian President Hassan Rouhani called this offer disingenuous though, citing American sanctions as impeding his people’s access to vital medical care. “When the Americans say they are ready to help Iran against the coronavirus, it is one of the greatest lies in history,” Rouhani emphasized. “If they want to help Iran, all they need to do is to lift sanctions,” the Iranian leader said.

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