

Iranian foreign minister says U.S. blocking Iran's payment of UN membership dues

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Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif. (Photo: ILNA)

Tehran, January 24 (RHC)-- Iran's foreign minister says the government has allocated funds for the payment of its dues to the United Nations, but Washington is preventing Tehran from paying its contributions.

Mohammad Javad Zarif said Iran's unpaid membership contributions are the only reason the UN General Assembly has stripped the country of its right to vote. "We should have paid \$16 million to settle our debts to the UN and secure our right to vote. The government allocated the fund, and urged that the country's frozen assets in South Korea be used [to pay the debts], but the US blocked the payment to the UN account," Zarif told the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA).

Earlier this week, the spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry said the country has regularly paid its UN membership contributions despite unilateral sanctions imposed by the United States on Tehran, which have made financial transactions difficult for the Islamic Republic. "During recent years, despite restrictions caused by unilateral U.S. sanctions, the Islamic Republic of Iran has always used few remaining financial channels to pay its UN membership dues," Saeed Khatibzadeh said.

During the current year, he added, Iran has been in talks with the United Nations treasury, urging the world body to introduce a safe transaction channel after the U.S. blocked the previous channels used by the Islamic Republic to transfer money. "Our country's latest proposal [to the UN] in this regard was to settle arrears using the country's frozen assets in South Korea," Khatibzadeh said, noting that Iran's Central Bank has authorized the option and negotiations on using it are underway with the UN secretariat.

The Foreign Ministry spokesman emphasized that Iran had urged the UN not to use an American bank as the "intermediary" for transfer of the funds because of the bleak history of the US in encroaching on Iran's international assets, or the world body should guarantee security of the transaction channel.

Under Article 19 of the Charter of the United Nations, a member state in arrears in the payment of its dues in an amount that equals or exceeds the contributions due for two preceding years can lose its vote in the General Assembly.

According to a statement by the UN General Assembly, as of 13 January 2021, ten member states are subject to the provisions of Article 19 of the Charter, which include Iran, Central African Republic, Comoros, Congo, Libya, Niger, Sao Tome and Principe, Somalia, South Sudan and Zimbabwe.

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