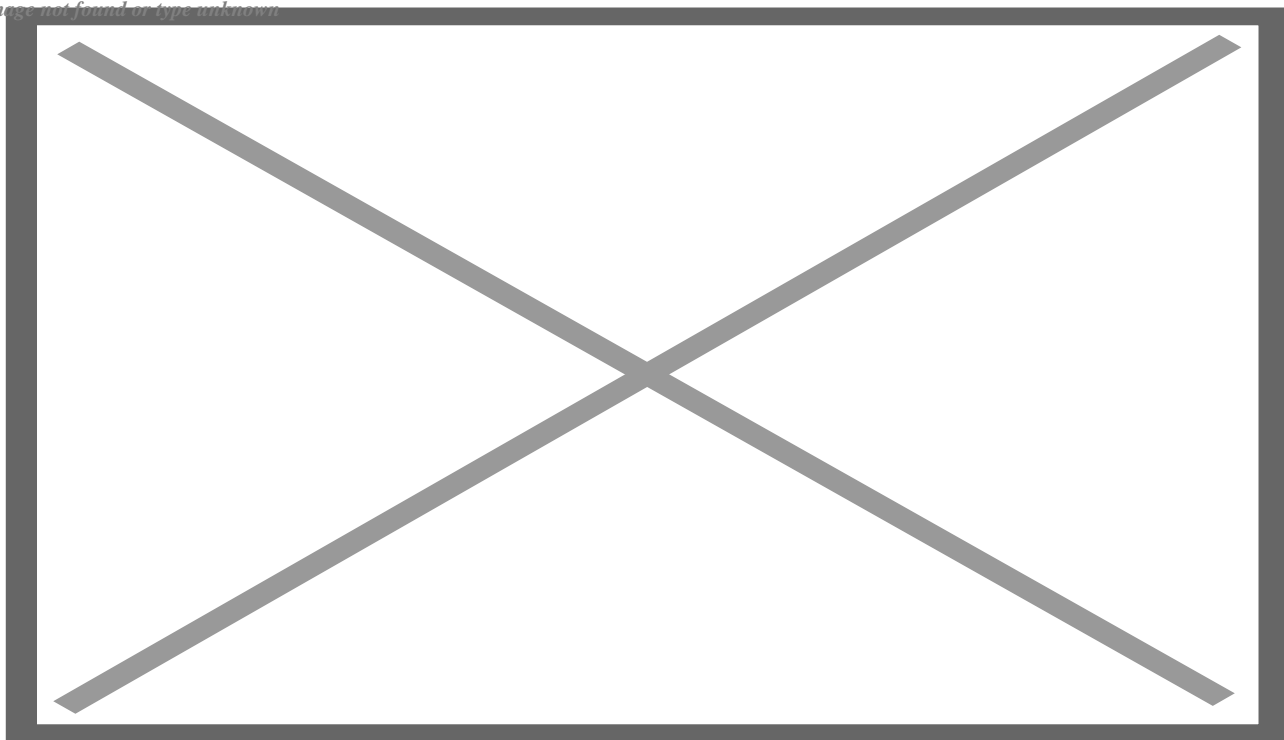


Iran calls on Argentina to release crew of plane held at Ezeiza

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Workers of the Venezuelan airline Conviasa demonstrate in front of the headquarters of the Embassy of Argentina in Caracas (Venezuela). | Photo: EFE / Ronald Pena

Tehran, August 16 (RHC)-- The Iranian government has called on Argentina to release the crew of a Venezuelan plane, presently in Argentinean territory. The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman requested that the seven people detained, including the pilot of the plane, be allowed to leave the country.

Speaking to the press, Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said: "We hope that the Argentinean authorities will not allow themselves to be subjected to pressure from the United States and the Zionist regime (of Israel) and will facilitate the immediate departure of the Iranian citizens."

The spokesman referred to the confiscation of a plane in Argentina, noting that the aircraft belongs to Venezuela because it was sold to Caracas based on international mechanisms, including the laws of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), so the United States claim on possession of the airplane by the Islamic Republic is unfounded.

However, he noted that releasing five Iranians on board the plane is of great importance for Tehran because they have been under arrest for around 80 days while they have done nothing wrong. Still, an Argentinean court has extended the trial procedure several times.

For its part, the Venezuelan government had also criticized the hijacking of the aircraft. The vice-president of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), Diosdado Cabello, demanded on behalf of Nicolás Maduro's administration: "We do not want that plane in five years; we want it now because that plane belongs to Venezuela."

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