

# *Iranian foreign minister says U.S. vengefully refusing to lift sanctions*

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Tehran, March 18 (RHC)-- Iran has lashed out at Washington for “vengefully” refusing to lift its “unlawful and collective punishment” amid the country’s battle against the COVID-19 outbreak, stressing all countries need to work together if they seek to emerge victorious against the fatal pandemic.

On the occasion of Nowruz, the Persian New Year, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif released a video on Wednesday to congratulate the Iranian nation, which is under Washington's tough sanctions and among the hardest-hit by the coronavirus, a happy and healthy year.

“At a time when we, Iranians, normally celebrate Nowruz, our New Year concurrent with the arrival of spring, we are faced with multiple and historic challenges. My country is among the hardest-hit by the coronavirus even as like other nations we are now learning how to better confront it,” he said.

Zarif added that the huge part of the danger Iranians are facing now is due to restrictions “unjustly” imposed on them by the United States government. “Iran, today, is the most intensely sanctioned country in history, not in line with United Nations decisions but contrary to them. The economic siege imposed on us impedes all legitimate trade and deprives us of our own resources -- the ones necessary to address

the needs of our people, including their health and livelihoods,” he noted.

Iran's top diplomat criticized Washington's draconian policy of maximum pressure against Iran, saying: “Even amid this pandemic, the US government has vengefully refused to lift its unlawful and collective punishment, making it virtually impossible for us to even buy medicine and medical equipment.”

He also took aim at other countries for bowing to U.S. pressures and said: “The bigger tragedy is that many companies and countries who officially opposed these sanctions have chosen to comply with them, perhaps in hopes of avoiding the future wrath of the United States despite President Trump time and again proving that this is just wishful thinking.”

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