

Iranian foreign minister says Washington's sanctions show utter contempt for human life



Tehran, March 21 (RHC)-- Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif accused the U.S. of taking its policy of “maximum pressure” on Tehran to a “new level of inhumanity” by imposing new sanctions on Iran as it struggles to cope with a huge surge of COVID-19 cases.

Zarif tweeted that the Donald Trump administration was “gleefully” taking pride in “killing Iranian citizens” on Nowruz, the Persian New Year, celebrated on March 20th this year. He said U.S. policy betrayed an “utter contempt for human life.”

His rebuke comes shortly after the U.S. blacklisted five companies based in the United Arab Emirates for trading in Iranian petrochemicals. Three companies in China, three in Hong Kong and one in South Africa were also added to the list this week, as Washington attempts to choke off Tehran's oil revenues.

"Washington's increased pressure against Iran is a crime against humanity... all the world should help each other to overcome this disease," Reuters quoted an Iranian official as saying on Friday. “Our policy of maximum pressure on the regime continues,” U.S. special representative for Iran Brian Hook told reporters, even though Iran is the worst-hit country in the Middle East by the Covid-19 coronavirus

outbreak and may face economic catastrophe as a result.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Friday that the U.S. has imposed “no sanctions” on medication or humanitarian assistance going into Iran. However, U.S. financial sanctions have in effect prevented Tehran from buying the necessary supplies, while shipping sanctions have interfered with humanitarian deliveries.

China has called on the US to offer sanctions relief to Iran, with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Beijing tweeting that the policy was “against humanitarianism and hampers Iran's epidemic response,” as well as deliveries of aid by the UN and other organizations.

Iran has seen at least 1,400 deaths from Covid-19 so far, with more than 19,000 confirmed cases. A health ministry spokesperson said on Wednesday that one person in Iran was now dying "every 10 minutes" from the virus, with 50 new infections every hour.

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