

U.S. medical sanctions on Iran amid coronavirus pandemic threat to world health



Geneva, April 6 (RHC)-- Medical sanctions by the U.S. government against the Islamic Republic amount to an "unprecedented threat" to global public health, says a senior Iranian diplomat, urging the international community to react in earnest to Washington's restrictions amid the deadly coronavirus pandemic.

In a letter to Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO) Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Iran's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN office in Geneva Esmail Baqaei Hamaneh said imposition of the cruel and illegal sanctions on Iran, which has resulted in the ordinary Iranian people being denied access to medicine and medical equipment and services, clearly exemplifies a crime against humanity.

He added that the sanctions have blocked Iran's banking interaction with other countries in order to buy commodities required in the fight against the coronavirus and warned that the illegal restrictions are a serious threat to Tehran's efforts to battle and contain the virus.

The Iranian envoy stressed the importance of rolling back international sanctions regimes around the world as emphasized by United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres. In a letter to the G-20 economic powers, Guterres said the sanctions are heightening the health risks for millions of people and weakening the global containment endeavor. "I am encouraging the waiving of sanctions imposed on countries to ensure access to food, essential health supplies, and COVID-19 medical support. This is the time for solidarity not exclusion," the UN chief wrote.

"Let us remember that we are only as strong as the weakest health system in our interconnected world."

Elsewhere in his letter, Baqaei Hamaneh said the intensification of U.S. economic and banking restrictions on Iran amidst the pandemic runs counter to international regulations, adding that the White House shoulders an international responsibility in this regard.

The United States has refused to lift sanctions on Iran and even tightened them several times in recent weeks, making it almost impossible for the Islamic Republic to access life-saving medications and medical equipment.

In a letter to the Trump administration, a group of U.S. lawmakers call for the suspension of anti-Iran sanctions amid a global battle against the coronavirus pandemic. Iran says the unilateral U.S. sanctions have seriously hampered its fight against the pandemic.

The disease has so far killed 3,294 people and infected 53,183 others in Iran. A total of 17,935 people have also recovered while 4,035 are under observation.

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Monday that U.S. "medical terrorism" against Iranians through imposing toughest ever sanctions on the country is leading to a "humanitarian catastrophe" as it makes it "impossible" for ordinary people to have access to essential drugs.

"The illegal blockade of Iran's financial resources by the sweeping U.S. sanctions makes access to drugs and medical equipment impossible," Zarif said, adding: "This is leading to a humanitarian catastrophe."

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