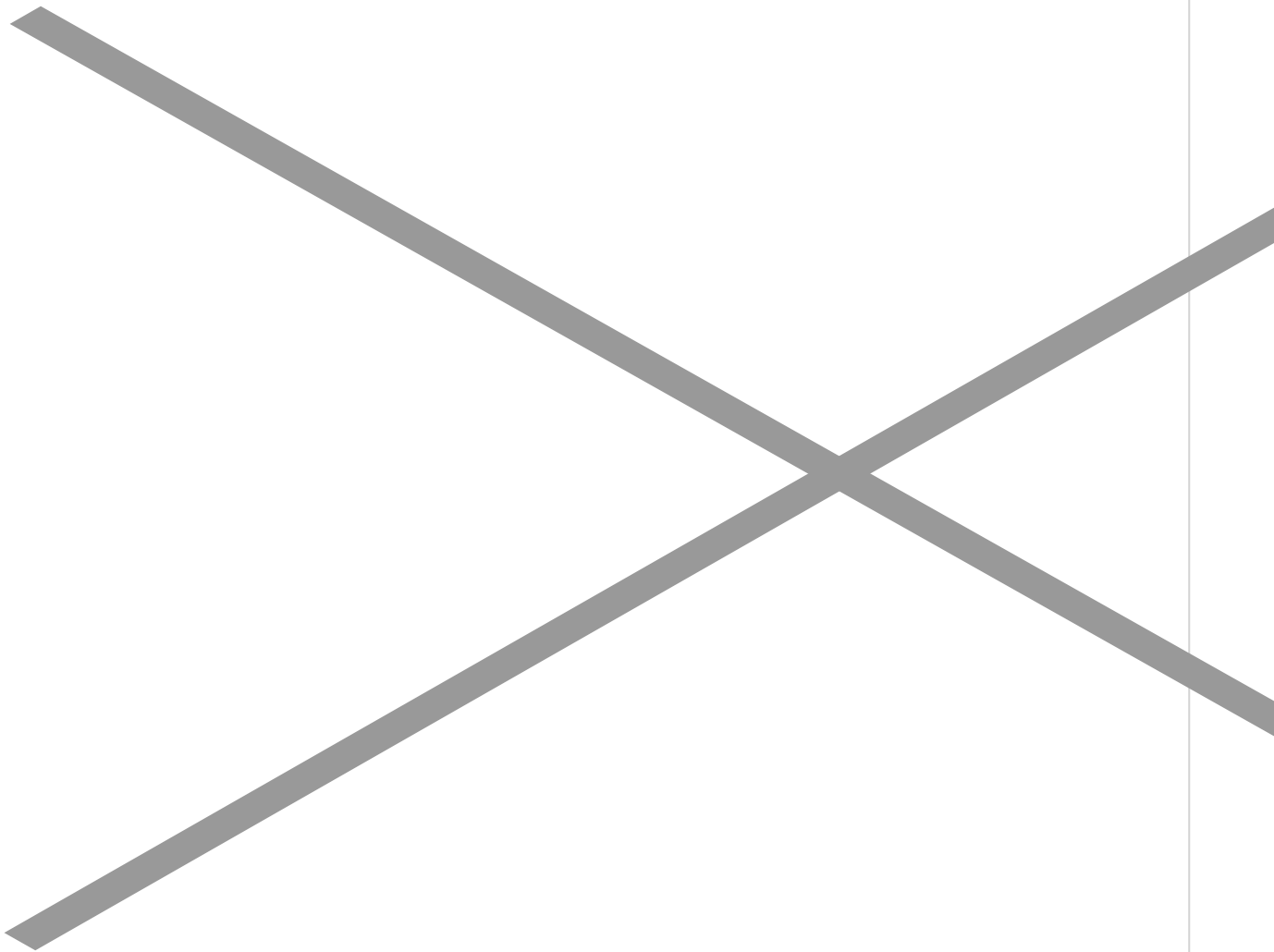


*Iranian Foreign Ministry
condemns U.S. blocking of
financial resources as illegal and
inhumane*

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Tehran, September 19 (RHC)-- Iran's Foreign Ministry has slammed different American administrations for barring the Islamic Republic's access to its foreign assets in other countries, describing the move as both illegal and inhumane.

The ministry's Monday statement came after Iran and the United States agreed to free five prisoners each as part of a deal that also included the release of billions of Iranian assets, which were illegally frozen in South Korea under the pretext of US sanctions.

The funds, owed to Iran for exports of oil and gas, had been frozen in South Korean bank accounts since 2018 after the administration of then President Donald Trump pulled the US from a landmark nuclear deal with Iran, further aggravating tensions with Tehran.

Informed sources tell Press TV that 2 out of 5 Iranians held by the US are now in the Qatari capital of Doha as part of a prisoner swap deal between Tehran and Washington. "Undoubtedly, the policies and actions of different administrations in the US in preventing Iran's free and legitimate access to its financial resources in other countries are illegal and inhumane," the ministry said.

The statement also took to task those countries that gave in to US pressures and froze Iran's foreign assets illegally, saying they must make up for the financial losses inflicted on Iran as a result of the long-term freezing of the country's assets.

"The illegal move of the US to abuse the international banking system and put pressure on other countries to limit Iran's access to its assets does not in any way mean that the governments where these assets are kept have no responsibility in this regard," the ministry said.

The Central Bank of Iran governor has confirmed that the Islamic Republic's released funds totaling \$6 billion have now been transferred to Qatari banks. It added: "Those governments must be held to account for their unjustified move to comply with the illegal demands of the U.S. government, the financial losses inflicted on Iran as a result of the long-term freezing of Iranian assets, and its humanitarian consequences, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic."

The statement stipulated that the unblocked assets "are under the control of the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran and will be used at the discretion of relevant Iranian authorities and based on the country's needs and priorities."

The ministry concluded its statement by thanking the government of Qatar "for playing an effective role in transferring the assets of Iran and exchanging the prisoners," while appreciating "the valuable efforts of the Sultanate of Oman to advance this process and also the Swiss government's cooperation and assistance in facilitating all this."

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