

World officials say U.S. sanctions devastate Iran's healthcare system



Washington, April 7 (RHC)-- A group of 24 senior diplomats and defense officials have called on U.S. President Donald Trump to make a targeted effort to ease Washington's rules, which prevent Tehran from trading in medical and humanitarian goods, in order to save "potentially hundreds of thousands of lives" across the Middle East amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

In a statement on Monday, the group said the move "could potentially save the lives of hundreds of thousands of ordinary Iranians and, by helping to curb the virus's rapid spread across borders, the lives of its neighbors, Europeans, Americans and others," The Guardian reported.

Former EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini, former director general of the World Health Organization Gro Harlem Brundtland, four former NATO secretary generals and senior American diplomats in the administrations of George W. Bush, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama are among the main supporters of the call.

Signatories also include former U.S. secretary of state Madeleine Albright, former U.S. defense secretaries William Cohen and Chuck Hagel, former director of the International Atomic Energy Agency

Hans Blix, former U.S. treasury secretary Paul O'Neill, former U.S. lead diplomat on the Iran deal, William Burns, and former NATO secretary general George Robertson.

The statement by the world's former diplomats and officials further said: "Though never intended to kill, U.S. 'maximum pressure' through sanctions on Iran are compromising the performance of the Iranian healthcare system as Iran's outbreak moves into its second month."

It added: "Despite humanitarian exemptions provided under U.S. and international law, these sanctions make the importation of medicine, medical equipment and raw materials needed to produce these goods domestically slower, more expensive, and complicated."

The signatories also urged Trump not to use U.S. voting rights on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) board to disrupt an Iranian request for a \$5 billion (£4 billion) loan and to issue a statement supporting the use of INSTEX, a trade mechanism set up by Britain, France and Germany in 2019 to protect companies doing business with Iran from Washington's sanctions.

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