

Iranian foreign minister says UK complicit in U.S. economic terrorism against Tehran



Tehran, August 5 (RHC)-- Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has condemned the UK for aiding and abetting Washington's "economic terrorism" against Iran. "The UK government has been complicit in the U.S.'s economic terrorism," he told foreign and domestic reporters in Tehran on Monday.

The Iranian top diplomat was referring to British naval forces' seizure of an Iranian-operated supertanker in the Strait of Gibraltar off Spain on July 4. The UK seized the vessel on the allegation that it was carrying Iranian oil to Syria in violation of the European Union's unilateral sanctions on the Arab country. Zarif repeated Tehran's condemnation of the UK seizure as an act of "piracy."

The captain of an Iranian-operated supertanker seized by the UK says British marines used excessive force while detaining the vessel in the Strait of Gibraltar off Spain. Iran has denied that the vessel was heading for Syria, and Spain later said that London had ordered the confiscation at the request of the United States.

Washington has been trying to hamper Iran's international oil sales since leaving a multilateral nuclear agreement with the Islamic Republic and other countries last year and returning the sanctions that the

deal had lifted.

"Economic terrorism is a reality today. It equals targeting ordinary people in the hope that they would implement your policies," Zarif said.

Britain has dispatched three warships to the Persian Gulf after Iranian forces detained a UK-flagged tanker that had collided with an Iranian fishing boat in the Strait of Hormuz and refused to heed its distress calls afterwards.

The top diplomat reminded that the Persian Gulf's security is Iran's responsibility, and asserted that Iran will no longer turn a blind eye to "maritime offences" in the strategic waters.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Zarif said he had been recently sanctioned by the United States after turning down an invitation to the White House by US President Donald Trump. "I was told in New York I would be sanctioned in two weeks unless I accepted that offer, which fortunately I did not," said the Iranian minister.

By imposing the boycott on him, Washington has closed the door to diplomacy, he said, noting, "Sanctioning a foreign minister means failure in talks." Zarif said the era, when the discourse of superpowers and bullying would rule the world is over, Zarif said.

"Our discourse is one of companionship, cooperation and empathy. It is for this reason that the U.S. is alone in the world today," he commented.

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