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Seventy-fifth year****The rule of law at the national and international levels****Global health and foreign policy****Letter dated 12 March 2020 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the
Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations addressed to the
Secretary-General**

I have the honour to transmit to you a letter dated 12 March 2020 from Mohammad Javad Zarif, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on the great urgency that has resulted from the coronavirus pandemic (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 83 and 126, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Eshagh Al Habib
Ambassador
Chargé d'affaires a.i.



Annex to the letter dated 12 March 2020 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I am writing to you concerning a matter of the greatest urgency. As you – and my counterparts across the world – are painfully aware, we are now officially amid a pandemic. Most of us have been affected by the spread of the highly contagious COVID-19 viral disease, with my country among the worst impacted so far.

While the virus ravages our cities and towns, our population – unlike those of other countries affected – suffers under the most severe and indiscriminate campaign of economic terrorism in history, imposed illegally and extraterritorially by the Government of the United States since it reneged on its commitments under Security Council resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#) in May 2018.

Although our medical facilities, doctors, nurses and other health practitioners are among the very finest in the world, we are stymied in our efforts to identify and treat our patients; in combating the spread of the virus; and, ultimately, in defeating it, by the campaign of economic terrorism perpetrated by the Government of the United States.

Beyond targeting our lawful trade with others, the illegal United States sanctions regime has impacted every sector of our economy, all while our people are told by the United States Secretary of State that their Government must submit to an outrageous outside diktat “if they want to eat”. Now, the same shameless United States official has gone as far as publicly holding medicine for Iranians to ransom, conditioning such trade on extraneous and extrajudicial demands.

The Government of the United States’ general collective punishment of the Iranian people – including by depriving them of humanitarian trade, in contravention of repeated sloganeering to the contrary – is clear. What has hitherto, and unfortunately, been less clear to the international community is how United States economic terrorism is specifically – and directly – undermining our efforts to fight the COVID-19 epidemic in Iran, including as follows:

- Illegal United States secondary sanctions have made it increasingly difficult for Iran to export its oil as well as manufactured items, thereby targeting not only the public sector – which must provide subsidized food, medicine and other necessities for the Iranian people, and particularly the most vulnerable segments of the population – but our entire private sector, which provides goods, services and employment for the Iranian people. Through the disgraced and failed policy of “maximum pressure” – i.e., bullying others to refrain from engaging in legitimate trade with Iran sanctioned by Security Council resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#) – the United States is trying to drain and deplete our public as well private sector resources necessary for the very survival of the Iranian people.
- Illegal United States secondary sanctions make it virtually impossible for Iranians and other Iran-based individuals and entities to import medicine and medical equipment; even if foreign suppliers are found and required items can be purchased with our assets abroad, myriad United States shipping, insurance, financial and banking sanctions make such trade non-viable. This is not only a violation of Security Council resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#), but of both general international humanitarian law – amounting to a crime against humanity – as well as the order issued by the International Court of Justice on 3 October 2018.
- Illegal United States secondary sanctions have left thousands of our citizens either stranded abroad or otherwise impacted by severe disruptions to air links with Europe. Indeed, the recent closure of European airports to Iran Air was

wholly unrelated to COVID-19 and rather directly due to United States sanctions preventing the purchase and installation of up-to-date flight planning software. Such cruel measures have left thousands of Iranian families in additional and severe distress at a time of crisis. This again – in addition to multiple violations of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015), International Civil Aviation Organization regulations and international humanitarian law – violates the above-mentioned order issued by the International Court of Justice on 3 October 2018.

- Beyond targeting the livelihoods, access to health care and medicine, as well as travel, of the Iranian people, illegal United States secondary sanctions even rob many of our citizens from accessing information from their own Government about how to deal with COVID-19. Google’s immoral censoring of AC 19 – the new Iranian app designed to help our citizens identify potential virus symptoms – is due to United States economic terrorism, which does not spare Iranian developer accounts, whatever their purpose.

How does the world benefit from the Iranian people being deprived of medicine and access to information about treatment for COVID-19?

Sadly, the outrageous status quo is partly the outcome of inaction on the part of some members of the international community. For instance – and even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic – whether it came to medical disinfectants, syringes or breathing appliances – in fact, all pharmaceutical goods – our imports from Europe, both in value and quantity, are today less than what they were before we implemented the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in good faith in 2016. Imports of medical sterilizers from the European Union alone have dropped by 75 per cent. The same unfortunate trend is apparent in other aspects of our trade with Europe.

It is unconscionable that the Government of the United States has not only increased what it shamefully calls “maximum pressure” on our people – just as the virus has spread and is killing our most vulnerable citizens – but that it additionally has the audacity to lecture us on containing the coronavirus as it itself is evidently incapable of containing its onslaught.

While other nations debate how to control the spread of the virus – and while their economies suffer and fear takes hold among their populations – our people not only suffer from its effects without the full benefits of adequate medical equipment and supplies, but also the many other ways in which United States economic terrorism had devastated many households prior to the inception of COVID-19, and only made worse since its arrival in Iran. This should be manifestly evident as economic and other effects are multiplying even in countries less afflicted by the virus.

As such, it is imperative that the Government of the United States immediately halt its campaign of economic terrorism against the Iranian people and lift all sanctions it has illegally imposed on my country in contravention of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015). To this end, it is imperative that the United Nations and its Member States join the Iranian people in demanding that the Government of the United States abandon its malign and fruitless approach against Iran.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly and of the Security Council.

(Signed) M. Javad **Zarif**