

Iran ready for more prisoner swaps with U.S.

Telegraph Herald (Dubuque, IA)

December 10, 2019 Tuesday

Copyright 2019 Woodward Communications, Inc. All Rights Reserved

Section: C; Pg. 7

Length: 660 words

Byline: NASSER KARIMI The Associated Press

Body

BY NASSER KARIMI

The Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran - Iran is ready for more prisoner swaps with the United States, the Cabinet spokesman said Monday even as he reiterated Iran's stance that there will be no other negotiations between Tehran and Washington.

The remarks by Ali Rabiei were the first after a prisoner exchange over the weekend saw Iran free a Chinese-American scholar from Princeton who had been held for three years on widely criticized espionage charges.

Xiyue Wang, was freed in exchange for Iranian scientist Massoud Soleimani who had faced a federal trial in Georgia over charges he violated sanctions by trying to have biological material brought to Iran.

"We are ready to cooperate to return all Iranians unlawfully imprisoned in the U.S.," Rabiei said.

Rabiei said any further negotiations would be possible through the so-called 5+1 framework - a reference to the five permanent U.N. Security Council members plus Germany.

"The ball is in the U.S.' court," said Iran's foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, in a tweet later Monday. He said Iran was "fully ready for comprehensive prisoner exchange."

Crushing U.S. sanctions on Iran blocking it from selling crude oil abroad remain in place, part of President Donald Trump's maximum pressure campaign. Those sanctions in part fueled the anger seen in nationwide protests last month. Amnesty International says that over 200 people were killed in the crackdown.

Pro-reform Iranian lawmaker Parvaneh Salahshouri said the authorities should not have used force.

"We have to find opportunities before it's too late. How can I tolerate the killing of young people as a member of parliament," she said. She also alleged authorities were out of touch with a changing Iranian society.

Iran's currency, the rial, lost some 5% of its value against the U.S. dollar Monday.

In the Iranian capital, money exchange shops offered 135,000 rials for one U.S. dollar, having traded Sunday at about 128,000 to the dollar.

Iran ready for more prisoner swaps with U.S.

There remain other Western detainees from the U.S. and elsewhere who are held in Iran and who could be used as bargaining chips for future negotiations.

They include U.S. Navy veteran Michael White, who is serving a 10-year espionage sentence, as well as environmentalist Morad Tahbaz, an Iranian with U.S. and British citizenship also initially sentenced to 10 years in prison.

Also in Iran are 83-year-old Baquer Namazi and his son, Siamak Namazi, dual Iranian-American nationals facing 10-year sentences after they were convicted of collaborating with a hostile power. Baquer Namazi now is on a prison furlough. However, the Namazis say he remains unable to leave Iran.

Former FBI agent Robert Levinson, who vanished in Iran in 2007 while on an unauthorized CIA mission, remains missing as well. Iran says that Levinson is not in the country and that it has no further information about him, but his family holds Tehran responsible for his disappearance.

Copyright 2019 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Japan's Abeseeks arbiter's role between U.S., Iran

TOKYO - Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said Monday his country is arranging a visit by Iranian President Hassan Rouhani because it wants to play a greater role in resolving a nuclear impasse between Tehran and Washington and in relieving tensions in the Middle East, the source of more than 80% of Japan's oil.

Japan, a U.S. ally that has traditionally had friendly relations with Iran, seeks to serve as a mediator between the U.S. and Iran, a role that is also expected by the international community, Abe said.

"Japan will do its utmost to relieve tension in the region and stabilize the situation through persistent efforts to hold a dialogue," Abe said. "From the point of view of energy security, it is only natural for Japan to play a role to contribute to the peace and stability in the Middle East, while securing safe navigation for Japanese vessels."

Load-Date: December 11, 2019