New EU Sanctions 'Inhuman' & Ineffective

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TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran on Tuesday denounced the new European Union sanctions as "inhuman," vowing they will not force any retreat on the country's suspect nuclear program.

The remarks by Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast amplify Iran's insistence that it can ride out Western economic pressures aimed at reining in Tehran's uranium enrichment.

The West and its allies fear the process could lead to nuclear weapons development, a charge Iran denies, saying its nuclear ambitions are only for peaceful purposes.

The 27-nation on bloc Monday banned imports of Iranian natural gas and imposed other restrictions on trade and financial dealings. Previous Western sanctions have targeted Iran's critical oil exports and access to international banking networks.

Mehmanparast told reporters Tuesday the new EU measures will not force Iran to

back down from enriching uranium to make nuclear fuel. He called the sanctions "illegal, unwise and inhuman."

"They cannot force the Iranian nation to surrender and withdraw," said Mehmanparast. "This sort of acts will encourage the Iranian nation to continue on its way, strongly."

He said the nuclear issue is merely a pretext since the West had imposed various sanctions for decades on Iran.

"It is pretty clear that Iran's persistence on its independence is the main problem" for the West, he said.

At a meeting with EU ambassadors in Jerusalem, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu thanked the European Union for imposing what he called "tough sanctions" against the "greatest threat to peace in our time."

Netanyahu observed Tuesday that while the sanctions were "hitting the Iranian economy hard," they haven't yet halted the Iranian program.

"We will know that they are achieving their goal when the centrifuges stop spinning."

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