

U.S. sanctions blamed for thalassemia deaths in Iran

Social Desk

Head of the Iranian Thalassemia Association (ITA), Younes Arab, on Monday blamed "cruel" U.S. sanctions for the deaths of 662 thalassemia patients in the country during the past year.

Despite producing 80% of the necessary medication domestically, the sanctions have made it difficult for patients to access vital treatment, leaving approximately 23,000 in desperate need, Arab told IRNA on World Thalassemia Day which falls on May 8.

Thalassemia is a genetic blood disorder that requires regular blood transfusions to survive. However, these transfusions can lead to excessive iron absorption, which can cause severe organ damage if left untreated. Thalassemia patients need access to medication that helps them excrete the excess iron.

Some thalassemia patients require foreign brands that are difficult to access due to the sanctions, while others struggle with the variability of raw materials in the domestic production of medication, leading to side effects and difficulty adjusting to new

treatments, Arab said. He called for the Iranian Food and Drug Administration's (IFDA) oversight to address these issues.

He also highlighted the critical role of blood donation and transfusion in supporting thalassemia patients, noting that continuous blood donation can provide a new lease on life for those suffering from the disease.

The challenges faced by thalassemia patients in Iran demonstrate the need for greater support and access to treatment for those living with this condition. The U.S. sanctions have harmed innocent people and underscore the importance of balancing international relations with humanitarian concerns.

'Cosmetic' exemption

IFDA chief Heydar Mohammadi also criticized the insufficient and 'cosmetic' exemption of drugs from sanctions, stating that this is not enough to improve the dire situation faced by Iranians.

"The organization is working hard to secure funding for drug importers and enhance the quality of domestically produced med-



● ABBAS HEYDARI/IRNA

ication to ensure patients have access to necessary treatment," Mohammadi said.

Expressing concerns about the impact of sanctions on thalassemia patients, he noted that "representatives of certain drug companies either refuse to respond to requests for medicine or

often provide only a small amount after months of delay."

Mohammadi's comments highlight the challenges faced by Iran's healthcare system and the need for greater access to medication and support for patients suffering from thalassemia and other illnesses.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared May 8th as World Thalassemia Day to raise awareness about the disease and encourage preventive measures. The goal is to provide international standard medical facilities, healthy blood, and prevent new cases of thalassemia.

Red Cross chief in Tehran:

Food, medicine access must not be restricted under sanctions



Social Desk

The head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delegation in Tehran stressed that no community should face restrictions on the supply of food and medicine even under sanctions regimes.

Johannes Brewer told IRNA that all the countries in the world should

be able to supply their essential and humanitarian goods and cargoes.

Speaking on the occasion of May 8, which is celebrated as World Red Cross Day, Brewer pointed out the promotion of universal human rights in Iran is one of the main activities of his office, as it most notably did during the Iraqi-imposed war on Iran in the 1980s.

May 8 is celebrated each year to honor the birthday of a Swiss humanitarian named Henry Dunant, the first-ever Nobel Peace Prize laureate.

Born on May 8, 1828, Dunant helped wounded soldiers at the battle of Solferino in 1859 and later, established the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Founded 160 years ago on February 17, 1863, in Geneva, Switzerland, the ICRC is a non-governmental humanitarian organization that specializes in preventing and alleviating the suffering of people affected by conflict and violence, regardless of their countries of residence, by providing educational and medical services, to name a few.

"The International Committee of the Red Cross has been active in Iran since the Iran-Iraq war, so addressing the consequences of that war is to be considered the mission of the ICRC and the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS)," Brewer emphasized.

Even though the Iraqi-imposed war on Iran happened quite some time

ago, he says the ICRC has been dealing with its aftermath for years and should, for instance, be supporting the families of soldiers who remain missing in action.

Participating in the clearing of minefields and leftover war materials are among other significant activities of the humanitarian organization in Iran, the Red Cross chief said.

Referring to the critical situation of Afghan refugees in Iran, Brewer said that the ICRC is helping the IRCS and the volunteers meet the needs of the Afghan community inside and outside Iran's borders.

"In fact, the International Committee of the Red Cross uses Iran as a logistics center to accomplish its missions in Afghanistan and Iraq as well," he stated.

However, since the ICRC is an independent non-political organization, it calls for governments and various institutions in charge to take part in its discussions and be supportive, Brewer stated.

Considering that the most important part of the

committee's operations is to pertain to providing basic necessities for survival in conflict zones, Brewer lauded the ICRC as the forerunner of such humanitarian efforts in war-afflicted zones such as Yemen but cites Syria as an exception.

He maintained that in Syria, the ICRC is working closely with the IRCS to provide services including restoring family links by reconnecting separated families and addressing the issue of missing persons.

Brewer underlined that the ICRC's mission is different from one country to the next. While in countries like Iran and Iraq, the organization is mainly engaged in handling the aftermaths of war, it mostly provides medical and education services in other countries in cooperation with local authorities and national societies such as the IRCS.

"In general, the guiding principle of the International Committee of the Red Cross is to alleviate the pains and sufferings of people and deal with the impacts of conflicts," he concluded.



Johannes Brewer, the Head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delegation in Tehran
● ALI SHARIFZADEH/IRNA

NEWS IN BRIEF

Mars Rover discovers faint signals of water



● CHINESE SPACE AGENCY

SCIENCEALERT – The surface of Mars is a pretty desolate place at first glance. The soil is many times as dry as the driest desert on planet Earth, the temperatures swing from one extreme to the other, and the air is incredibly thin and toxic.

And yet, there's ample evidence that the planet was once much warmer and wetter, with lots of flowing and standing water on its surface. Over time, as Mars' atmosphere was slowly stripped away, much of this water was lost to space, and what remains is largely concentrated around the poles as glacial ice and permafrost. For years, space agencies have been sending robotic landers, rovers, orbiters, and aerial vehicles to Mars to learn more about when this transition took and how long it took. According to China's Tianwen-1 mission, which includes the Zhurong rover, there may have been liquid water on the Martian surface later than previously thought.

New probe aids novel findings on cell functions



● JIAJIE DIAO

PHYSORG – Collaborative research at the University of Cincinnati has developed a new probe to better study cells that has already led to new knowledge about certain cellular processes.

UC's Jiajie Diao, Ph.D., and Yujie Sun, Ph.D., are lead authors on new research published in ACS Sensors. The team's research focused on organelles, or specialized structures that perform various jobs inside cells, called endolysosomes. Lysosomes are organelles that act as the "recycling center" of the cell, reusing broken or malfunctioning building blocks for different purposes, and endolysosomes are a subset of lysosomes that begin as a different organelle called an endosome.

Lysosomes are an important organelle to study because abnormalities can lead to what are called lysosomal storage diseases that cause buildups of toxic substances in cells. Abnormalities in lysosome function are also associated with neurodegenerative diseases and cancer.