Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

Foreign Secretary calls Chief Minister of Gibraltar, Iranian Foreign Minister

2019-07-13

Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt today spoke to Chief Minister of Gibraltar, Fabian Picardo, and Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif to discuss the recent detention of the Grace 1.

Following his conversation with Chief Minister Picardo, Mr Hunt said:

The Chief Minister and I agreed the importance of deescalating the current situation as quickly as possible, while noting the importance of Gibraltar enforcing EU sanctions against Syria through its legal processes. Mr Picardo noted that Gibraltar would be prepared to facilitate, subject to its obligations under EU law, the release of the detained assets to a rightful claimant if they were satisfied that they had received guarantees it would not be going to Syria.

The detention and investigation of the Grace 1 has been – and continues to be – a government of Gibraltar-led operation to uphold EU sanctions on Syria. I pay tribute to the admirable leadership of the Chief Minister throughout this process, ably supported by Gibraltarian authorities.

Following his conversation with Foreign Minister Zarif, Mr Hunt said:

Today I reiterated in my conversation with Foreign Minister Zarif that Gibraltar’s decision to detain the Grace 1 related to the destination of the vessel, and not to its origin. This was about the enforcement of EU Syria sanctions: action was taken because of where the oil was going – a sanctioned Syrian entity – not because it was from Iran.

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