

Venezuela Accuses UK of Denying Venezuelans Food, Healthcare by Blocking Gold Deposits

By [Press TV](#)

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Britain is denying millions of Venezuelans food and healthcare by blocking access to the South American country's gold deposits at the Bank of England, says Venezuelan Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza.

Speaking during a visit to Moscow, the Russian capital, Arreaza said Monday that the Bank of England had confiscated over \$1.5 billion in Venezuelan overseas gold deposits and refused to return it even though the Latin American country was grappling with food shortages and deteriorating healthcare services.

"In the Bank of England, there are 1359 million euros (\$1.52 billion) in Venezuelan gold blocked," Arreaza told a press conference, noting that the money was for "the health of the people, to feed the people, for production in Venezuela".

The Venezuelan FM said the Bank of England was only one of the European and international financial institutions that had "confiscated" a total of 5 billion euros in Venezuelan deposits upon an order by US President Donald Trump.

The Trump administration has announced sanctions against the government of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and blocked the assets of its officials across the world in a bid to channel them to Juan Guaido, the country's self-proclaimed interim president who has been trying to oust Maduro since his re-election in January.

"These are resources of the Venezuelan people for their food, for their health, for their public services, for their housing, for their infrastructure, it's criminal what the United States is doing," said Arreaza.

"When a housewife can't get a product or it's more expensive, it's thanks to the blockade; when a child can't be operated on, it's thanks to the blockade," he added.

London has already expressed support for Guaido.

British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said in late January that tightening economic pressure against Venezuelan "kleptocrats" could force Maduro to accept opposition calls for early elections.

“Targeted sanctions against the kleptocrats who have enriched themselves on the back of the rest of the population who are very poor, that is something I think can be effective,” Hunt said ahead of Brexit meeting with counterparts in the European Union (EU).

Maduro had tried to withdraw the gold in January but the Bank of England rejected the request after extensive lobbying by the US. Guaido has since asked for the funds to be diverted to him instead. According to British media, however, the assets still remain frozen.

Arreaza said Caracas was not sitting idly by and had been seeking help from allies such as China and Russia to create “alternative routes ... to bypass the American blockade.”

Russia and China have sent humanitarian aid for Venezuelan people.

Maduro has blamed US sanctions for his country’s woes. Venezuela’s GDP has fallen by around 50 percent since he took over from the late Hugo Chavez in 2013.

Back in March, Maduro accused Washington of using cyberwarfare to cripple the country’s power grid and cause nationwide blackouts that lasted for days.

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