
Iran Uses Free Zones to Evade Sanctions Pressure



Published on April 15, 2026

Document Date: Wed, Apr 15 2026 10:42:32 pm

Category: ,English,International - ,Snippets

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rki.news|Sources Xinhua

TEHRAN, April 15: Iran is increasingly relying on its free trade zones to maintain imports of essential goods and sustain economic activity amid U.S. sanctions pressure and reported restrictions on maritime access in the Strait of Hormuz.

According to Iran's semi-official Mehr news agency, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance

has directed the use of free zones as part of a strategy to ensure trade continuity and bypass external economic restrictions. The initiative is led by Minister Seyed Ali Madanizadeh.

The report said free zones, due to their strategic coastal and border locations, flexible regulations, and infrastructure advantages, are playing a central role in stabilizing supply chains and preventing domestic shortages.

Separately, Iran's semi-official Fars news agency reported that a sanctioned Iranian very large crude carrier (VLCC) entered southern waters through the Strait of Hormuz while keeping its automatic identification system active, despite U.S. sanctions.

Citing maritime intelligence data, the report said the vessel—capable of carrying up to 2 million barrels of crude oil—is listed under U.S. Treasury sanctions but successfully entered Iranian waters.

Iranian media described the movement as a demonstration that sanctioned shipping can still navigate regional waters, reinforcing Tehran's claim that the Strait of Hormuz remains open for Iranian-affiliated vessels.

The developments come amid heightened tensions following recent ceasefire arrangements and ongoing disputes over maritime security and sanctions enforcement in the Gulf.