

Despite U.S. Threats to Cut Aid

UN Palestinian Refugee Agency Vows Continued Services

GAZA (Dispatches) – The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) vowed Tuesday to continue its services despite the possibility that the U.S. will stop its financial aid.

“Despite austerity, the Agency is committed to continuing its vital services to the Palestinian refugees,” UNRWA Spokesman Sami Masha’sa said in a press release sent to Xinhua. This commitment will not be affected by any intention of the United States to withhold assistance from the agency.

The U.S. is so far the biggest supporter of the UNRWA. It is contributing more than 300 million U.S. dollars to the agency annually.

“Even if without this year’s U.S. financial pledges, UNRWA will not leave Palestinian refugees alone and will continue to operate in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, as well as its presence and services in East Jerusalem (al-Quds),” Masha’sa noted.

UNRWA provides services to 5.3 million refugees in the Palestinian territories, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, and operates 711 schools and 143 health clinics.

The United States has threatened to freeze or delay its financial support payment to the UNRWA until the Palestinians return to the negotiating table with the Zionist regime.

UNRWA plays a significant role in supporting Palestinian refugees by providing access to education, healthcare, social services and employment in the occupied Palestinian territories and in neighboring states.



Palestinian children sit by sacks of food aid provided by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), in the town of Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, August 22, 2017.

In other reports, UNRWA said it has been forced to lay off more than 100 employees in Jordan because of the United States’ refusal to allow the transfer of financial aid to the agency.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) announced the lay-offs on Tuesday, Jordan’s al-Ghad newspaper reported.

The agency, it said, had started 2018 with a \$174-million budget deficit, which is feared to

get worse if its financial predicaments exacerbate.

UNRWA staffers have reportedly planned a January 21 sit-in in front of the U.S. Embassy in Amman.

“The administration is preparing to withhold tens of millions of dollars from the year’s first contribution, cutting a planned \$125-million installment by half or perhaps entirely,” AP cited U.S. officials in Washington as saying this week.

Syrian Army Liberates More Regions in Aleppo



Syrian soldiers, and pro-government forces, pose for a picture in front of damaged buildings in the eastern Syrian city of Dayr al-Zawr on November 3, 2017.

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – The Syrian Army troops have liberated several settlements in southern Aleppo and went towards the

strategic Abu al-Dhohour airbase in southeastern Idlib.

Local sources reported that the government forces had pushed terrorists back from the villages of Sheikh Khalil west of the village of Abu Rawil. Besides, the Army’s engineering units started defusing landmines and bomb planted by the terrorists in the newly freed regions.

Meanwhile, Syria’s chief opposition negotiator said on Monday that U.S. President Donald Trump and European Union leaders should increase the pressure on President Bashar al-Assad and his allies Russia and Iran to return to talks.

Nasr Hariri, the chief negotiator for Syria’s main militant group, said that unless the West forced

President Assad and his big power allies to seek peace then the blood of Syrian civilians would continue to be spilled.

He called for Trump and EU leaders such as German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Emmanuel Macron and British Prime Minister Theresa May to get tougher with Assad.

The remarks came as the U.S. is helping those who are seeking to topple the government of Syria rather than trying to resolve the Syrian crisis.

Syria has been gripped by foreign-backed militancy since March 2011. The Syrian government says the Zionist regime and its Western and regional allies are aiding terrorist groups that are wreaking havoc in the country.

Muslims...

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supporting the regional people while they refuse to answer any of these serious questions.

“They claim that they are our friends, that they are interested in human rights and that they are advocating democracy.” The Leader said some of the regional countries which are U.S. allies, “one cannot even talk about elections.”

“They are not familiar with the phenomenon of elections in any way and they do not understand elections at all. However, the U.S. regime– that claims to be advocating democracy – has signed a brotherhood pact with such countries.

“And what pact it is! The U.S. is defending them in every way,” he said.

“Our enemy is such an enemy. The U.S. regime is such a creature. Of course, I have said many times that by America we mean the governing body of that country. We mean the United States system. We have nothing against the people of America. The American system is such a system,” the Leader added.

Ayatollah Khamenei said U.S. leaders “adopt the most embarrassing and wrong courses of action and then they smile at us”, apparently meaning President Donald Trump’s decision to recognize Jerusalem al-Quds as the so-called capital of the occupying regime of Israel.

“Well, if they really have an answer, they should give it to public opinion in the world. When a country is faced with such an enemy, it should pay careful attention,” the Leader said.

Ayatollah Khamenei also said the people of Iran should pay careful attention to the enemies.

“By God’s favor, the people of Iran are and have been completely focused on this matter. Until now, this great popular movement has managed to foil the plot of this deceitful, treacherous and malicious enemy and God willing, our people will continue to humiliate him.”

Airbus...

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Treasury that expire around the start of the next decade, meaning it would need renewed permission to complete its planned deliveries to Iran, which are scheduled to stretch beyond 2020.

The number of deliveries covered by those existing licenses would shrink if schedules were delayed, industry sources say.

Diplomats say the process of obtaining or renewing licenses has become slower amid uncertainty over U.S. policy on Iran.

Leahy, who is due to retire later this month, indicated Airbus would be cautious about building jets for Iran without receiving deposit payments. Industry sources say Boeing has also held off building jets until it receives downpayments.

“You have got to make pre-delivery payments where aircraft get into production, so we are doing it on perhaps a lower basis than we thought, but we still believe that it will work out,” Leahy said.

Industry sources say Iran has been forced by the lack of financing to pay cash via its central bank for the airplanes it has received already, and deals may be worked out allowing these payments to double as deposits for future aircraft deliveries.

Airbus declined to comment on Trump’s latest declaration on Iran, but said it “continues to work with IranAir and the Iranian authorities on the execution of the purchase agreement signed last year in full compliance with the (nuclear deal) and other regulations”.

Boeing, which has sold 80 planes to IranAir and committed to sell 30 more to another Iranian airline, Aseman Airlines, said it continued to follow the U.S. government’s lead. So far it has not included any of the Iranian sales in the way it accounts for unfilled orders.

“We are aware of last Friday’s announcement and we are reviewing it to determine any impact it may have on our interactions with Iran’s commercial airlines,” a spokesman said.

“As the government provides us details and guidance, we will adjust our activities

if required.”

Saudi...

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accidents and corruption allegations saw an end to preferential treatment for to Saudi Oger and Binladin Group, another Saudi construction giant.

The two companies found themselves struggling with debts in the new climate in Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Oger ended operations in July after 39 years in the business, Saudi daily Okaz reported at the time.

While most of its assets have been transferred, it still has three projects, including a 15-year maintenance and operation contract for King Abdullah University of Science and Technology; the king’s palace in Tangier; and a project in Mecca.

The government is now moving to “re-structure” these companies, amid accusations this amounts to nationalization of private sector assets.

On Saturday, Saudi Binladin Group was forced to deny claims that Riyadh had taken over the company after its chairman was detained in an alleged anti-corruption campaign.

It did admit, however, that some shares may have been transferred to the government.

“All companies linked to those detained at the Ritz Carlton will be restructured, the assets belonging to the detainees seized by the Saudi government, including the MBC group,” the source said.

In November, Crown Prince Muhammad launched a wide-ranging crackdown on dozens of elites, ostensibly to tackle corruption. Critics say it was also a way of consolidating his grip on power.

Most of those detained have struck monetary settlements in exchange for their freedom.

The suspects - who include high-profile princes and billionaires - have been held at Riyadh’s luxurious Ritz Carlton hotel since early November and were reportedly told to hand over assets and cash in exchange for their freedom.

Rouhani...

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al-Quds have fallen through so far,” Berri said of the Israelis. “We will win if we make it our resolution.”

He also praised the Islamic Republic for always standing on the front line of supporting Palestine and humanitarian affairs.

Rouhani in a meeting with speaker of Senegal’s Parliament Moustapha Niasse, lashed out at his U.S. counterpart for his “deplorable and wrong” comments about African countries, saying U.S. politicians have not yet realized the noble position of African people.

The U.S. president’s (phrase used to refer to) African people was very deplorable and wrong and a condemned move, which shows that the current U.S. politicians have not yet recognized the position and greatness of Africans properly,” Rouhani said.

Trump has reportedly used an offensive word to describe African countries during an Oval Office meeting on Thursday with a group of senators. He also questioned the need to admit more Haitians to the U.S., saying he would prefer immigrants from countries such as Norway instead.

Elsewhere in the meeting, the Iranian president expressed Tehran’s readiness to enhance political, economic, cultural and scientific relations with Senegal, saying such ties would open the doors for Africa’s cooperation with the West Asia region.

The Tehran event, which will last until Wednesday, is attended by parliament speakers, deputy parliament speakers, and parliamentary delegations from 44 countries.

The Parliamentary Union’s various committees, including the Permanent Palestine Committee, the Expert Committee on Political Affairs and Foreign Relations, Expert Committee on Human Rights, the Women and Family Affairs’ Committee, met over Saturday and Sunday.

The committees lent their initial approval to more than 55 resolutions, which are to be discussed and approved over the two days when the PUIC is holding its session.

Bahraini Regime Forces Attack Demonstrators

MANAMA (Press TV) – Bahraini regime forces have engaged in clashes with separate groups of people protesting against the Al Khalifah regime’s ferocious crackdown on political dissidents and pro-democracy activists in the kingdom and commemorating three Shia activists executed last year.

Dozens of people took to the streets in the island of Sitra, located five kilometers south of the capital Manama, holding up pictures of Abbas al-Samea, 27, Sami Mushaima, 42, and Ali al-Singace, 21, whom were executed by firing squad on January 15, 2017.

Regime forces then intervened and fired stun grenades and tear gas canisters to disperse the crowd. There were no reports of casualties or arrests.

On January 9 last year, Bahrain’s Court of Cassation upheld the death penalties given to the three activists over allegations of killing a member of Emirati forces, who had been assisting Manama in its suppression of Bahraini protesters in the northern village of al-Daih back in March 2014.

Seven other convicts were also been sentenced to life in prison in the case. The defendants denied the charges.

Protesters also set tires ablaze and blocked roads in the northern villages of al-Daih and al-Musalla as well as Jidhafs city, situated about 3 kilometers west of Manama.

Similar anti-regime protest was staged in Sanabis village, which lies in the suburbs of the capital, as well as Karzakan village.

Thousands of anti-regime protesters have been holding demonstrations in Bahrain on an almost daily basis ever since a popular uprising began in the country in mid-February 2011.

They are demanding that the Al Khalifah dynasty relinquish power and allow a just system representing all Bahrainis to be established.

Manama has gone to great lengths to clamp down on any sign of dissent. On March 14, 2011, troops from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were deployed to assist Bahrain in its crackdown.

Scores of people have lost their lives and hundreds of others sustained injuries or got arrested as a result of the Al Khalifah regime’s crackdown.

On March 5, 2017, Bahrain’s parliament approved the trial of civilians at military tribunals in a measure blasted by human rights campaigners as being tantamount to imposition of an undeclared martial law countrywide.

King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifah ratified the constitutional amendment a month later.

After Tunnel Destroyed

Zionist Regime Reopens Gaza Crossing

GAZA (Dispatches) – The Zionist regime’s authorities announced Tuesday it has reopened a key commercial crossing with the Gaza Strip after destroying a tunnel underneath the crossing.

The Palestinian committee for the entry of the goods into Gaza said in an emailed statement that the entry of food and commercial trucks

and the pumping fuel through the Kerem Shalom crossing resumed Tuesday morning.

The occupying regime’s military said it had destroyed a cross-border attack tunnel that ran from Gaza into Israel and Egypt, which was dug by Hamas.

The regime has adopted a single commercial crossing with Gaza since 2012 after four crossings with the Strip have been closed and Erez crossing for humanitarian personnel into Israel.

Kerem Shalom is one of the Gaza Strip’s few lifelines to the outer world and the principal entry point for humanitarian aid.