

# Palestinian Children Call For Int'l Intervention to End Gaza's Worsening Crisis

GAZA (Dispatches) – Palestinian children demonstrated in Gaza on Sunday to appeal for international intervention to end the worsening economic crisis in the enclave besieged by the Zionist regime.

As part of a campaign launched by the Coalition of Palestinian Charities in the Gaza Strip entitled "Save Gaza", Palestinian children waved banners condemning the regime's siege, urging the Zionist regime to open Gaza's crossings, and calling for more access to safe drinking water, electricity and decent health care.

Nazih Al-Banna, director of the campaign, told Xinhua that the event "comes in light of the suffering from the Israeli siege, which has worsened the condition of the humanitarian sector."

The Gaza Strip, home to more than 2 million Palestinians, faces severe shortage of basic services due to a power outage for most of the day and pollution of drinking water.

Scores of employees of Gaza's cleaning companies recently announced plans to protest for an hour a day, as they have not been paid their salary for four months.

They called on the Palestinian government to fulfill its pledges. There are some 800 cleaners in Gaza's hospitals.



A Palestinian boy walks past a building destroyed in an Israeli airstrike in Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip, Jan. 24, 2016.

"I could not meet the basic needs of my eight-member family due to unpaid salaries over the past months," Anam al-Taweel, a Gaza cleaner, told Xinhua. Meanwhile, three hospitals and 10 medical centers have suspended services over an acute fuel shortage in Gaza, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry.

Gaza hospitals need 450,000 liters of fuel a month to operate their power generators.

Ashraf Al-Qedra, a spokesman for the Palestinian Health Ministry, confirmed to Xinhua that the hospitals had halted all treatments and patients were being transferred to other facilities in the enclave.

"Forty-five per cent of basic medicines and medical supplies are out in the facilities of the ministry and 58 per cent of laboratory supplies and blood banks have been run out," al-Qedra added.

The spokesman warned of grave health consequences of the fuel crisis on the patients in Gaza.

## Rights Group:

### Zionist Troops Shoot Palestinians Who Pose No Threat

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – An Israeli rights group says Zionist troops regularly fire at Palestinian protesters who pose no threat to them in the eastern part of the besieged Gaza Strip.

B'Tselem said the Zionist regime's military is pursuing the policy of suppressing demonstrations using live bullets, Al-Hayat al-Jadida reported.

The rights group said that troops take positions in concrete towers or behind bulwarks and shoot at Palestinian demonstrators.

According to the report, the number of demonstrations increased since U.S. President Donald Trump on December 6, 2017, announced his decision to recognize al-Quds as the regime's

"capital" and relocate the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to the occupied city.

At least eight Palestinian protesters had been killed and 322 others injured in Gaza by the end of December, it said.

The regime's military regularly opens fatal fire on Palestinians, accusing them of attempting to carry out stabbing attacks against its forces.

Human rights groups have repeatedly criticized the Tel Aviv regime for its policy of shoot-to-kill as a large number of the Palestinians killed at the scene of attacks did not pose serious threats to Israelis.

The number of Zionist attacks have sharply risen since Trump's

announcement on al-Quds, which triggered demonstrations in the occupied Palestinian territories, Iran, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, Algeria, Iraq, Morocco and other Muslim countries.

Meanwhile, Zionist troops have shot and killed a Palestinian teenager during a raid on a village in the occupied West Bank.

According to Palestinian health officials on Saturday, Ahmad Samir Abu Obeid, 19, was shot in the head while clashes erupted with the troops who had entered the village of Burqin located close to the city of Jenin.

Obeid died several hours after being transported to a hospital in Jenin.

An Israeli military spokeswoman

said that the troops had entered the village while looking for suspects involved in a drive-by shooting of a rabbi in January.

On January 17, another Palestinian was killed during clashes with Israeli troops in the occupied West Bank city of Jenin.

Israeli media reports claimed that the victim, Ahmed Jarrar, had links to the shooting incident in the West Bank in which a rabbi was killed.

On January 9, Israel ordered a sweeping crackdown in the West Bank after the shooting death of the Israeli rabbi.

Tel Aviv often uses such incidents as pretexts to intensify its already draconian restrictive measures against the Palestinians residing in the territory.

### Afghanistan Parliament Elections Likely Delayed Until October

KABUL (Reuters) – Afghanistan's long-delayed parliamentary and local council elections scheduled for July this year may have to be pushed back for another three months, an election commissioner said on Sunday citing organizational challenges.

The parliamentary polls, originally scheduled for July 2015, are seen as dry run for a presidential election in mid-2019 and a test of the progress made by Afghanistan's Western-backed government towards establishing durable democratic institutions.

"We are ready to hold the elections with two or three months' delay, but the security agencies must tell us whether they are ready," Wasima Badghisi, deputy head of operations at the Independent Election Commission told Reuters.

The problems in organizing the parliamentary vote underline the fragility of the political institutions created in Afghanistan since a U.S.-led campaign brought down the Taliban in 2001.

International donor countries have laid heavy emphasis on the need for successful elections this year

following a contentious presidential election in 2014 that was marred by allegations of massive voter fraud on both sides.

Referring to organizational problems, Badghisi said the appointment of a new member of the election commission had taken a lot of time, she also cited budget problems and insecurity.

Afghanistan has held two parliamentary elections since the end of Taliban rule, the first in 2005 and the second in 2010.

The five-year term of the parliament elected in 2010 was

meant to expire in June 2015, but elections were postponed because of security fears and disagreements on how to ensure a fair vote after the bitterly disputed presidential election in 2014.

The current assembly is operating under a 2015 decree issued by President Ashraf Ghani extending parliament's mandate until a vote could be held, a decision criticized by many Afghans who questioned whether the extension was legal.

District council elections have never been held, despite being mandated in the 2004 constitution.

## President ...

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He then described strengthening of national power as a pre-emptive measure for permanent peace and said the Iranian government needs to remain vigilant under any condition against the enemies' new threats endangering its people.

Iran's defense capabilities have become the subject of U.S. interest for fresh pressures on Tehran, especially the country's missile program.

On Monday, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley said Washington was encouraging other UN Security Council countries to set aside the nuclear deal with Iran loathed by President Donald Trump and focus on cracking down on Iran's missile program.

Rouhani stressed that Iran will never negotiate on its defense capabilities in the face of threats.

"If any authority comes and asks a question, we will give a firm and strong answer. Our answer is clear. But we will procure any weapon or capability which we need within the framework of rules and regulations and the fatwas of our Leader," he said.

## Russia ...

(Continued From Page One)

"The Saudis have always thought that the way to get the Russians to back off is what worked in Afghanistan 30 years ago – negating their air power by giving MANPADS to the Mujahideen," it quoted another American official as saying.

Members of the Ansar al-Islam Front were shown in a video posted in November 2016, parading a cache of shoulder-launched anti-aircraft missiles, the first evidence of the weapons being supplied to militants after an expected relaxing of U.S. restrictions.

Russia has been lending aerial support to Syria's counter-terrorism operations since September 2016.

The United States and its allies, including regional ally Saudi Arabia, however, have been backing the militants against Damascus since the onset of the crisis.

## Zangeneh ...

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"We're always adding to our production levels, from West Karoun and Azadegan," he said, referring to two oil-producing areas in western Iran near the Iraq border. Iran has so far exercised "self-restraint" in pumping to accommodate the group's decision in November to maintain the cuts, he said.

OPEC agreed with Russia and other producers to continue limiting production until the end of this year as they try to counter a threat from rival suppliers, including U.S. shale drillers, and firm up prices. The collective cuts, which took effect last January, targeted a reduction of about 1.8 million barrels a day. OPEC allowed Iran, which is struggling to modernize its economy after years of international sanctions, to boost production slightly to some 3.8 million barrels a day.

Brent crude, an international benchmark, has gained 48% since the producers first agreed to cap output. Brent ended trading in London on Friday at \$68.58 a barrel.

"If we want to make a decision, it has be at the right time, which is June -- when we'll next meet," Zangeneh said. "But my impression is that OPEC members are not after very expensive oil because very expensive oil leads to mid-term price fluctuations."

Iran, the third-largest producer in OPEC, pumped 3.83 million barrels a day last month, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

Legal Action Against Pakistan  
Zangeneh announced y that Iran is to begin legal proceedings against Pakistan in a protracted gas pipeline project.

Iran has laid the pipeline up to Pakistan's border, but Pakistan has neglected to take due measure on its soil, he said. So the Petroleum Ministry is to take the issue to the court, he added.

About Tehran-Ashkhabad gas dispute, the minister said Iran did not import gas after Turkmenistan cut off its imports and claimed for 1.8-billion-dollar in arrears from Iran.

The two sides did some swap after cutting-off measure, Zangeneh said adding Turkmenistan wants to settle the gas dispute through international courts while Iran believes that Ashkhabad should make up for the losses.

The dispute started between Iran and Turkmenistan over gas imports when Ashkhabad, despite its previous agreements with Tehran, demanded for illogical high prices for its exported gas to Iran's northern regions.

Turning to the issue of gasoline, Zangeneh said Iran produced 16.5 million liters of the product, which shows an increase from the past Iranian calendar year ended on March 20, 2017, mostly from the Persian Gulf Star Refinery (PGSR) this year.

## Four ...

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The official sources said that all detained people will be freed after Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs takes necessary measures to resolve the issue.

Iran closely monitors all movements in its territorial waters to protect marine life and ensure the security of the country's sea borders.

In January 2016, Iran detained 10 U.S. sailors from two navy vessels for "straying" into Iranian waters. They were later released after Washington opened direct contacts with Iran seeking their release.

### Turkey Denies Report Border Guards Shot at Fleeing Syrians

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) – Turkish guards at the border with Syria are indiscriminately shooting at and summarily returning asylum seekers attempting to cross into Turkey, Human Rights Watch said.

A senior Turkish government official denied the report on Saturday, repeating that Turkey had taken in 3.5 million war

refugees since the Syrian conflict began in 2011.

New York-based Human Rights Watch said Syrians were now fleeing heightened violence in the northwestern province of Idlib to seek refuge near Turkey's border, which remains closed to all but critical medical cases.

Syrian armed forces have thrust

deeper into the mainly terrorist-held province in recent months and Turkey last month launched military action in the nearby Afrin region, targeting Kurdish YPG militia fighters.

"Syrians fleeing to the Turkish border seeking safety and asylum are being forced back with bullets and abuse," Lama Fakih, deputy

Middle East director at Human Rights Watch, said.

President Tayyip Erdogan's spokesman Ibrahim Kalin, asked about the HRW statement, told reporters that Turkish soldiers were there to protect these people and that Ankara has had an "open-door policy" since the start of Syria's war in 2011.