

Zionist Regime to Legalize Withholding Bodies of Palestinians Killed by Regime Troops

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – The Zionist regime’s parliament (Knesset) is expected to approve a controversial bill that allows police to withhold the bodies of Palestinians killed by the regime’s troops and refuse to hand them over to their families for burial.

The bill, co-sponsored by right-wing Israeli lawmakers Anat Berko and Bezalel Smotrich, has passed its first reading, and will be put to vote in two more readings.

If approved, the law will authorize police to determine the conditions under which the funerals for Palestinian victims will be held.

The law would be enforced in Israeli cities and in occupied East al-Quds, but not in the West Bank.

Under the law, Zionist police could issue an order to postpone the handing over of bodies until those organizing the funerals promise to meet certain conditions.

The conditions include a limit on the number of participants at the funeral, a ban on the participation of certain individuals as well as a specified time, site and route for the procession.

In special cases, police could even



Mourners carry the body of Khaled Taeh during his funeral in the city of Nablus in the occupied West Bank on February 7, 2018. He was shot dead by Zionist troops at the entrance to a nearby settlement.

demand the posting of a bond to guarantee that certain conditions are carried out during the burial.

The police would also be permitted to delay the transferring of a body if it deems that the funeral could lead to a loss of life or injury.

Back in January, Israeli lawmaker Jamal Zahalka described the act of preventing someone’s burial as shameful.

“All cultures see burying the dead as a commandment, and preventing a burial is an act of villainy. You are

giving Jews a bad name,” he said.

The regime has dramatically increased the practice of refusing to hand over Palestinians’ bodies since the beginning of a wave of unrest across the occupied lands in October 2015.

Ahead of Election

UN Rights Chief Decries Repression in Egypt

CAIRO (Dispatches) – The United Nations human rights chief has denounced a “pervasive climate of intimidation” in Egypt ahead of presidential election in late March.

The presidential election is set to be held on March 26-28 in Egypt and on March 16-18 abroad. The incumbent President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi is expected to win easily after his real challengers were detained, prosecuted or intimidated out of the race.

The UN human rights chief said on Wednesday that the vote has been marked by arrests, torture of detainees and “silencing” of independent media. “Potential candidates have allegedly

been pressured to withdraw, some through arrests. Legislation prevents candidates and supporters from organizing rallies. Independent media have been silenced, with over 400 media and NGO websites completely blocked,” Zeid Ra’ad al-Hussein said in an annual report submitted to the United Nations Human Rights Council.

Egypt’s chief prosecutor on February 28 called for strict monitoring of the media and taking legal action against any outlet whose behavior disrupts security or hurts national interests as the country approaches the vote and amid an ongoing military

operation against militants in the Sinai Peninsula.

Sisi, who has been in power since he led the 2013 military overthrow of his predecessor, Egypt’s first democratically-elected president Mohamed Morsi, is one of the two candidates.

The other candidate is Moussa Mostafa Moussa, leader of the pro-government centrist Ghad (Tomorrow) Party that had collected signatures of support for Sisi’s presidential campaign.

Sisi’s critics say he has silenced all forms of political opposition during his first four-year term. His

administration has been under fire for widespread arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, torture against perceived dissidents, and trial of thousands of civilians in military courts since the 2013 coup.

Several human rights groups have denounced the election as “farce” and opposition leaders have called for a boycott.

A coalition of opposition figures said in a joint statement that Egyptians should stay away from the polls in protest as the government had prevented “any fair competition in the upcoming elections”.

‘Zionist ...

(Continued From Page One)

Rouhani criticized attempts by certain nations of the region to promote Iranophobia, saying Iran had never invaded and would not invade any country.

“History shows that the Iranian nation has never... occupied any country. We have never bombarded our neighbors or piled up pressure on regional nations. Not only haven’t we driven people out of their countries, but we have welcomed refugees,” he noted.

Iran seeks the progress and prosperity of all regional countries, Rouhani said, stressing Iran’s economic, political and military power was for deterrence not attacking other countries.

“Our weapons are meant to promote peace, strengthen stability and security, and to prevent others from thinking about invading our country. Therefore, no one should be concerned about Iran’s weapons, missiles or strengthening of its defense might,” Rouhani stressed.

In remarks in February, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei called for efforts to maintain and boost Iran’s defense capabilities, hitting back at the enemies for disputing the country’s missile program.

“Without a moment of hesitation, the country must move to acquire whatever is necessary for defense, even if the whole world is opposed to it,” Ayatollah Khamenei said, describing plans to develop and renovate Iran’s defense strategies and equipment as a top priority.

Putin: ...

(Continued From Page One)

The warning came a week after Putin showcased Russia’s new strategic weapons, including nuclear-powered submarine drones, massive intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) with hyper-sonic warheads, cruise missiles and a ground-based laser weapon that had already entered service.

He also said the new weapons were developed as a response to Washington’s violation of the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, which was signed between the U.S. and the Soviet Union to limit the use of missile defense systems.

Putin said Washington unilaterally withdrew from the agreement under former President George W. Bush to advance its missile defense technology, but Moscow has made sure that its strategic weapons can get past any modern U.S. system.

Putin praises Trump, says U.S. ‘devouring itself’

Elsewhere in his remarks, Putin praised Trump as a “balanced” leader but expressed disappointment with the American political system.

The Russian head of state said his U.S. counterpart made a “good impression” on him during their various meetings on the sidelines of international summits last year.

“It’s possible to negotiate with him, to search for compromises,” Putin said, noting that he had no “disappointment” with the American president.

Putin then proceeded to voice frustration with the political system in the U.S., which he said “has demonstrated its inefficiency and has been easting itself up.”

“It’s quite difficult to interact with such a system, because it’s unpredictable,” the Russian president argued.

Asked about the bitter tensions in ties between Russia and the West, Putin accused Western powers of orchestrating plots to contain and weaken Russia.

“We are a great power, and no one likes competition,” he said.

The U.S. and its Western allies have long been at loggerheads with Russia over a range of issues, using economic and political means to contain Moscow’s influence in the Middle East as well as Eastern Europe.

‘Blatant cheating’ in Ukraine

Putin said he was particularly disappointed by Washington’s role in the ouster of Ukraine’s former President Viktor Yanukovich in February 2014 as he was dealing with anti-government protests.

According to Putin, then U.S. President Barack Obama asked Russia to advise Yanukovich against using force to quell the tensions inside the country and then “rudely and blatantly” cheated Russia by sponsoring a “coup.”

“Those who serve us with poison will eventually swallow it and poison themselves,” he warned.

Pointing to Western sanctions against Moscow over the 2014 reintegration of Crimea to Russia, Putin said they were part of “illegitimate and unfair” efforts to contain Russia but added that “we will win in the long run.”

Hariri Tribunal to Bring Formal Charges Against Suspects



This file photo taken on February 14, 2005 shows a general view of the site of an explosion in Beirut, in which Lebanon’s former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri was killed.

BEIRUT (Press TV) – The Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) says it has now ample evidence to bring charges against four people suspected of involvement in an explosion 13 years ago that killed former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri.

The United Nations-backed tribunal said on Wednesday from The Hague, where it is based, that the judges in the case had reached a conclusion that the bombing in Beirut that killed Hariri was a terrorist act.

The judges said in a statement that prosecutors had presented evidence that “could” lead to convictions for the four people accused in the case.

The STL opened its inquiry into Hariri’s death in 2009. A total of five people, all of them affiliated to the Lebanese resistance movement, Hezbollah, have been accused by the court of having a role in the explosion on February 14, 2005 in central Beirut that also left 21 other people killed. Charges against Mustafa Badreddine, a

senior Hezbollah commander, were dropped after he was killed in Syria in May 2016. The four others, namely Hussein Oneissi, Salim Ayyash, Assad Sabra and Hassan Merhi, are at large and being tried in absentia.

Hezbollah has recurrently denied any involvement in Hariri’s alleged assassination. The group has accused the STL of being influenced by certain governments in the Middle East and in the West which are basically opposed to the resistance in Lebanon.

The STL had announced on Monday that it would review defenses presented by Oneissi’s lawyer to see whether charges against him could be dropped.

However, the Wednesday announcement showed that the court seeks to formally indict Oneissi and the three other suspects in the case.

There was no immediate comment from either the Lebanese government or from the Hezbollah.

Denmark Ship on Fire in Arabian Sea, 4 Missing

DUBAI (AP) – Four people are missing after “a serious fire” erupted on a Singapore-flagged cargo ship in the Arabian Sea belonging to the shipping branch of the Danish group A.P. Moller-Maersk, authorities said Wednesday.

Maersk Line says the fire broke out late Tuesday on Maersk Honam and firefighter efforts

were “unsuccessful.”

“The crew sent out a distress signal and a total of 23 crew members were safely evacuated to the nearby vessel ALS Ceres,” the shipper said in a statement.

Maersk Line says the fire is still burning and “the situation of the vessel is very critical.”

The shipper initially described the vessel as being about 1,000

miles off the coast of Oman. The Indian Coast Guard put the ship near the Agatti Island, some 650 nautical miles from the port city of Kochi in India.

The Press Trust of India news agency said one of the missing sailors was Indian and that authorities believe the fire started in one of the many shipping containers on board the vessel.

The cause of the blaze is still unknown. Denmark’s TV2 said the ship was transporting “dangerous cargo” without giving further details.

“Two crew members (were) currently receiving medical first aid onboard the ALS Ceres,” said Toft, adding Maersk will offer the families of missing crew members “all the support we can

in this very difficult situation.”

The nationalities of the 27 crew members on the Singapore-flagged Maersk Honam include 13 from India, nine from the Philippines, two from Thailand, and one from Romania, South Africa, and the United Kingdom.

The vessel, built in 2017, is carrying 7860 containers. The Maersk Honam has a nominal

capacity of 15262 TEU (twenty-foot equivalent unit).The US Navy’s 5th Fleet, which is based in Bahrain, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

In September, another cargo ship loaded with construction material sank off the Omani coast, though all 20 sailors abroad the vessel survived.