

Turkey Seeks 20-Year Terms for Hunger-Striking Teachers

ANKARA (Dispatches) – Turkish prosecutors have demanded up to 20 years in prison for two hunger-striking teachers protesting their dismissal in a widespread purge after an abortive coup last year.

Nuriye Gulmen and Semih Ozakca, who have been on hunger strike for over two months, were charged by an Ankara court with membership in a terrorist group, spreading terrorist propaganda, and breaking the law on demonstrations after the failed July 2016 coup.

People in this world are like travelers whose journey is going on though they are asleep. (Life's journey is going on though men may not feel it).

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

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Bahrainis Hold Anti-Regime Rallies Nationwide



Bahrainis hold protest rallies across the kingdom against the bloody Diraz crackdown May 25, 2017.

MANAMA (Dispatches) – People in Bahrain hold more rallies nationwide in protest at the Manama regime's recent bloodshed in the besieged village of Diraz, which is home to the spiritual leader of the country's Shia majority, Sheikh Isa Qassim.

Protesters took to the streets in several areas to condemn the Bahraini military's Tuesday raid on Diraz, which killed five supporters of Sheikh Qassim.

The gatherings, however, turned violent when regime forces intervened and attempted to disperse the demonstrators. Nine arrests were made during the skirmishes.

On May 23, Bahraini forces raided Diraz, which has been under a military siege for almost a year, and stormed into the home of Sheikh Qassim.

During the raid, regime forces killed at least five demonstrators, wounded dozens and arrested over 280 people during the crackdown on Diraz, which took place shortly after a meeting between U.S. President Donald Trump and Bahraini King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifah in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

The fresh wave of anti-regime protests broke out on May 21, when a Bahraini court convicted Sheikh Qassim of illegal collection of funds and money

laundering. The cleric was sentenced to one year in jail and ordered to pay \$265,266 in fines.

Last year, the cleric was also stripped of his citizenship, sparking repeated sit-ins outside his residence in Diraz.

On Wednesday, the Bahraini Interior Ministry warned the protesters against holding more rallies, but the stern warning has failed to end anti-government marches across the kingdom.

The deadly Diraz raid has drawn angry reactions from prominent human rights groups, with Amnesty International calling for an independent investigation into Manama's use of "excessive force."

New York-based Human Rights First also urged the Trump administration to condemn the Bahraini military for the "deadly disturbing" raid on Diraz.

In a show of solidarity with Sheikh Qassim and his supporters, Iraqi people gathered outside the Bahraini embassy in Baghdad on Wednesday to deplore the Diraz attack.

Iranians are also set to hold similar marches in different cities following Friday Prayers.

Tehran has denounced the fatal Diraz raid as "unacceptable." Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said the bloodshed was the U.S. president's "cozying up" to despots during the visit to Saudi Arabia earlier this week, where Trump vowed Washington's relations with Manama would improve.

Reacting to the developments, Germany also said it has been "following with concern the latest events in Bahrain, which claimed the lives of 5 people."

The German Foreign Ministry urged, in a statement issued Thursday, all parties to "work towards peaceful coexistence, and return to the path of national dialogue."

This is while Saudi Arabia, which has been helping the Bahraini military in its crackdown on peaceful protests since 2011, has defended Manama's brutalities in Diraz.

Home to the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet, Bahrain has carried out a crackdown on opposition political activity and dissent since an uprising began in 2011 against the ruling Al Khalifah regime by demonstrators from the Shia Muslim majority.

UN Raises Alarm Over Hunger-Striking Palestinian Inmates



Palestinian women shout slogans during a press conference in Gaza City in solidarity with Palestinian prisoners on hunger strike in the Zionist regime's jails on May 18, 2017.

NEW YORK (Dispatches) – The United Nations has raised the alarm over the health conditions of hunger-striking Palestinian inmates in the occupying regime's prisons.

"I am especially alarmed by reports of punitive measures by the Israeli authorities against the hunger strikers, including restricted access to lawyers and the denial of family visits," said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein in a statement.

Since April 17, more than 1,600 Palestinian prisoners have been refusing to eat food as part of a protest action dubbed the Freedom and Dignity Strike, led by imprisoned Marwan Barghout, a former top leader of the Palestinian Fatah Movement.

The strikers are demanding basic rights, such as an end to administrative detention, solitary confinement, and deliberate medical negligence.

The much-criticized administrative detention is a policy under which Palestinian inmates are kept in the Zionist regime's detention facilities without trial or charge. Nearly 700 prisoners are currently held in administrative detention. Some of them have been held in such detention for up to 11 years.

The occupying regime has sentenced Barghout, a popular figure among Palestinians, to serve five life terms in prison over his role in the Palestinian Intifada (uprising), and the Israel Prison Service (IPS) has placed him in solitary confinement since the initiation of the strike.

The IPS has been punishing the hunger-striking prisoners by placing

them in solitary confinement and denying them legal visits by their families and lawyers since the strike began on April 17, which also was the Palestinian Prisoners' Day.

Zeid, the UN human rights chief, added that, according to international human rights law, the right to consult an attorney was a "fundamental protection" and should "never" be violated.

He also said the health conditions of the hundreds of hunger strikers had "deteriorated significantly."

Zeid's comments came as lawyers with the Palestinian Prisoners' Society announced that at least 60 imprisoned hunger strikers in Ohalei Kedar prison had been moved to infirmaries, set up in the prison, for observation. Many of the hospitalized inmates were in serious condition, the lawyers added.

On May 16, the Arabic-language al-Aqsa satellite television network reported that 76 hunger strikers in the occupying regime's Ofer prison had been taken to the Hadrim field hospital for treatment and possible force-feeding, adding that 36 other hunger strikers from the same jail had been taken to the hospital for observation the previous day.

Earlier this month, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which visits Palestinian prisoners, called on Israeli authorities to end administrative detention and to allow family visits. It said that under international law, the visits "can only be limited for security reasons, on a case by case basis, but never for strictly punitive or disciplinary purposes."

U.S. Lawmakers Seek to Stop Massive Trump Saudi Weapons Deal

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – U.S. lawmakers have introduced legislation seeking to block at least a portion of U.S. President Donald Trump's massive sale of weapons to Saudi Arabia.

Republican Senator Rand Paul and Democratic Senators Chris Murphy and Al Franken introduced a resolution of disapproval in the Senate to force a vote on whether to block about \$500 million of the \$110 billion arms deal.

Paul said he opposes the arms deal because Riyadh supports terror groups and could use the weapons in the war against Yemen.

"Given Saudi Arabia's past support of terror, poor human rights record, and questionable tactics in its war in Yemen,

Congress must carefully consider and thoroughly debate if selling them billions of dollars of arms is in our best national security interest at this time," Paul said in a statement.

Saudi Arabia has agreed to buy \$110 billion of U.S. weapons, with options to buy up to \$350 billion over 10 years. Saudi Arabia was the first stop on Trump's first overseas trip this week, and he marked the visit by announcing the arms deal in Riyadh on May 20.

Trump has said he wants to encourage international weapons sales as a way to create jobs in the United States.

Reportedly brokered by the Republican president's son-in-law Jared Kushner, the massive package includes American

missiles, bombs, armored personnel carriers, warships and munitions.

In September, the Senate voted 71-27 against a joint effort by the same three senators to block another military deal with Saudi Arabia worth of \$1.15 billion, signed by Trump's predecessor Barack Obama.

Obama's administration suspended the planned sale of precision-guided munitions in December 2016 because of concerns over the Saudi-led military campaign in Yemen and civilian casualties.

The human rights group Amnesty International USA said the U.S. is fueling serious human rights violations taking place in Yemen by selling

weapons to Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia has been incessantly pounding Yemen since March 2015 in an attempt to bring back to power the resigned president, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, who is a staunch ally of Riyadh, and to undermine the Houthi Ansarullah movement. The Riyadh regime has, however, failed to reach its goals despite suffering great expense.

The military aggression has claimed the lives of more than 12,000 people in Yemen.

Since 2011, the Saudi regime has also been sponsoring terrorists fighting against the Syrian government, which has left hundreds of thousands people dead and millions more displaced.

Qatar Target of 'Hostile Media Campaign' by Saudi, UAE

DOHA (Dispatches) – Qatar says it is being targeted in a "hostile media campaign" after Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates blocked its websites and broadcasters over certain remarks attributed to the Qatari emir. "There is a hostile media campaign against the State of Qatar, which we will confront," Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani said.

A day earlier, Qatar's state-run news agency ran a story, saying the kingdom had ordered the withdrawal of its ambassadors from Bahrain, Egypt, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates over "tension"

with the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump.

The article, quoting Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, called Iran an "Islamic power" and praised the Hamas resistance movement as "the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people."

Qatar's Foreign Ministry later claimed that its state agency had been hacked and the emir's statements had been forged.

Following the alleged hack, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates blocked Qatari websites and broadcasters in their respective

countries.

The Qatari state television's nightly newscast had on Tuesday showed clips of the monarch at an official military ceremony with a scrolling ticker at the bottom of the screen showing the same remarks.

They included reference that Qatar had "strong relations" with Iran.

"Iran represents a regional and Islamic power that cannot be ignored and it is unwise to face up against it," the ticker read at one point. "It is a big power in the stabilization of the region."

The Qatari top diplomat, however, played down any existing rifts with

the country's fellow Persian Gulf littoral states by saying Doha was always in favor of maintaining "strong and brotherly relations" with them.

Among the media outlets allegedly antagonizing Doha, Al Thani said, were American ones.

There were 13 opinion articles "focused on Qatar" in U.S. media in the last five weeks, he said.

On the day of the hack, "a conference on Qatar convened without us attending while the authors of those articles were there," he said, asking, "Is this a coincidence?"

Iraqi Popular Forces Retake 8 Villages of Mosul From Daesh

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – Iraqi fighters from the Popular Mobilization Units have managed to retake eight villages west of Mosul as they are engaged in joint military operations with army troops to drive Daesh terrorists out of their last urban stronghold in the Arab country.

Army First Lieutenant Samir Dawood said that the pro-government forces, commonly known by the Arabic name Hashd al-Sha'abi, had wrested complete control over the villages of al-Wahbi, Arfie, Arfie Awwal and Amlihat.

Dawood added that Hashd al-Sha'abi fighters had also recaptured the road linking the nearby al-

Adnaniyah district and the mainly Shia-populated town of al-Ba'aj.

Later in the day, the media bureau of Hashd al-Sha'abi forces announced in a statement that the volunteer and pro-government fighters had liberated the villages of Kojou and Tel Ghazi north of Ba'aj from the grip of Daesh extremists.

Hashd al-Sha'abi fighters also retook the villages of Northern and Southern Biski north of Ba'aj.

Iraqi army soldiers and volunteer fighters from the Popular Mobilization Units have made sweeping gains against the Takfiri elements since launching the Mosul operation on October 17, 2016.