

Palestinians to Meet in Cairo To Advance Unity Deal

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – Some 13 Palestinian factions are to attend a meeting in the Egyptian capital Cairo to discuss steps that could consolidate a recent major reconciliation deal.

Sources from the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the entity that dominates the Palestinian Authority of President Mahmoud Abbas, said Sunday that talks will open in Cairo on Tuesday and could last for two days.

Wasel Abu Yousef, a senior PLO official, said 13 delegations representing almost all Palestinian factions in the occupied West Bank and in the Gaza Strip, will attend the talks, which come more than a month after the PA reached an agreement with the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas to establish a unity government in the Palestinian territories.

Under the October 12 reconciliation deal, which was brokered by Egypt, Hamas agreed to cede civilian control of Gaza to the PA. Hamas stuck to a November 1 deadline to allow the PA to take control of Gaza's border crossings with Egypt and the occupied Palestinian territories. The resistance movement has until December 1 to hand over full civilian administration to the PA.

Hamas has been ruling Gaza since 2007, a year after it surprised Abbas' Fattah party in general elections. The territory has been suffering from two wars waged by the Zionist regime and a crippling siege since then. The PA has exacerbated the plight of the Gazans by reducing electricity to the relatively-small, but heavily-populated enclave. Some PA officials have hinted that restrictions could ease if Hamas gives up its arms.



A Palestinian man waves the flags of Egypt and Palestine as people gather in Gaza City to celebrate after rival Palestinian factions Hamas and Fatah reached an agreement on ending a decade-long split following talks mediated by Egypt on October 12, 2017.

However, Hamas rejected claims that the resistance movement would discuss giving up its weapons, something demanded for years by the Zionist regime and the United States. Officials within the group said the Cairo meeting would focus on societal reconciliation, security, forming a potential unity government, elections.

"I think no Palestinian here can accept this model as a model for the security we are looking for," Bassem Naim, a top Hamas official,

said, adding that talks in Cairo will be focused on "how to achieve practical steps in the reconciliation process, mainly in the civil sector, government, ministers".

Abu Yousef of the PLO also hailed the talks as a major opportunity to bridge gaps between Hamas and the PA.

"I think this meeting will be a huge step towards the removal of all the obstacles to reconciliation, which is supported by everyone," he said.

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a move never recognized by the international community.

Hader is situated in the part of the occupied territory that is under the Syrian control, and its population is aligned with the Syrian government.

After the attack, people in the Golan Heights held a protest to condemn what they called the occupying regime of Israel's support for anti-Damascus terrorists. Israeli forces were deployed to the area then to disperse the protesters.

The Zionist regime is widely believed to be providing al-Nusra with weapons, salaries, medical aid and intelligence to fight Syrian troops and keep them at bay from the territories under the occupation.

Tel Aviv has also repeatedly targeted the Syrian army positions, with Damascus saying the attacks were aimed at propping up the militants.

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Sources close to Hariri say he has been forced to step down for "refusing to confront Hezbollah" as demanded by Saudi leaders.

Riyadh associates Hezbollah with Iran, and has been trying to weaken the resistance movement which is Lebanon's de facto deterrent force against any Israeli aggression.

Hezbollah, both a military force and a political movement, is part of a Lebanese government made up of rival factions.

Lebanese President Michel Aoun has accused Saudi Arabia of holding Hariri hostage. Senior Lebanese politicians close to Hariri have also said he was coerced into resigning.

Egypt's state news agency MENA said the Arab League meeting on Sunday was convened at the Saudi request with support from the UAE, Bahrain, and Kuwait to discuss means of confronting what they deemed as Iranian intervention.

Saudi Arabia is under rising international pressure over Hariri's mysterious sojourns in Riyadh. After initially assuring that he would return to Beirut soon, Hariri flew to Paris with his wife Saturday while leaving their two children behind in Saudi Arabia.

Hariri's saga has angered many Lebanese who deem it an affront to their country and a blatant interference by Saudi Arabia in their domestic affairs.

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spearheaded an 18-month campaign to remove a man he openly described as a "dictator", embraced colleagues and shouted: "The President is gone. Long live the new President."

Mugabe's 52-year-old wife Grace, who had harbored ambitions of succeeding her husband, was also expelled from the party, along with at least three cabinet ministers who had formed the backbone of her 'G40' political faction.

Speaking before the meeting, Mutsvangwa said Mugabe, who has so far resisted calls to quit, was running out of time to negotiate his departure and should leave the country while he could. "He's trying to bargain for a dignified exit," he said.

If Mugabe refused to go, "We will bring back the crowds and they will do their business," Mutsvangwa told reporters.

Mnangagwa, a former state security chief known as "The Crocodile," is expected to head an interim post-Mugabe unity government that will focus on rebuilding ties with the outside world and stabilizing an economy in freefall.

On Saturday, hundreds of thousands of people flooded the streets of Harare, singing, dancing and hugging soldiers in an outpouring of elation at Mugabe's expected overthrow.

His stunning downfall is likely to send shockwaves across Africa, where a number of entrenched strongmen, from Uganda's Yoweri Museveni to Democratic Republic of Congo's Joseph Kabila, are facing mounting pressure to quit.

On Saturday, men, women and children ran alongside the armored cars and troops who stepped in to target what the army called "criminals" in Mugabe's inner circle.

Meanwhile, the man himself remained under house arrest in his lavish 'Blue Roof' compound, watching the support from his party, security services and people evaporate.

Speaking from a secret location in South Africa, his nephew, Patrick Zhuwao, told Reuters Mugabe and his wife were "ready to die for what is correct" rather than step down in order to legitimize what he described as a coup.

Zhuwao, who was also sanctioned by ZANU-PF, did not answer his phone on Sunday.

On Harare's streets, few seemed to care about the legal niceties as they heralded a "second liberation" and spoke of their dreams for political and economic change after two decades of deepening repression and hardship.

More than 3 million Zimbabweans - around 20% of the population - have emigrated to neighboring South Africa in search of a better life.

The huge crowds in Harare have given a quasi-democratic veneer to the army's intervention, backing its assertion that it is merely effecting a constitutional transfer of power, rather than a plain coup, which would entail a diplomatic backlash.

Despite the euphoria, some Mugabe opponents are uneasy about the prominent role played by the military, and fear Zimbabwe might be swapping one army-backed autocrat for another, rather than allowing the people to choose their next leader.

"The real danger of the current situation is that having got their new preferred candidate into State House, the military will want to keep him or her there, no matter what the electorate wills," former education minister David Coltart said.

The United States, a longtime Mugabe critic, said it was looking forward to a new era in Zimbabwe, while President Ian Khama of neighboring Botswana said Mugabe had no diplomatic support in the region and should resign at once.

Besides changing its leadership, ZANU-PF said it wanted to change the constitution to reduce the power of the president, a possible sign of its desire to move towards a more pluralistic and inclusive political system.

After Nearly 80 Days

Egypt Opens Gaza's Rafah Crossing



Palestinians argue with officials in a makeshift station in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip on November 18, 2017 as they await clearance to take a bus to travel through the Rafah border crossing with Egypt, after it opened for three days for the first time since a Palestinian reconciliation deal.

CAITOR (Dispatches) – Egyptian authorities have allowed the opening of the Rafah crossing east of the country to the besieged Gaza Strip after nearly three months of closure.

The reopening, which would last for three days and comes on a humanitarian basis, is meant to reduce the increasing number of people stranded on both sides of the frontier.

It has been a routine for Egypt over the past 10 years to keep Rafah closed in what many call Cairo's alignment with the Zionist regime against the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas, the dominant force in Gaza. Hamas only recently ceded administrative control of the enclave to the Palestinian Authority, the organization that controls the occupied West Bank, in an Egyptian-brokered unity deal meant to ease frictions between the two sides. Hamas forces withdrew from Rafah and another crossing to the occupied territories in early November.

Many sought to link the opening

to the Palestinian Authority's amicable ties with Egypt. However, there was no report that the two sides had reached an agreement to run the crossing on a regular basis, which the regime in Tel Aviv has fiercely opposed over the past years.

The Zionist regime has launched two wars on Gaza since Hamas took office in 2007 while the regime maintains a crippling siege on the Mediterranean enclave, leaving many in desperate need of medicine and other humanitarian stuff.

According to official estimates by Hamas, some 30,000 people are on the waiting list to find the chance to travel across Rafah. The crossing has opened only 17 times this year and the last time it was open for a similar three-day period was some 80 days ago.

Concerns Grow Over Fate of 7 Missing Bahraini Civilians

MANAMA (Press TV) – An independent human rights group has expressed deep concern over the fate of seven people, including two minors, who have been forcibly disappeared as the ruling Al Khalifah regime relentlessly continues with its crackdown on human rights activists and pro-democracy campaigners in the tiny Persian Gulf kingdom.

The Bahrain Forum for Human Rights (BFHR) said in a statement on Saturday that the victims, who come from five different villages, had not been heard of for weeks, Arabic-language Bahrain Mirror news website reported.

The BFHR identified the minors as Sadiq Jaafar al-Sammak from the town of A'ali, situated about three kilometers southeast of the capital Manama, and Mohsen Abdullah al-A'ali from the village of Buri, located about 13 kilometers southwest of Manama.

The human rights group stressed that the first minor had gone missing since October 5, while the second had disappeared since November 8.

The BFHR said the Manama regime had restored to enforced disappearance as a means of pressure against those arrested over exercising

their right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

Thousands of anti-regime protesters have held 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, 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.

Bahraini monarch King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifah ratified the constitutional amendment on April 3.

Zionist PM Questioned for 6th Time Over Corruption

AL-QUDS (Dispatches) – Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been questioned by the police for the sixth time over two alleged cases of corruption, local media reported.

Netanyahu is suspected in two criminal investigations dubbed by the police "case 1,000" and "case 2,000." In one of the affairs, Netanyahu is

suspected of receiving luxury gifts from Zionist U.S. Hollywood tycoon Arnon Milchan. Netanyahu said he had been a longtime friend of Milchan and the gifts were given "between friends."

In the other case, he is suspected of allegedly making secret deals to receive favorable coverage in Yediot Aharonot, one of Israel's largest

daily newspapers.

The upcoming questioning was the second time this month that the police will arrive to question Netanyahu in his al-Quds residence.

Netanyahu has been denying any wrongdoing, constantly saying "there will be nothing because there was nothing."