

Bahraini Civilians Held in Custody Without Charge

MANAMA (Press TV) – Bahraini forces have held six civilians without offering any legal justification for their detention as the ruling Al Khalifah regime presses ahead with its repressive measures and heavy-handed crackdown in the tiny Persian Gulf kingdom.

Human rights activists, requesting anonymity, said Fawzia Mashallah had been kept in police custody over the past three days after regime troops raided her home in the Bilad al-Qadim suburb of the capital Manama, and took her to the Interior Ministry's Criminal Investigation Directorate without providing any reasons, Arabic-language Bahrain Mirror news website reported on Saturday.

The forces also arrested a young man, identified as Mohammed Ja'afar al-Jamri, in the northwestern village of Bani Jamrah.

Separately, officials detained Ibrahim Sabbat at Bahrain International Airport upon return from a vacation abroad.

Bahraini troops also made three separate arrests in the northwestern village of Diraz, situated some 12 kilometers west of Manama, as well as al-Dair village on the northern coast of Muharraq Island.

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



In this file picture, Bahraini police force arrest a protester during a demonstration against the ruling regime in the village of Shakhurah, west of the capital Manama.

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 crack-

down.

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.

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U.S. Census Bureau in September 2017 indicated more than 40 million people - more than one in eight Americans - were living in poverty. Almost half of those, 18.5 million, were living in deep poverty, with reported family income below half of the poverty threshold.

He said while it was frequently assumed that poor people belonged almost entirely to minority groups, but noted there were eight million more white people than African-Americans living in poverty. "The face of poverty in America is not only black or Hispanic, but also white, Asian and many other colors," he said.

He said the tax and welfare reforms being proposed by Trump and the Republican leadership in Congress were likely to have "devastating consequences" for the poorest 20% of Americans.

"The proposed tax reform package stakes out America's bid to become the most unequal society in the world," Alston said.

"It will greatly increase the already high levels of wealth and income inequality between the richest one percent and the poorest 50 percent of Americans."

He added: "The dramatic cuts in welfare, foreshadowed by President Trump and Speaker Paul Ryan, and already beginning to be implemented by the administration, will essentially shred crucial dimensions of a safety net that is already full of holes."

Republicans declined to meet Alston in Washington, with the office of Speaker Paul Ryan saying he was too busy. Yet independent senator Bernie Sanders seized on the envoy's findings.

He wrote on Twitter: "Our job: fight back against the reactionary Trump agenda and for a progressive agenda that works for the middle class, not the one per cent."

U.S. Ignorant ... (Continued From Page One)

was violating international law.

Iranian Foreign Minister Muhammad Javad Zarif on Saturday dismissed the allegations as "baseless", saying they were an attempt by Washington to whitewash its war crimes in the Middle East.

"In an attempt to cover up its presence in the region and measures which can mostly amount to war crimes, the U.S. levels baseless allegations against the Islamic Republic of Iran by displaying a piece of metal," Zarif told reporters in Tehran.

Zarif said the claims aimed to deflect attention from U.S. complicity in the crimes committed in the Middle East, particularly in Yemen, and from U.S. President Donald Trump's "very dangerous move" to recognize Al-Quds as Israel's "capital."

The top Iranian diplomat further said the U.S. made such allegations against Iran while it provided Saudi Arabia with cluster bombs that kill Yemeni civilians, and supported the Saudi regime's blockade on the impoverished country.

What is clear, he emphasized, is that American bombs are being dropped on the Yemeni people and "this is a fact that no one can conceal."

California's ... (Continued From Page One)

to remain strong through Saturday evening in the Santa Barbara County mountains, the National Weather Service warned. Gusts of up to 64 kilometers per hour were expected.

From Saturday night through Sunday evening, the winds could lash neighboring Ventura County, the Weather Service said. That is where the Thomas Fire first began due to unknown causes, and where it was still burning.

Cal Fire engineer Cory Iverson, 32, died on Thursday while battling the flames near the Ventura County community of Fillmore. Fire officials said Iverson, the blaze's first fatality, left behind a pregnant wife and 2-year-old daughter.

The Thomas Fire was one of several major blazes that broke out in Southern California this month, although the others have been contained.

The blazes forced many schools to close for days, shut roads and drove hundreds of thousands from their homes. The fires were also responsible for poor air quality throughout Southern California.

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The force was established in 2014 after Ayatollah Sistani urged Iraqi citizens to take up arms against Daesh which had swept aside government forces and seized control of much of northern Iraq.

Known in English as the Popular Mobilization Units, the various forces within the Hashd can field a total of between 60,000 and 140,000 fighters.

Iraq's parliament has classed it as a state force operating within the constitution.

Calls have been growing from the West for the Hashed to disband, with French President Emmanuel Macron proposing "a gradual demilitarization" of the group and for all militias in Iraq to be "dismantled".

Last month a U.S. senator introduced a bill to designate two Hashd brigades - Asaib Ahl al-Haq and Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba - as terrorist organizations.

According to the head of Hashd media team Muhunnad Najam al-Aqabi, the 140,000-strong force currently includes 34,000 Sunni fighters and about 10,000 from Iraq's minority faiths, including Christians, Shabaks and Yazidis.

Syria Slams UN Envoy for Anti-Damascus Remarks

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – Syria has lambasted United Nations Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura and the French Foreign Ministry for accusing the Arab country of being responsible for a lack of progress in the latest round of the Geneva peace negotiations.

In a statement carried by Syria's official news agency SANA, a Syrian Foreign Ministry official said such "allegations reveal that Syria's enemies have been persisting in their campaigns of misdirection and lies since the beginning of the crisis" in the country.

The official made the comments a day after the eighth round of peace talks between Damascus and oppo-

sition groups ended without making any progress.

After the conclusion of the Geneva talks on Thursday, de Mistura accused the Syrian government delegation, led by Syria's UN Ambassador Bashar al-Ja'afari, of lacking the will to "find a way to have a dialogue and negotiate during this round."

France's Ambassador to the U.S. Gerard Araud also hurled similar accusations against Damascus, saying the Syrian leaders "do not look for a political compromise but for the eradication of their enemies."

However, the Syrian Foreign Ministry source said Damascus has always dealt "positively" with all

"honest efforts" aimed at resolving the six-year-old crisis.

The source went on to say what had prevented the Geneva talks from progressing was the opposition's November statement at the Riyadh II conference that demanded Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's departure before any peace deal in the Arab country.

The source also stressed that the Riyadh II conference was created for the sole purpose of stalling and derailing the latest round of talks, because "the enemies of Syria and their pawns do not want stability" on Syrian soil.

The Syrian Foreign Ministry official added that de Mistura must be

"honest" and "objective" in order to reach results that would put an end to the crisis.

On Thursday, Ja'afari accused Saudi Arabia and the West of sabotaging the Geneva negotiations. "Those who drew up the Riyadh communiqué are the ones who sabotaged this round" of the Geneva talks," he said.

Meanwhile, a parallel peace process in the Kazakh capital, Astana, between Syria's warring parties has resulted in significant achievements, leading to ceasefires and the establishment of de-escalation zones across the conflict-ridden country. The Astana talks have been brokered by Iran, Russia and Turkey.

Pence Trip to Middle East Overshadowed by Trump's al-Quds decision

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – U.S. Vice President Mike Pence will underscore the U.S. partnership with the Zionist regime during a trip to the Middle East next week while seeking to shore up U.S. relations with the Arab world after President Donald Trump recognized al-Quds as the capital of the Zionist regime.

Pence, a strong supporter of Trump's decision, will spend three days in the region with stops in the Israeli-occupied territories and Egypt, the first high-level official to visit after the president reversed decades of U.S. policy and announced the United States would start the process of moving its embassy from Tel Aviv.

The status of al-Quds, which holds Muslim, Jewish and Christian holy sites, is one of the thorniest obstacles to a peace deal between the Zionist regime and the Palestinians, who were furious over Trump's move and have declined to meet with Pence. The international community does not recognize the Zionist regime's sovereignty over the full city.

The Zionist regime considers -Quds its eternal capital, while Palestinians want the capital of an independent state of theirs to be in the city's eastern sector, which the Zionist regime captured in the 1967 Middle East war and

annexed in a move never recognized internationally.

Pence, an evangelical Christian who had planned to highlight the plight of Christian minorities during his trip, will not meet with Palestinian Christians or with officials from the Coptic Christian church, who declined a meeting in response to the U.S. move.

Officials said Pence still would discuss the persecution of Christians as well as the al-Quds decision, countering Iran as a superpower in the region, and fighting "extremist ideology."

The dates of his trip have been in flux because of Trump's U.S. tax overhaul push and the possibility that Pence would be needed to provide a tie-breaking vote in the Senate.

He is now scheduled to depart Washington on Tuesday, arriving in Cairo on Wednesday for a meeting with Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

He flies to the Israeli-occupied territories later on Wednesday and will meet with Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Reuven Rivlin, deliver a speech to the Israeli parliament, and visit al-Quds' Western Wall.

Turkey Wants Former Police Investigator Repatriated From U.S.

ANKARA (Reuters) – Turkey's justice minister has told his U.S. counterpart that a former Turkish police investigator who testified at the trial of a Turkish banker in New York this week is wanted by Ankara and should be swiftly returned, ministry sources said.

Huseyin Korkmaz gave evidence at the New York trial of a Turkish banker who is charged with helping Iran evade U.S. sanctions, in a case which has strained ties between NATO allies Turkey and the United States.

"It has been requested by our judicial offices that (Korkmaz) be temporarily arrested with the aim of being repatriated, based on

alleged crimes," Justice Minister Abdulhamit Gul said in a letter to U.S. Justice Secretary Jeff Sessions, according to the sources at his ministry.

"We expect that the request is met on positive terms and the previously mentioned person be repatriated as soon as possible."

The Turkish government has said followers of U.S.-based cleric Fethullah Gulen, who it blames for last year's failed military coup, are behind the case brought in the United States. Gulen has denied any role in the coup attempt.

"I want to point out that a fugitive, a terror suspect facing serious allegations, taking part

in this case in your country as a witness is big enough a scandal," Gul said, adding that the case could cause irreparable damage to relations if action was not taken.

Korkmaz told the trial at Manhattan federal court this week that he feared he would be tortured if he returned to Turkey, where he led an investigation involving Turkish officials and Mehmet Hakan Atilla, the bank executive on trial in New York.

Gul's letter repeated Turkish allegations of contact between members of the judiciary who have handled the case and members of the Gulen network.