

Washington to Terminate USAID Office in Palestine on Jan. 31

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) will cut funding to all its projects in the West Bank and Gaza Strip on January 31, Dave Harden, former USAID mission director and managing director of the Georgetown Strategy Group, says.

Harden lamented the White House's decision, adding that the administration "demonstrates again a lack of nuance, sophistication and appreciation for the complexity of the situation," according to the Jerusalem Post.

"Who suffers when USAID leaves schools and water systems unfinished? Palestinians, of course, but also Israelis and Americans. The administration just gave Hamas more running room," Harden said.

He later tweeted that the decision to close the office is "another example of the end of the two-state solution" to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

The decision to cut U.S. foreign aid to Palestinians was announced by



A student stands at the entrance of a school run by the UN agency for Palestinian refugees in Balatah Camp in the occupied West Bank on August 29, 2018.

U.S. President Donald Trump's administration in August 2018.

"At the direction of President Trump, we have undertaken a review of U.S. assistance to the Palestinian Authority and in the West Bank and Gaza to ensure these funds are spent

in accordance with U.S. national interests and provide value to the U.S. taxpayer," the State Department said at the time. "As a result of that review, at the direction of the president, we will redirect more than \$200 million... originally planned for pro-

grams in the West Bank and Gaza."

The United Nations aid coordination body says the Tel Aviv regime and Israeli groups have been trying over the past years to delegitimize humanitarian organizations working in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The push has been "advanced by a network of Israeli civil society groups and some associated organizations elsewhere, with the apparent support" of the regime itself, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said in a report.

It said the overall bid had a negative impact on the ability of humanitarian organizations to deliver assistance and advocate on behalf of Palestinian rights.

The bid, the UN body said, had featured "targeted defamation and smear campaigns alleging violations of counter-terrorism legislation and international law, or political action against Israel."

China...

(Continued From Page One)

South Korea and Turkey are likely to be given waivers after they expire in May.

"Other geopolitical priorities will moderate the administration's desire to halt Iranian exports, particularly with Iran's top two purchasers, China and India," they said.

Amos Hochstein, the former international energy envoy who ran Iran sanctions under the Obama administration, said the real reason Trump is giving the waivers is because he is unable to force China and India to stop buying oil from the country.

"There will 100 percent be exemptions in May," Hochstein said.

Asian buyers of Iranian oil have overcome final hurdles to resuming shipments from the country, with first cargoes set to arrive in Japan as early as this month.

According to media reports, China took 576,000 barrels per day of Iranian oil in December, while South Korea discharged 300,000 barrels, its first cargo since July.

Oil pricing agency S&P Global Platts quoted presidents of Japan's JXTG Holdings and Cosmo Oil as saying that the refiners will resume loading from Iran at the end of this month.

China and India continued to import Iranian oil from November while Turkey resumed imports in December.

EU...

(Continued From Page One)

Iran hosted tens of thousands of Polish war refugees who were brought to the country after surviving work camps in the Soviet Union and before they migrated to then-emerging Occupied Palestine, New Zealand and some African countries. Scores stayed on after the war, choosing to reside in Iran.

Zarif tweeted: "Polish Government can't wash the shame: while Iran saved Poles in WWII, it now hosts desperate anti-Iran circus."

Tehran and Warsaw have had good relations. On Saturday, Polish Foreign Minister Jacek Czaputowicz said Poland supported the EU's efforts to preserve its nuclear agreement with Iran, but claimed the deal alone would not keep Iran from "destabilizing" the region.

Thousands of activists in the United States and other countries have recently signed a petition, calling on European countries to boycott the anti-Iran summit.

The activists started the petition on the website of the anti-war group Code Pink to ask European countries not to attend the summit.

By Thursday, more than 3,400 people had signed the online petition which urges EU countries to skip Pompeo's "belligerent conference" and "instead host an alternative one with all nations of the region, including Iran".

Private...

(Continued From Page One)

Netanyahu credited the outgoing chief of staff for being part of the alleged change in Muslim and Arab states' attitude towards Israel.

"Gadi, you were part of it and you witnessed it, in your meetings with commanders-in-chief of armies of Arab states. You saw the hugs, and there are pictures of these hugs," Netanyahu said.

Netanyahu's revelation about the "hugs" with Arab military leaders comes as Middle East Eye reported last week that Mossad director Yossi Cohen attended a meeting in a Persian Gulf capital in early December with senior intelligence officials from the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, with whom he discussed measures to curtail the regional influence of Turkey and Iran.

Last week it was also reported that the leader of the occupying regime's Labor party, Avi Gabbay, secretly visited Abu Dhabi in early December and met with senior officials there.

The UAE, like most Arab countries, does not have official diplomatic ties with the occupying regime of Israel and does not officially recognize it.

However, Zionist minister of sport and culture Miri Regev travelled to the UAE in October to attend a judo tournament in which an athlete was allowed to compete under Israel's flag and sing its anthem for the first time in the country.

It was the first time a Zionist minister made an official visit to the Emirates.

Netanyahu also visited Oman, which does not recognize Israel, in November, and was hosted in Muscat by Sultan Qaboos.

Among the Persian Gulf states, Saudi Arabia, Oman and Bahrain are becoming more open about their relations with Israel at an official level.

Despite the warm official ties that the occupying regime of Israel has developed with some Persian Gulf Arab states, the 2017-2018 Arab Opinion Index poll conducted by the Doha Institute indicated that 90 percent of Arabs believe that Israel "poses a threat to the security and stability of the region".

Thousands...

(Continued From Page One)

branded a crime by international rights activists.

Ordered in June 2018 to better account for the children in its care, HHS identified 2,737 it was caring for at that time.

"However, thousands of children may have been separated during an influx that began in 2017, before the accounting required by the Court, and HHS has faced challenges in identifying separated children," the department said.

The report added that the Office of Refugee Resettlement had dozens and possibly hundreds of children whom it did not know had been separated from their parents.

The report contradicted statements by administration officials that there was a clear system in place for dealing with the children and that there was not a "policy" of separations.

"The OIG report released today shows that the Trump Administration, with its unique blend of incompetence, cruelty, and disregard for basic decency, misled the American public on one of its most heinous policies to date," said Democratic Representative Bennie Thompson, who heads the House Committee on Homeland Security.

"Thousands more children were separated from their families than we were previously told -- and we still don't even know exactly how many kids have been ripped from their families because the Administration has failed to keep track."

FM...

(Continued From Page 2)

say that Iran-Iraq relations have a bright future," the minister said.

"The affinities between the Iranian and Iraqi nations are cultural and historical. The blood of their youths has mingled amid their fight against terrorism; therefore, no power can divide them," he added.

Zarif said, "Outsiders forced their way into this region one day, but they will eventually leave. It is the regional nations that will remain," said Zarif. "We must not allow the parties that do not favor better conditions for us to hinder Iran-Iraq relations."

Prior to Pompeo, U.S. President Donald Trump had paid a controversial secret visit to American troops in Iraq, which triggered a wave of condemnation from the Arab country's political and military leaders.

Commenting on Zarif's remarks, spokesman of Iraq's Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba Hashim al-Mousawi, described Iran-Iraq ties as not only political but also "intellectual, religious, spiritual and friendly."

"There are continuous coordination and cooperation between the two sides whether politically, militarily or economically," he told Press TV.

He further pointed to Washington's attempt to "provoke" the Arab world against Iran, stressing that "Iraq will not let go of its alliance with Iran, because Iran has stood with the people of Iraq" during difficult times.

Hamis:

Fatah Trying to Drag Gaza Into New War With Zionist Regime

GAZA STRIP (Dispatches) – A high-ranking leader of the Palestinian Hamas resistance movement has accused the West Bank-based Fatah movement of attempts to provoke the Zionist regime's army to launch a new military campaign against the impoverished Gaza Strip.

"Fatah-affiliated people are trying to force the Gaza Strip into a fresh battle with Israel by launching rockets during this sensitive time," Mahmoud al-Zahar said in an exclusive interview with Arabic-language Palestine Today television network.

Zahar added, "Some of these people are linked to Israel and are commissioned to get on with the task. These people are

well-known to us. Fatah stands behind them. We have talked with their field leaders about their dangerous acts. Sometimes, they are arrested."

The Hamas leader noted that Gaza-based resistance movements are closely monitoring the occupying regime's acts of aggression against the coastal enclave, stressing that they would never wait too long to respond to such moves.

Zahar's remarks came after Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum warned in a statement on Sunday that the movement "will intensify the confrontation with Israel" in the coastal sliver if the Israeli military launches new attacks against the enclave.

"The Israeli occupation [re-

gime] bears the consequences of continuing to commit its follies against peaceful protesters and deliberately killing them in cold blood as well as bombing sites of resistance," he stated.

The Palestinian official further noted that the escalation of situation in Gaza and "playing with fire" will never led to security for the regime and its people.

The statement came after the regime's military aircraft carried out several airstrikes against multiple locations across the besieged Gaza Strip late on Saturday.

Palestinian Ma'an news agency reported that Israeli warplanes fired at least one missile towards a military site belonging to Hamas east of Gaza City.

Two other sites were targeted in the town of Beit Lahiya in the northern Gaza Strip and in the city of Khan Yunis south of the enclave. The Israeli airstrikes caused fires to erupt in several targeted sites; however, there were no reports of human casualties.

The Zionist regime military frequently bombs the Gaza Strip, with civilians being the main target of such attacks.

It has also launched several wars on the Palestinian coastal sliver, the last of which began in early July 2014. The military aggression, which ended on August 26, 2014, killed nearly 2,200 Palestinians. Over 11,100 others were also wounded in the war.

Hassan's imprisonment and that of two other members of Alwadaei's family as unlawful.

The body of independent human rights experts stated that Alwadaei's relatives were "deprived of their liberty, interrogated and prosecuted for their family ties with him and that these were acts of reprisals."

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 regime 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, 2017, 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, 2017.

Turkey Sentences Detained Human Rights Award-Winning Judge to 10 Years

ANKARA (Reuters) – A Turkish court sentenced a judge who previously won an award for human rights to 10 years in prison over links to the network Ankara says orchestrated an attempted coup in 2016, the state-owned Anadolu news agency said on Friday.

Murat Arslan, who has been detained for 22 months, was convicted of membership in an armed terrorist organization, after prosecutors charged him with use of the encrypted messaging app ByLock, Anadolu said.

Arslan has denied the charges and said any

evidence that he had used the app was "fabricated", Anadolu said.

The government says the outlawed app was widely used by followers of the U.S.-based cleric Fethullah Gulen, whom it blames for the attempted coup that saw rogue soldiers commandeer tanks and aircraft, attacking parliament and killing some 250 unarmed civilians.

Gulen, a former ally of President Tayyip Erdogan who has lived in self-imposed exile in the United States since 1999, has con-

demned the coup and denied any involvement with it.

The Council of Europe human rights body in 2017 gave Arslan, who was detained at the time, the Vaclav Havel Human Rights Prize, a decision that prompted Turkey to say it would cut back its funding to the body.

Arslan was the former head of Turkey's Judges and Prosecutors Union, a civil legal association that was shut down by government decree in the wide crackdown that followed the coup attempt.