

‘Zionist Regime Detained Over 500 Palestinians in January’

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – Three advocacy groups say Zionist troops detained more than 500 Palestinians, including dozens of children and women, last month.

The detentions were made in the occupied al-Quds, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the Palestinian Prisoners Society, the prisoners and ex-prisoner affairs committee, and the prisoners’ rights group Addameer said.

Zionist troops took away at least 509 people, including 89 children and eight women, during repeated raids, the groups said in a statement carried by Ma’an news agency.

Thought for Today

If you are greeted then return the greetings more warmly. If you are favoured, then repay the obligation manifold; but he who takes the initiative will always excel in merit.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

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‘Humanitarian Crisis Deteriorating in Yemen’

SANAA (Dispatches) – The United Nations has warned that the situation in war-ravaged Yemen is further deteriorating as the Arab country is facing the biggest humanitarian crisis in the world.

“The humanitarian crisis in Yemen remains the worst in the world,” said the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in a statement.

“An estimated 80 percent of the population -24 million - require some form of humanitarian or protection assistance, including 14.3 million who are in acute need,” it added.

“Severity of needs is deepening, with the number of people in acute need a staggering 27 percent higher than last year,” the OCHA statement further read. It also warned that two-thirds of the Arab country was “already pre-famine”, while one-third faced “acute vulnerabilities.”

Meanwhile, the U.S. House of Representatives on Wednesday adopted a resolution that obliges President Donald Trump to end Washington’s military support for the Saudi-led coalition’s war on Yemen, and withdraw almost all U.S. forces engaged in the war in less than a month.

The resolution was passed 248-



In this undated photo, a Yemeni refugee child fills water jerrycans at a camp for displaced people in northern Yemen.

177, with one voting present.

The resolution directs the president to remove any U.S. armed forces that are affecting the war with Yemen, with the exception of forces purportedly fighting al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, in less than 30 days after the resolution is enacted.

It’s expected at some point that the Senate will take up the resolution, but it’s not clear when.

On the overall issue of US military support for the war in Yemen, the Republican-controlled Senate passed similar legislation in December, but it was not taken up by

the Republican-controlled House. Democrats, who now hold the majority in the House, have made the legislation a priority.

The developments come as war-planes of the Saudi-led coalition waging war on Yemen have targeted a fishing boat in the waters off the Red Sea port city of Hudaydah, killing at least eight fishermen.

The boat came under attack north of Hudaydah Province’s Badhia Island on Wednesday, al-Masirah TV channel reported.

The aerial assaults also injured five Yemeni civilians and left 10

others missing, it added.

According to the report, Saudi fighter jets also conducted air-strikes against several targets in Hudaydah city.

Wednesday’s attacks amount to yet another violation of the UN-brokered ceasefire on the part of the Saudi-led coalition.

Saudi Arabia invaded Yemen in March 2015 in an attempt to re-install Yemen’s former President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, who had resigned amid popular discontent and fled to Riyadh, and to eliminate the Houthi Ansarullah movement, which had been running state affairs.

The invasion, which has failed to achieve any of its goals, has reportedly killed over 56,000 people. The imposed war has also taken a heavy toll on the country’s infrastructure, destroying hospitals, schools, and factories.

The Saudi-led military campaign has also paved the way for the outbreak of epidemics, most notably cholera, in the impoverished country.

With the war drawn into a deadlock, Saudi Arabia is virtually mired in a quagmire, having faced repeated military backlashes in Yemen and reprisal attacks inside its own territories.

Khashoggi’s Body Possibly Burnt in Oven in Saudi Consulate



Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman strengthens his djellaba during the G20 Leaders’ Summit family photo in Buenos Aires, Argentina, November 30, 2018.

ANKARA (Dispatches) – The body of Saudi opposition journalist Jamal Khashoggi might have been burnt in an oven installed in the Saudi Consulate General in Istanbul, the city’s police department says.

“An oven was found in the building of the Saudi Consulate General. According to experts, it can heat up to 1,000 degrees Celsius, destroying any biological tissue and leaving no possibility to detect any DNA traces”, the police statement says.

The Saudi diplomatic mission ordered 32 servings of raw meat from one of the Istanbul restaurants after the murder of Khashoggi, the police noted.

“The question is whether it was pre-planned. It will be investigated”, the statement says.

The journalist, who worked as a columnist for The Washington Post newspaper and was a vocal critic of Saudi policies, went missing on October 2 after he entered the Saudi consulate in Istanbul.

Riyadh initially denied any knowledge of the journalist’s whereabouts, but later admitted that Khashoggi had been killed with a drug injection and his body had been dismembered and taken out of the consulate. The Saudi authorities have charged 11 people with Khashoggi’s murder.

The Istanbul Prosecutor’s Office stated that the assassination of Khashoggi had been pre-planned.

Turkey urged Saudi Arabia to extradite the perpetrators of the crime, as well as information on the whereabouts of Khashoggi’s body.

Meanwhile, Republican and Democratic members of the U.S. Senate asked the Trump administration on Thursday to tell them more about the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi at a Saudi consulate last year, days after a missed deadline for a detailed report on his death prompted an angry bipartisan backlash.

Ten of the 12 Republicans from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, led by Chairman Jim Risch, wrote to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo asking for more information.

“The Senate Foreign Relations Committee is committed to pursuing all information available in its oversight role and, to that end, is in the process of arranging a classified briefing for the committee,” Risch said in a statement.

All 10 committee Democrats, led by senior member Bob Menendez, along with Appropriations Committee Vice Chairman Pat Leahy, signed their own letter demanding that Pompeo brief Congress on why President Donald Trump’s administration missed last Friday’s deadline to report to Congress on whether Saudi government officials and members of the royal family, including Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, were behind the death of Khashoggi, a legal U.S. resident.

Palestinians Denounce U.S. ‘Deal of Century’

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – Two major Palestinian groups, the West Bank-based Fatah party and the Gaza-based Hamas resistance movement, have expressed their strong opposition to U.S. President Donald Trump’s “deal of the century” on the so-called Middle East peace process.

The strongly-worded statements were read by representatives of both sides after the third edition of Russia-mediated intra-Palestinian conference in the Russian capital Moscow with the aim of unifying 12 different Palestinian movements and organizations, including the Fatah movement led by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

“We created the Palestinian state, in which we declared back in 1988. We stand for the

creation of the Palestinian state within the borders of the liberation of territories captured in 1967 ... with its capital in East Jerusalem al-Quds,” said Azam al-Ahmad, a senior member of Fatah’s Central Committee.

“I would like to emphasize for [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu and Trump. This is our and Qatar’s opinion. We will not allow America to use the financial factor in order to tear us away from the Gaza Strip,” he added.

Ahmad said that Washington had so far rejected “all of our peace-loving initiatives.”

Meanwhile, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas has warned Saudi rulers about the nature of a so-called

peace plan in the works at the White House on the decades-long Zionist-Palestinian conflict, describing the yet-to-be unveiled proposal as a plot against the Palestinian nation.

Meeting with Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud in Riyadh, Abbas called Washington’s plan a “conspiracy,” renewing a term the Palestinian Authority first used to refer to the scheme in a statement it released last July.

The United States, Abbas told Salman, would seek to impose the plan on the Palestinians and force them to back down on many of their demands in favor of Israel.

The PA chief called for the revival of a previously-proposed plan, known as the “Arab Peace

Initiative,” to counter the U.S. scheme, which Washington is expected to partially expose on Wednesday during a so-called Middle East security conference in the Polish capital, Warsaw.

That Arab plan calls for the withdrawal of the Zionist regime from Arab territories, including the Palestinian territories, which it occupied during a war in 1967, the establishment of a Palestinian state with East al-Quds as its capital, and a solution for Palestinians rendered homeless by the regime’s aggression.

This is while the U.S. scheme, hailed by President Donald Trump as “the deal of the century,” reportedly features significant encroachment on historical Palestinian demands.

‘No Syria Safe Zone Without Damascus Consent’

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) –Russia says Turkey must obtain the consent of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad’s government for its plan to create a safe zone in the northeastern part of the conflict-plagued Arab country.

“The question of the presence of a military contingent acting on the authority of a third country on the territory of a sovereign country and especially Syria must be decided directly by Damascus. That’s our base position,” Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told reporters in Moscow.

The remarks came as Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and his Russian and Turkish counterparts Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdogan held a tripartite summit in the Russian coastal city of Sochi to provide further coordination among the three countries towards a

long-term settlement of the Syria crisis.

The three leaders are going to hold their fourth such meeting in the Astana format.

The Sochi summit comes before the 12th Astana talks in the Kazakh capital in mid-February. The first round of the Astana talks commenced a month after the three guarantors joined efforts and brought about an all-Syria ceasefire.

Moscow, Tehran, and Ankara have been mediating peace negotiations between representatives from the Damascus government and Syrian opposition groups in a series of rounds held in Astana and other places since January 2017.

Meanwhile, Turkey’s Defense Minister Hulusi Akar was quoted by the state-run Anadolu news agency as saying on Friday that only Turkish forces should be present in the so-called planned safe zone in northeast Syria.

Turkey wants to set up the safe zone with logistical support from allies after U.S. troops pull out of Syria. It says the safe zone should be cleared of the U.S.-backed Syrian Kurdish YPG militants which Ankara considers a terrorist group.

In another development, United Nations Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen hopes to convene the first session of a UN-sponsored Syrian Constitutional Committee in the Swiss city of Geneva “as soon as possible” early next year in a bid to begin a viable peace process to the country’s nearly eight-year-old conflict.

“I think we have identified the challenges and we have agreed on how we should move forward and that I see as a very, very positive sign,” Pedersen told reporters on Friday.

Daesh Shoot Wives as Families Flee Terrorists’ Last Foothold in Syria

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – Daesh terrorists have shot fleeing families trying to escape from Baghuz, the last remaining Daesh enclave located not far from the border with Iraq in Dayr al-Zawr province, according to a coalition commander, British Maj. Gen. Christopher Ghika said, cited by British media.

While over 1,500 civilians have fled the last Daesh stronghold in Syria in the last several days, arriving at so-called screening points, where new arrivals are checked by SDF members, hundreds reportedly remain trapped inside. According to Ghika, those “arriving to be screened are the wives of Isis [Daesh] fighters, some of whom sustained gunshot wounds while fleeing from Isis”.

Those fleeing, as well as the coalition’s efforts to recapture the territory have, meanwhile, been considerably hindered by “tunnels” in the area, “IEDs and suicide cars and bombs that slow down the advance of

our forces”, said Adnan Afrini, the SDF commander in Baghuz, who portrayed the area surrounding Baghuz as a “rabbit hole”.

“There is a network of tunnels that the terrorists are using, and our forces need to clear the tunnels very delicately to avoid counter-attacks and explosives”, he said.

The battle to claim victory over the terrorist group’s last speck of land is now drawing to an end, Kurdish commanders said, with Mustafa Bali, a so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) spokesman, stating that the militants who remained there appeared to be among the most experienced Daesh elite who continue to fight “fiercely”.

Those fleeing, as well as foreign terrorists, who along with their families, at some point joined Daesh, are reported to be being intimidated by the terrorist group, which is threatening them with death if they leave the fight.