

LONDON (Press TV) – Human Rights Watch has called on the United States to put on hold two planned arms sales to its close ally Bahrain in light of “dismal human rights record” in the tiny Persian Gulf state.

The New York-based organization made the plea in a statement concerning sales of attack helicopters and 3,000 bomb bodies worth around \$1 billion in total. “These two weapons sales make clear that the Trump administration intends nothing short of a free pass on human rights for Bahrain,” said the HRW’s Washington director, Sarah Margon.

*I wonder at the mentality of a miser, fearing poverty he takes to stinginess and thus hastily pushes himself headlong into a state of want and destitution, he madly desires plenty and ease, but throws it away without understanding. In this world he, of his own free will, leads the life of a beggar and in the next world he will have to submit an account like the rich.*

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

## Syrian Air Defense Intercepts Missile Attack on Airport



Members of the Syrian pro-government forces stand in front of a destroyed tank in the al-Hajar al-Aswad neighborhood on the southern outskirts of the capital Damascus on May 22, 2018.

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – A military airport near the Syrian city of Homs came under missile attack which was repelled by its air defense systems on Thursday, the country’s state media said.

“One of our military airports in the central region was exposed to a hostile missile attack, and our air

defense systems confronted the attack and prevented it from achieving its aim,” state news agency SANA said.

SANA earlier reported sounds of explosions heard near the Dabaa airport, about 20 km (12 miles) southwest of the central Syrian city of Homs and 10 km (6 miles) from

the Lebanese border.

Syrian state media did not comment on the origin of the missile attack.

There have been no immediate reports of possible casualties, but Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said “six missiles” had targeted the Syrian mili-

tary airport, which it said stationed fighters from popular defense groups allied with government forces.

“The missiles would have been fired by Israel,” the so-called monitoring group added.

AFP quoted a source close to the Lebanese-Syrian border as saying that warplanes had flown over Lebanese airspace and “some people are still expecting new strikes”.

Earlier in the day, SANA reported that a number of Syrian military positions between Albu Kamal and Hmeimeh were hit “in an aggression by American coalition warplanes.”

Pentagon spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Kone Faulkner claimed the strike was not carried out by U.S. forces.

The attacks come amid reports of the full liberation of neighborhoods south of the Syrian capital Damascus from the clutches of the Daesh terrorist group.

Syrian army troops and pro-government fighters had been fighting since April 19 to recapture the area covering Yarmouk camp and the adjacent districts of Qadam, Tadamun and al-Hajar al-Aswad.

## UN Urges Imports Into Yemen to Avoid Starvation



Yemenis gather next to a water tank to collect water in an impoverished coastal village on the outskirts of the Yemeni port city of Hudaydah, on May 12, 2018.

GENEVA (Dispatches) – The United Nations aid chief has called on the Saudi-led coalition to loosen restrictions on imports of food and fuel through commercial ports into the war-ravaged country, warning that millions more could face starvation.

“I am particularly concerned about the recent decline of commercial food imports through the Red Sea ports. Pressure on the currency and a liquidity crisis in the Yemeni banking system make imports less viable for traders,” Mark Lowcock, UN emergency relief coordinator, said in a statement.

Confidence among commercial shippers has eroded due to delays, “including as a result of inspections undertaken by the Saudi-led coalition after these vessels have been cleared by UNVIM,” he said, referring to the UN verification mechanism.

The United Nations says a record 22.2 million Yemenis are in need of food aid, including 8.4 million threatened by severe hunger.

A high-ranking UN aid official recently warned against the “catastrophic” living conditions in Yemen, stating that there was a growing risk of famine and cholera there.

“People’s lives have continued unraveling. Conflict has escalated since November driving an estimated 100,000 people from their homes,” John Ging, UN director of aid operations, told the UN Security Council on February 27.

Ging said cholera had infected 1.1 million people in Yemen since last April, and a new outbreak of diphtheria had occurred in the war-ravaged Arab country since 1982.

In the latest development, at least six civilians have been killed when Saudi military aircraft carried out airstrikes against a residential area in Yemen’s northwestern province of Sa’ada as the Riyadh regime presses ahead with its atrocious bombardment campaign against its southern neighbor.

Saudi fighter jets conducted aerial assaults against a house in the Majz district of the province on Friday, leaving six people dead and four others injured, an unnamed local source told Yemen’s Arabic-language al-Masirah television network. Earlier in the day, Yemeni army forces, backed by allied fighters from Popular Committees, fired a domestically-designed and -developed ballistic missile at a military base in Saudi Arabia’s southwestern border region of Najran in retaliation to the Saudi aggression against their country.

A Yemeni military source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the short-range Badr-1 missile struck Mostahadeth base with great precision.

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## Saudi Arabia Makes New Arrest in Crackdown on Activists

RIYADH (Dispatches) – Saudi Arabia arrested prominent rights campaigner Mohammed al-Bajadi, Amnesty International said on Friday, as part of a crackdown mostly targeting advocates of women’s rights in the conservative kingdom.

Four activists have been released but up to seven others remain in detention. Most are women who previously campaigned for the right to drive and an end to the kingdom’s male guardianship system, which requires women to obtain the consent of a male relative for major decisions.

The government announced last

week that seven people had been arrested for suspicious contacts with foreign entities and offering financial support to “enemies overseas”, and said other suspects were being sought. It did not name them.

State-backed media have labeled those held as “agents of embassies”, unnerving diplomats in Saudi Arabia, a key U.S. ally which has appealed to the West for massive investments to help transform its economy away from oil.

The arrests come a month before a ban on women driving is set to end, but accompanied by a crack-

down on dissent.

Activists and diplomats have speculated that the detentions may be aimed at appeasing conservative elements opposed to social reforms which include new cinemas, public concerts and an easing of gender segregation. It may also be a message to activists not to push demands out of sync with the government’s own agenda, they said.

Bajadi is a founding member of the banned Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association, which has accused the security forces of abuses. He has been detained previously and spent several years in prison.

Saudi Arabia is the last country in the world to permit women to obtain driving licenses.

In September last year, Riyadh removed the driving ban on women as part of reforms to undo the damage the ultraconservative kingdom has suffered for decades of human rights violations.

In 2016, Saudi Arabia was ranked 141 out of 144 on the Global Gender Gap Index.

In recent years, the Al Saud regime has come under intense pressure by rights groups for mistreating women.

Saudi women were banned from voting until 2015.

## Zionist Regime Calls on EU to Stop Funding ‘Anti-Israel’ Groups

AL-QUDS (Dispatches) – The Zionist regime accused European Union institutions on Friday of funding non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that promote “anti-Israel boycotts” and called for the support to end.

Issuing a 40-page study, the regime’s ministry of strategic affairs and public diplomacy put the scope of such assistance to European and Palestinian groups at 5 million euros in 2016.

It said it based the sum on EU figures for that year, describing them as the latest available.

Israel has long decried groups like the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement who want to isolate the Zionist regime over its policies against the Palestinians.

The EU delegation in the Israeli-occupied

territories said it had not received any communication by the regime on the matter but would be happy to review any relevant information received concerning EU-funded activities.

“Money from the EU budget may only be spent for the purpose for which it was contracted, under strict transparency rules and is subject to extensive monitoring requirements,” a statement from the delegation’s office said.

“We are therefore confident that EU financing does not go to support terrorism nor to BDS activities, as apparently suggested in the report,” it added.

More than a dozen NGOs “which promote

anti-Israel boycotts” received the money, “in stark opposition to the EU’s own declared policies rejecting such boycotts”, the regime’s report claimed.

Several million more euros, the ministry said, were channeled to NGOs through third parties that received EU assistance.

In its descriptions of “anti-Israel delegitimation”, the report included calls by various NGOs to boycott Zionist and foreign companies over ties with Israeli settlements in occupied territories Palestinians seek for a state.

The European Union, and many countries, regard the settlements in the West Bank and East al-Quds, areas captured in the 1967 Middle East war, as illegal.

## U.S. Senate Bill to Bar Turkey From Buying F-35 Jets

WASHINGTON (Reuters) – A U.S. Senate committee has passed its version of a \$716 billion defense policy bill, including a measure to prevent Turkey from purchasing Lockheed Martin F-35 Joint Strike Fighter jets.

The amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act, or NDAA, from Democratic Senator Jeanne Shaheen and Republican Senator Thom Tillis, would remove Turkey from the F-35 program over its detention of U.S. citizen Andrew Brunson, Shaheen’s office said.

Brunson, a Christian pastor who could be jailed for up to 35 years, denied terrorism and spying charges in a Turkish court this month. He has been in pre-trial detention since 2016.

It also faults NATO ally Turkey for its agreement with Russia in December to buy S-400 surface-to-air missile batteries. Ankara wants the system to boost its de-

fense capabilities amid threats from Kurdish and other militants at home and conflicts across its borders in Syria and Iraq.

According to Shaheen’s office, the intention to purchase the Russian system is sanctionable under U.S. law.

“There is tremendous hesitancy (about) transferring sensitive F35 planes and technology to a nation who has purchased a Russian air defense system designed to shoot these very planes down,” said Senator Shaheen.

Relations between Ankara and Washington have been strained over a host of issues in recent months, including U.S. policy in Syria and a number of legal cases against Turkish and U.S. nationals being held in the two countries.

Turkey has said it would retaliate if the United States enacted a law halting weapons sales to the country.