

MOSCOW (Dispatches) – Soccer legend Diego Maradona once again reiterates support for Palestine, embracing Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas during a meeting in Moscow and telling him that he is Palestinian in his heart. “In my heart, I am Palestinian,” Maradona told Abbas during the meeting, which followed the final World Cup game. The Palestinian leader was in Russia at the invitation of President Vladimir Putin for talks on bilateral and regional issues. The Argentinean public figure reiterated his long-standing support for Palestinians and expressed hope that Palestine will eventually become an internationally-recognized sovereign country.

That the present times are the times of our Holy Prophet and his faithful followers. The best friend of our Holy Prophet is he who, though not related to him, obeys the orders of Allah and his greatest enemy is the man who though related to him, disobeys Allah.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

Fresh U.S. Airstrikes Leave Civilians Dead in Syria

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – At least two civilians have lost their lives and several others sustained injuries when the U.S.-led coalition purportedly fighting the Daesh terrorist group carried out a string of airstrikes against Syria’s eastern province of Dayr al-Zawr.

Local sources, requesting anonymity, told Syria’s official news agency SANA that the airborne assaults targeted residential buildings in the town of al-Susah, killing a couple and injuring a number of their family members, mostly women and children.

Amnesty International says the U.S.-led coalition is “deeply in denial” about the number of civilians killed during an offensive it launched last year to dislodge Daesh terrorists from Syria’s northern city of Raqqah.

The Britain-based rights organization, in a statement released on Tuesday, condemned the military contingent’s position on the findings of a June 5 report about the four-month-long assault to flush the extremists out of the city.

“The coalition’s knee-jerk reactions are long on rhetoric and short on detail,” Donatella Rovera, a senior



A picture taken on September 5, 2017 shows smoke billowing out following a U.S.-led airstrike in the western al-Daraiya neighborhood of the embattled northern Syrian city of Raqqah.

nior adviser at Amnesty International, said.

Meanwhile, heavy bombardment killed at least six people in a village in southwestern Syria on Tuesday, the so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported, as the Syrian government pressed a Russian-backed offensive in the area.

UOSSM, a medical charity that operates in the area, said a bomb had killed more than 10 people in the village, Ain al-Tineh, most of them

women and children.

Ahmad al-Dbis, UOSSM safety and security manager, said another 35 people had been wounded in the attack which he said had hit a school. The casualties had fled to the village from nearby parts of the southwest.

Meanwhile, the political arm of the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a U.S.-backed coalition of mainly Kurdish militants holding a grip on northeastern Syria, says it is devising a negotiating team for potential

talks with the central government in Damascus.

The so-called Syrian Democratic Council (SDC), which is linked to the SDF umbrella militant group, held a gathering in the northern town of Tabqa for a two-day meeting, with local Kurdish officials and Syrian domestic opposition figures in attendance.

Leading SDC member Hekmat Habib told the AFP that one of the meeting’s aims was “to create a platform to negotiate” with the Syrian government.

“This platform will represent all areas in the autonomous administration and all areas held by the SDF,” he said, without providing further details.

The militants are allied with US and French troops deployed to Syria and control much of the country’s north and east.

In June, the SDC said it was ready for “unconditional” peace talks with the government.

The Kurdish militants in northern Syria have been a source of tensions between the US and Turkey. Ankara wants the U.S. to stop supporting and arming the Kurds, but Washington rejects that call.

Unrest Grows in Iraq, Police Disperse Protesters



An Iraqi policeman arrests a demonstrator during a protest at the main entrance to the giant Zubair oilfield near Basra, Iraq July 17, 2018.

BASRA (Dispatches) – Iraqi police wielded batons and rubber hoses to disperse about 250 protesters gathered at the main entrance to the Zubair oilfield near Basra on Tuesday as unrest across southern cities over poor basic services gathered pace.

Since demonstrations began nine days ago, protesters have attacked government buildings, branches of political parties and powerful militias and stormed the international airport in the holy city of Najaf.

Iraq’s military spokesman said authorities would not tolerate any actions that threaten the country’s security.

Officials and industry sources said the protests have not affected output at Zubair, run by Italy’s Eni, and the other major oilfields including Rumaila developed by BP and West Qurna 2 managed by Lukoil. Many Iraqis believe their leaders do not share the country’s oil wealth. Some demonstrators said foreign laborers were robbing them of employment at oil companies.

Three protesters have been killed in clashes with police, including one at West Qurna 2, and dozens wounded.

“We the people of Basra hear about the Iraqi oil and its huge revenues, but we never enjoy its benefits,” said 24-year-old protester Esam Jabbar.

“Strangers have decent jobs at our oilfields and we don’t have the money to pay for a cigarette. That’s wrong and must be stopped.” Jabbar said he was unemployed.

On Monday, the Iraqi Health Ministry said eight demonstrators had lost their lives in protests over poor public services and alleged corruption in various southern cities since a week ago, when daily protests began in Iraq’s Basra port city.

Medical sources, however, had previously said that at least 11 civilians had been killed in the protests.

Earlier on Monday, Iraqi Interior Ministry spokesman Brigadier General Saad Maan said 487 Iraqis had also been wounded during the protests in southern Iraq, noting that half of them were security forces.

Basra is an important hub for oil exports, which account for over 95 percent of Iraq’s government revenues. Long neglected, the city is one of the few cities in the Middle East without an effective water treatment system. State officials blame a public funding crisis caused by years of low oil prices.

Since the unrest erupted, demonstrators have vented their anger at several major oilfields.

Iraqi officials, however, stressed that the protests have not affected production or export operations in the OPEC member country.

Daesh Terrorists in Afghanistan Kill At Least 15 Taliban

MAZAR-I-SHARIF (Dispatches) – Daesh terrorists attacked the house of a Taliban commander in the northern Afghan province of Sar-e Pul on Tuesday, killing at least 15 people as they were attending a prayer ceremony, the provincial governor’s office said.

The attack, in Sayyad district of Sar-e Pul, followed reports from local officials of fighting between Daesh and Taliban militants in other northern provinces over recent days.

“Two Daesh fighters entered a Taliban commander’s house where a ceremony was under way and opened fire,” said Zabihullah Amani, spokesman for the Sar-e-Pul governor’s office said. He said 15 Taliban were killed and another five wounded.

Northern Afghanistan has become one of the main areas of

Daesh activity in Afghanistan as the movement has spread beyond its original base in the eastern province of Nangarhar, where it remains strong.

However establishing a clear picture of the group remains difficult in a remote and often mountainous region, with diverse bands of terrorists and militants often switching sides between the Taliban, Daesh and even the pro-government camp.

In Nangarhar, a local commander known variously as Saba Gul or Mohammad Khorasani was killed by a drone strike on Monday afternoon, the Nangarhar governor’s spokesman Attaullah Khogyani, said.

A former Taliban commander, he moved to Daesh after the group first appeared in Nangarhar in late 2014 and was responsible for hundreds of deaths,

Khogyani said.

Elsewhere in Afghanistan, troops raided a Taliban prison in the southern province of Helmand late on Monday, releasing 58 prisoners, officials said.

The Taliban prisoners, including both civilians and members of the security forces, were released following an army raid on a prison in Musa Qala district of Helmand province, according to a statement from the 215 Maiwand army corps.

Separately, Taliban militants attacked three checkpoints of the Afghan border forces in the southern province of Kandahar, killing nine members of the security forces and suffering 25 killed themselves, Kandahar police spokesman Zia Durani said.

In another development, at least 54 people have been released from a prison run by Taliban in

Afghanistan’s southern province of Helmand, where militants are in control of the majority of districts.

Omar Zwak, a spokesman for the provincial governor, said on Tuesday that the prisoners were freed after a commando unit raided the prison in Musa Qala district late Monday night.

Zwak said there were 32 civilians, 16 police, four soldiers and two military doctors who had been locked up by the militants.

Afghan special forces spokesman Jawid Saleem also confirmed that dozens of people, including security personnel and civilians, were freed from the notorious detention center.

Helmand is one of the most embattled provinces in southern Afghanistan. More than 80 percent of its territory is controlled by Taliban.

PA Calls on World to Stop Zionist Attacks on Gaza

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – The Palestinian Authority on Tuesday called on the international community to intervene to stop the Zionist regime from carrying out a military operation in the Gaza Strip.

The PA government, which held its weekly meeting in Ramallah, also repeated its call for providing “immediate and urgent international protection” for the Palestinians.

Death toll in the Gaza Strip since March 30 has grown up to 140 after a young Palestinian died of his wounds early on Tuesday in a hospital in East al-Quds, Gaza Health Ministry said in a statement.

The statement said that Sari al-Shubaki, 24 years old, died in a hospital in East al-Quds of

his wounds he sustained on May 14 from a Zionist soldier’s gunshot in the back during protests in eastern Gaza. The gunshot wound caused him quadriplegia, also known as tetraplegia.

A total of 14,811 Palestinians also sustained injuries, of whom 366 are reportedly in a critical condition.

The Gaza clashes reached their peak on May 14, the eve of the 70th anniversary of Nakba Day (Day of Catastrophe), which coincided this year with the U.S. embassy relocation from Tel Aviv to the occupied al-Quds.

On June 13, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a Turkish and Algerian-sponsored resolution, condemning Israel for Palestinian civilian deaths in the Gaza Strip.

The resolution, which had been put forward on the behalf of Arab and Muslim countries, garnered a strong majority of 120 votes in the 193-member assembly, with 8 votes against and 45 abstentions on Wednesday.

The resolution calls on UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres to make proposals within 60 days “on ways and means for ensuring the safety, protection, and well-being of the Palestinian civilian population under Israeli occupation,” including “recommendations regarding an international protection mechanism.”

It also calls for “immediate steps towards ending the closure and the restrictions imposed by Israel on movement and access into and out of the Gaza Strip.”

Zionist Regime Passes Law to Ban Critical Groups From Schools

AL-QUDS (Dispatches) – The Zionist regime’s parliament passed a law on Tuesday that could see groups critical of government policies toward the Palestinians banned from entering Israeli schools and speaking with pupils.

Critics of the law, which passed with 43 votes in favor and 24 against in the 120-seat Knesset, said it was a blow to core democratic values such as free speech and part of the Zionist regime’s effort to delegitimize rights groups and NGOs.

The amendment to the education act grants new powers to Education Minister Naftali Bennett, head of the religious-nationalist Jewish Home party, to order schools to bar certain groups from giving lectures to students.

The legislation has been dubbed the “Breaking the Silence” law, a reference to the Israeli group of that name which collects and publishes testimony from Israeli veterans about the military’s treatment of Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and during conflicts with

fighters in Gaza.

Bennett has been critical of the organization along with other right-wing politicians who accuse the group of damaging the regime image abroad and putting soldiers and officials at risk of prosecution for alleged war crimes.

“Anyone who wanders around the world attacking IDF (the Zionist regime’s) soldiers, will not enter a school,” Bennett said in a statement.

Breaking the Silence, which has given talks in schools, said the law was meant to weaken it and other rights groups.

“It’s really about trying to silence and cover up what’s been going on in the occupied territories for 51 years,” said the group’s director, Avner Gvaryaahu.

Shuli Mualem Refaeli, a legislator from Bennett’s Jewish Home party, said on Army Radio “it is a law about Breaking the Silence and other organizations whose aim is to libel Israeli soldiers and the State of Israel”.