

Syrian First Lady Treated For Cancer

BEIRUT (Reuters) – Syrian first lady Asma al-Assad has started treatment for early stage breast cancer, Syrian state media reported on Wednesday. A photo published by the state news agency SANA and the Syrian presidency showed Asma al-Assad, 42, hooked up to a drip smiling and sitting next to her husband President Bashar al-Assad in what appeared to be a hospital room. “Asma al-Assad begins the first stage of treatment for a malignant tumor of the breast which was discovered early,” said a statement issued on the presidency’s Telegram feed.

More Yemeni Civilians Killed in Saudi Air Raid



More than 15,000 Yemenis have died since Saudi Arabia intervened in the war.

SANAA (Dispatches) – Saudi Arabian warplanes have carried out fresh strikes against targets in southwestern Yemen, killing seven civilians, mostly women and children. The attacks targeted Amran Province’s Harf Sufyan District on Wednesday, Yemen’s al-Masirah television reported, adding that three children and two women were among the victims. Separately, Yemeni sharpshooters killed five Saudi-backed militants in the kingdom’s southwestern border region of Jizan during counter-attacks

against the aggressors. The mercenaries were advancing on the al-Doud and Dukhan mountains in the region. Two military vehicles belonging to the militants were also destroyed in missile and mortar attacks by the Yemeni army in Jizan. Separately, Yemeni forces fired three ballistic missiles at the positions of Saudi-backed militants in al-Jawf and Ma’rib provinces as well as in the country’s west coast. Meanwhile, the spokesman for Yemen’s Houthi Ansarullah

movement has strongly condemned the UAE over its collusion with the al-Qaeda terrorist network in the Saudi-led military aggression against his country, stating that such a conduct has been supported by the U.S. administration. “In the wake of the Saudi-led onslaught on Yemen and the aggressor’s desperate need for mercenaries, the UAE has cemented its relationship with al-Qaeda under the auspices of the United States,” Yemen’s Arabic-language al-Masirah television network cited Mohammed

Abdul-Salam as writing on his official Twitter page. He added, “The recent report by The Associated Press attests to the fact that [Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE’s Armed Forces] Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan is a modern version of al-Qaeda leaders, and that Abu Dhabi serves as a hideout of the criminal group.” The Associated Press report states that the Saudi-led coalition on Yemen, backed by the United States, has been paying some al-Qaeda commanders to leave key Yemeni cities, while allowing others to retreat with weapons, equipment and wads of looted cash. It further noted that the Riyadh-based alliance has even recruited hundreds of al-Qaeda militants in Yemen. Moreover, Washington was aware of the coalition’s secret deals with al-Qaeda, and avoided assassination drone strikes against members of the dangerous terror network. “Elements of the U.S. military are clearly aware that much of what the US is doing in Yemen is aiding AQAP (al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula) and there is much angst about that,” Michael Horton, a fellow at the Washington DC-based Jamestown Foundation, commented. Some 15,000 Yemenis have been killed and thousands more injured since the onset of the Saudi-led aggression.

Amnesty: Raqqa Civilian Deaths Admitted by U.S. ‘Tip of the Iceberg’



A file photo showing the devastation in Syria’s Raqqa

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – Seventy-seven Raqqa civilians, including 24 children and 25 women, were killed in airstrikes between June and October 2017, the U.S.-led coalition has acknowledged, but human rights monitor Amnesty International warns the figure is just the “tip of the iceberg.” The U.S.-led coalition was forced to acknowledge the civilian deaths on July 26 after Amnesty published field research in June highlighting several cases. Previously the coalition had refused to acknowledge civilian casualties. “The U.S.-led coalition’s admission of responsibility is not surprising given the level of our evidence, and marks a welcome U-turn in its stance on the many civilians killed by its Raqqa offensive,” said Donatella Rovera, Senior Crisis Response Adviser at Amnesty International, in a statement. “But this is only the tip of the iceberg. Our detailed field investigations covered just four cases – but the many survivors and witnesses we spoke to on the ground pointed to a civilian death toll in the high hundreds. Amnesty’s report, ‘War of annihilation’: Devastating Toll on Civilians, Raqqa – Syria, called on the coalition to investigate and provide survivors with reparations. “The plight of many of the survivors

is dire,” Benjamin Walsby, Middle East Researcher at Amnesty International, said in the statement. “Nothing can ever bring back the dead or wipe away the unimaginable trauma. The least the coalition can do right now is provide restorative measures – including compensation and rehabilitation – to victims’ families and survivors, while it sets up the investigations that can bring full justice and reparation.” The human rights monitor called on the coalition to be transparent on the true scale of civilian harm, and to investigate any failures in intelligence gathering that allowed civilians to become caught up in strikes against Daesh. The U.S. has been conducting airstrikes against what it says are Daesh targets inside Syria since September 2014 without any authorization from the Damascus government or a United Nations mandate. The U.S. and its allies have repeatedly been accused of targeting and killing civilians and drawn criticism over their failure to destroy Daesh which they claim to be fighting. Raqqa fell in the hands of U.S.-sponsored Kurdish militants last year after they managed to drive Daesh terrorists out of the city. They have refused to hand back the control of Raqqa to the Syrian government.

Zionist Regime Gives 1.5 Years in Jail to Palestinian Minor

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – An Israeli military court has handed down a jail term of 18 months to a Palestinian minor as the number of Palestinian children being held in Tel Aviv regime’s prisons and detention facilities is soaring following U.S. President Donald Trump’s decision to recognize al-Quds as the Zionist regime’s capital and relocate the U.S. embassy in the occupied territories from Tel Aviv to the occupied city. The court passed the sentence on Qassem Abu Bakr, who is a local of the northern West Bank town of Ya’bad, and also ordered him to pay a fine of 5,000 Israeli shekels (U.S.\$ 1,357.50). The jail terms comes as nearly 350 Palestinian minors are currently being held under conditions in the Zionist regime’s prisons, which do not meet the minimum requirements laid down by international rights institutions.

According to the Palestinian Information Center, at least 8,000 Palestinian minors have been arrested and prosecuted in the regime’s military courts since 2000. It is estimated that between 500 and 700 Palestinian minors, some as young as 12 years old, are arrested and brought to trial in Israeli courts. The most common charge is stone-throwing. More than 7,000 Palestinian prisoners are currently held in some 17 the occupying regime’s jails, dozens of whom are serving multiple life sentences. Over 500 detainees are under the so-called administrative detention, which is a sort of imprisonment without trial or charge that allows Israel to incarcerate Palestinians for up to six months, extendable an infinite number of times. Some prisoners have been held in

administrative detention for up to 11 years without any charges brought against them. Palestinian detainees have continuously resorted to open-ended hunger strikes in an attempt to express their outrage at the detentions. The dramatic shift in Washington’s policy vis-à-vis al-Quds on December 6 last year has triggered demonstrations in the occupied Palestinian territories, Iran, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, Algeria, Iraq, Morocco and other Muslim countries. On December 21 last year, the United Nations General Assembly overwhelmingly voted in favor of a resolution that calls on the US to withdraw its controversial recognition of al-Quds as the regime’s “capital.” In an attempt to prevent the passing of the resolution, Trump threatened reprisals against countries that backed

the measure, which had earlier faced a U.S. veto at the UN Security Council. The Zionist regime, however, rejected the world body’s resolution while thanking Trump for his decision to move the U.S. embassy to al-Quds. On January 18, the United States reneged on a pledge to contribute \$45 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which supports more than five million registered Palestinian refugees and their descendants. The announcement to cut aid to Palestinian refugees came after the US president made a threat to cut off aid to the UN’s Palestinian refugee agency. In a series of tweets on January 2, Trump had said that the U.S. paid “the Palestinians hundreds of millions of dollars a year” and yet got “no appreciation or respect.”

Saudi Arabia: ‘Nothing to Mediate’ in Canada Dispute

RIYADH (Dispatches) – Saudi Arabia’s foreign minister said on Wednesday there is “nothing to mediate” in the kingdom’s escalating diplomatic dispute with Canada, and Ottawa knew what it needed to do to “fix its big mistake”. The kingdom was considering implementing additional measures against Canada, said Adel al-Jubeir, speaking at a press conference in Riyadh. He did not elaborate. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia said it had stopped all medical treatment programs in Canada and was working on the transfer of all Saudi patients from hospitals there, in an escalating row after Ottawa urged it to free rights activists. Saudi Arabia froze new trade and investment with Canada and expelled the Canadian ambassador this week, pushing Canada to seek help from the United Arab Emirates and Britain to try to defuse the dispute. Since rising to power in 2015, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has courted Western allies to support his reform plans, offering billions of dollars of arms sales and promising to fight radicalism in the kingdom. Hundreds of billions of dollars of investments were discussed during his trips to the United States and Europe. The dispute with Canada has shed light on scores of political and rights activists arrested in Saudi Arabia over the last two years. State news agency SPA said Riyadh had stopped sending patients to Canadian

hospitals and “is coordinating for the transfer of all Saudi patients from Canadian hospitals ... according to directives by the leadership.” It was unclear how many Saudi patients would be affected by the decision and how many were covered by the kingdom’s health care system. The government provides health care services through several government agencies for public employees. The move follows a series of measures the kingdom has taken since the row erupted on Monday. The kingdom has suspended educational exchange programs with Canada and moved Saudi scholarship recipients to other countries, while Saudi state airline Saudi said it was suspending flights to and from Toronto. Saudi Arabia’s main state wheat buying agency, the Saudi Grains Organization (SAGO), has told grains exporters it will no longer accept Canadian-origin grains in its international purchase tenders, European traders said. Canada’s Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is expected to hold a news conference in Montreal, where he will be pressed on the diplomatic crisis. Canada is planning to seek help from Saudi Arabia’s closest ally, the UAE, and Britain to defuse the dispute which looks set to damage what is a modest bilateral trade relationship worth nearly \$4 billion a year. Canadian exports to Saudi Arabia totaled about \$1.12 billion in 2017, or 0.2 percent of the total value of Canadian exports.

NATO Probes Airstrike Killing 15 Afghan Police Officers in Logar

KABUL (Press TV) – NATO has launched a probe into the deaths of some 15 Afghan police officers who were killed in a US air strike in eastern Afghanistan. Logar provincial council chief Hamidullah Hamid on Tuesday said that “foreign forces” had bombed two police checkpoints and killed “about 15 police.” Interior Ministry Spokesman Nasrat Rahimi, confirmed the incident saying that over nine police officers were killed and

14 more injured during the aerial bombardment of the Azra district of the province. Afghan forces battling Taliban “called in air support but unfortunately foreign forces mistakenly bombed their positions,” Rahimi added. NATO’s mission in Afghanistan confirmed that air strikes had been carried out “in defense of Afghan forces” and by their request in Azra district without referring to casualties.

“We are looking into the matter further,” said Resolute Support spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Martin O’Donnell. In July, Fourteen members of a family, including three children, were killed in an airstrike in the northern Afghanistan province of Kunduz. The deaths occurred in the Chahar Dara district during a battle against the Taliban involving US and Afghan airstrikes, according to reports.

The US invaded Afghanistan in 2001 with the express aim of toppling the Taliban. Now, some 17 years on, the militant group rules supreme in the war-torn country and the US has shown interest more than ever in negotiating with the militants. Recently, the Daesh terrorist group has taken advantage of the lawlessness in Afghanistan and stepped up its terror attacks in the war-torn state after losing its bases in Iraq and Syria.