

'Egypt Finalizing Details of Hamas Truce With Zionist Regime'

CAIRO (Dispatches) – Egypt is finalizing details of a long-term truce deal between the Zionist regime and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, an Egyptian security source said on Thursday, amid easing of tensions in the enclave where some two million Palestinians live.

Cairo has brokered an interim truce that has allowed commercial goods into Gaza ahead of the Muslim Eid al-Adha feast which starts next week.

"We are putting the final touches to the terms of the truce that will be signed by all sides, and we expect to announce the terms next week if Fatah helps us to do so," the source said, referring to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas's party which dominates the occupied West Bank.

Officials from Fatah have not joined those of Hamas, which runs the Gaza Strip, and other Palestinian factions for the talks in Cairo on the long-term truce.

But Fatah's backing is crucial for any deal as the party retains a large presence in the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip and has overall control in areas under Abbas's Palestinian Authority in the occupied West Bank.

"The period of calm will be for one year, during which contacts will be held to extend it for another four years," the source told Reuters, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Abbas has already lashed out at the U.S. for its dishonesty regarding the humanitarian situation in Gaza, saying American statesmen are lying when they talk of plans to address the crisis in the Israeli-blockaded territory.

In a televised speech at the start of a Palestinian Central Council meeting in Ramallah on Wednesday, Abbas denounced as mere lies the recent claims by officials in U.S. President



Members of Hamas' security forces standing guard in front of the Rafah border crossing with Egypt in the southern Gaza Strip.

Donald Trump's administration that they want to improve the living conditions of Gazans.

The suffering of the Palestinian people in Gaza "started ever since there was an occupation and Israeli blockade," he said. "The U.S. has now woken up to defend and support our people. They are liars," he added.

He said the American officials' plan to promote "humanitarian aid and relief projects" in Gaza is in line with their own interests.

Back in June, the Israeli Haaretz newspaper reported that the Trump administration is trying to persuade the Persian Gulf Arab monarchies

to invest in Gaza economic projects in a bid to calm the situation before Washington unveils its so-called Middle East peace plan.

The Palestinian Authority said back then that the so-called aid plan is a scheme meant to sow discord among Palestinians and get concessions on occupied al-Quds.

The Gaza Strip has been under an inhumane siege by the occupying regime of Israel since 2007 and witnessed three wars since 2008. The Tel Aviv regime carries out regular attacks on Gaza under the pretext of hitting positions belonging to the Hamas resistance movement.

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and demonizing the messenger," the Des Moines Register in Iowa wrote.

In St. Louis, the Post-Dispatch called journalists "the truest of patriots." The Chicago Sun-Times said it believed most Americans know that Trump is talking nonsense.

The Fayetteville Observer said it hoped Trump would stop, "but we're not holding our breath."

"Rather, we hope all the president's supporters will recognize what he's doing – manipulating reality to get what he wants," the North Carolina newspaper said.

Trump, however, was unrepentant. He took to Twitter Thursday morning to denounce the effort, saying the Globe was in collusion with other newspapers.

He wrote: "THE FAKE NEWS MEDIA IS THE OPPOSITION PARTY. It is very bad for our Great Country ... BUT WE ARE WINNING!"

Newspaper editorial boards overwhelmingly opposed Trump's election in 2016. Polls show Republicans have grown more negative toward the news media in recent years: Pew Research Center said 85 percent of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents said in June 2017 that the news media has a negative effect on the country, up from 68 percent in 2010.

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Kim's diplomacy with Beijing, and with Moscow as well, seems to be progressing more smoothly. Chinese tourism is reportedly already on the rise and there are signs that Chinese businessmen are looking to resume and even broaden their activities in the country as soon as the political climate will allow them to do so.

That's crucial to Kim, who is hoping to undermine support for the U.S.-backed sanctions so that he can focus on improving North Korea's economy.

Russian Foreign Ministry said on Thursday that fresh sanctions, imposed by the United States against a Russian firm and an individual over North Korea, may undermine peace process in the Korean peninsula.

In a statement, the ministry also said that Washington "is not aware" of how the "utmost pressure" on Pyongyang is "fraught with danger".

On Wednesday, the United States imposed sanctions on a Russian port service agency and Chinese firms for aiding North Korean ships and selling alcohol and tobacco to Pyongyang in breach of U.S. sanctions.

"The destructive U.S.' tactics, pursued beyond the framework of the UN Security Council and its 1718 Sanctions Committee (related to North Korea), is only able to undermine the progress, which has been made recently toward the settlement," Russian Foreign Ministry said.

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pilgrims," he said, wearing large sunglasses and a striped shirt.

Cancellations by Iranian pilgrims could have dramatic consequences for Iraq's tourism sector, which last year directly or indirectly employed some 544,500 people.

It also contributed 3 percent of gross domestic product – nearly \$5 billion – according to the World Travel and Tourism Council.

Tourism is almost exclusively religious in Iraq and is concentrated in Najaf and nearly Karbala, the country's other holy city.

As Najaf prepares to welcome pilgrims for numerous religious processions this month, there is a notable drop in Iranian arrivals.

Transport links have been slashed – Najaf airport, which used to offer 35 flights a day between the two countries, now operates just 12.

Officials say most of the passengers on the flights leaving Najaf for Iran are Iraqi pilgrims heading for Iranian holy sites.

"A lot of hotel reservations have been canceled and the number of pilgrims to Najaf is very fragile," Abu Ghoneim said, although he was unable to provide precise figures from the city's 285 hotels.

To counter the trend, hoteliers have been forced to offer rooms at bargain basement prices.

"Prices have been slashed, to less than 50 percent sometimes," said Youssef Abu al-Tabouk, owner of Najaf's Al Balad Al Amine hotel.

But discounted stays and other special offers are not enough to make up for the impact of sanctions, the 85-year-old said, his head covered with a traditional black-and-white keffiyeh scarf.

Without Iranian pilgrims, he said, "the market is in free fall."

Senior Saudi Cleric Taken Away for 'Secret Trial'

RIYADH (Press TV) – A hugely-popular Saudi Sunni cleric, who has been imprisoned since last year for critiquing the kingdom's policies, is reportedly taken away to attend a "secret trial."

Salman al-Odah's son announced the development on Twitter on Wednesday, saying his father had told him about being transferred "suddenly" from Zehban Prison in the port city of Jeddah to al-Ha'er Prison in capital Riyadh.

Abdullah Odah also cited a prison official as telling him that his father had been referred to the trial, adding, "In such a trial, no one is allowed to attend and there

does not seem to be any real due process."

"We do not trust secret and sudden trials, held without any disclosure of information, and without the presence of lawyers or independent organizations, without clear charges. We hold the government fully responsible for my father's safety," Abdullah tweeted.

Abdullah also said he had tried to enquire about his father from prosecuting authorities, but they had told him that the matter was out of their hands and within the jurisdiction of the "security apparatus."

The 61-year-old scholar, who

has many millions of followers on Twitter, has been in jail since last September after he expressed hope for the resolution of the diplomatic crisis between the kingdom and Qatar. Four months earlier, the kingdom had led three of its allied states in breaking off their ties with the emirate.

Odah's family have told the Middle East Eye news portal that "the scholar was held in solitary confinement in his Jeddah prison and was denied medical care and family visits for months," the MEE reported.

His detention came as part of an arrest spree ordered by Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman

of members of the royal family, heavy-weight businessmen, scholars, and rights activists.

The purge has been widely criticized by human rights groups as a means of solidifying Salman's grip on power in the run-up to his ascendancy to the country's rule.

Separately, a Twitter account reporting on Saudi "prisoners of conscience" reported the detention of Dr. Ahmad al-Amari, the former head of Medina Qur'an Academy. The activists said Amari had been nabbed for his close ties to Sheikh Safar al-Hawali, another outspoken Saudi scholar, who has likewise been imprisoned.

Over Alleged Corruption

Police Question Zionist PM Again

AL-QUDS (Dispatches) – Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who faces three investigations over alleged corruption, was questioned again by police over a case involving the regime's largest telecoms firm.

The authorities allege Netanyahu awarded regulatory favors to Bezeq Telecom Israel in return for favorable coverage of him and his wife on a news website owned by the company. Netanyahu, Bezeq and its owner have all denied wrongdoing.

Netanyahu has been questioned over the case before and police have yet to make a recommendation about charges.

In a brief statement that gave no details about the investigation, a police spokesman said Netanyahu was questioned for several hours at the prime minister's residence in al-Quds by the police anti-corruption unit.

In another development, the commander of an Israeli military headquarters has been sacked and put under investigation on several offenses, including bribery and nepotism in a case for which an Israeli court issued

a gag order.

The regime confirmed that it is probing into the offenses committed by Colonel Yigal Ben Ami, the commander of the Kirya military headquarters in Tel Aviv.

The colonel, who has been in the Israeli military for 30 years, has allegedly received bribes and given top positions to the children of his friends and business partners, The Jerusalem Post reported.

The commander is also suspected of using military vehicles for personal purposes and having ties to construction companies working on projects at the military base, the investigations have shown.

Despite denying the allegations, Ben Amy has accepted a request to advance the date of his retirement, a statement by the Israeli military said.

The regime, which has imposed a gag order on the case, is reportedly wiretapping and interrogating senior military officers and contractors as part of the investigation into the case.

Afghan President Congratulates Armed Forces for Ghazni Victory

KABUL (Reuters) – President Ashraf Ghani congratulated Afghanistan's armed forces in Ghazni on Friday for their victory over Taliban insurgents in the strategically important city after clashes that killed at least 150 soldiers and 95 civilians.

The five-day Taliban siege of Ghazni eased on Wednesday after Afghan officials declared that they had regained complete control of the city by killing hundreds of the

militants.

Ghani met officials in the central city on the main highway linking the capital, Kabul, with the south, to assess security. He also met families of the victims and prayed for the dead.

"I am here to help all those who have suffered losses, I am committed to building the city and also do everything to protect Ghazni," Ghani said.

"Our soldiers have fought bravely and we stand committed to bringing peace," he said.

The assault on Ghazni exposed the fragile grip Ghani's Western-backed government has on security and its apparent inability to prevent large-scale militant attacks.

It also came as Ghani's government and its international partners had been pushing for a ceasefire during next week's Eid al-Adha holiday.