

VATICAN CITY (Dispatches) – Pope Francis has called on a crowd in St. Peter's Square in the Vatican City on Palm Sunday to pray for peace in the Holy Land and the Middle East. "I once again appeal to the young people and to all to pray for peace in the world, but especially for peace in the Holy Land and the Middle East", the pope said. The appeal by the Catholic Supreme Pontiff comes amid growing tensions in the region, including foreign-backed wars in Syria and Yemen, ongoing clashes between Palestinian protesters and the Zionist regime troops, etc.

I never lied and the things revealed to me were not false I never misled anybody nor was I misled.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

Iraq Unearths Mass Grave of Kurds Killed by Saddam



Iraqi members of the Civil Defense and Kurdish men examine an unearthed mass grave of Kurds in west of the city of Samawa, southern Iraq, on April 14, 2019.

SAMAWA (Dispatches) – Iraq must never forget Saddam Hussein's crimes or allow his party to return, President Barham Salih said on Sunday after attending the unearthing of a mass grave of Kurds killed by the former dictator's forces three decades ago.

The grave, found in the desert about 170 km (106 miles) west of the city of Samawa, contained

the remains of dozens of Kurds made to "disappear" by Saddam's forces, Salih's office said. They were among up to 180,000 people who may have been killed during Saddam's "Anfal" campaign that targeted Iraqi Kurds in the late 1980s when chemical gas was used, villages were razed and thousands of Kurds were forced into

camp. "He killed them because they did not accept the continuation of this regime, because they wanted to live a free and dignified life," Salih, a Kurd, told a news conference at the grave site. "He brought them to Samawa to bury them but our people in Samawa embraced them," Salih

added. Iraq's southern provinces are predominantly inhabited by Shia Arabs, who also suffered oppression and mass killings under Saddam.

"The new Iraq must never forget these crimes that were committed against Iraqi people from all groups," he said.

Farqan Sahib, a volunteer working at the site of the discovery, told Kurdish-language Rudaw television news network that he had seen the remains of a mother with "a baby in her arms and another next to her."

The Anfal campaign took place over eight phases, beginning in 1986, reaching its peak in 1988, and culminating in the closing weeks of the Iran-Iraq war (1980-88).

After the collapse of the Ba'athist regime in 2003, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) coordinated with Iraqi officials to uncover graves containing bodies of Kurds killed by the former leader's forces with the help of local witnesses.

Between 2003 and 2018, more than 2,500 bodies were discovered and repatriated to the semi-autonomous Kurdistan region, said Rebwar Ramazan, a Kurdish official.

Hamas Says Formation of New Palestinian Gov't Deepens Internal Division



Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas (7th-R) poses for a photo with members of the new Palestinian government during a swearing-in ceremony, in Ramallah, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, on April 13, 2019.

GAZA (Dispatches) – The Hamas resistance movement has slammed the formation of a new Palestinian government for deepening the internal division.

Khalil al-Hayya, deputy chief of Hamas and a member in Hamas' politburo, said the new government of Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammed Ishtaye "is very far from any Palestinian national accord or any legal measure."

"We were hoping and will hope to go for a national unity government that will be a salvation government that rescues the current national Palestinian status," said al-Hayya in a press statement.

On Saturday, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas swore in the new government headed by a loyalist from his Fatah party, Mohammad Shtayyeh.

The 21-member cabinet only includes ministers from factions affiliated with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), primarily Fatah, but excludes Hamas and the Islamic Jihad movement.

Hayya also criticized the new Palestinian government as "a separatist government that doesn't include all factions and political powers."

"This government was made to

empower the internal Palestinian division and again proves that there is no return to a real national unity," the Hamas deputy chief concluded.

Hamas also said such a government will ease the way for the imposition of the United States' yet-to-be-unveiled proposal on the Zionist-Palestinian conflict.

The so-called deal of the century, drawn up by the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump to address the conflict, is said to be huge in favor of the Zionist regime.

Hamas underlined the need to form an inclusive national unity government, which serves all Palestinian people and puts an end to the oppression they have been enduring.

The new government should invite Palestinian leaders to agree upon a national strategy to fight off all challenges facing the Palestine issue, the resistance group noted.

Shtayyeh is seen as a critic of Hamas and a proponent of Zionist-Palestinian talks.

UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Maldenov has welcomed the formation of the new Palestinian government, saying he was looking forward to cooperating with the team.

Syria's President Assad Stresses Cooperation With Iraq

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has received Iraqi National Security Adviser Faleh Fayyad and stressed the importance of cooperation between Damascus and Baghdad in confronting common enemies and combating terrorism, Assad's press office said.

"Events at the regional and international levels require that Syria and Iraq move forward in protecting their sovereignty and independence of their decisions in view of the plans weaved by external enemies on a divide and wreaking havoc", Assad

said as quoted in a statement obtained by Sputnik.

According to the Syrian president, it is ultimately up to the people to decide the fate of the region regardless of the complexity of the challenges it is facing.

Assad also pointed the importance of strengthening Syria-Iraq relations to complete the fight against terrorism and remove various challenges facing both Damascus and Baghdad, according to the Syrian Foreign Ministry.

Both Syria and Iraq are still recovering from devastating wars against numerous op-

position groups and terrorist organizations, including Daesh. Since Iraq defeated the terrorists on their territory the country's military has re-established control over the border with Syria.

Recently, the countries reportedly announced plans to connect their railway systems. The aim of the project, reports say, is to provide Baghdad and Tehran with access to Syrian ports. The project was started even before the outbreak of the Syrian war in 2011.

The remarks came after at least two civilians were killed and seven oth-

ers wounded on Sunday by terrorists' mortar shelling in Syria's northern city of Aleppo, state news agency SANA reported.

The mortar attack targeted the al-Nile and al-Khaliyeh areas in Aleppo, SANA said.

It is the latest in a string of mortar attacks carried out by the terrorists in the western countryside of Aleppo.

Aleppo returned under the government control in December 2016, but the terrorists have remained in the western countryside and frequently fire mortar shells on the city to disrupt daily lives of the people.

Over 3,500 Refugees Returned to Syria From Turkey Since Start of 2019

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – More than 3,500 Syrian refugees have returned home from Turkey through the Kessab checkpoint since the beginning of this year, media reported citing the Syrian migration authorities.

"3,610 Syrians have returned since the beginning of the year through the Kessab checkpoint in the north of Latakia province [...] Last week, 327 people returned, while 20-30 people arrive daily", a source told the Syrian al-Watan newspaper.

The number of refugees returning to their homes in Syria has been gradually increasing, the source noted.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said in January that Turkey had spent \$35 billion on hosting about 4 million Syrian refugees under the deal with the European Union, which the Turkish leader accused of failing to comply with an agreement.

Syria has been in a state of foreign-backed war since 2011, with government forces fighting

against numerous terrorists groups and organizations. In late 2017, the victory over the Daesh terrorist group was declared in Syria and Iraq. Certain territories in the two countries are still being cleared of terrorists.

Turkey, alongside Russia and Iran, is a guarantor of the ceasefire regime in Syria. Moscow has also been assisting Damascus through supporting the struggle against terrorist groups, providing humanitarian aid to local residents and facilitating the return of refugees.

'Terrorists Violate Ceasefire in 3 Syrian Provinces'

MOSCOW (Dispatches) – Ceasefire violations by terrorist groups have been registered in the Syrian provinces of Latakia, Idlib and Aleppo, head of the Russian Defense Ministry's Centre for Syrian Reconciliation Maj. Gen. Viktor Kupchishin says.

"Militants have attacked settlements of Safsafa and Jubb al-Mgara in Latakia province, Abu-Omar (twice) in Idlib province, Tel Hamra and Hara in Aleppo province", Kupchishin said at a press briefing.

Kupchishin noted that over the past day the reconciliation centre had not hold humanitarian actions. He added that a total of 2,096 humanitarian actions were held by the center since the beginning of the settlement process in Syria.

Kupchishin stressed that works to recover social infrastructure in Syria continued.

The Centre for Syrian Reconciliation has brought over four tons of humanitarian aid to the residents

of two settlements in the southwestern Syrian province of Daraa, the centre's spokesman said.

"We have delivered food with a total weight of more than four tons to the settlements in the province of Daraa. More than 1,000 families residing in these communities have received humanitarian assistance", the centre's spokesman Aleksander Makarenko told reporters.

"Social infrastructure is being recovered. 31,545 houses, 843 educational facilities and 156 medical centers has been recovered. Besides, 1,031.1 km of roads have been repaired", the head of the center said.

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