

Bahraini Court Gives Prison Sentences to Anti-Regime Activists

MANAMA (Press TV) – A court in Bahrain has handed down prison sentences to seven anti-regime protesters as the ruling Al Khalifah regime continues with its heavy clampdown on political dissidents and pro-democracy activists in the tiny Persian Gulf kingdom.

Bahraini judiciary officials sentenced three defendants, identified as Mahmoud Sadiq al-Sharqi, Abdullah Maytham al-Haddad and Syed Muhammad Syed Anwar, to five years in jail each, while the remaining four, identified as Abdullah Abdullah al-Hanzabari, Hussein Kamel Mirza, Badr Maytham al-Haddad and Syed Majeed Syd Faisal, received 3-year prison terms each on Wednesday, the Britain-based and Arabic-language Bahrain al-Youm news agency reported.

The report added that the defendants were all local residents of Jidhafs city, which lies five kilometers (3 miles) west of the capital Manama.

Back on November 13 last year, the Bahrain Center for Human



This file picture shows the entrance to the building of Bahrain's Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs in the capital Manama.

Rights (BCHR) announced in a statement that law courts had issued death sentences against 32 opposition figures since 2011, three of which had been carried out, seven commuted to life imprisonment and two others appealed.

“All these verdicts have been pronounced following unfair trials, and therefore do not comply with the guarantees of fair trials. The BCHR has documented many

cases in which those sentenced to death have been subjected to torture,” the statement read at the time.

The BCHR then called on the Manama regime to reverse all death sentences and sign the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which is aiming at the abolition of death penalty.

The center further noted that the Bahraini judiciary had overused

death penalty in recent years, particularly with regards to freedom of opinion and expression in addition to the exercise of political rights.

Thousands of anti-regime protesters have held demonstrations in Bahrain on an almost daily basis ever since a popular uprising began in the country in mid-February 2011.

They are demanding that the Al Khalifah regime relinquish power and allow a just system representing all Bahrainis to be established. Manama has gone to great lengths to clamp down on any sign of dissent. On March 14, 2011, troops from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were deployed to assist Bahrain in its crackdown.

On March 5, 2017, Bahrain's parliament approved the trial of civilians at military tribunals in a measure blasted by human rights campaigners as being tantamount to imposition of an undeclared martial law countrywide.

Bahraini King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifah ratified the constitutional amendment on April 3 that year.

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eradicate terrorist groups from all parts of Syria.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan spoke by phone on Friday to discuss the implementation of agreements on Syria's Idlib province amid mounting tension, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said.

Lavrov told reporters at a news conference in Moscow that Russia and Turkey were ready to continue coordinating on the Syrian province of Idlib.

On Thursday, Russia's Defense Ministry accused Turkey of illegally sending strike drones into Idlib to support terrorists fighting Syrian government forces, and of providing artillery support for them.

The ministry made the allegation after militants backed by Turkish forces claimed that they had recaptured the crossroads town of Saraqeb.

Russian state TV earlier on Thursday said Turkish military specialists in Idlib were using shoulder-fired missiles to try to shoot down Russian and Syrian military aircraft.

The Russian ministry said Turkey was in breach of agreements it had made with Russia over Syria.

It said a Turkish strike drone had illegally entered Syrian airspace on Tuesday and been destroyed by Syrian government air defenses while preparing a strike on government troops.

Iran said it was closely monitoring and pursuing developments on the field and the regional consequences in Idlib.

In a statement Friday, the Iranian Foreign Ministry Iran called for an urgent containment of the chaotic situation in Idlib.

“Given the previous decision made by senior officials attending the Astana process on holding this meeting in our country, the Islamic Republic of Iran continues its efforts to hold the summit under the current critical circumstances,” it said.

Iran believes participants at the Astana summit can take effective measures to battle terrorism, avoid harm to civilians and resolve the conflict through diplomacy, the statement said.

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heightened tensions, bringing the region to the brink of war.

The assassination also drew the condemnation of leaders across the region and beyond. Numerous major rallies commemorating General Soleimani were also held worldwide.

On January 8, Iran officially responded to the U.S. assassination by firing a volley of ballistic missiles at the U.S.-occupied Ain al-Assad base in Iraq and another outpost in Erbil, the capital of the semi-autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan.

Despite initial U.S. claim that the attack resulted in no casualties, the Trump administration has since gradually announced injuries from the Iranian retaliatory attack, most recently saying that 110 U.S. troops have suffered from “traumatic brain injuries.”

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo appeared on Friday before a committee of Congress probing whether the Trump administration had adequate justification for the assassination.

It was the first time the top U.S. diplomat has faced questions publicly from legislators about the assassination.

President Donald Trump and top administration officials have given shifting explanations for the January 3 drone attack that martyred Gen. Soleimani and others in his convoy at the airport in Baghdad, Iraq.

Iraq's former Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi had told parliament that he was scheduled to meet with Gen. Soleimani on the morning the Iranian general was assassinated and that the top commander was carrying the Iranian response to an Iraqi diplomatic initiative to foster talks between Riyadh and Tehran.

Initially, Trump, Pompeo and others said Gen. Soleimani was an “imminent threat” to American interests in Iraq. But administration officials walked back from that justification, saying they did not know “when or where” any attacks would take place.

In closed-door briefings to U.S. legislators, Trump officials were unable to provide evidence of an imminent threat, Democrats and some Republicans said.

Earlier this month, the Senate passed a War Powers Resolution aimed at limiting Trump's ability to wage war against Iran. Although the measure is expected to be passed in the House, it faces a likely veto by the president.

On Thursday, an official submitted a petition of the Iranian people against the

U.S. over the assassination to United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet.

The petition signed by thousands of demonstrators in Tehran during a February 11 rally marking the anniversary of victory of the Islamic Revolution was submitted by head of the Iranian Judiciary's High Council for Human Rights Ali Baqeri Kani.

The petition strongly condemns the criminal assassination, demanding that international organizations bring the perpetrators of the crime to justice.

Bachelet said she has condemned the assassination, adding she would convey the request to the United Nations Secretary General.

She also decried the “inhumane and unacceptable” sanctions against Iran, saying the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights is the only United Nations institution that has adopted stances against the sanctions in its report.”

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had “lost all faith” in the prospect of receiving proper treatment there.

Zakzaky, who is the leader of the IMN, was charged in April 2018 with murder, culpable homicide, unlawful assembly, the disruption of public peace, and other accusations. He has pleaded not guilty, vehemently rejecting all the accusations brought up against him.

In 2016, Nigeria's federal high court ordered Zakzaky's unconditional release from jail following a trial, but the government has so far refused to set him free.

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days starting from tomorrow,” he said. His announcement came as Jahanpour said eight more people have died because of coronavirus infections, taking its overall toll to 34, while 73 patients have recovered.

The total number of people diagnosed with the disease is 388 after an additional 143 infections were detected over the past 24 hours, he said Friday.

“The latest figures for the number of people with coronavirus infection in the country stand at 388 people, of whom 73 people have recovered in the past few days and 34 people have died,” he said.

Jahnapour said the average age of those hospitalized has been cited above 50 and the average age of deaths more than 60 years.

Instagram... (Continued From Page 2)

“There have been no reported cases by the Turkish government or by the UAE both of which are major international flight hubs to and from China. Now, this is intellectually dishonest. It is not credible to think that the two major international flight hubs in the Middle East and Turkey and the UAE have not reported any infections of the coronavirus,” he said.

“In the meantime, Western media is silent on this huge discrepancy, while at the same time engaging in their drumbeat of Islamophobia and anti-Iranian sentiment. The world should condemn the UAE and Turkey for its fake approach, and lack of preventative measures and lack of transparency with regard to the coronavirus, and the world should commend Iran for having been transparent on the international stage and reporting the number of cases and for addressing the issue medically,” he stated.

“This is also a stronger case for the world to condemn and withdraw international sanctions against Iran so it can begin importation of needed medicines and medical equipment to combat this pandemic,” he noted.

The United States Treasury Department claimed Thursday that it had granted a license to allow for certain humanitarian trade transactions with Iran's sanctioned central bank.

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Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for International and Legal Affairs Mohsen Baharvand on Wednesday blasted the U.S. for violating UNSC Resolution 2231 and forcing the remaining signatories to the deal to follow in its footsteps.

“The U.S. is a state that, as a permanent member of the Security Council, is violating a UNSC resolution, forces the other countries to violate that resolution, and, at the same time, criticizes Iran for not adhering to the very resolution,” he said.

Saudi Arabia Suspends Issuing Electronic Tourist Visas

CAIRO (Dispatches) – The Saudi ministry of tourism temporarily has suspended issuing electronic tourist visas for those coming from China, Italy, Korea, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore and Kazakhstan, the Saudi news agency (SPA) reported.

The ministry also decided to temporarily suspend work on tourist visas previously issued to citizens of these countries, SPA added.

Meanwhile, it has temporarily suspended entry for individuals aiming to perform Umrah pilgrimage or to visit the Prophet's Mosque in Medina over concerns of the spread of COVID-19, the novel coronavirus.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia tweeted early Thursday that the temporary suspension of Umrah is a precautionary measure to prevent the spread of the

new disease.

The Foreign Ministry said the decision is one of the three precautions taken by the Saudi government to “provide the utmost protections to the safety of citizens and residents and everyone who intends to come to the territory of the Kingdom to perform Umrah or visit the Prophet's Mosque or for the purpose of tourism.”

Umrah, a lesser pilgrimage

compared to the annual Hajj, involves a visit to Saudi Arabia where Islam's holiest site Kaaba is located.

The new coronavirus, which is believed to have originated in a market selling wildlife in the Chinese city of Wuhan late last year, has infected about 80,000 people and killed more than 2,700, the vast majority in China. The number of confirmed cases has risen above 80,000.

Children First Victims When Famine Knocks Yemen's Doors

SANAA (Dispatches) – Emaciated child Mohammed Hassan threw a frightened look towards the door after a doctor entered to examine his skinny body in a hospital bed in Sanaa, where five years of Saudi-led war has pushed millions in Yemen to the doorstep of famine.

Mohammed, aged fifteen and weighs only 14kg, lives with his family in a tent in a remote village east of the Red Sea port city of Hodeidah, near a frontline where fighting between Houthi Ansarullah fighters and the invading Saudi-backed mercenaries has impeded the entry of humanitarian aid for months.

“Mohammad was admitted to Al-Sabeen hospital from As-Sukhnah district in eastern Hudaydah. He suffers acute malnutrition for long time because of the dire circumstances in the embattled areas,” doctor Mousa Debis told Xinhua.

Mohammed said a good man gave his father money that helped transferred him to the hospital.

“My father works as a woodcutter and had no enough money to take me to the hospital for treatment until a good man helped us,” he said.

The father, Hassan, blames the Saudi regime for the worsening condition of his extremely malnourished son, complaining that he is unable to secure daily basic food needed for his nine-member family.

“My children and I are hungry... our daily meal is dry bread and sometimes we do not get it. The war and blockade have devastated our

life. We live now in a tent with very little food,” he lamented.

Hassan's family was one of thousands of Yemeni families which became unable to secure one meal a day or rent a house as food prices are rising and value of the country's currency is falling because of the war.

The United Nations says about 80 percent of the Yemeni population are in need of life-saving support.

“About 7.4 million people need nutrition assistance, including 2.1 million children under the age of five, and 1.1 million pregnant and breastfeeding women who need acute malnutrition treatment,” Stephanie Dujarric, spokesman for United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, said in a statement in January.

audi Arabia and a number of its allies launched a devastating campaign against Yemen in March 2015, with the goal of bringing the former regime of Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi back to power.

The U.S.-based Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), a nonprofit conflict-research organization, estimates that the war has claimed more than 91,000 over the past four and a half years.

The war has also taken a heavy toll on the country's infrastructure, destroying hospitals, schools, and factories. The UN says over 24 million Yemenis are in dire need of humanitarian aid, including 10 million suffering from extreme levels of hunger.

Lebanon to Ask for Grace Period for March 9 Bond

BEIRUT (Dispatches) – Lebanon intends to ask for a seven-day grace period for a \$1.2 billion Eurobond that matures on March 9, as it is entitled to, in order to give financial advisers more time to draft a restructuring plan, a government source says.

Lebanon would seek the seven-day grace period ahead of the March 9 date, the source said.

Financial sources said the exercising of the seven-day grace period would make it more likely the government would seek to restructure the March 2020 Eurobond. Lebanon faces two further Eurobond maturities this year, one in April and one in June.

The Lebanese government this week appointed U.S. investment bank Lazard and law firm Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP as its financial and legal advisers on the widely expected debt restructuring.

Earlier, Beirut had invited several international firms to bid to be its financial adviser on how to restructure and clear the country's sovereign debt. And a team of experts from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) traveled to Lebanon and met with new Lebanese Prime Minister Hassan Diab last week.

The Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement, whose party in parliament is one of the main backers of the new government,

has opposed allowing the IMF to manage Lebanon's financial crisis.

On October 29, the then-Prime Minister Saad Hariri resigned under pressure from the unprecedented protests, creating a political void that lasted until January 21, when Diab assumed office as the country's new premier.

Diab faces one of the worst crises in his country's recent history and urgent decisions about upcoming debt payments, particularly a 1.2-billion-dollar sovereign bond due early next month.

Lebanon's national debt stands at around 85 billion dollars.