

Dozens of Palestinians Injured in Clashes With Zionist Troops

RAMALLAH (Dispatches) – Dozens of Palestinians have been injured in clashes with Zionist troops in the northern West Bank, according to medical sources.

Palestinian Red Crescent Society said that at least 10 Palestinians were injured with rubber coated bullets and at least 50 others broke their bones and suffered from tear gas grenades fired by Zionist troops in the village of Baïta, near Nablus city.

Ghassan Daghlis, head of the Zionist regime's settlement activity watchdog in the northern West Bank, said that the clashes broke out between Zionist troops and Palestinians during a protest against Israeli settlement activity in al-Erma hill south of Nablus.

Daghlis told reporters that settlers aim at taking over a historical site on top of al-Erma hill.

Zionist prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu pledged to annex further parts of the occupied West Bank "within weeks" provided he is re-elected.

Netanyahu, the occupying regime's longest serving premier, made the pledge in an interview with the regime's public radio on Sunday,



Zionist troops scuffle with a Palestinian man following a protest in the village of Baïta, south of Nablus, in the occupied West Bank, on February 28, 2020.

stressing that annexation of the strategically important Jordan Valley and other parts of the West Bank had been his top priority among "four major immediate missions."

"That will happen within weeks, two months at the most, I hope," he said.

Netanyahu was particularly emboldened in annexing more Palestinian lands by U.S. President Donald

Trump in January, when the latter unveiled his much-delayed and self-proclaimed "deal of the century" during an event at the White House alongside the Zionist premier.

Palestinian groups have unanimously rejected Trump's one-sided plan, which largely meets the occupying regime's demands in the decades-old conflict with the Palestinians while envisioning a Palestin-

ian state with limited control over its own security and borders.

The so-called "peace plan" enshrines al-Quds as "Israel's undivided capital" and allows the regime to annex settlements in the occupied West Bank and the Jordan Valley. The plan also denies the right of return of Palestinian refugees to their homeland, among other controversial terms.

Trump's plan has triggered waves of protest rallies both across the Palestinian occupied territories and around the globe.

Many experts believe that a unilateral move by Netanyahu to annex the valley would definitely trigger further regional tensions and damage ties with neighboring Jordan, one of only two Arab countries that agreed a "peace" deal with the Zionist regime.

On Friday, the European Union's Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell condemned the regime for its plan to build thousands of settler units in occupied East al-Quds, warning that such construction would sever territorial contiguity between the area and the rest of the occupied West Bank.

Two Missiles Target U.S. Embassy in Baghdad

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – Two Katyusha rockets have fallen inside Baghdad's Green Zone, with one hitting an area near the U.S. embassy, according to security sources.

Video emerged online showing the moment before the strikes, with the alarm sirens on and loud bangs heard in the background.

The Green Zone - a diplomatic quarter in central Baghdad that hosts many international facilities including the U.S. embassy and an Iraqi base - constantly comes under fire, with the latest attack occurring on 16 February. The U.S. military said at the time that the strike "impacted" the Iraqi military installation housing American forces in the

Iraqi capital.

In recent months, however, the fortified zone has been repeatedly targeted by Katyusha rockets.

Each time these mostly erratic volleys have hit near the U.S. diplomatic perimeter, Washington has been quick to point the finger at popular anti-terror groups, which are now integrated into Iraq's regular armed forces.

The Iraqi groups have dismissed the accusations, saying the ordinance used in such attacks is not used by them.

The U.S. military, however, has used such attacks as a pretext to pressure the Iraqi government to disband the country's anti-terror organizations and staged air-

strikes on their positions along with the Zionist regime.

Last December, the U.S. attacked a base in northern Iraq, killing 25 Kataib Hezbollah fighters after an American contractor was allegedly killed in a rocket attack.

Several reports later suggested that terrorists had been behind the rocket fire and similar attacks, which almost always miss their targets.

Around 5,200 U.S. troops are still in Iraq. Anti-American sentiment has been running high in Iraq following Washington's January 3 assassination of Iraq's anti-terror commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis and Iran's General Qassem Soleimani.

In January, the Iraqi parliament voted to expel all American forces from the country after the assassination and the airstrike on Kataib Hezbollah's base.

US President Donald Trump has refused to discuss the withdrawal and instead threatened to seize about \$35 billion of Iraqi oil revenues held in a bank account in New York.

Iran responded to the assassination with a volley of missiles at Ain al-Asad base that hosts about 1,500 US troops in Iraq's Anbar province.

Iraqi resistance groups have also pledged to avenge the assassination of Abu Mahdi in a capacity equal to Iran's response or even harsher.

Pakistan FM:

No Need to Involve U.S. to Resolve Kabul-Islamabad Issues

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) – Any reservations Afghanistan has with Islamabad should be resolved bilaterally rather than involving the United States, Pakistan's foreign minister says.

"The United States commits to facilitate discussions between Afghanistan and Pakistan to work out arrangements to ensure neither country's security is threatened by actions from the territory of the other side," one of the clauses of the declaration reads.

"They should talk directly to Pakistan. The U.S. is planning to withdraw and we will always remain neighbors," Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi told Reuters in an interview, referring to Washington's intent to withdraw troops from Afghanistan.

"If I have an issue with Afghanistan, I will not ask Washington to play a role."

Pakistan and Afghanistan have been at loggerheads for years. Kabul publicly blames Pakistan for harboring Taliban leaders after they were ousted from power Afghanistan in 2001, and al-

lowing safe havens for attacks against international and Afghan forces.

Islamabad has denied these allegations and blames Afghanistan for giving anti-Pakistan militants refuge to plot attacks in Pakistan, which, in turn, Kabul denies.

"You know a trust deficit has existed and Pakistan has done its best to bridge that trust deficit," Qureshi said, adding there are institutionalized mechanisms through which Afghanistan can raise "any issue under the sun" instead of turning to the United States.

He said that the U.S.-Taliban agreement in Doha would never have happened if Pakistan had not convinced everyone that there was no military solution to the 18-year conflict in Afghanistan.

The Doha agreement was signed by U.S. special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad and Taliban political chief Abdul Ghani Baradar.

Under it, Washington committed to a full withdrawal in 14 months, and to working with allied forces to do the same.

New Coronavirus Cases Announced in Middle East

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – Iraq has detected two new coronavirus patient, the Health Ministry said on Monday, bringing the total cases recorded so far to 21.

The two new cases were detected in Baghdad, the ministry said in a statement.

Egypt's health ministry also announced that one foreigner was tested positive for the new coronavirus strain inside Egypt, the ministry said in a statement on its Facebook page.

The ministry said that the person, whose nationality was not announced, was taken to an isolation hospital and is currently receiving the necessary medical care. It also added that it is currently taking strict preventive measures regarding those who were in contact with the person.

It is the second case of new coronavirus detected in Egypt. The first person has recovered, the statement said.

Jordan on Monday confirmed the first case of novel coronavirus infection in the country, the state-run Petra news agency reported.

The report said the infected patient is a Jordanian who arrived recently from Italy.

It added the citizen had been in a quarantine center for days after his arrival, and was then taken to state-run Prince Hamzah Hospital.

Major travel disruptions due to the new coronavirus have already caused the equivalent of a roughly \$100 million loss to airlines in the Middle East, which serves as a connection hub for east-west travel, the indus-

try's main trade association said Monday.

The Persian Gulf city of Dubai, which is home to the world's busiest airport for international travel, relies heavily on tourism and aviation. The United Arab Emirates has cancelled many flights. It has also limited flights in China to just Beijing to reduce the spread of the virus.

The International Air Transport Association, which represents around 290 airlines, said a projected 4.6% growth in passenger demand in the Middle East this year will be halved to just 2.3% if conditions do not change.

Worldwide, the virus, which started in China, has infected more than 89,000 people, and more than 6,000 have died.

Iran...

(Continued From Page One)

needs to contain the coronavirus and treat patients exist in the country, but that its friends have also announced their readiness to help the Islamic Republic.

"Turkey, China and the Red Cross have helped us. Some countries in the region have also said they are ready to cooperate," he said.

The UAE deployed an aircraft that carried 7.5 tonnes of cargo provided by the World Health Organization (WHO) from Dubai to Iran on Monday afternoon.

The shipment contained hundreds of thousands of gloves, surgical masks, and other basic medical supplies, that could assist some 15,000 healthcare workers taking care of coronavirus patients in Iran.

Laboratory diagnostic kits in the cargo will help screen thousands of people, further supporting the efforts to control the pandemic.

Mousavi, however, reserved his special thanks for China. "The Chinese government has fully stood by the Iranian people and sent several medical shipments to Iran."

China also sent a scientific team for research on finding a vaccine for the coronavirus and to transfer their latest findings to their Iranian peers, he added.

"This is a good example of international cooperation. If all fulfill their obligations with this seriousness and goodwill, we will definitely have a better world," Mousavi said.

The spokesman appealed to Iranians to maintain their high spirit and help contain the malaise so that these outlets cannot take advantage of the situation.

Several television channels, chiefly based in Europe, broadcast programs in Persian with the funding of British and Saudi governments as well as former Iranian monarchists.

Some of their broadcasts have been aimed at disrupting Iran's financial market and stoking riots across the country. Last week, BBC Persian Television claimed that the coronavirus had killed more than 200 people in Iran.

Health Ministry spokesman Ali Reza Raisi said that Iran's armed forces and its Basij, the all-volunteer arm of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, stood ready to mobilize 300,000 troops to help combat the virus. Already, IRGC vehicles have been spraying disinfectant on streets in major cities.

Those troops would help sanitizing public areas, as well as running down leads on who infected people had contacted before falling ill, Raisi said.

Trying to stem the outbreak of the new coronavirus, Iran also on Monday held an online-only briefing by its Foreign Ministry. China as well has held similar teleconference briefings.

Judiciary chief Ebrahim Raisi acknowledged some people had begun stockpiling medical supplies for profit in the country, urging prosecutors to show "no mercy for hoarders."

"Hoarding sanitizing items is playing with people's lives and it is not ignorable," Raisi said. He also urged officials to grant "maximum" leave to prisoners.

Syria...

(Continued From Page One)

The European Union's chief executive, Ursula von der Leyen, said sending migrants to Europe cannot be the answer.

Turkey had shut the border in return for EU funds under a 2016 deal to end a crisis in which more than a million people entered Europe and 4,000 drowned in the Aegean Sea. On Monday, a child died after being pulled from the sea when a boat capsized off the Greek island of Lesbos, Greek officials said, the first reported fatality since Turkey re-opened its border last week.

Two Turkish security sources told Reuters a Syrian migrant also died from injuries on Monday after Greek security forces acted to stop migrants entering Greece by land. Athens denied the incident.

More than 1,000 migrants have arrived by sea on Greek islands since Sunday and more than 10,000 have attempted to cross by land at the border, where guards from both sides have fired tear gas into crowds caught in no-man's land.

U.S....

(Continued From Page 2)

healthcare and medicinal system and also the health of people," he told at a weekly press conference here.

He said all Iranian administrative organizations, health institutions, industrial centers and even the military units have joined hands after the outbreak of COVID-19 in Iran to contain the disease.

Highlighting the great achievements of Iran in the battle with the novel coronavirus, Rabiei said the World Health Organization has announced that Iran is the second most successful country in the world in controlling and treating the disease.

The spokesman added that schools across the country will be closed until the end of this week, while a decision about the extension of the closure through the next week will be made on Thursday or Friday.

Rabiei also predicted that the rate of new cases of coronavirus infection in Iran would decline in the next two weeks.