

UN Report Says:

Afghanistan Election Violence Left 85 Dead

KABUL (Dispatches) – Violence linked to Afghanistan’s election last month left 85 civilians dead and more than 370 wounded, a United Nations report says.

The bulk of the casualties were caused by Taliban militants, who attacked several polling stations in an attempt to derail the vote.

Only a quarter of eligible voters cast their ballots in Afghanistan’s presidential election on Sept. 28 following threats of violence by the militant group.

“Deliberate acts of violence against voters, election workers, campaigners, election rally sites and polling centers are completely unacceptable,” Tadamichi Yamamoto, the UN Secretary-General’s Special

Representative for Afghanistan, said in the report.

More than a third of civilian casualties were children, the report said. Twenty-eight people were killed and almost 250 injured on election day, with the rest of the casualties caused by violence before or after the vote.

The Taliban, who consider the election illegitimate and had warned people not to take part, were not immediately available for comment.

The report accused the Taliban of deliberate attacks against civilians on election day.

“Widespread or systematic attacks against civilian populations may constitute crimes against humanity; the United



Men arrive to cast their votes outside a polling station in Jalalabad, Afghanistan, on September 28, 2019.

Nations unequivocally condemns them.” Yamamoto said. Thirteen election staff members were kidnapped by the Taliban on Sept. 29 while 11 others were injured on polling day.

Massive Fires Sweep Lebanon Due to Sudden Temperature Rise



Fire fighters try to put out a fire in Chouf district, Lebanon, Oct. 15, 2019. Thousands of square meters of forests have been destroyed in more than 103 massive fires in several towns and villages in Lebanon since Monday night, the National News Agency (NNA) reported Tuesday.

BEIRUT (Xinhua) – Thousands of square meters of forests have been destroyed in more than 103 massive

fires in several towns and villages in Lebanon since Monday night, the National News Agency (NNA) has reported.

The affected towns and villages include Mechref, Kfar Matta, Daqoun, Zagharta and Dibbiyeh, NNA said.

Caused by a sudden rise in temperature, the fires broke out and also reached houses and cars in some of the areas, prompting many people to leave their houses and move to safer regions.

George Kettaneh, secretary general of the Lebanese Red Cross (LRC), announced that LRC rescued 49 civilians with suffocating cases in Na’ame, a southern village in Lebanon.

Raymond Khattar, direc-

tor general of the Lebanese Civil Defense (Fire Department), said the massive fires led to the explosion of 20 landmines in Chouf district of Mount Lebanon.

These are the worst fires in Lebanon in decades and the country has not witnessed a disaster of such magnitude for years, he added.

With the support of Lebanese Armed Forces, civil defense workers and firefighters have been working since Monday to put out the fires.

Lebanese Interior Minister Raya El Hassan said two Cypriot jets arrived on Tuesday to help Lebanese firefighters to control the fires.

Jordan Demands Zionist Regime Release Two Citizens

AMMAN (Dispatches) – Jordan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates has called on the Zionist regime to release two Jordanian citizens, who were lately arrested after crossing the kingdom into the occupied West Bank.

Sufyan al-Qudah, a spokesman for the foreign ministry, said that Jordanian Ambassador in the occupied territories Walid Obeidat, had demanded the immediate release of Heba Abdel-Baqi and Abdurrahman Marei and their repatriation in his meetings and frequent contacts with Israeli officials, Jordan’s official news agency Petra reported.

Qudah added that Amman rejects the regime authorities’ decision to arrest the two, pointing out that the Jordanian foreign ministry follows up on their cases on a daily basis and has instructed its diplomats in Tel Aviv to visit them periodically.

He further noted that the Jordanian ambassador has visited Abdel-Baqi four times at her detention center to check on her conditions. Marei has also received two consular visits since his arrest.

Abdel-Baqi, a Jordanian citizen who also holds a Palestinian identity card, was arrested on August 20, when she crossed the King Hussein Bridge, also known as the Allenby Bridge, which crosses the Jordan River near the Palestinian city of Ariha and connects the occupied West Bank with Jordan, with her mother and aunt on their way to a relative’s wedding in the northern West Bank city of Jenin.

According to her attorney, Raslan Mahajna, she is suspected of meeting

with people affiliated to the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement during trips to Beirut both last year and early this year.

Mahajna added that Abdel-Baqi often voices her views against the Israeli regime’s occupation of Palestinian territories on social media networks. “She was interrogated intensively for 35 days, and in the end, there was no basis for indicting her, so she was slapped with an administrative detention order,” he said.

“She’s been on hunger strike, because in her view, this was an arbitrary, unjustified arrest,” Mahajna noted.

Abdel-Baqi is reportedly being held at Kishon prison, also known as the al-Jalame detention center.

Arabic-language Arabi 21 online newspaper reported that Marei was arrested on September 2 as he was going to attend the wedding of a relative in the northern West Bank city of Nablus, located approximately 49 kilometers (30 miles) north of al-Quds.

The 29-year-old man, a resident of the Abu al-Zayegan area in the central Jordanian city of Zarqa, had traveled with his mother through the King Hussein Bridge.

His family said that they have not been able to contact him since his arrest, and have not been told the reason for his detention. Marei is said to be suffering from cancer. His relatives are concerned his medical condition will deteriorate in jail.

Baghdad Provincial Council Elects New Governor

BAGHDAD (Press TV) – The Provincial Council of Baghdad has elected Mohammed Jaber al-Atta as the new governor of the Iraqi capital province, one week after the former head stepped down in the wake of demonstrations against corruption, staggering youth unemployment and poor public services.

On Monday, 42 members of the provincial council voted in favor of Atta, who is a member of the State of Law Coalition headed by former prime minister Nouri al-Maliki.

The council members also voted in favor of Ali al-Issawi as the first deputy governor.

On October 6, Baghdad’s provincial council voted unanimously in favor of accepting governor Fallah al-Jazairi’s resignation, and

called for nomination of an alternative for the post.

Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi pledged on October 9 to reshuffle his cabinet, launch a probe into the killing of protesters, and punish those who shot the demonstrators.

“We will ask parliament to vote tomorrow on changes to ministries,” the Iraqi prime minister said in a televised speech.

He vowed that his government will refer the names of hundreds of corrupt officials to the Judiciary for investigation.

Abdul-Mahdi also declared three days of national mourning over the deaths of at least 110 people and injuries of more than 6,000 others during the recent violent clashes be-

tween security forces and demonstrators in Baghdad and the country’s south.

The remarks came only a day after the Iraqi cabinet approved the second package of reforms, including distribution of residential plots of land to citizens, expansion of municipal borders of cities, and changing agricultural land into residential.

The planned reforms also contain freezing the law, which allows payment of several salaries to one public servant, providing jobs for young people and activation of the agricultural lending fund.

Additionally, the Iraqi cabinet endorsed a possible study to minimize the age of retirement to give more jobs to the youth.

Residents...

(Continued From Page One)

from northern Syria. Its former Kurdish allies immediately forged a new alliance with President Assad’s government, inviting the army into towns across the breadth of their territory.

The UN Security Council will likely meet on Wednesday to discuss the latest developments in Syria, diplomats said, the second such session since Turkey began its offensive.

Trump’s pullout ends joint U.S.-Turkish patrols of the Manbij area under a deal meant to persuade Turkey not to invade and attack the Kurdish YPG, seen by Ankara as a terrorist group aligned with Kurdish separatist insurgents in Turkey.

The YPG is also the main component of the SDF, which had been Washington’s key regional ally.

A Reuters cameraman on the Turkish frontier reported heavy bombardment on Tuesday morning of the Syrian border town of Ras al-Ain where an SDF spokesman reported a fierce battle going on.

Trump has defended his reversal of U.S. policy as part of a plan to extricate the United States from “endless” wars in the Middle East.

But his critics, including senior figures in his own Republican Party, cast it as a betrayal of the Kurds.

France said on Tuesday it would hold talks soon with Iraqi and Kurdish leaders to weigh how, amidst the upheaval triggered by the Turkish incursion, to secure thousands of foreign and regional Daesh militants held in Syrian camps and prisons.

Turkey says it aims to defeat the Kurdish YPG militia and create a “safe zone” where millions of Syrian war refugees now in Turkey could be resettled.

The United Nations says 160,000 people have fled their homes as Turkish forces advance. The regional Kurdish administration puts the number of displaced at 270,000.

Europeans...

(Continued From Page One)

since the geopolitical showdown escalated between Iran and the U.S. in 2015, when President Donald Trump announced “the most biting sanctions ever imposed” on Tehran.

Millions of Afghan refugees, disaster victims and ordinary communities in Iran became the first and hardest hit victims of the draconian measure.

U.S. leaders have cast the sanctions as intended to ramp up pressure on the government of Iran, but the real pain has come upon vulnerable communities impacted by the coercive action against the Iranian economy.

Because of the sanctions, the cost of living in Iran has skyrocketed. As a result, the number of Afghans in need has nearly doubled and pushed almost 3 million people into emergency levels of hunger, according to Secretary General of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) Jan Egeland.

Mostly neglected in all the political discourse of the West, the ripple effect is now reaching the Europeans shores, especially the Greek islands where many of Afghan refugees first arrive.

Over 13,000 men, women and children are now crammed into the Moria camp on Lesbos, which was designed to accommodate 3,100 people, according to charity group Oxfam.

In 2018, about 12,000 Afghans were recorded to have illegally crossed the EU borders, but that number could now double, Reuters said.

“They are leaving because the U.S. policy has significantly deteriorated the economic situation in Iran,” the unnamed senior European official told Reuters.

European authorities, who have failed to help Iran in any meaningful way to cope with the situation and protect Tehran against the sanctions, are alarmed. German Interior Home Minister Horst Seehofer warned last week that the EU risked a repeat of the 2015 chaos.

Iranian officials said Afghan workers are leaving to seek better ways to support families left behind in Afghanistan.

Those remaining - and still in millions - are making their best to take the U.S.-imposed situation in their stride and Iran is helping them.

According to officials, Iran rang in the new school year last month with some 500,000 foreign students enrolled in around 28,000 schools across the country.

To understand the difficulty of the task the Iranians have to deal with, one has to bear in mind that devastating floods in Iran in April destroyed many schools, hospitals and homes and left 2 million people in need.

That is while the U.S. blacklisting of financial transactions with Iran means any humanitarian aid, if any, can barely reach the country, including for flood victims and Afghan refugees.