

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Abdonnaser Hemmati on Friday shrugged off new sanctions imposed by the U.S. government against the Islamic Republic, describing them as ineffective.

Hemmati also dismissed as untrue a recent claim by U.S. Special Representative on Iran Brian Hook that the Islamic Republic's oil exports have reduced to 120,000 barrels per day due to the sanctions. Iran's economy is progressing and its oil and non-oil exports are increasing despite sanctions, Hemmati said.

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Head of Iran's Civil Defense Organization Brigadier General Gholam Reza Jalali on Friday highlighted the country's recent military advances against enemies and said the Islamic Republic has reached major achievements in this area. "Today, we are living in a post-triumph... era and we are standing at a point where very significant gains have been made," Brigadier General Jalali said, addressing a gathering of worshippers here. "We managed to define (a new type of) asymmetric deterrence in the defense sector," the official added.

Anti-U.S. Sentiments Run High After 40 Years



Iran, Germany Commemorate Two Prominent Poets



Iran Finish 2nd With 6 Medals at U23 World Wrestling



Yemen's Houthis Down U.S.-Made Drone Near Saudi Border



Ayatollah Sistani: Iraq on Precipice of Civil War

NAJAF (Dispatches) -- Iraq's top Shia cleric Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani on Friday called for an end to bloodshed in the Arab country, warning of a civil war and chaos after dozens of deaths during a wave of protest rallies.

In a statement, Ayatollah Sistani expressed regret over continued clashes between demonstrators and security forces, which have resulted in the deaths and injuries of innocent people from both sides and damage to public and private properties.

"The innocent blood shed during the past few weeks is very valuable to us, and measures must be taken to prevent further bloodshed," the top cleric said.

"The country must be kept from slipping toward the edge of the precipice of a civil war, chaos, and destruction," Ayatollah Sistani urged.

This is only possible if all parties join hands to resolve the current crisis in the country with good faith, he added.

The top cleric once again condemned any assault on peaceful protesters and any unjustifiable violence, calling for investigation into those who use violence.

Ayatollah Sistani also warned any individuals and groups inside Iraq as well as regional and world countries against attempting to exploit the Iraqi people's protests.

Hashd al-Sha'abi Says Won't Interfere in Rallies

Meanwhile, Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units also known as Hashd al-Sha'abi announced that it will support the legitimate demands of protesters without interfering in the country's political situation.

In a statement on Thursday, the PMU stressed that it is not going to meddle in the public demonstrations as it is a force tasked with ensuring the security and integrity of Iraq and defending the country against terrorism.

The statement further dismissed rumors circulating on social media against Hashd al-Sha'abi, the latest of which was about the deployment of military vehicles from the house of PMU commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis in Baghdad's Jadriyah neighborhood.

Muhandis, it said, has no base or house in Jadriyah and his office is the Hashd al-Sha'abi headquarters in the Green Zone of Baghdad.

The PMU played a decisive role in Iraq's uphill 2014-2017 battle against the Daesh terrorist group. The Iraqi parliament on

November 26, 2016 approved a law giving full legal status to Hashd al-Sha'abi fighters.

The ongoing demonstrations in Iraq follow a previous bout of anti-government protests in early October over corruption, unemployment and lack of basic services.

More than 200 have been killed and thousands of others wounded since the protests erupted, with security forces using tear gas and rubber bullets against those taking to the streets.

As part of efforts to meet the anti-corruption demands, the Iraqi Supreme Anti-Corruption Council announced on Friday that it has issued arrest warrants for a minister, a provincial council chief, five lawmakers, two former ministers, and 60 local officials for corruption.

Also in Thursday remarks, Iraqi President Barham Salih said Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi is ready to step down if a replacement is found, emphasizing that a snap parliamentary election will be held once a new electoral law is passed.

Early elections cannot be held until a new electoral law is passed, Salih said, adding that he expected a bill to be introduced in parliament by next week.

It took more than six months of negotiations before Abdul-Mahdi was appointed a year ago, and finding a successor all the political factions can agree to will not be easy.

U.S. Withholds Aid to Beirut Amid Economic Crisis Lebanon Returning to Normalcy



A man takes a picture with his mobile phone as people queue outside a branch of Blom Bank in Sidon, Lebanon November 1, 2019.

BEIRUT (Dispatches) – Hezbollah Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah on Friday said a new Lebanese government must listen to the demands that fueled protests against the country's rulers and led Saad Al-Hariri to quit as prime minister.

Hariri's resignation has left Lebanon without a government as it faces the worst economic crisis since the 1975-90 civil war. Hezbollah had opposed the resignation of the coalition of which it was part.

"A new government must be formed as soon as possible ... and the new government must listen

to the demands of the people who took to the streets," Nasrallah said in a televised address.

"There must be serious work because time is tight and so is people's patience," he said, adding that the government's goal must be to restore confidence.

The unprecedented, nationwide protests that erupted on Oct. 17 tipped Lebanon into political turmoil at a time when it was already grappling with dire economic conditions and strains in its financial system.

Lebanese banks, which had been closed since Oct. 18, reopened on

Friday, in a further sign of normalcy returning to the country.

The Association of Banks in Lebanon praised the public for acting "responsibly." The Lebanese pound strengthened against the dollar on the parallel market that has emerged in recent months, three dealers said.

Hariri's resignation has somehow eased the protests, but has not been enough to send demonstrators back home, as people have continued their rallies mainly in major squares of the Lebanese cities.

On Thursday, demonstrations were held in Riad al-Solh Square

in the heart of downtown Beirut, where protesters set fire on the Israeli flag and chanted 'Death to Israel'.

Meanwhile, Reuters said U.S. President Donald Trump's administration has reportedly decided to withhold \$105 million in aid for Lebanon.

The State Department told Congress on Thursday that the White House budget office and National Security Council had decided to withhold the foreign military assistance, two U.S. officials told the news agency.

The decision comes as the U.S. administration had earlier described the aid as crucial for Lebanon to protect its borders.

Fully aware of Hezbollah's key role in the Lebanese economy, Washington has imposed sanctions against a number of lawmakers, officials, and bodies linked to the movement.

In May last year, the U.S. Treasury imposed sanctions on the Hezbollah leadership jointly with Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

Tehran's Friday prayers leader Ayatollah Muhammad Ali Movahedi Kermani warned of hostile elements seeking to destabilize Lebanon and Iraq.

"The people of Iraq and Lebanon should value the importance of security and stability and be vigilant against an enemy plot seeking to create strife among different factions

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U.S. Economic Terrorism Targets Iran Construction

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- The United States should return to a 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and major powers, Iranian Foreign Minister Muhammad Javad Zarif said on Friday, saying the new U.S. sanctions imposed on Tehran showed failure of Washington's policy.

"Rather than dig itself deeper, US should abandon failed policies & return to #JCPOA (the 2015 nuclear deal)," Zarif tweeted.

Washington on Thursday imposed new sanctions on Iran, targeting the construction sector, despite Washington's announcement a week ago that it had created a new mechanism to facilitate "permissible trade" with Tehran.

"Subjecting construction workers to #EconomicTerrorism only manifests maximum failure of 'maximum pressure'. US can sanction every man, woman & child but Iranians will never submit to bullying" Zarif tweeted.

The U.S. State Department issued a fact sheet, singling out the sale of software used for industrial purposes, raw and semi-finished metals, graphite and coal used in Iran's construction sector as tar-

gets for the new sanctions.

The State Department said Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had determined Iran's construction sector was controlled directly or indirectly by Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC).

The U.S. has previously imposed sanctions on a number of Iranian business companies and networks on the pretext of being tied to the IRGC after blacklisting it as a "terrorist" organization earlier this year. The IRGC is an official branch of the Iranian armed forces.

Also on Thursday, the State Department announced a separate batch of sanctions against what it described as the sale of "strategic material" being used "in connection with Iran's nuclear, military, or ballistic missile programs."

The State Department listed the sanctioned material as "stainless steel 304L tubes, MN40 manganese brazing foil, MN70 manganese brazing foil, and stainless steel CrNi60WTi ESR + VAR."

The embargoes mark the latest round of Washington's sweeping sanctions against Iran after the U.S. government unilaterally

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President Assad: Syria to Restore Authority Over Northeast

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) -- Syrian President Bashar al-Assad said on Thursday that his government's ultimate goal was to restore state authority over Kurdish controlled areas in northeast Syria after an abrupt U.S. troop withdrawal but he expected it to happen gradually.

In a state television interview Assad also said that a deal between Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin to drive out the Kurdish YPG militants from a 30 km (19 mile) "safe zone" along the border was a "positive" step that would help Damascus achieve its goal.

"It might not achieve everything ... it paves the road to liberate this area in the near future we hope," said Assad.

The U.S.-backed YPG reached a deal with Damascus to take up positions near the border after U.S. President Donald Trump's announcement in early October that he was withdrawing American forces from northeast Syria.

The withdrawal paved the way for a Turkish offensive against the Kurds and left them feeling abandoned by the United States and forcing them to work a deal with Damascus

to help them resist Turkish forces. Ankara views the YPG as a terrorist organization because of its links to Kurdish militants in southeastern Turkey.

Assad also said Trump's decision to keep a small number of U.S. troops in the Kurdish-held areas of Syria "where they have the oil" showed that Washington was a colonial power that was doomed to leave once Syrians resist their occupation as in Iraq.

But he said his country could not stand up to a great power such as the United States and that ending the presence of American troops on Syrian soil was not achievable soon.

Assad said Trump was the "best American president" for his "complete transparency" about intentions to maintain control of Syria's main oilfields in Dayr al-Zawr province.

U.S. troops have begun deployment in the province in coordination with Kurdish SDF militants, a U.S. military spokesman said on Thursday.

Diplomats say the U.S. decision to prevent oil fields from falling back to government control would deny Damascus millions of dollars of much needed revenues.

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