

SANA'A (Dispatches) – Forty-three percent of Yemeni families have been forced to reduce the number of their daily meals due to the country's hardships stemming from the Saudi-led attacks that devastated the country's already dire economy, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) in Yemen announced. "Economic volatility & conflict means that many in Yemen regularly reduce the frequency or size of their meals or parents eat less so they can feed their children," the WFP posted on Twitter. Impoverished Yemen has been mired in a conflict since the Saudi-led alliance launched a lethal campaign in 2015 to reinstate former president Abd Rabbuh Abd Mansour, among other objectives.

If you are greeted then return the greetings more warmly. If you are favoured, then repay the obligation manifold; but he who takes the initiative will always excel in merit.

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Syria Wants U.S. Troops to Leave Immediately

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – The Syrian Foreign Ministry has demanded the "immediate and unconditional withdrawal" of U.S. troops from Syria, according to the state news agency SANA.

In a statement, the ministry condemned the "hostile practices" of the U.S. troops in northeastern Syria.

It accused the U.S. forces of "systematic theft" of oil and agriculture resources in northern Syrian in addition to bringing in military reinforcement to that part of the country.

The administration of former U.S. president Donald Trump has destabilized the region and supported separatist movements in a bid to divide Syria and prevent reaching a political solution through supporting the "terrorist groups," the ministry charged.

The ministry, meanwhile, called on the international community to condemn the U.S. moves and occupation of Syrian territories and denounce the "coercive and unilateral" sanctions imposed on Syria.

The Syrian government has repeatedly called for the withdrawal of the U.S. troops, slamming the



A militant from the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces SDF stands guard as a U.S. military vehicle pulling out of a U.S. base in the northern Syrian town of Tal Tamr drives by, on October 20, 2019.

U.S. claims that its troops are present in Syria to fight terrorist groups.

Syria's deputy foreign minister says terrorist groups are covered by U.S. troops illegally based in his country to launch attacks on Syrian soldiers and civilians, calling for international cooperation led by the United Nations to curb them.

Bashar al-Ja'afari, who is also Syria's permanent representative to the UN, made the remarks Thurs-

day in a statement to a UN Security Council session on the situation in Syria via a video link.

He stressed that on top of the terror organizations being helped by U.S. troops are the two most notorious terrorist groups, namely Daesh and Jabhat al-Nusra.

"The hypocrisy of some states went far beyond to a hateful degree... from one side, the U.S. administration alleges its elimination

of Daesh, and from another side, it reshapes and re-operates it to target my country, and this was witnessed many days before through the terrorist attacks against a civil bus and tankers which claimed the lives of tens of innocent Syrians," he said.

Ja'afari was referring to two deadly attacks on January 3, when terrorists launched an attack against a bus in the Kabajib area in Dayr al-Zawr province and another attack against fuel tankers as well as civilian vehicles in al-Salamiyah district in Hama province.

Ja'afari noted that the two attacks had been carried out by the Daesh terrorists who came from an area controlled by U.S. troops in al-Tanf, which includes the al-Rukban camp.

He also said the U.S. and the European Union continue with their crippling sanctions and coercive measures against the Arab nation despite the fact that Syrians are suffering more from the COVID-19 pandemic, ignoring calls by the UN Security Council, the UN special envoy to Syria and scores of other senior representatives at the international organization to put an end to these "illegal measures."

Palestinian Inmate Dies After Zionist Officials Administer 'Vaccine'

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – Palestinian inmate Maher Saasaa has died after recently receiving the coronavirus vaccine, according to the Palestinian Commission of Detainees' and ex-Detainees' Affairs, Anadolu Agency reported.

The Israel Prisons Service announced late Wednesday the death of Saasaa, 45, from Qalqilah, in northern West Bank.

The family of the Palestinian inmate said he was exposed to medical negligence during his detention for more than 15 years.

Saasaa was the father of six children.

Holding the Zionist regime

accountable for Saasaa's death, advocacy groups said the Palestinian prisoner — who had received a coronavirus shot a day earlier — was suffering from several chronic illnesses as a result of unhealthy conditions in Israeli jails.

Saasaa's case will be followed on to find out the reason for and suspects behind his death, according to the groups.

The International Committee of the Red Cross said delegates are still visiting jails and facilitating the transmission of messages between detainees and families since visits were stopped at the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic in

March.

It said it has visited more than 95% of jails and detention centers, ICRC spokesman in Palestine, Yahya Maswadeh, told Anadolu Agency.

"We are in intensive contact with the Israeli jails services about the plan for vaccination of Palestinian inmates, and we give our recommendations for giving priority for vulnerable groups inside the jails," Maswadeh added.

The Zionist regime decided to start vaccinating prisoners in different jails but risks remain and the numbers of infected detainees have been increasing recently, Abu-Baker told Anadolu

Agency.

A large number of Palestinian prisoners have over the past months been infected with the coronavirus due to the negligence of the Zionist regime authorities, with reports saying the number of cases has reached more than 230 people.

The United Nations has already called for the protection of Palestinian prisoners being held in Israeli jails and detention facilities amid the novel coronavirus pandemic.

Over 7,000 Palestinian prisoners are currently held in some 17 Israeli jails, with dozens of them serving multiple life sentences.

UAE Signs Last-Minute Deal to Buy U.S. F-35s



Palestinian refugees tread on images of Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, U.S. President Donald Trump, and Zionist prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, during a demonstration against the Emirati agreement with the occupying regime, in the Bass refugee camp in the Lebanese southern coastal city of Tyre, on August 15, 2020.

DUBAI (Dispatches) – Less than an hour before new U.S. President Joe Biden was sworn into office, the outgoing Trump administration signed an agreement with the United Arab Emirates to sell the Persian Gulf country 50 of its Lockheed Martin F-35A stealth fighters.

The jets are part of a huge \$23.3 billion weapons sale that includes 18 MQ-9B Reaper drones and a slew of anti-air and anti-surface missiles. While the final delivery schedule is unclear, drafts of the agreement stated deliveries would begin in 2027.

The possibility it might be able to buy the advanced fighter jet was a major part of Washington convincing Abu Dhabi to a historic rapprochement with the Zionist regime last September. In the Middle East, the Zionist regime is the only entity that operates the F-35.

The Trump administration pressed ahead to advance Abu Dhabi's longstanding request to buy F-35s after the UAE and the Zionist regime signed a controversial normalization agreement at the White House last August.

Under understandings dating back decades, Washington has refrained from Middle East arms sales that could blunt the regime's "qualitative military edge." This had applied to

the F-35s, which was denied to Arab states.

Sources familiar with the talks told Reuters that the deal gave the green light to the UAE to get 50 F-35 Joint Strike Fighter jets and 18 armed drones from the U.S.

"The jets are a major component of a \$23 billion sale of high-tech armaments from General Atomics, Lockheed Martin Corp and Raytheon Technologies Corp to the UAE announced this fall," the sources said.

"The UAE and the United States had once hoped to have a deal in place in December, but the timing of jet deliveries, their cost, the technology packages and training associated with the deal extended negotiations," they added.

The delivery date for the F-35 jets could not immediately be confirmed but the initial proposal sent to the UAE was 2027, according to the sources.

One of the sources said the agreement was signed about an hour before the swearing-in ceremony of Biden, who recently said his administration would build on the accords but would "reassess" Washington's relations with the UAE and Saudi Arabia, which are engaged in a bloody military campaign against Yemen.

Lebanon Extends COVID Lockdown Until February 8

BEIRUT (Al Jazeera) – Lebanon has extended a hard lockdown by two weeks amid record-breaking numbers of COVID-related deaths and an unabated surge in the number of new cases that have stretched the country's healthcare system to its limits.

Meanwhile, a top health official has announced plans for a roll-out of vaccinations in the crisis-hit country that he said would see some three million of the country's inhabitants – roughly half the population – receive the jab by the end of the year.

Assem Araj, the head of Lebanon's parliamentary health committee, announced that the first batch of doses would arrive in the first week of February and that priority would be given to healthcare workers and those over the age of 74.

Lebanon has struggled to bring a COVID outbreak under control since the August port explosion that killed 200, injured more than 6,000 and destroyed large parts of Beirut, including several hospitals.

Cases jumped from double figures to hundreds in July and into more than a thousand by late September and have averaged more than 5,000 per day since the beginning of the year with a positivity rate of roughly 20 percent, indicating wide community spread.

The country implemented a nationwide lockdown with an overnight curfew on January 7, allowing for a range of exceptions.

But daily new-case records continued to be broken and an outcry from health professionals led officials to impose a hard lockdown with a 24-hour curfew on January 14.

Originally scheduled to last just 11 days, the lockdown was extended on Thursday until February 8.

Under the strict measures, most businesses and factories must close and even supermarkets and restaurants can only operate via home delivery.

The Lebanese state has promised to provide aid to some 280,000 families.

Raising Doubt About Pledge to Youth Saudi Arabia Delay Jobless Figures Again

RIYADH (MEMO) – Saudi Arabia has delayed the publication of highly sensitive unemployment data for the fourth time, raising questions about Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman's modernization plan which pledged to create more jobs for millions of unemployed young people.

The kingdom's labor market report for the third quarter of 2020 was meant to be published in late December, but was rescheduled several times before officials simply removed the release date from the Saudi Statistics Authority website. The authority is said to need more time "due to the importance of the target period."

The delay was necessary to ensure that data collected from 33,000 households during a period of pandemic restrictions meets the authority's standards, it explained. "The pandemic has had an impact on the economy that affected the Saudi labor market in terms of stability,

job losses and job availability. The review of the data and its validity is extended in order to carry out a thorough analysis."

This has raised questions over the direction in which the Crown Prince is taking the kingdom. Creating enough jobs for the young population is one of the biggest challenges facing bin Salman as he tries to diversify the economy of the world's largest crude oil exporter. He aims to reduce unemployment among citizens to 7 percent by 2030.

As part of his plan to get Saudis into work, Riyadh introduced a number of measures, including restricting jobs to Saudis only and increasing taxes on expatriate workers, which forced many thousands to leave the kingdom. These policies appear to have had little success.

Indeed, bin Salman is a long way away from achieving the target. Unemployment hit a re-

cord high of 15.4 percent in the second quarter last year, when the pandemic and lower oil prices struck businesses. It is one of a number of key indicators showing that Saudi economic reforms, launched more than three years ago, are still having little success in creating jobs or developing non-oil-related industries.

More than 50 percent of jobless Saudis are graduates. This suggests that there is a high demand for professional jobs amongst the country's young people.

A report by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has concluded that the unemployment crisis in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has the potential to trigger another wave of instability if it is not addressed. In eight MENA countries, including Saudi Arabia, youth unemployment is more than 30 percent.