

'Charity', UK Branch Continue to Push Land Grab in West Bank: Report

WEST BANK (Press TV) – A new report shows the so-called Jewish National Fund charity and its British branch continue to raise money for seizure of more occupied Palestinian lands for the construction of new illegal settlements.

In a new report, the Popular-Resistance.org revealed that both the Jewish National Fund (KKL-JNF) and its branch in the United Kingdom, JNF UK, continue to fund the Zionist regime's land confiscation in the occupied West Bank in direct defiance of international law.

Last month, the parent organization, for the first time in its long history, openly announced that it raised money for further land grab in the occupied Palestinian territories in favor of establishing more illegal settlements for Zionists, which are condemned globally.

The fund said at the time that its board of governors voted through the allocation of NIS (new Israeli shekel) 38 million to help the Zi-



This file picture taken on August 06, 2019 shows the settlement of Ma'ale Adumim in the occupied West Bank on the outskirts of al-Quds.

onist regime further usurp Palestinian land and mushroom settlements, the report said.

Such funding comes as "all Israeli settlements, based on stolen Palestinian land in the West Bank, constitute a war crime under international law," the report said.

Furthermore, the JNF UK, the British branch, also continued to be a registered charity, a status that enables it to enjoy tax ex-

emption to collect money for its parent organization, or the JNF, the report added.

"This decision is not an aberration, or a reversal of existing JNF policy, but a clear indication that the settlement expansion driven by Israel's far right government and emboldened by the support it received from the Trump administration, is set to continue, more blatantly than previously," the re-

port went on to say.

It was revealed last year that during a two-year period and in a clandestine move, the JNF-KKL spent tens of millions of shekels to usurp territories in the occupied West Bank earmarked for the expansion of illegal settlements.

Simultaneously, Himnuta, a wholly-owned JNF-KKL subsidiary, spearheaded new attempts to force Palestinians from their homes in Israeli-annexed East al-Quds.

More than 600,000 Zionists live in over 230 settlements built since the 1967 occupation of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and East al-Quds.

All settlements are illegal under international law. The UN Security Council has condemned the regime's settlement activities in the occupied territories in several resolutions.

Palestinians want the West Bank as part of a future independent Palestinian state with East al-Quds as its capital.

Anti-Netanyahu Protests Intensify

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – Weekly demonstrations against Zionist prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu continued Saturday with renewed vigor, marking the 37th consecutive week of protests.

According to the report, as usual, protests were set outside Netanyahu residence in al-Quds and his private residence in Caesarea on the Mediterranean coast. A rally was also planned in Hadera, near the location of Netanyahu's campaign gathering.

The protesters reportedly shouted "Come on Bibi get out of here" during a rally near PM's house in Caesaria. The protesters also were singing songs with lyrics addressed to Netanyahu.

The report cited a statement put out by the Black Flags Movement, one of several organizations heading the regular protests, violence was again targeted at the demonstrators, which has been described as a "routine" occurrence during the protests.

Supporters of Netanyahu violently attacked protesters as in previous demonstrations, Haaretz reports.

People will Israel heads to the polls on March 23 in its fourth elections in two years. The incumbent prime minister is to see his legal woes out in the open during election campaign.

In November last year, Netanyahu was indicted for "receiving a bribe, fraud, and breach of trust" in four corruption cases.

As the most serious case of

charges, Netanyahu has been accused of offering regulatory favors for media executives worth about 500 million dollars in return for securing positive press coverage that helped him win re-election twice.

In lesser charges of fraud and breach of trust, he is indicted for negotiating a deal with the owner of the Israeli newspaper Yedioth Ahronoth for better coverage. In return, the prime minister allegedly promoted legislation that would slow the growth of a rival newspaper.

Ranking Afghan Policewoman Hurt, Husband Dies in Targeted Attack

KABUL (AP) – The former head of women police in a southern Afghanistan province was seriously wounded and her husband — also a police officer — was killed Sunday in an attack by unidentified gunmen, provincial officials said.

Omer Zwak, spokesman for Helmand's provincial governor, said unidentified gunmen opened fire on the couple in the provincial capital Lashkar Gah. The attack came amid a surge in violence in the war-weary country.

An officer in the Helmand police chief's office who wasn't authorized to speak with media, said the attack targeted the female officer, whom he identified only as Malala. She formerly supervised all female police in the province.

Mohammad Zaman Hamdard, a spokesman for the Helmand police chief, said Malala served for 14 years and was working in a Helmand police section that deals with family domestic problems.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack. Zwak said that an investigation is going on into the attack.

Afghanistan is experiencing a nationwide spike in bombings, targeted killings and other violence as peace negotiations in Qatar between the

Taliban and the Afghan government continue.

The Daesh terrorist group's local affiliate has claimed responsibility for some of the attacks, but many go unclaimed, with the government putting the blame on the Taliban. The militants have denied responsibility for most of the attacks.

In the capital Kabul Sunday afternoon, one person was killed and four others were wounded when a bomb exploded on a minibus. Kabul police spokesman Ferdaws Faramarz said, adding that investigations were underway. No one claimed responsibility for the blast.

Separately, in northern Balkh province, at least eight policemen were killed when their checkpoint came under an attack by Taliban militants late Saturday, according to Adil Shah Adil, spokesman for the provincial police chief.

Adil said five Taliban militants were also killed in the battle in Dawlat Shahi district. Six policemen and seven Taliban militants were wounded in a gun battle that lasted for two hours, he added.

Zabihullah Mujahid, a Taliban spokesman, claimed responsibility for the attack in Balkh, saying their militants killed 12 police and he denied there were any Taliban casualties.

Iran... (Continued From Page One)

a map which he claimed indicated the position of rockets, near civilian areas along the Lebanese border, in possession of Hezbollah resistance movement.

"This is a target map. Each one of them has been checked legally, operationally, intelligence-wise and we are ready to fight," he said.

Zionist prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu has also said that Tel Aviv would work independently, if necessary, to prevent what he called a nuclear-armed Iran.

"I will do everything in my power to prevent Iran from getting nuclear weapons, and so far, we've been successful," he said, adding he believed Biden "understands... that my commitment to prevent Iran from getting nuclear weapons is absolute".

The Zionist officials' renewed anti-Iran rhetoric comes despite the fact that the occupying regime is widely believed to be the sole possessor of atomic bombs in the Middle East and estimated to have between 200 and 400 nuclear warheads in its arsenal. Tel Aviv has turned a deaf ear to international calls for the regime to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Hundreds... (Continued From Page One)

October 2019, when the Turkish military launched a cross-border invasion in a declared attempt to push militants of the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) away from border areas.

Ankara views the U.S.-backed YPG as a terrorist organization tied to the home-

grown Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has been seeking an autonomous Kurdish region in Turkey since 1984.

SOHR said on Saturday that Russian military aircraft had conducted dozens of airstrikes on the positions of Daesh terrorist group across the country, killing 11 of them in the process.

Scores more were injured in the air raids as well.

The United States has reportedly deployed new military reinforcements to Syria's oil-rich northeastern province of Hasakah, in total disregard of the Damascus government's fierce opposition to the presence of occupation forces on the Arab country's soil.

Local sources, requesting not to be named, told Syria's official news agency SANA that four military aircraft with dozens of American troops aboard had landed at the U.S. military base in al-Shaddadi

town on Saturday.

Some 20 boxes containing shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles were also offloaded at the base, they added.

A convoy of U.S. trucks also left Hasakah for the neighboring Iraq, carrying tens of tonnes of grain.

Syria's official news agency SANA, citing local sources in Al-Malikiyah town, reported that 42 military vehicles loaded with wheat crops had headed towards Iraqi territories after crossing the Simalka border.

The trucks, they said, were escorted by U.S.-sponsored militants affiliated with the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

Why... (Continued From Page One)

bank attached to a mosque in Leicester in

the East Midlands, responded with similar urgency. The mosque doors were closed, the carpets were rolled up and industrial shelving installed. Overnight, it became a food distribution centre. "We looked like a cash-and-carry at one point," Hameeda Sidat, a volunteer at the centre, told MEE.

At the peak of the first wave, the centre was delivering 5,000 meals a week, extending its coverage to the outskirts of the city to fill the gaping holes left by closures of other food banks and a struggling local council, which began to direct referrals to the centre.

"We had a lot of mental-health referrals, adult social care, postnatal care... I was very surprised," Sidat said, causing to draw breath after reeling off the list. "It hasn't stopped. It's ongoing."

As with the Peace Centre, the East London Mosque started out as a food distribution hub, before helpers there soon found themselves responsible for a plethora of services. In addition to delivering emergency food parcels and hot meals to intensive care staff at the nearby Royal London Hospital, they set up a will-writing service and, with domestic violence on the rise, women's counseling.

To ease the strain on Muslim funeral services, they rented a temporary morgue where bodies could be stored and washed. "It is in operation today, and it's still very busy," said Khizar Muhammad, the mosque spokesperson. "It would be fair to say it's got worse."

'Like Trench Warfare'

The Muslim community in London suffered a disproportionate death toll during the first wave of the pandemic.

While the second wave of Covid-19 has seen a reduction in the mortality rates of people from a Black ethnic background, death rates in the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities remain alarmingly high.

The fact that 68 percent of British Muslims are Asian and the mounting pressure on Muslim funeral services suggest that the pattern established in the first wave is being repeated.

Musharaff Hussain, an imam based in Nottingham, 200 km to the north of London, had noticed a "substantial" uptick in the funerals he was officiating. "It's like trench warfare," Hussain told MEE when asked how his congregation was faring during the second wave. His daily rounds of phone calls to mosque worshippers started going unanswered.

A government-commissioned report by Public Health England (PHE) into disproportionate deaths of ethnic minorities from Covid-19 cited systemic racism as the main predictor.

The determinants of ethnic disparities in mortality rates outlined in the report - deprivation, overcrowding and occupational exposure - are true for the Muslim community.

This was no revelation to Hussain. "My congregation are frontline workers, in restaurants, shops, drivers, retail. They're right at the front of it," he said.

Put simply, British Muslims are more likely to be poor. In the event of a pandemic, this means they are more likely to die.

Government action spurred by the PHE report - routine collection of ethnicity based data, the inclusion of ethnicity as a risk factor in triaging, and more concerted efforts to translate guidance into more languages - does not address the structural determinants of inequalities outlined in it.

For Salman Waqar, spokesperson for the British Medical Islamic Association, who has been working tirelessly throughout the pandemic translating guidance and liaising with faith leaders, these measures don't go far enough.

"If it becomes a case of all we have to do is translate this poster into Punjabi, we're going down the wrong path, we won't get to the crux of the problem," he said.

Questions Over Funding Waqar and his colleagues squeezed in their vital communications work around busy ward rounds.

"We have no funding from the NHS [National Health Service] or the government. This is people putting in time after work... if they have a spare moment. Instead of being with their families, they are putting together this stuff," Waqar told MEE. "I'm not aware of any [grassroots] group that has been supported from the centre."

On April 8, the government announced a £750 million (\$1 billion) package to the charity sector, including a \$277m Coronavirus Community Support Fund to be distributed to small charities via the National Lottery Fund.

On January 25, the government announced the distribution of a further \$32 million to 60 councils and community groups to "expand work to support those most at risk and boost vaccine take up".

While Waqar welcomed this move, he questioned where the money was going: "It is right that money is going out locally, but

what is being done and how is that money spent?"

Not one of the organizers and faith leaders MEE interviewed was able to access this money. In response to a Freedom of Information request, the Department of Culture, Media and Sport revealed that, while 8,282 "eligible charities" were awarded money, just 115 faith groups received funding.

As data regarding faith-based organizations is exempt from disclosure, precise details about these groups are unknown. The National Lottery Fund confirmed that £30.3 million (\$42 million), or 5.6 percent of total funding, was distributed to projects supporting Asian communities. However, due to data restrictions, it could not provide information regarding faith-based recipients of the fund.

Sidat and her team at the Peace Centre applied for money and were refused. "I don't know why we don't meet the criteria. We don't get a response as to why we were unsuccessful. The applications are so intensive."

Although under-resourced, the volunteers MEE spoke with recognized the important role they played in plugging the gaping holes left by local government.

"No one else could facilitate [this emergency response]... people in need knew they could phone the mosque and they knew it could be done in the next hour," Tracey Pook, a volunteer at the Didsbury Mosque, in Manchester, told MEE.

'We Don't Exist'

The lack of engagement and government support came as no surprise to the mosque teams interviewed by MEE. They said Prevent counterterrorism program policies have cast them as "suspect communities" who are at best overlooked, at worst subject to scrutiny and hostility.

"We don't exist," Hussain said. "The government does not like and does not want to talk to the Muslim community, they regard us as dangerous... we're the fifth column."

Despite the council's heavy reliance on the work of the Peace Centre in Leicester, the group was also subjected to heavy scrutiny from the local community.

"We had people reporting us for not social distancing... We've noticed the other food banks are not getting scrutinized as much as we are," Sidat told MEE.

Lack of means did not deter the mosque workers MEE spoke to. They transformed their places of worship into food hubs, referral and counseling services, morgues and vaccination centers.

Despite being pushed to the margins by disinterested authorities and a hostile media, they are keenly aware of their centrality to the fabric of their community; a global pandemic has brought this truth sharply into focus.

Rouhani... (Continued From Page 2)

government posed an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States.

When he came to office, Biden claimed willingness to return to a 2015 nuclear agreement with Iran, but he has taken no meaningful measure to undo the former U.S. government's wrongs.

Iran on February 23 started to restrict some IAEA inspections.

But a visit to Tehran by the UN nuclear agency chief Rafael Grossi just before the restriction came into force led to an interim technical deal for up to three months.

The arrangement would allow the body to continue monitoring "all the key activities," Rossi claimed at the time.

Rouhani noted that "Iran still remains committed to cooperation with the IAEA."

He added that Iran is ready to reverse the restrictions "after the lifting of America's illegal sanctions and it stopping the policy of threats and pressure."

Iran's Foreign Minister Muhammad Javad Zarif was set to meet Coveney later in the day.

Zarif said on Twitter on Friday that he would soon present Tehran's "constructive concrete plan of action-through proper diplomatic channels".

The former Trump regime unleashed a "maximum pressure" campaign with the stated objective of forcing Iran to negotiate "a better agreement".

Those pressures have failed to cow Iranians who have responded to Washington's pressure policy with their own "maximum resistance".

Biden, who had said Trump's maximum pressure was a "maximum failure", has not changed that policy, prompting Tehran to state that "Washington is addicted to pressure, sanctions and bullying, and it does not work with Iran".