

BEIRUT (MEMO) – Lebanese Social Affairs and Tourism Minister Ramzi Musharrafieh has announced that his recent meeting with Syrian officials in Damascus on the refugee issue was “positive and encouraging”, Lebanese media reported.

“Syrian authorities assured that a dignified and safe return of refugees will be achieved and guaranteed,” he said. More than one million Syrian refugees are registered with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Lebanon, while the Lebanese government estimated the exact number of Syrians in the country at 1.5 million.

# Yemen: U.S. Ceasefire Plan ‘Dangerous Adventurism’

SANA’A (Dispatches) – Yemen has described the U.S. ceasefire plan “dangerous adventurism” that may deteriorate the situation in the war-torn country.

On Friday, the U.S. Special Envoy for Yemen, Tim Lenderking, said that his recent talks with Yemen and Persian Gulf leaders had achieved a “sound plan” for a ceasefire in the war-torn country.

“The proposal of the U.S. special envoy is adventurism that may leave Yemen in a more dangerous situation than the current one. The U.S. proposal has nothing new, only Saudi Arabia’s conditions for a ceasefire. If Washington’s proposals were acceptable, we would have agreed on them during the talks with Saudi Arabia,” a spokesman for the Houthis, Mohammed Abdul-Salam, told the Almasirah broadcaster late on Friday.

From his point of view, the U.S. initiative includes neither ceasing fire nor lifting the siege from northern Yemen.

“The U.S. plan doesn’t include



Smoke billows from the site of Saudi-led air strikes in Sana’a, Yemen, on March 7, 2021.

breaking the siege or ceasing fire. It is actually a detour which would lead to a resumption of a (Saudi) blockade diplomatically,” Abdul-Salam said.

“One of the conditions presented in the initiative is to determine the destinations of flights departing Sana’a airport, and for the coalition of aggression to issue flight permits. This means they are not

licensed here in Sana’a,” he said.

The Ansarullah spokesman said the U.S. presentation of Saudi conditions as a so-called peace plan once again proved that Washington explicitly supports the Saudi war and blockade against Yemen.

He further noted that what the U.S. special envoy on Yemen, Lenderking, presented was a plot to plunge the Arab state further into

turmoil.

“It is unacceptable for an American envoy to present a plan which is inferior to that of the United Nations special envoy for Yemen (Martin Griffiths),” Abdul-Salam said.

He said there is no real change towards ending the Saudi war and lifting the siege, stressing that such matters lie in the hands of the other side.

“They want us to respond through dialogue to what they have not achieved by means of war and siege. Everyone must realize such a fact,” the senior Ansarullah official added.

Saudi Arabia and some of its regional allies waged the Yemen war in March 2015 with the aim of reinstating a Riyadh-friendly regime.

The Saudi-led war, which has been accompanied by a full blockade on Yemen, has killed tens of thousands of people and taken a heavy toll on the Arab country’s infrastructure.

The UN has described the situation as the world’s worst humanitarian crisis.

## Car Bomb Kills, Injures Dozens in Afghanistan



The blast targeted a police headquarters in the city of Herat.

HERAT (Dispatches) – A powerful car bomb in western Afghanistan killed at least eight people and wounded dozens more, authorities said Saturday, as the United Nations condemned attacks on civilians in the country.

The blast targeted a police headquarters in the city of Herat around 10 pm on Friday, damaging dozens of houses and shops, Jailani Farhad, the spokesman for the Herat provincial governor, told AFP.

“The death toll from a car bomb in the city of Herat increased to eight, and 47 others are wounded,” he said, adding that women, children and security personnel were among the dead.

Dozens of homes and shops were also damaged in the blast, and rescuers rushed to the scene to help several people trapped under the rubble.

The interior ministry spokesman, Tariq Arian, confirmed the death toll, adding that 54 had been wounded.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said the blast in Herat had no links to their group.

Violence has surged in Afghanistan in recent months -- including a wave of assassinations against journalists,

activists and civil servants, despite the launch of talks between the warring Afghan government and Taliban.

On Friday, the UN Security Council “condemned in the strongest terms the alarming number of attacks deliberately targeting civilians in Afghanistan”.

In another development, the Afghan government said on Saturday it would participate in two separate U.S.- and Russian-backed peace conferences in the coming weeks.

The Russian-backed conference is scheduled for March 18, while the U.S.-sponsored one will take place in Turkey next month, officials said.

Negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban in Qatar’s capital Doha have largely stalled.

“The Afghan government will take part in both the Moscow and Turkey conferences,” Hamdullah Mohib, the country’s national security council advisor told reporters in Kabul.

Mohammed Naeem, a spokesman for the Taliban, told Reuters it had received an invitation from Moscow, but had not yet decided whether to attend or not. The Taliban has not made any comment about the proposed meeting in Turkey.

## Zionist Settlers Attack Palestinian Family in Farmland

West Bank (Dispatches) – Zionist settlers, some masked and equipped with batons, attacked a Palestinian family in the south al-Khalil Hills on Saturday as they were working on their plot of land near an illegal Zionist settlement.

According to Israeli rights group B’Tselem, some 10 settlers attacked the Alyan family on Saturday morning near the settlement of Mitzpe Yair.

The parents were wounded by stones thrown at them and were taken to a hospital in al-Khalil, the group said on Twitter.

The Alyan family, which includes eight children, live in Um Lasafa, the same village as five Palestinian boys who were ag-

gressively detained by Zionist troops earlier this month while foraging for wild vegetables, an incident captured on camera.

The video, which was widely shared online, has triggered widespread condemnation from activists and human rights groups.

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.

Emboldened by the anti-Palestine policies of former U.S. president Donald Trump, the troops stepped up its settlement expansion in defiance of United Nations Security Council Reso-

lution 2334, which pronounces settlements in the West Bank and East al-Quds “a flagrant violation under international law.”

All settlements are illegal under international law as they are built on occupied land.

On Friday, Zionist troops attacked Palestinian worshipers at the al-Aqsa Mosque compound in the occupied Old City of al-Quds, detaining five people.

According to Palestinian sources, the Zionist troops attacked the Muslim worshipers and fired stun grenades at them after Friday prayers, forcing the Palestinians to leave the al-Aqsa Mosque through al-Asbat Gate.

The troops had also prevented

321 people from the West Bank from performing the Friday prayers at al-Aqsa, arresting four of them.

Separately, Zionist troops continued to suppress anti-settlement weekly protests across the occupied West Bank on Friday.

In the village of Beit Dajan, the troops opened live fire on anti-settlement protesters, leaving three people injured. Two others were hit with rubber bullets fired by the troops, who also used tear gas against the demonstrators, leaving tens of them suffering breathing difficulties.

A settlement outpost has recently been established in the village.

## Russia Says Ready to Discuss Sale of SU-57, SU-35 Fighter Jets With Turkey

ANKARA (Dispatches) – Russia is ready to negotiate the deliveries of fifth generation fighters SU-57 and generation 4++ fighters SU-35 with Turkey, as well as to cooperate in the development of the latest Turkish combat aircraft, Valeria Reshetnikova, the spokeswoman of the Russian Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation (FSMTC), told reporters.

Earlier, Turkish Industry and Technology Minister Mustafa Varank told Sputnik that Ankara did not rule out the possibility of buying SU-35s and SU-57s, but the priority was to develop its own fifth generation fighters.

“As for the potential plans for Ankara to purchase Russian SU-35 and Su-57 fighters, it is worth noting that the Turkish side is fully informed about their technical specifications. If there is an application from Turkey for these aircraft, we are ready to negotiate this issue,” Reshetnikova said.

Led by Dmitry Shugayev, the FSVTS is a

federal executive body responsible for control and oversight in the field of military-technical cooperation between the Russian Federation and foreign countries. It is under the direct authority of the Russian Ministry of Defense.

Turkey, a NATO member state, has already purchased the Russian S-400 missile defense systems. Ankara and Moscow had finalized an agreement on the delivery of the S-400 missile systems in late 2017.

The move angered the United States and the U.S.-led NATO, prompting Washington to impose sanctions on Turkey over the purchase late last year, alleging that the Russian systems are not compatible with the military hardware owned by the other countries of the Western military alliance.

Ankara condemned the U.S. move as a “grave mistake” that would inevitably harm mutual relations and threatened retaliation.

Shugayev said on Friday Turkey would not cave in to pressure from the United States over advancing the purchase of the Russian S-400 missile defense systems.

“They (the Americans) oppose supplies to any country in every possible way. In particular, they have problems with Turkey, we are all aware of it. Thank God, our Turkish partners remain firm and understand that this is a matter of their national security. I believe we will move on,” he said.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said a day earlier that Turkey needed more air defense systems and was well within its rights to acquire them from various sources.

“Today, we produce 70% of our defense industry needs in our country. We also produce and export with high quality. But we still need to procure products that we can’t produce in our country one way or another,” Cavusoglu said.

## Jordan Health Minister Resigns After Oxygen Outage Kills Patients

AMMAN (Reuters) – Jordan’s health minister resigned on Saturday after six people died following an oxygen outage in a hospital treating coronavirus patients and police were deployed to hold back angry relatives, state media said.

The oxygen failure earlier on Saturday hit intensive care, maternity, and coronavirus wards in the new Salt government hospital west of the capital Amman.

A government spokesman said Prime Minister Bisher al-Khasawneh asked Health Minister Nathir Obeidat to resign over the accident for which Obeidat had earlier said he carried “moral responsibility”.

Obeidat said initial investigations showed the six deaths were caused by a one hour disruption in oxygen to the wards

and that prosecutors were handling the case.

Jordan’s King Abdullah also later visited the hospital.

Jordan is facing a spike in COVID-19 infections attributed mainly to the fast transmission of the British variant of the virus. It announced last week stricter measures to curb the spread of COVID-19 and reimposed a full lockdown on Fridays.

The country reported 8,300 new cases of COVID-19 on Thursday, the highest daily death toll since the pandemic first surfaced in the kingdom a year ago.

Jordan, with a population of around 10 million, has recorded 385,533 cases of COVID-19 and 5,224 deaths.