



Al-Aqsa Mosque to Reopen After Eid Holiday

AL-QUDS (Dispatches) – Al-Aqsa mosque will reopen to worshippers after the Eid holiday, a statement from its governing body said Tuesday, two months after closing due to the coronavirus. “The council decided to lift the suspension on worshippers entering the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque after the Eid al-Fitr holiday,” a statement from the Waaf organisation said, referring to the three-day holiday expected to begin this weekend. Islam’s third holiest site was closed in late March for the first time in more than 50 years as part of measures across the globe to stem the spread of the new coronavirus.

VOL NO: LV 11161 TEHRAN / Est.1959

Wednesday, May 20, 2020, Ordibehesht 31, 1399, Ramadhan 26, 1441

Syria Vows Fight Against U.S., Turkish, Zionist Occupiers

NEW YORK (Dispatches) – Syria’s UN envoy says any presence of foreign troops on Syrian soil without authorization from the Damascus government amounts to ‘aggression and occupation,’ emphasizing the Arab nation’s right to defend its sovereignty and resources.

Addressing a teleconference meeting of the UN Security Council, Bashar al-Ja’afari said Syria would not abandon its right to safeguard its land and resources.

The Arab country, he added, is determined to keep up the fight against both foreign-backed terrorists and the occupiers, whether they are Americans, Turks or Israelis.

He slammed Turkey for sponsoring the terrorist groups that are active in different regions of northern Syria, describing Ankara’s move as a flagrant violation of its obligations under the agreements in Sochi, Moscow, Kazakhstan and under international law in general.

On the U.S. military intervention in his country, Ja’afari said the



A Syrian boy on his bicycle looks at a convoy of armored US vehicles patrolling fields near the northeastern town of Qahtaniyah, at the border with Turkey, on October 31, 2019.

American troops had begun to establish a new military base in the countryside of the eastern city of Dayr al-Zawr with the aim of tightening their grip on Syrian oil wells and looting the nation’s resources.

The senior Syrian diplomat further referred to the Zionist regime’s frequent acts of aggression against

the country using the airspace over the Tel Aviv-occupied side of the Golan Heights or Syria’s neighbors.

Syria says such hostile practices are part of an agenda to prop up the terrorist groups wreaking havoc on the country and prolong the crisis gripping the nation since 2011.

Separately, the UN’s Syria envoy Geir Pedersen on Monday urged the U.S. and Russia to make the most of “some calm” in the conflict-stricken country and push for peace amid the threats posed by remnants of the Daesh terror group in the country as well as a coronavirus outbreak there.

The mediator told the 15-member Security Council that since the outbreak of conflict in the Arab country, too many “fleeting opportunities to turn dynamics towards a political path were lost,” warning that those “missed moments were followed by renewed violence and a hardening of positions.”

“With some calm, with the common threats of COVID and ISIS [Daesh terror group], and with the Syrian people continuing to suffer, I want to stress that renewed and meaningful international cooperation, building trust and confidence between international stakeholders and with Syrians ... is essential,” Pedersen said.

Hamas: No Release of Zionist Captives Without ‘Real’ Deal



The file photo shows Palestinian prisoners at a detention facility in the occupied territories.

GAZA (Dispatches) – A senior Hamas official says that the Zionists who have been held in captivity in the Gaza Strip since 2014 won’t be released until ‘a real prisoner swap deal’ is reached.

“A real prisoner exchange deal is the best way for the release of the captive Israelis” held by Hamas, Hazem Qassem, Hamas spokesman in Gaza, told Xinhua.

“Otherwise, the Zionist leadership will be just selling illusions to the Israeli public,” said Qassem, referring to the new Zionist war minister Benny Gantz’s remarks to the families of the Zionist captives.

Earlier in the day, Gantz met with the families of four Zionists, two troops and two civilians who are believed to have been held by the Hamas resistance movement since 2014.

In October 2011, Egypt brokered a prisoner swap deal between the Zionist regime and Hamas, where the occupying regime handed over 1,028 Palestinian prisoners in exchange for the release of the Zionist corporal Gilad Shalit who was abducted in southern Gaza in 2006.

Meanwhile, member of Hamas Political Bureau Musa Dodeen warned that American moves against freed Palestinian prisoner Ahlam Al-Tamimi might undermine efforts to reach prisoner swap deal between Hamas and the Zionist regime, Al-Quds Al-Arabi reported.

His remarks came following a letter signed by seven American congressmen sent to the Jordanian embassy in Washington requesting Al-Tamimi be handed over to the Zionist regime for retrial.

Dodeen described the congressmen’s measure ‘racist’ and part of a ‘stray policy’, stressing that Al-Tamimi is a Palestinian freedom fighter who is respected by the Jordanian the Palestinian peoples.

He stressed that the American measure is a “new aggression on the Palestinian resistance and the Palestinian people, as well as an aggression on Jordanian sovereignty.”

He added that this move would lead to the resistance teams to change the conditions of prisoner swap talks with the occupation.

Bomb, Fighting Claim 12 Lives in Afghanistan’s Kunduz

KUNDUZ (Dispatches) – At least 12 people mostly militants have been killed in a motorbike blast and fighting in the northern Kunduz province on Tuesday, an official said.

Militants planted explosive device in a motorbike and detonated it in a bazaar outside Kunduz city around noon, killing one police and one civilian and injuring 18 others, provincial government spokesman Esmatullah Muradi said.

The blast, during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan when tens of thousands of Afghans are fasting, is the latest in a spate of violence across the country despite a peace accord signed between the United States and

Taliban in February.

Muradi asserted that the security forces have repulsed Taliban attacks outside Kunduz city, the capital of the restive Kunduz province on Tuesday morning, forcing militants to flee after leaving 10 bodies behind and 15 others injured.

Muradi also confirmed that five security personnel and three civilians had been injured in the fighting erupted in Talawka and Pul-e-Safid areas outside Kunduz city, saying the militants fled away.

The attack comes a day after Taliban fighters detonated a car bomb near an Afghan intelligence agency installation in the central province of Ghazni,

killling at least seven people and wounding 40, officials and the Taliban insurgents said.

The interior ministry in Kabul and provincial officials in Ghazni confirmed the attack.

“Around 4:30 am, a base of the National Security (NDS) forces in Ghazni was targeted by a car bomb,” said a police official, adding that seven people died at the blast site and 40 injured were taken to a military hospital.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said the militants were responsible for the attack in Ghazni, which has been the scene of many large-scale attacks by the Taliban in recent years against both Afghan and

foreign forces.

Last week five civilians were killed and 40 people, including six soldiers, were wounded in a Taliban truck bomb blast targeting an army office in the neighboring province of Paktia.

The attack came a day after Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and his rival Abdullah Abdullah signed a power-sharing deal to end a months-long political stalemate, raising hopes that it could smooth efforts to end the country’s long-running war.

Officials said a deal between Ghani and Abdullah was crucial to launching peace talks, as Abdullah’s camp represents much of the country’s northwest.

EU Won’t Recognize Zionist Regime’s Annexation

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – The European Union’s foreign policy chief has warned the Zionist regime against acting on its ‘unilateral’ decision to annex parts of the occupied Palestinian territory, saying the 27-nation bloc will not recognize any such changes to the 1967 borders.

In a statement, Josep Borrell said the EU viewed Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s push for annexation with ‘grave concern.’

“International law is a fundamental pillar of the international rules-based order. In this respect, the EU and its member states recall that they will not recognize any changes to the 1967 borders unless agreed by Israelis and Palestinians,” he said.

“We strongly urge Israel to refrain from any unilateral decision that would lead to the annexation of any occupied Palestinian territory and would be, as such, contrary to international law,” the top EU diplomat added.

A key campaign promise of Netanyahu and his right-wing Likud party in recent Israeli

elections was imposing the Zionist regime’s so-called “sovereignty” over illegal settlements and the strategic Jordan Valley in the occupied West Bank.

A coalition deal that Netanyahu recently signed with his chief rival, Benny Gantz, allows the cabinet to begin moving ahead with the annexation bid on July 1.

Presenting his new cabinet on Sunday, Netanyahu said the regime’s law should be extended over the West Bank areas.

“The truth is, and everyone knows it, that the hundreds of thousands of settlers in Judea and Samaria will always stay put in any future deal,” he said, referring to the occupied West Bank by its biblical name.

Elsewhere in his statement, Borrell expressed the EU’s willingness to help restart Palestinians’ talks with the Zionist regime, adding that “the two-state solution, with Jerusalem [al-Quds] as the future capital for both states, is the only way to ensure sustainable peace and stability in the region.”

Borrell had said Friday that the European nations “must work to discourage any possible initiative towards annexation” and such a strategy will require that states reach out to Israel, the U.S., the Palestinians and Arab partners “using all channels that the EU and the member states have.”

The resolution of the decades-long Zionist-Palestinian conflict “remains a priority and it is one of the strategic interests of the European Union,” he told a press conference in Brussels after a virtual meeting with EU foreign ministers on the matter.

Netanyahu’s U.S.-backed plan to consolidate the regime’s occupation of Palestine has been met with harsh criticism from almost the entire international community, including its close allies.

Several member states of the EU — Tel Aviv’s largest trading partner — have raised the possibility of taking punitive measures in a bid to deter the regime from its new land grab bid.

Rocket Hits Area Near U.S. Embassy in Baghdad

BAGHDAD (Press TV) – A rocket has hit an area near the U.S. embassy in Baghdad’s Green Zone, security sources say.

The rocket that hit the Green Zone early Tuesday was the first to land in the high-security area in weeks.

The sound of explosion could be heard across the Iraqi capital and triggered security sirens at the U.S. embassy compound but did not cause casualties, the sources confirmed to AFP.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility.

The rocket attack follows more than two dozen similar attacks against American interests in Iraq since October. The volleys of rockets have so far killed U.S., British and Iraqi armed

personnel.

Nearly 5,200 U.S. troops still remain in Iraq while the Iraqi parliament voted in January to expel all American forces from the terror-ravaged country.

Baghdad and Washington are to hold negotiations in June to set a framework for the presence of U.S. troops in the Arab country.

The American embassy in Baghdad -- the world’s largest -- lies within the fortified neighborhood, also known as the International Zone, surrounded by concrete walls.

The Green Zone is home to several Western embassies and government offices including the parliament, the prime minister’s office, and the presidency.