

# Lebanese Protesters Denounce U.S. Interference

BEIRUT (Dispatches) – Lebanese people have staged a rally to express their resentment at Washington’s interference in their country’s domestic affairs and the latest remarks by the U.S. ambassador to Beirut against the Hezbollah resistance movement.

On Monday, demonstrators converged outside the Foreign Ministry building in the Achrafieh district of Beirut, amid a heavy security presence. The protest rally came at the invitation of national forces and civil society activists, Arabic-language al-Mayadeen television news network reported.

The participants emphasized the significant role Hezbollah plays in Lebanese society.

They said vague positions of some political factions in Lebanon vis-à-vis the United States would not serve Lebanon’s interests, adding that they do not need lectures from U.S. authorities as they have contributed to the economic blockade of Lebanon.

The protesters highlighted that the U.S.’ economic blockade of Lebanon and Syria is simply due to their support for the resistance front.

The protesters also trampled on the photos of the U.S. envoy, Dorothy Shea for her meddlesome remarks.

“We remind the American ambassador [Dorothy Shea] of people’s right to defend their sovereignty,” they said, stressing, “Americans will not be able to impose their wills” on Lebanon as it is a dignified nation that supports resistance.

The protest came at the same time that Shea



*A Lebanese protester tramples on the photo of U.S. Ambassador to Beirut Dorothy Shea outside the Foreign Ministry building in Beirut, Lebanon, on June 29, 2020.*

was summoned to the Lebanese Foreign Ministry, and was meeting with Foreign Minister Nassif Hitti.

Meanwhile, scores of Hezbollah supporters protested on Sunday in Beirut’s southern suburb of Dahieh against the U.S. ambassador to Lebanon for her remarks blaming Hezbollah for the economic crisis in the country.

Also on Saturday, Lebanese judge Mohamad Mazeh in the southern city of Tyre banned local and foreign media outlets in the country from interviewing the U.S. ambassador to Beirut for a year, after Shea told Saudi-owned

al-Hadath television news network that Washington has “great concerns” over Hezbollah’s role in the government.

Mazeh said Shea’s comments were meant to incite sectarian strife and threaten social peace.

Hezbollah’s growing popularity in the Arab and Muslim world has been a matter of serious concern for the Zionist regime and its Western allies since the resistance movement shattered the regime’s military’s myth of invincibility during a 33-day military offensive on Lebanon back in the summer of 2006.

## UK Faces Fresh Calls to End Arms Sales to Zionist Regime

LONDON (Dispatches) – The UK is facing fresh calls to end its arms sale to the Zionist regime amidst international outrage over the regime’s planned annexation of Palestinian territory which is considered a war crime under international law.

Number 10 has expressed its opposition to any further takeover of Palestinian territory, however campaigners, warning that the Conservative government risks being complicit in the occupying regime’s war crimes, have expressed concerns that the UK will continue

with business as usual by selling arms to the occupying regime.

Britain is said to have licensed £376 million (\$462 million) worth of arms to the regime since 2015, according to the human rights organization Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT).

Previous government reviews have concluded that it likely that UK-made arms have been used against Palestinians.

Campaigners have called on the UK government to stop all arms sales and military support

for the occupying regime. This comes as Zionist troops prepare to begin the annexation of large parts of the West Bank. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has condemned the plan and called it illegal.

Despite ongoing abuses against besieged Palestinian communities and the threat of annexation looming, UK arms sales to the regime have continued unabated.

According to a CAAT report, the \$462 million worth of arms sold to the Zionist regime is an underestimate as there are

also 31 Open Licences to the regime. These are mainly for aircraft equipment. Open Licences allow for an unlimited number of exports, so the real figure is said to be significantly higher.

CAAT revealed that a review by the government found 12 licences for arms which are likely to have been used in the 2014 bombardment of Gaza. Likewise, in 2010 the then Foreign Secretary David Miliband said that UK-made arms had “almost certainly” been used in the 2009 bombing campaign.

## Presidents...

(Continued From Page One)

crisis after a decade of war and the coronavirus pandemic.

Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Muallem has said the sanctions are aimed at reviving terrorism in Syria and forcing Damascus to turn its back on the anti-Israel resistance front.

Muallem stressed that the new sanctions do not include any exemptions, and adversely affect the imports of food, medicine and medical devices.

Syria has already been under U.S. and European Union sanctions that have frozen the assets of the state and hundreds of companies and individuals. Washington already bans export and investment in Syria by Americans, as well as transactions involving oil and hydrocarbon products.

But the new sanctions can freeze the assets of anyone dealing with Syria, regardless of nationality, and cover many more sectors. It also targets those dealing with entities from Russia and Iran.

Syrian authorities blame Western sanctions for widespread hardship among ordinary residents, where the currency collapse has led to soaring prices and people struggling to afford food and basic supplies.

On Sunday, Syria called on the United Nations to prepare a report on the legality of the U.S. and European sanctions against Damascus.

Syrian Ambassador to the UN Bashar al-Ja’afari wrote to UN chief Antonio Guterres and Security Council head Nicolas de Riviere, demanding that the report shed light on the harmful effects of the sanctions on the lives of ordinary Syrians and on the United Nations’ ability to implement its humanitarian assistance programs in Syria.

A staggering 9.3 million Syrians are now going to sleep hungry and more another two million are at risk of a similar fate, international NGOs said in a joint statement Monday.

Signed by the Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam, CARE, Mercy Corps, and others, the statement warned that “Syrians who have already endured almost a decade of war and displacement are now facing unprecedented levels of hunger leaving millions of people acutely vulnerable to Covid-19.”

“Covid-19 restrictions, the collapse of the Syrian pound, and the displacement of millions of people have led to an unprecedented number of families in Syria who are no longer able to put food on the table,” it said.

The statement said the number of Syrians facing food insecurities has risen by 42 per cent since last year.

It noted that “unless funding and humanitarian access are increased, many Syrians, including those living as refugees in the region, will be pushed to the brink of starvation.”

## Bitter...

(Continued From Page One)

support) for the extension of the arms embargo on our country.”

The Iran arms embargo -- in place since 2006/2007 -- is set to expire on October 18 under United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2231 that endorsed the country’s 2015 nuclear deal.

The U.S., which unilaterally withdrew from the accord in May 2018, has recently circulated a draft resolution at the UNSC to keep the ban in place.

However, Security Council veto-holding powers Russia and China have already signaled their opposition to the U.S. proposal.

“The time has come for these countries to stop making irrational rhetoric and blindly toeing the U.S. line, a country which is itself an embodiment of oppression and injustice in the world, and come to the understanding that security will not be maintained through submission to the United States,” Mousavi said.

“The only way to create stability and security in the region is to change their hostile behavior and turn to regional cooperation.”

Saudi Arabia and Bahrain are key partners in the bloody Riyadh-led military invasion of Yemen, which has already claimed in excess of 100,000 lives since it started five years ago.

## Iran...

(Continued From Page 2)

Monday that the agreement has not been finalized yet, adding its contents will be publicized once it is complete.

Earlier this month, Government spokesman Ali Rabiei described it a “win-win” plan for cooperation in the face of U.S. efforts to isolate the Islamic Republic.

According to President Hassan Rouhani, the plan paves the way for China’s participation in infrastructure development projects in Iran. He has called it an opportunity to attract investment in industry, tourism, information technology and communication sectors.

“The document is in line with the interests of the two countries,” Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Monday.

Well-regarded energy industry publication the Petroleum Economist wrote last September that Iran and China had updated their 25-year deal signed first in 2016 that foresaw \$400 billion of Chinese investment in the resource-rich Middle Eastern nation.

According to the publication, the deal represented “a potentially material shift to the global balance of the oil and gas sector” and could mark a “seismic shift in the global hydrocarbons sector” where no U.S. dollars would be involved in commodity transaction payments.

## From Food to Cars, Saudis Stock Up Ahead of VAT Hike

RIYADH (Reuters) – People in Saudi Arabia rushed to buy goods from imported fruit juices to cars ahead of a sharp hike in value-added tax on July 1, introduced by the oil-rich kingdom to boost state revenues amid its worst ever economic decline.

The tripling of VAT to 15% comes against a backdrop of lower consumer spending and an easing of inflation due to a three-month coronavirus lockdown that was fully lifted on June 21.

Supermarkets in the capital Riyadh were packed over the weekend as shoppers stockpiled non-perishable goods. Furniture and appliances stores offered discounts to lure buyers.

“Demand has been very weak but people are now actively buying ahead of the VAT so there is a bit of demand,” said Najem Alotaibe, a car dealer in Riyadh.

Jaber al-Sahari, who works in a gold shop, also reported an increase in demand in the last two weeks.

Saudi Arabia announced the VAT hike and suspension of a cost of living

allowance in May, shocking citizens and businesses expecting more support from the government.

“Life is getting more expensive. I bought some imported food and juices and stored it because prices will rise,” said Sarah, a Saudi mother of two.

In recent months inflation eased to around 1% due to low demand for non-food items and reduced fuel prices, but some analysts expect it to surge by up to 6% year-on-year in July due to the VAT hike.

Authorities this month increased import tariffs to contain a ballooning fiscal deficit, which the International Monetary Fund projects at over 12% of GDP from 4.5% last year.

These steps could reduce the overall deficit by 4.5% to 6% of GDP, but may dampen economic recovery, Arqaam Capital has said.

For Abu Omar, an Egyptian expatriate, the VAT hike comes on top of a 20% salary reduction due to the coronavirus crisis.

“So now I have to live with 35% less, this will be very difficult with three kids,” he said.

## Egypt Says Gold Deposit Discovered in Southeast

CAIRO (Reuters) – Egypt’s Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources said on Tuesday a gold deposit with estimated resources of 1 million ounces had been discovered in the southeast of the country.

The deposit lies in the concession area of the military-controlled Shalateen Mining Company in the Eastern Desert’s Iqaat area, it said in a statement.

More than \$1 billion is expected to be invested to develop the deposit over the next 10 years, the statement said, without giving

details on the methodology used to determine the deposit’s size.

Egypt has been seeking to attract investors to its mining sector and in March began an auction of 56,000 square kilometers of exploration concessions in the Eastern Desert.

It recently extended the auction’s original July deadline to Sept. 15 as a result of the coronavirus crisis “and to have an opportunity for the bidders”.

A new company will be formed between Shalateen Mining Company and the state

regulator, the Egyptian Mineral Resources Authority, to develop the deposit.

Centamin Plc, which says its Sukari mine in the Eastern Desert is Egypt’s only operating gold mine, estimated its total gold resource at 11.7 million ounces as of mid-2017.

A third company, Hammash Misr, a 50-50 joint venture between EMRA and Cyprus-registered Matz Holdings Ltd, also has gold mining operations in Egypt, the oil ministry statement said.