

# Afghan Ceasefire Holds as Hundreds of Taliban Prisoners Freed

KABUL (Dispatches) – A rare ceasefire between the Taliban and Afghan government appeared to hold for the third and final day on Sunday, with hundreds of militant prisoners released in a bid to bring talks closer.

Calm prevailed across much of Afghanistan, with officials not reporting any major clashes between the two foes since the truce began on Friday to mark the Muslim festival of Eid al-Adha.

President Ashraf Ghani and the Taliban have both indicated that long-delayed negotiations could begin straight after Eid.

“This Eid feels different, parks are full of people... you almost forget that there has been a war in this country for 40 years,” said Shahpoor Shadab, a resident from the eastern city of Jalalabad.

In restive Zabul province, several residents recited poems calling for the ceasefire -- only the third official halt in fighting in nearly two decades of conflict -- to be made permanent.

“Peace is everybody’s need and aspiration,” said Sardar Wali, who took part in the poetry session.



Newly freed Taliban prisoners sit at Pul-i-Charkhi prison, in Kabul, Afghanistan May 26, 2020.

“This is a great opportunity to extend the ceasefire today and start intra-Afghan talks tomorrow.”

Under a deal signed by the Taliban and the U.S. in February, the “intra-Afghan” talks were slated to start in March, but were delayed amid political infighting in Kabul and as a contentious pris-

oner swap dragged on.

The deal stipulated that Kabul would free around 5,000 Taliban prisoners in return for 1,000 Afghan security personnel held captive by the Taliban.

The National Security Council said Sunday that a further 300 Taliban prisoners had been released since Friday, taking the

total number of militants freed so far to just over 4,900.

Authorities however have refused to free hundreds of inmates accused of serious crimes that the militants had requested for release.

The Taliban said they have already fulfilled their side of the exchange.

## Protestors Hold Largest Anti-Netanyahu Rally

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – In one of the largest turnouts in weeks of protests, at least 10,000 people have protested in al-Quds, calling on Zionist prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu to resign over corruption charges and the mishandling of the coronavirus pandemic.

Demonstrators gathered at al-Quds’ Paris Square, near Netanyahu’s official residence, and began marching through the city center.

They were packed, in some places shoulder to shoulder, entirely filling the areas barricaded off by the police.

Similar but smaller anti-Netanyahu protests were also held at Charles Clore Park in Tel Aviv, near the premier’s private home in the coastal city

of Caesarea, and elsewhere across the occupied territories.

Blowing loud horns, the al-Quds demonstrators chanted slogans such as “Crime Minister” and “Bibi Go Home”, accusing Netanyahu of being out of touch with the public.

Shai Sharfberg, a 31-year-old archaeology student, said that he had decided to join the protests recently and that he just wanted Netanyahu to act like other prime ministers under suspicion of corruption.

“Yitzhak Rabin resigned. Bibi called for Olmert to resign. He should do the same,” Sharfberg said, adding that Netanyahu seems too busy dealing with his criminal cases to run the Zionist regime.

The al-Quds protest went on

until after midnight, when police forces forcibly dispersed the crowd that remained outside the prime minister’s residence.

The demonstrators chanted “scum” at police officers who were dragging away those blocking the road.

Police say they made arrests during the dispersal, which was done manually, without water cannons.

In previous rallies, the police was accused of using excessive force against peaceful protesters, deploying riot control units, as well as undercover officers, mounted units and water cannons.

In Caesarea, hundreds of people gathered outside Netanyahu’s private residence, along-

side heavy police presence.

In Tel Aviv, the protesters denounced the regime’s failure to manage the economic fallout from the coronavirus outbreak.

Yafa Ben Porat, 83, said that it was her first time protesting “because all week I’ve been hurting because of the Knesset and the things they’re doing. This week I’ve had it up to here. They’re liars, they’re cheats, Bibi has an empire in Caesarea, everyone needs to get up and go protest ... We should be getting the money, not the parasites.”

Reports say the rallies against Netanyahu are the largest the occupied territories have seen since 2011 protests against the high cost of living in the occupied territories.

## Lebanon Dismantles Zionist Regime’s Spying Device

BEIRUT (Dispatches) – Lebanon has dismantled a spying device belonging to the Zionist regime in South Province near the occupied territories. Lebanon’s Arabic-language al-Mayadeen television news network reported on Sunday that the device had been discovered on the outskirts of the town of Kfar Houneh, which lies in Jezzine district.

The small-sized device was equipped with a GPS equipment as well as a high-precision sensor to measure humidity and temperature.

On Saturday, the Zionist regime’s military flew a reconnaissance balloon over southern Lebanon.

Lebanon’s official National News Agency reported that the device was sent over the small southern village of Hula. It flew for a quarter.

Back on July 26, the occupying regime said one of its drones had come down in Lebanese territory.

Israel’s Channel 12 reported at the time that the drone crashed after it

experienced a technical failure.

Also on Sunday, Lebanese Defense Minister Zeina Akar said Lebanon reserves the right to resist the regime’s occupation and the Lebanese Army is ready to respond to any act of aggression.

Akar, in remarks published by the London-based Arabic-language al-Quds al-Arabi daily newspaper, condemned Zionist troops over firing dozens of shells into and around the occupied Shebaa Farms on July 27.

She added that the attack on Lebanon’s sovereignty was dangerous “especially as the [UN] Security Council will soon discuss renewing the tasks of UNIFIL (the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon).”

The army, she said, is “highly prepared and fully ready to defend Lebanon and its security and stability, and [that] this has been proved more than once.”

## Turkey Donates Meat to Gazans on Eid al-Adha

ANKARA (Anadolu) – Palestinian authorities on Sunday began distributing meat from livestock sacrificed with donations from Turkey on the Muslim Eid al-Adha festival to hundreds of families in need in the Gaza Strip, reported Anadolu Agency.

Most of the Muslim-majority countries

around the world, including Turkey, are observing the four-day holiday that started on Friday.

On Eid al-Adha, one of the two main yearly Muslim holidays, people who can afford to slaughter an animal do so and distribute most of the meat to the needy, neighbors and relatives.

### In Detail...

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visited Damascus to scout out investment opportunities and regional trade had started to pick up.

Nearly all of Syria’s main cities and towns are under government control, with foreign-backed terrorists who fought since 2011 to overthrow Assad now confined to a patch of territory near the Turkish frontier.

But Syria’s hopes of rehabilitation have been put on ice by new U.S. sanctions that will likely deter the investment the government needs to deliver on promised reconstruction.

The economy, already ravaged by a decade of war, is hit not only by sanctions but also by the fallout of another U.S.-caused financial meltdown in neighboring Lebanon that has choked off dollars.

According to experts, the U.S. is doing all it can to undermine the Syrian government’s ability to re-extend control over the country and rehabilitate its economy and Kurdish militants are just one of its tools to do so.

Sinam Mohamad, the SDF representative to the United States, confirmed via Whatsapp that Delta Crescent had signed an agreement with the militants.

The sources briefing Al-Monitor confirmed that Lindsay Graham, the Republican senator from South Carolina who is close to Trump, had spoken to SDF ring-leader Mazloum Kobani and that Kobani had informed Graham of the deal and asked him to relay its details to the U.S. president.

During his testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last week, hardline U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo told Graham he was “OK” with the deal. “The deal took a little longer senator than we had hoped, and now we’re in implementation,” he said.

The sources told Al-Monitor that the U.S. government had also agreed to provide two modular refineries to the Kurdish militants.

Kurdish militants and U.S. troops control most of Syria’s oil wealth, which is concentrated in and around the Rmelain fields close to the Turkish and Iraqi borders and in the Al-Omar fields further south. Production by U.S. troops is reportedly down to around 60,000 barrels per day, much of it refined in makeshift refineries and transported by leaky pipelines causing massive environmental pollution.

According to Al-Monitor, the sources said U.S. special envoy for Syria reportedly had informed Turkey about the oil deal and that Ankara had not reacted negatively. Russia was also informed and had not expressed a view, though certain fields were kept outside the deal, so as to ensure that the Syrian people outside the Kurdish zone were “not deprived of their share of the oil,” one of the sources said.

### IRGC ...

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The IRGC’s servicemen began the episode by destroying the mock carrier’s accompaniment with coast-to-sea fire. State television aired footage showing the damage caused to the model vessel following the operational juncture, and the IRGC commandos’ rappelling onto it. Following the drills, some Western and anti-Iran media claimed that the goal of the IRGC forces was to totally destroy the mock-up carrier and that goal was not achieved during the said maneuver.

Rejecting Iranian enemies’ false reports about the naval drills, the IRGC spokesman said, “We need this mock-up carrier ... to exercise various scenarios and its destruction is not a prioritized goal in our operational plans for such drills. We are still planning to further use it in a variety of drills to test our equipment and systems and boost readiness for participation in a real battlefield,” he added.

“As said before, in the war game designed for this maneuver, the goal was to destroy two accompaniments of the aircraft carrier, which was done appropriately. The goal was to hit the command bridge of the carrier ... and conducting heliborne operations on its deck. This operation has a special meaning, which has been well understood by defense and military experts, including Americans,” the IRGC spokesman added.

He said IRGC’s large-scale naval maneuver was staged under special conditions that exist in the country, the region and the world, and proved that the enemy’s arms embargo and economic sanctions have failed to have any impact on the country’s forward march and the promotion of its military might as well as the enhancement of its deterrent power.

“The hostile front has well understood that according to the defense doctrine of the Armed Forces, no move against Iran’s national interests will go unanswered and will be faced with appropriate and firm reactions within the framework of aggressive deterrence,” the IRGC spokesman said.

General Sharif noted that the organizers of the IRGC’s naval drills intended to convey to the neighboring countries the message of peace and protection of the regional security.

He emphasized that the IRGC’s aggressive scenarios in military exercises are directed toward hostile extra-regional countries possessing aircraft carriers who seek in their evil strategies to plunder regional nations’ wealth through their illegitimate and destabilizing presence in the region and by fomenting state terrorism.

Sharif said the terrorist and inhuman regime of the United States of America tops these extra-regional plundering countries that are present in the region.

### Documentary...

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inform the ambassador, and use the intelligence service for any money you might need to secure the overthrow of Mossadegh by legal or quasi-legal means.” The MI6 officer goes on to explain he spent “vast sums of money, well over a million-and-a-half pounds”, adding, “I was personally giving orders and directing the street uprising.”

Yet the explosive interview footage was never broadcast. In Amirani’s film, the part of Darbyshire is played by Ralph Fiennes, who delivers lines from the censored Granada transcript. The 1985 Observer article by reporter Nigel Hawkes was published just before the Iranian episode was shown by Channel 4.

But when the program went out, Darbyshire and his testimony were absent. A TV review a week later by Observer critic Julian Barnes made no mention of this part of the story. Amirani, Murch and the intelligence experts they have consulted now conclude the government stepped in after a private screening, preventing the producers from using the Darbyshire interview. Newspapers, including the Observer, edited at the time by Donald Treford, would also have been told to go no further with the story, using a state provision known as a D Notice.

Darbyshire worked closely with a CIA counterpart, Stephen Meade, who did appear in End of Empire. He describes his British colleague as “a very competent individual who spoke Farsi fluently as well as French”.

Perhaps the most shocking evidence in Coup 53 concerns British guilt in the kidnapping and eventual “accidental” killing of the Iranian police chief Mahmoud Afshartous. This incident deliberately provoked the unrest that led to the arrest and imprisonment of Mossadegh in August.

In the lost footage, Darbyshire claims he made “the correct psychological reading of the Persian mob character”, but that he understood that they “had the feeling they were being screwed, and rightly so, from 1920 onwards”.

Darbyshire died in 1993, and former Granada researcher Alison Rooper, who worked on End of Empire, together with her producer/director Mark Anderson, tell Amirani they have no clear memory of interviewing the MI6 officer or of what happened to the footage.

The shah, who had been living in exile in Italy, flew back to Iran, then governed by CIA- and MI6-approved General Fazlollah Zahedi. In America, the coup was known as Operation Ajax, while in Britain it was Operation Boots. The shah ruled the country until the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

“This coup shaped not only western relations with Iran for 60 years, but changed the Middle East,” said Amirani.

### Arrest...

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the ministry has already carried out several similar operations in the past.

“People like Sharmahd make a mistake to rely on the U.S. and the Zionist regime as these two support them as long as they serve their interests,” the Iranian intelligence minister said.

Iran, he said, had previously informed Interpol of Sharmahd’s criminal acts in Shiraz but had seen the international police refuse to arrest him while he traveled around the world before their eyes.

“Although Interpol was tasked with arresting him, no action was taken against him, which shows the West’s slogan of fighting terrorism is hollow,” Alavi added.