

# Damage to Palestinian Hunger Striker's Organs Could Be Permanent: Physician

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – Even if the Palestinian detainee in the occupied territories, Maher al-Akhras, who has been on hunger strike for 85 days in protest against his incarceration without charge, end his fast, damage to his vital organs caused by the prolonged fast could be permanent, a physician affiliated with a human rights group has warned.

In an update on the medical condition of al-Akhras, family medicine specialist and volunteer, Lena Qassem, said after visiting him on at his hospital bed, where he is currently detained by the Zionist regime, that “although al-Akhras is fully conscious and lucid, he is having trouble concentrating and is suffering bouts of confusion throughout the day. He continues to lose weight, has severe dizziness and balance issues. He is unable to stand, walk or turn over in bed.”

Qassem added that al-Akhras has suffered significant muscle atrophy, and his eyesight and hearing have deteriorated.

“Al-Akhras drinks nothing but water, refusing to take sugar, salt or vitamins. He is also refusing all tests to monitor his condition, including for vital signs, ECG and blood tests,” she said, and he refuses to be tested or receive any medical care from the staff, a phenomenon typical in hunger strikes.

“In view of Maher’s condition, even if he decides to end his strike and gradually return to eating, doing so under medical supervision, it will take him months to recover. His body will require quite some time – if ever – to repair the



The file photo shows Palestinian prisoner Maher al-Akhras as he is holding his wife's hand in Israeli Kaplan hospital.

damage to various organs caused by the prolonged fast,” said Qassem.

The Palestinian Information Center reported on Sunday described The 49-year-old Palestinian prisoner’s health condition as extremely dangerous, saying that he is unable to move and that he has lost a lot of fluids and salts amid warnings of his possible martyrdom.

Palestinian human rights organizations and political parties, for their parts, have warned that Akhras would lose his life at any moment

as he has entered the stage of extreme danger.

Akhras, the father of six children, was detained on July 27 and was held under the administrative detention order, with no charge. This has led him to start a hunger strike in an attempt to seek justice against the unfair detention.

“I am committed to my decision and will eat food only in my home, and I will not break my will. I am now in Kaplan Hospital, I do not drink anything but water, and I will continue doing so until I return to my house,” he said.

## UK Festival Not Returning to Abu Dhabi Over Sexual Assault Claims

LONDON (Al Jazeera) – Britain’s Hay Festival will not return to Abu Dhabi until the United Arab Emirates’ tolerance minister will remain in his post following allegations of sexual assault by one of the literary event’s curators.

Hay Festival chief Caroline Michel released a statement after Caitlin McNamara said she was attacked in February by Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, 69, a member of Abu Dhabi’s ruling family, the Sunday Times reported.

The Times said McNamara, 32, who had travelled to the

UAE to work on the launch of the literary festival there, claimed she was assaulted by the sheikh when they met at a remote island villa on Valentine’s day.

Michel stressed that her colleagues are committed to supporting McNamara in seeking legal action and said the festival will not return to Abu Dhabi while the sheikh remains in his post.

“What happened to our friend and colleague Caitlin McNamara in Abu Dhabi last February was an appalling violation and a hideous abuse

of trust and position,” Michel said in a statement.

“Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan made a mockery of his ministerial responsibilities and tragically undermined his government’s attempt to work with the Hay Festival to promote free speech and female empowerment,” she said, adding that the festival “will not be returning to Abu Dhabi while he remains in position.

The Foreign Ministry of the UAE, a federation of seven sheikhdoms on the Arabian Peninsula that is also home to Dubai, said it does not com-

ment on personal matters.

When asked about the case, the United Kingdom’s Metropolitan Police confirmed that a woman contacted the force on July 3 to report an allegation of rape, and said an initial statement has been taken from her.

McNamara agreed to be identified by The Sunday Times, which ran her picture on the front page.

The sheikh’s ministry paid for the four-day festival in Abu Dhabi, which took place in late February and featured several famous authors.

## Zionist Regime Turning 36 West Bank Nature Reserves Into Settlements

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – Zionist regime officials control 36 areas in Area C of the occupied West Bank and are planning to convert them into illegal settlements and military camps, Jordanian Assabeel newspaper reported.

General Director of natural resources at the Palestine Authority (PA)’s Environment Quality Authority Issa Musa indicated that there are 50 nature reserves in the West Bank, including 36 in Area C, which are occupied by the regime.

Musa explained that there are 11,000 dunams of fertile farmlands located in Ariha extending to the eastern West Bank city of Tubas, on which the occupying regime intends to build illegal settlements and military camps.

According to Musa, the Environment Quality Authority documents all aggressions by the regime on these areas in order to raise them with the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity who will take the necessary steps.

Meanwhile, Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor has documented a sharp increase in the Zionist regime’s demolition of European Union (EU)-funded Palestinian projects built in occupied territories, a report issued over the weekend revealed.

According to the report, which was circulated by world news agencies, in 2019 the Euro-Med monitor documented a record high of 204 Palestinian structures that the regime had demolished in East al-Quds alone, representing a spike when compared with previous years.

The Zionist regime further demolished or seized 127 structures funded by international donors, mainly the EU and its member states, in East al-Quds and Area C, twice as much as in 2018.

“Despite the coronavirus pandemic and the accompanying economic crisis, Netanyahu’s cabinet has significantly stepped up the demolition of Palestinian structures further,” the report explained.

## Saudi Arabia Restructures Supreme Court, Religious, Advisory Bodies

RIYADH (Press TV) – Saudi Arabia’s King Salman has issued a raft of royal decrees, restructuring the country’s supreme court as well as its highest religious and advisory authorities.

The monarch appointed a new Supreme Court chief, Khaled bin Abdullah al-Luhaidan. The tribunal serves as the last authority, with which the country’s legal decisions have to be cleared.

These include decisions taken by the so-called Saudi Specialized Criminal Court that implements its “terrorism”-related cases. Many high-profile international right bodies say the cases are mostly built against dissidents and critics of the royal

family.

The king also ordered “reformation” of the Council of Senior Scholars, the kingdom’s top religious body, by appointing 20 people to the council.

The council advances Wahhabism, Saudi Arabia’s dominant radical ideology. It is headed by grand mufti Sheikh Abdulaziz al-Sheikh, who has secured notoriety for his numerous controversial rulings.

The king, meanwhile, appointed 150 members to Shura Council, the top Saudi consultative body, which is due to start a new term this week, for a renewable period of four years.

He also picked a new speaker and two

deputies for the council and in a rare move, one of the deputies was chosen a woman.

Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who is the country’s heir to the throne and de facto ruler, has been trying to paint a picture of strong societal presence by women in the kingdom.

The move, supposed to appeal the West, has seen him reportedly lifting a driving ban on woman and relaxing the kingdom’s high-handed male guardianship laws.

His tenure has, however, also witnessed jailing of hundreds of activists, including woman, many of whom are still behind bars, something that has prompted critics to denounce the “reforms” as only cosmetic.

## Countering...

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the night. “Ah, well there we are, see you in a month.”

Belgium’s second major lockdown comes after Prime Minister Alexander de Croo warned the situation was “much worse” than in March when there was an almost complete confinement.

Italy, the initial epicenter of Europe’s outbreak, also announced fresh curbs including earlier closures for bars and restaurants and a push to increase working from home.

“We cannot waste time,” Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte said, also flagging bans on amateur team sports and local festivals.

In Poland, where around half the country is now designated as a coronavirus “red zone”, the government said the national stadium would double as a field hospital to help ease the strain on overwhelmed health care facilities.

Switzerland meanwhile made mask-wearing compulsory in indoor public spaces and put limits on public gatherings after infections doubled over the last week.

“The second wave is here, earlier and stronger than we expected, but we are prepared,” Swiss Health Minister Alain Berset said.

France imposed its own overnight curfew from the weekend in nine cities including Paris, affecting 20 million people, with a record 32,400 new infections reported on Saturday.

Saudi Arabia eased more of its own virus restrictions when it allowed worshippers to re-enter Islam’s holiest site for prayers on Sunday for the first time since March.

The Grand Mosque in Mecca is the site of the annual hajj pilgrimage that draws Muslims from around the world but only 10,000 people were allowed to take part this year, a far cry from the 2.5 million in 2019.

Numerous political figures have contracted the virus in recent days, including veteran chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat, who is in a “critical” condition and in a medically induced coma, the Jerusalem Al-Quds hospital treating him said.

A vaccine remains the great hope to end the cycle of imposing and lifting lockdowns across the world, and the United Nations said Monday it would stockpile a billion syringes worldwide by the end of 2021 for that purpose.

“Vaccinating the world against COVID-19 will be one of the largest mass undertakings in human history, and we will need to move as quickly as the vaccines can be produced,” Unicef executive director Henrietta Fore said.

## New ...

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For decades, the group has failed to stop the sporadic outbreaks of fighting and implement United Nations resolutions that demand the “withdrawal of armed forces from the occupied territories.”

Turkey says their mediation has failed, and Azerbaijan wants a role for Ankara in peacemaking. Baku also seeks withdrawal of Armenian military forces from Nagorno-Karabakh according to the UN resolutions, but Yerevan rules it out.

Baku said on Saturday that 61 Azeri civilians had been killed and 282 wounded since the fighting flared on Sept. 27. It has not disclosed its military casualties.

The separatists in Nagorno-Karabakh say 710 of their fighters have been killed, and 36 civilians.

The new truce came amid Azerbaijan’s advances on the battlefield and an escalation in attacks

on cities, including an Armenian missile attack which killed at least 13 people in the second Azeri city of Ganja early Saturday.

## Abu...

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made since, the leader of the UAE has appeared frail.

According to the Malaysian investigatory site, Sarawak Report, in 2015 Sheikh Khalifa’s holdings were placed into the trust of a committee led by his half brother Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the owner of Manchester City Football Club. Sheikh Khalifa’s lawyers deny any transfer of assets was made.

The documents obtained by Sarawak Report show that they were signed by the crown prince, rather than Sheikh Khalifa.

In the past, Emirati officials have used their economic clout in the UK for more than just money making.

Revelations detailed in 2015 showed how the chairman of Manchester City, Khaldoon al-Mubarak threatened the UK with the cancellation of arms contracts and the withdrawal of investments unless the country cracked down on groups it did not like, such as the Muslim Brotherhood.

## China...

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an onslaught on the international political and economic system, Hua said, adding U.S. sanctions have impaired the improvement of livelihood of people in the sanctioned states and ignored basic rights of innocent people, including children, women and the elderly.

As regards the U.S., he said, “we are committed to the principles of non-conflict and non-confrontation, mutual respect, and win-win cooperation”. “At the same time, we will defend our country’s national sovereignty, security, and interests in the process of development.”

Heading a high-ranking delegation, Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif visited China last week at the invitation of his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi.

“Fruitful talks in beautiful Tengchong with my friend Wang Yi on Iran-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. Rejected US unilateralism and US attempts to create unipolar world. Agreed on strengthening our ties incl 25-yr plan, regional coop, preserving JCPOA & vaccine collab,” Zarif said tweeted after the visit. Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh recently said Tehran and Beijing are determined to further expand their strategic partnership,” adding China is Iran’s “1st economic partner” despite Washington’s “maximum pressure” campaign against the Islamic Republic.

## Iran...

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countries without any interference in their internal affairs, noting that many issues related to Iran and Afghanistan are intertwined and the two countries enjoy deep historical and cultural bonds.

Abdullah said Iran and Afghanistan are working on a comprehensive document for boosting bilateral cooperation and have managed to make major advances in this regard.

Iran and Afghanistan have common historical and civilizational roots and their common customs will further cement bilateral cooperation, he further said.

Meanwhile, in a post to his Twitter account, Abdullah described as “constructive” his meeting with the Iranian Parliament speaker.