

Lebanon's Exit From Crisis Hinges on New PM: President

BEIRUT (Dispatches) – Crisis-hit Lebanon's next prime minister, the third in a year, will have to spearhead reforms and battle corruption, President Michel Aoun said Wednesday.

Aoun was speaking at a televised news conference a day before his scheduled consultations with MPs to name Lebanon's new premier.

"I hope that you will think well about the consequences the nomination (of a premier) will have on the process of forming a government," Aoun said, addressing lawmakers.

It will effect "reform plans and international rescue initiatives", he said.

Saad al-Hariri is poised to be named prime minister at formal consultations on Thursday after weeks of wrangling, political sources said. But he would face major challenges to overcome discord and form a new government that can tackle a meltdown deepening by the day.

Hariri quit as PM - a post he has already held three times - when the crisis erupted last year as protests against the ruling elite gripped the country, toppling his coalition government.

Lebanon has appointed two new premiers since Hariri resigned last October.



Lebanese President Michel Aoun holds a televised press conference at the presidential palace in Baabda, east of the capital Beirut.

Hassan Diab, a little known academic, was named as Hariri's replacement in December last year.

His cabinet of so-called "technocrats" resigned in the wake of the huge August 4 blast at Beirut port widely blamed on government negligence.

Lebanon's worst peace-time disaster killed more than 200 people and wounded at least 6,500 others. Lebanon's ambassador to Ber-

lin, Mustapha Adib, was then named in September but bowed out last month over the failure of political leaders to agree on a cabinet line-up.

The process can take months in Lebanon, where consensus between most of its top political groups is required for major decisions.

Despite mounting international pressure, Lebanese parties are still bickering over the distribu-

tion of cabinet posts and portfolios.

Aoun on Wednesday also accused unnamed officials of blocking reforms long demanded by international donors, including power sector reform and a forensic audit of the central bank.

Aoun is due to hold consultations on Thursday with parliamentary blocs, postponed from last week amid political rifts.

222 European MPs Ask Sisi to Release Prisoners of Conscience

CAIRO (Dispatches) – Over 200 European lawmakers sent a letter to Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi on Wednesday, publicly denouncing his government's continued human rights abuses as a threat to the country's security and stability, Middle East Eye reported.

The letter also urged Sisi to release human rights defenders who are held in pre-trial detention, particularly with the health risks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The letter read that "violations of human rights are neither necessary nor productive for establishing security and stability". Detainees named in the letter

include political activist Ramy Shaath, whose French wife Celine Lebrun-Shaath has been lobbying the international community to pressure Egypt to release him.

The letter is signed by 222 lawmakers from the European parliament and seven European national parliaments - including France, Germany and Italy, all key allies of Egypt.

The letter comes a day after more than 50 U.S. Democratic lawmakers urged Sisi to release human rights activists, lawyers, journalists and other prisoners of conscience "before their unjust imprisonments become death sentences in the face of massive

COVID outbreaks".

In a letter, the 55 politicians, led by Representatives Ro Khanna, Jim McGovern and Senator Sherrod Brown, called on Sisi to release those "unjustly detained for exercising their fundamental human rights".

Senators Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, two former candidates for the Democratic presidential nomination, also signed the letter.

"The wrongful imprisonment of prisoners of conscience and other gross violations of human rights fundamentally undermine that partnership and those relations," the legislators said.

Amnesty International has re-

peatedly called for the release of political prisoners in Egypt and called the country's crackdown on dissent "one of the worst in recent history".

Human rights groups estimate that there are around 60,000 political detainees in Egypt, including journalists, bloggers, political dissidents, lawyers and activists.

In their letter, the lawmakers raised the cases of several activists including Sanaa Seif, who was abducted outside the prosecutor-general's office in Cairo in June.

Her lawyers later said she was charged with "spreading false rumors, inciting to terrorist crimes" and "misuse of social media".

Muslim...

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"The Emiratis will be disgraced forever," he said in his first reaction to the agreement between the UAE and Israel. "I hope they wake up and compensate for what they did."

Palestinians, who seek an independent state in the occupied West Bank and Gaza, with East Jerusalem Al-Quds as its capital view the U.S.-brokered deals as a "stab in the back" of Palestine.

On Tuesday, an Israeli pipeline company announced a preliminary deal to transport oil from the United Arab Emirates to Europe via a pipeline that, if finalized, will be one of the most significant partnerships to emerge so far since the two regimes normalized relations.

The Europe Asia Pipeline Company (EAPC) said it had signed a binding memorandum of understanding with MED-RED Land Bridge, a company with Zionist and Emirati owners, in Abu Dhabi on Monday during a ceremony with visiting U.S. Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin.

The UAE oil will be transported through a pipeline that already connects the Red Sea city of Eilat and the Mediterranean port of Ashkelon, which was secretly built by the occupying regime of Israel and the former Shah of Iran in the 1960s.

Along with UAE oil, the partners said they also hoped to use their "land bridge", which saves time, fuel and costs, compared to having to cross the Suez Canal to transport oil back and forth between other countries.

But the deal is certainly bad news for Egypt, as President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi just spent \$8 billion to widen the canal, which could be undercut by a cheaper means of getting oil from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean.

"There is no doubt that this agreement is of high importance to the Israeli market, both economically and strategically, with joint investments extending a decade into the future," EAPC Chairman Erez Halfon told Reuters.

The firm did not disclose financial details but said the arrangement "is likely to increase the transferred quantities by tens of millions of tons per year."

The UAE exports the vast majority of its crude oil to Asia. A source familiar with the deal told Reuters that, if finalized, it could be worth \$700-\$800 million over several years and that supplies could start at the beginning of 2021.

The occupying regime of Israel and the UAE were about to ink a deal on Tuesday to allow 28 weekly commercial flights between Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion airport, Dubai and Abu Dhabi, Israel's transportation ministry said.

Armenia...

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accuses Azerbaijan of making a land grab even as the territory is internationally recognized as part of the Muslim country.

Azeri President Ilham Aliyev said this month he believed there was a military solution to the conflict and added in a speech on Tuesday: "We will drive them (Armenians) out of our lands."

Azeri forces, boosted in recent years by increased military spending and the purchase of weapons from close ally Turkey, say they have made territorial gains in the latest fighting. Nagorno-Karabakh separatists say they have repulsed repeated attacks and that the situation is under control.

The fighting is the worst since Nagorno-Karabakh broke away from Azerbaijan as the Soviet Union collapsed, resulting in a war in which about 30,000 people were killed.

By 1994 when the war ended in a ceasefire, Armenian forces not only held Nagorno-Karabakh itself but also occupied substantial Azerbaijani areas outside the breakaway territory's borders.

The violence has increased concern about the security of pipelines in Azerbaijan that carry Azeri gas and oil to world markets.

Armenian President Armen Sarkisian flew to Brussels Wednesday to meet leaders of the NATO military alliance and the European Union and seek assistance in the face of Azerbaijan's military advances.

Mediation has for years been led by Russia, France and the United States under the auspices of the Organiza-

tion for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), a security and rights watchdog.

But Azerbaijan says mediation has achieved nothing in three decades and wants Turkey involved in peacemaking.

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."

Russia has brokered two ceasefires since Sept. 27 but neither has held. There was no indication Lavrov had made any breakthrough in his talks with the Azeri and Armenian foreign ministers, Jeyhun Bayramov and Zohrab Mnatsakanyan.

In the latest fighting, both sides said clashes continued in several areas near the line of contact.

Nagorno-Karabakh said 834 of its military personnel had now been killed since Sept. 27, in addition to 37 civilians.

Azerbaijan says 61 Azeri civilians have been killed and 291 wounded, but has not disclosed its military casualties.

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peaceful resolution of all regional tensions and conflicts through enhanced communication and early warning and ensure the freedom of navigation and energy security for all.

The top Iranian diplomat proposed adherence to common principles such as dialogue and mutual respect, equal footing, respect for each other's sovereignty, rejection of the threat or use of force, non-aggression and non-intervention in the internal affairs of each other and rejection of participation in alliances and coalitions against one another to achieve such goals.

"We believe that a new regional approach should be the outcome of collective deliberations. Together, we can envisage a broad spectrum of cooperation and confidence-building measures that include water management, environmental protection, nuclear safety, energy security, education, tourism, economic cooperation, trade, investment, poverty eradication and people empowerment," he said.

He added that all the Persian Gulf littoral states can agree on regional early warning systems and on military contacts and to establish joint task forces regarding practical measures to gradually expand cooperation.

Zarif warned that peace and dialogue cannot be achieved if one or two regional countries pursue confrontation and wishfully wait for alien vampires to "cut their neighbor's head."

He finally told regional states that they can "choose to remain prisoners of the past and perpetuate instability and tension. Or ...can choose peace, security, stability and prosperity for all."

Envoy...

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certain Persian Gulf states with huge military expenditures for turning the region into "a powder keg" and committing war crimes against the Yemnis.

"It should be borne in mind that security must originate from within and cannot be purchased from outside. Those in our region who spend hundreds of billions of dollars on sophisticated armaments annually should realize that huge military expenditures neither create legitimacy nor long-lasting security," he said.

"They have only turned our region into a powder keg. And the only beneficiaries are the exporters of these deadly weapons. Some GCC forces are using these sophisticated armaments against the innocent people of Yemen who are experiencing the worst man-made humanitarian catastrophe of contemporary history; a clear case of war crime."

Takht-Ravanchi underlined the need for promoting cooperation on an equal footing as well as building mutual trust and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of states and no interference in their internal affairs.

"Let me conclude by once again reiterating our call for a constructive dialog with our neighbors with a view to dispelling misunderstandings and restoring friendly relations among all littoral States of the Persian Gulf," he added

Zionist Missile Hits School in Southern Syria

DAMASCUS (Press TV) – An Israeli strike had hit Syria's southwestern province of Quneitra, Syria's official news agency SANA reported.

SANA reported that the missile targeted a school in al-Huriah village in Quneitra's northern countryside near Syria's Golan Heights late Tuesday night, without providing additional detail.

The so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights also confirmed the missile attack on the area.

The occupying regime frequently targets military positions inside Syria, especially those of the resistance movement Hezbollah which has played a key role in helping the Syrian Army in its fight against foreign-backed terrorists.

The Arab country has been gripped by foreign-backed militancy since March 2011. The Syrian government says the Zionist regime and its Western and regional allies are aiding terrorist groups that are wreaking havoc in the country.

The Zionist regime mostly keeps quiet about the attacks on Syrian territories which many view as knee-jerk reaction to Syrian government's increasing success in confronting terrorism in country.

The occupying regime has been a main supporter of terrorist groups that have opposed the government of President Bashar al-Assad since militancy erupted in Syria nine years ago.

Syrian government forces have taken back many areas once controlled by the terrorist groups.

Zionist Regime Detains Palestinian Child in Night Raid

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – Zionist troops have arrested 14 Palestinians, including at least one child, in night raids across the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian Prisoners' Club (PPS) has reported.

According to the PPS, at least four Palestinians were detained when Zionist troops broke into and ransacked their homes in occupied East al-Quds late Tuesday night. One of those detained was a 15-year-old child from the Isawiyeh neighborhood.

In Bethlehem, Zionist troops barged their way into Dheisha refugee camp, south of the city, where they rounded up four others, including a 42-year-old man. Similar raids took place in Qalandia refugee camp north of al-Quds and al-Khalil, as well as Nablus.

Wafa news agency said that the raid triggered confrontations with local residents during which troops opened fire on protesters. No injuries were reported.

Zionist troops carry out frequent arrest campaigns across the West Bank, including occupied East al-Quds, on the pretext of searching for "wanted" Palestinians. Children living in occupied East al-Quds are the most targeted, the PPS said. Many apparently face arrest at least once a month.

The PPS recorded the arrest of more than 3,000 Palestinians by the Zionist regime from the beginning of this year to the end of August.