

BEIRUT (Dispatches) – Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement said Friday it had filed slander lawsuits against an ex-parliamentarian and a political party who allegedly claimed the movement was responsible for the Beirut port blast.

The explosion of hundreds of tonnes of ammonium nitrate fertilizer at the Beirut port on August 4 was Lebanon's worst disaster.

It killed more than 200 people, wounded at least 6,500 others and ravaged large swathes of the capital.

A divine rule can be established only by a man, who, where justice and equity are required, neither feels deficient nor weak and who is not greedy and avaricious.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

Almost Half of Yemenis in Acute Food Insecurity: UN Data



Malnourished boy Hassan Merzam Muhammad lies on a bed at his house in Abs district of Hajjah province, Yemen, on July 17, 2020.

SANA'A (Dispatches) – **Famine-like conditions have re-appeared in parts of Yemen and almost half the population is experiencing high levels of food insecurity, new United Nations data shows, with aid agencies warning time is running out to prevent mass starvation.**

Around 45% of Yemen's population is facing high levels of acute food insecurity, according to the UN's Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis.

Within this number, 33% of the population are in crisis, 12% are in emergency and 16,500 people are in a catastrophic, famine-like situation, the worst level of the IPC classifications.

The outlook for next year is worse, the IPC analysis said. Between January and June 2021, 54% of Yemenis - 16.2 million people - are likely to experience high levels of acute food insecurity.

Those in a catastrophic state will likely increase to 47,000 people.

UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Director General Qu Dongyu said, "Keeping people alive by maintaining the flow of food is imperative, but this cycle cannot continue forever."

He added, "Yemen needs a cessation of conflict, which is the primary driver of food insecurity in the country."

Saudi Arabia and a number of its regional allies launched the war on Yemen in March 2015, with the goal of bringing the government of former president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi back to power and crushing the popular Ansarullah movement.

The U.S.-based Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), a non-profit conflict-research organization, estimates that the war has claimed more than

100,000 lives.

The WFP apparently provides emergency food assistance to 13 million people in Yemen amid the Saudi war. Nevertheless, only 8.5 million of them have been able to receive such assistance on alternate months since April, amid funding shortages.

The humanitarian agency noted it needs at least \$1.9 billion in 2021 to provide the minimum amount of food assistance needed to prevent widespread famine in Yemen.

The United Nations and international aid agencies have also warned the U.S. against its plan to label Yemen's popular Houthis Ansarullah movement as a 'foreign terrorist organization', raising concerns that such a move would prevent life-saving aid reaching the war-ravaged country and would derail a related \$700 million aid program.

David Beasley, executive director of the UN's World Food Programme (WFP), told the Washington Post daily newspaper earlier this week that the designation could hamper aid deliveries.

Beasley's warning came after he had a meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, where he expressed "grave concerns" about the blacklisting of Ansarullah.

"WFP is deeply concerned about the potential impact of a decision by the U.S. to designate Ansarullah as a foreign terrorist organization," an unnamed WFP spokesperson said.

"It would heighten the gravity of an already severe humanitarian crisis in Yemen," the spokesperson added.

Last month, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that Yemen is teetering on the brink of "the worst famine the world has seen for decades," voicing concerns about the U.S. decision to label Ansarullah a terrorist organization.

Bahrain Open to Imports From Illegal Zionist Settlements, Palestinians Fume



Pro-Palestine demonstrators marching behind a banner of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement in Marseille, France, on June 13, 2018.

AL-QUDS (Dispatches) – **The Bahraini trade minister says imports from the occupied territories will not be subject to distinctions between illegal settlements or anywhere else in occupied territory, drawing a rebuke from Palestinians.**

Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates formalized ties with the Zionist regime on Sept. 15, in a U.S.-sponsored deal.

Although the international community deems the settlements as illegal, Bahrain's Industry, Commerce and Tourism Minister Zayed bin Rashid al-Zayani voiced openness to settlement imports.

"We will treat Israeli products as Israeli products. So we have no issue with labeling or origin," he told Reuters during a visit to the occupied territories.

Under European Union guidelines, settlement products should be clearly labeled as such when exported to EU member countries. The Trump administration last month removed U.S. customs distinctions between goods made within the illegal settlements or other parts of the occupied territories.

Al-Zayani's remarks were condemned by Wasel Abu Youssef of the

Palestine Liberation Organization as "contradicting international and UN resolutions".

He urged Arab countries not to import products from other parts of the occupied territories, either, in order to prevent it from "stretching into Arab markets to strengthen its economy".

Palestinian Hamas resistance movement has denounced Zayani's position, saying it runs contrary to international law.

Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri said in a statement on Thursday that the statements reflects Bahrain's state of political and moral downfall as well as its collaboration with the occupying regime against Palestine.

He also called on the Bahraini nation to pressure the Manama regime into abandoning such humiliating and hostile stances against Palestinian people.

Separately, the humanitarian anti-Israeli regime movement Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) slammed Bahrain's treatment of Zionist settlement products, emphasizing that the position amounts to Manama's participation in war crimes being committed by the Zionist regime against Palestinians.

U.S. to Keep Larger Afghan Bases After Pullout

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – **The Pentagon has approved drawdown plans in Afghanistan that will still keep two larger bases in the country as officials carry out President Donald Trump's orders to slash troop levels to 2,500 by Jan. 15, the U.S. general says.**

Trump's post-election decision last month to cut nearly half of the roughly 4,500 troops currently in Afghanistan came before military leaders could devise plans to execute a drawdown, leaving many questions unanswered about the future

U.S. military mission after Trump leaves office on Jan. 20.

Army General Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, offered the first details about the drawdown at an event hosted by the Brookings Institution think tank. He said that in addition to the two larger bases, the United States would also keep "several satellite bases."

Milley did not disclose which bases in Afghanistan would be shuttered or say what capabilities would be lost as the United States removes 2,000 troops from the country. He declined to

speculate about what President-elect Joe Biden may decide.

"What comes after that, that will be up to a new administration," Milley said.

As the United States prepares to withdraw more troops, the U.S.-backed Afghan government and Taliban representatives reached a preliminary deal on Wednesday to press on with peace talks.

It was their first written agreement in 19 years of war that Milley said has long been stalemated, with neither side able to defeat the other on the battle-

field.

In the agreement reached between the U.S. and the Taliban on February 29, the Trump administration promised to pull out all its troops by mid-2021.

The Taliban agreed to negotiate a permanent ceasefire and a power-sharing formula with the Afghan government.

The U.S. invaded Afghanistan and toppled the Taliban regime in 2001 on the pretext of fighting terrorism following the September 11 attacks in New York. Afghanistan has been gripped by insecurity since then.

Lebanon Parl't Speaker: Internal Disputes Hindering Gov't Formation

BEIRUT (Dispatches) – **Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri has expressed his deep dissatisfaction with the delay in the new government formation considering the massive crises facing the country.**

Berri stressed that the issue is not related to external obstructions, but rather internal disputes over the file.

Berri announced in a statement to Al-Joumhouria newspaper: "The current stalemate and the failure to form the new government is unjustifiably damaging the country in vain," while confirming that responding urgently to Lebanon's need for a salvation government is a vital duty at the moment.

He added: "The situation which Lebanon witnesses currently is the worst, most disastrous and tragic in its history, and we will not be able to continue this way. There is only one solution, which is to form a government."

The Lebanese official asserted that his political party did not object to the selection process of government members, noting that the issue stems from the lack of harmony between President Michel Aoun and Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri.

Aoun said Thursday that a recent conference on supporting Lebanon will motivate Lebanon to assume its responsibilities by

implementing reforms.

Aoun made the remarks during his meeting at the Baabda Palace with British Minister for Middle East and North Africa James Cleverly, the Lebanese presidency's office said in a statement.

The meeting came after 40 countries and international financial institutions on Wednesday took part, via teleconference, in an international conference on supporting Lebanon.

The Lebanese president vowed to implement reforms, adding that his insistence on the forensic audit of public institutions constitutes the beginning of the fight against corruption.

Riyadh, Doha Set to Sign Deal to End Crisis: Reports

DOHA (Dispatches) – **Saudi Arabia and Qatar are close to signing a preliminary agreement to resolve bilateral disputes and the prolonged Persian Gulf crisis that has lasted for over three years, the Bloomberg news agency has reported, citing sources familiar with the talks.**

The agreement is likely to include the reopening of air and land borders, an end to the information war between Riyadh and Doha, as well as other steps to promote confidence as part of a plan to gradually restore relations, the sources said, adding that a potential breakthrough is due to occur after months of "intense diplomacy mediated by Kuwait".

The news agency reported that the deal will not involve the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt. Diplomats and analysts told the news outlet that Abu Dhabi, unlike Riyadh, was reluctant to rebuild its ties with Doha.

Qatar's foreign minister said on Friday that there had been "some movements" to resolve the Persian Gulf crisis.

Saudi Arabia led its allies -- the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt -- to cut ties with Qatar in 2017, accusing it of back-

ing radical movements. Doha has denied the accusation.

"We have achieved certain progress at a certain point of time more than a year ago, and then things have slowed," Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani said at the Mediterranean Dialogues forum in Rome.

"Right now, there are some movements that we hope will put an end (to) this crisis," he said without giving details.

"We believe that Persian Gulf unity is very important for the security of the region. This needless crisis needs to end based on mutual respect."

Qatar has repeatedly said it is open to talks without preconditions, though has not signaled publicly it would compromise on the 13 demands of the boycotting countries.

Past mediation efforts led by Kuwait have yielded no results.

In December 2019, Sheikh Abdulrahman said there had been "some progress" in talks with Saudi Arabia.

He later in February revealed that the talks were suspended a month earlier, but said Doha "remains open if there are any benign efforts to resolve the issue".