



**Egypt Says Won't Release Ever Given Until Compensation Paid**  
 CAIRO (Andolu) – The head of Egypt's Suez Canal Authority (SCA) said the Ever Given container ship, which ran aground in the waterway for almost a week, will not be allowed to sail until compensation is paid. "The vessel will remain here until investigations are complete and compensation is paid," Osama Rabie said in a TV interview, Anadolu news agency reported. "We hope for a speedy agreement. The minute they agree to compensation, the vessel will be allowed to move," Rabie added. On March 25, the 400-meter-long (1,312-foot) Ever Given, owned by Japanese firm Shoei Kisen KK, was sailing from China to the Netherlands with almost 220,000 tons of goods when it ran aground in the canal.

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# Canadian Party Endorses Boycott, Arms Embargo Against Zionist Regime



*A Boycott, Divestment Sanctions (BDS) protest in Montreal, Canada*

MONTREAL (Dispatches) – **Members of Canada's New Democratic Party (NDP) have voted overwhelmingly to endorse sanctions on the Zionist regime during the party's 2021 convention.**

NDP members voted over the weekend in favor of a motion brought forward by a coalition of Palestinian and Jewish activists calling to amend its policy book to include a boycott of products emanating from illegal settlements in the occupied

territories as well as an arms embargo on the Zionist regime. The motion comes after years of many within the party demanding that the NDP take a clear stance on the Zionist regime and Palestine.

"The adoption of this motion today was a result of a groundswell of support from the grassroots membership," said Amy Kishek, one of the lead organizers for the Justice and Peace in Israel Palestine Resolution at this weekend's NDP conven-

tion.

"Not only is this position hugely popular with the NDP membership but it is something that is supported by the vast majority of the Canadian labor movement as well as the Canadian population at large," she said.

A 2017 poll carried out by EKOS Research confirmed that in the context of the occupying regime's ongoing human rights violations, 78 percent of Canadians believed that the

Palestinian call for boycott is reasonable. The number was even higher among those who identified as NDP supporters at over 90 percent in support. The adopted policy today also has strong support among many of Canada's major labor unions including the Canadian Labor Congress which represents over three million workers across the country.

"The adoption of this policy today firmly positions the NDP as one of the few parties demanding the end of Canada's support for illegal settlements and suspending the flow of weapons to and from Israel until Palestinians are free," said Geneviève Nevin, another organizer behind the successful resolution.

"In a time of unparalleled and intersecting social, environmental, and economic crises, it is of paramount importance that the NDP stand with and take direction from marginalized communities and those fighting for peace and justice everywhere," he added.

NDP's vote is the latest in a series of actions by Canadian organizations against the Zionist regime's brutal occupation of Palestine.

## Iraq PM Pushes for Syria's Return to Arab League

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – **Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi has reiterated his support for Syria to be readmitted into the Arab League, a decade after President Bashar Al-Assad's government quit the organization.**

In a meeting between Al-Kadhimi and the Arab League's Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit in Baghdad over the weekend, the two discussed a number of issues relating to the Arab states and

the international community. The Iraqi prime minister assured his support for ending the ongoing conflict in Yemen, helping Lebanon in its political and economic situation, and paving the way for Syria to return to the Arab League.

The Arab League suspended Syria's membership in November 2011, citing alleged crackdown by Damascus on opposition protests. Syria has denounced the

move as "illegal and a violation of the organization's charter."

Al-Kadhimi's comments a day after Iraq's Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein called in a meeting with the Arab League Secretary-General for Syria's membership to be reinstated after it left the organization in 2011.

During Aboul Gheit's visit, Hussein also urged Baghdad and the League "to work together to find a mechanism for dialogue

with different countries that have influence in Syria" in an effort to resolve the ongoing decade-long conflict.

The Iraqi minister said that the situation in Syria has an impact on the situation in Iraq. Syria has been embroiled in a vicious foreign-backed war since early 2011.

Syria was one of the six founding members of the Arab League in 1945.

*Urging Clear U.S. Stance on Pullout*

## Taliban Say Not to Attend Turkey Meeting



*Afghan security forces and foreign troops arrive at the site of an attack in Kabul.*

KABUL (Dispatches) – **Afghan militant group Taliban say they are "not ready" yet to participate in a meeting in Turkey scheduled to be held April 16, due to their "consultations on the details of the event," spokesperson Mohammad Naeem announced Monday.**

According to TOLONews, the spokesperson expressed that the Taliban are "reviewing the details of the Turkey conference agenda."

The leadership of the Taliban has not made "a final decision on the agenda" and "the formation of its delegation" for the Istanbul conference Naeem said, and added that they will soon announce their stance on the issue.

"The Taliban have said that things will not move forward unless the issue of the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan is made clear, therefore, I think that the Turkey conference will not be held unless these issues are made clear," expressed former Taliban commander Sayed Akbar Agha on the issue.

The Afghan government Sunday announced that a cohesive and unified strategy had been finalized ahead of the planned talks set to take place in Istanbul.

According to the country's High Council for National Reconciliation (HCNR), the strategy is designed to protect democracy, fundamental rights and institutions in the country.

The council said the strategy emphasizes strong regional and global guar-

antees to put an end to war, and for the implementation of the agreement in Afghanistan.

On Saturday, Washington's special envoy for Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad held separate meetings with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah, chairperson of the HCNR, as well as other senior officials.

In his meeting with Abdullah, the U.S. official said the world expects "Afghanistan to attend the Istanbul Conference with a uniform strategy," the HCNR said in a separate statement.

Last month, a top U.S. Democrat said President Joe Biden is looking to keep U.S. troops in Afghanistan beyond a May 1 deadline, warning that U.S. troops would be vulnerable and could "lose lives" if they remained in the country.

House of Representatives Armed Services Committee Chairman Adam Smith said Biden is exploring a deal in which the Taliban would allow a "U.S. counterterrorism force" to remain in Afghanistan.

Under an agreement reached between the Taliban and the administration of former president Donald Trump, Washington promised to withdraw troops by May.

President Biden, however, reneged on the deal and said it would be "tough" to meet the deadline to withdraw all the remaining troops and that his administration was consulting with allies and in the process of making a decision.

## Lebanon Needs New Gov't to Launch Reforms: IMF

BEIRUT (Reuters) – **Lebanon cannot pull itself out of its economic crisis without a new government to transform the country and launch long-stalled reforms, a senior official at the International Monetary Fund says.**

The country defaulted on its debt last year, sending its currency crashing. Its economy shrank by 25 percent in 2020, the IMF said in a report last week.

A standoff over the make-up of a new government has intensified in recent months, delaying a revival of funding talks with the Washington-based crisis lender.

"The change of direction cannot be done on a piecemeal basis. It requires a comprehensive approach," the director of the IMF's Middle East and Central Asia Department, Jihad Azour, told Reuters.

Reforms should focus on the financial sector, public finance, governance, and loss-making utilities that have contributed to a surge in debt, he said.

"In (the) absence of a new government that can lead this trans-

formation, it's very difficult to expect that the situation will in itself improve," he added, joining a chorus of officials calling for an end to wrangling over the cabinet.

Lebanon's crisis started before the COVID-19 pandemic and accelerated after a huge stockpile of ammonium nitrate, stored unsafely for years, exploded in the capital's port in August last year, killing 200 people.

International support through grants was needed, Azour said.

"Lebanon needs some large financing in order to jumpstart the economy again in part also to allow Lebanon to be on a recovery path that will take time but is highly needed."

"Lebanon needed to rebuild confidence among citizens, investors and the international community," he added.

"This reform package is the starting point. And for that you need to have a new government who will lead the implementation of this reform program."

## Qatar to Launch Global Refugee Vaccination Project

DOHA (Dispatches) – **The Qatar Red Crescent has announced it will launch a \$100m humanitarian initiative to provide COVID-19 vaccines to refugees, displaced persons and migrants around the world.**

The campaign will run for three years and aims to cover 20 countries across Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

The Qatar Red Crescent will implement the initiative in cooperation with the World Health Organization.

"Implementation will be carried out through the World Health Organization, according to the procedures adopted in each country, in coordination with the concerned authorities," Qatar Red Crescent said in a statement.

The objectives of the initiative include inoculation of "3,650,000 of the most vulnerable people in refugee, internally displaced and migrant communities" against COVID-19, as well as promotion and encouragement of the vaccination.

Target groups will also include the elderly, those with chronic diseases and humanitarian workers.

The project intends to provide the highest number of vaccines for displaced people and refugees in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, northern Syria, the occupied Palestinian territories and Yemen – with 400,000 inoculations planned in each country.

Lebanon, which has the highest per capita concentration of refugees in the world, is also

included in the campaign, and is expected to receive inoculations for 150,000 people.

Meanwhile, Iraq on Sunday received the second batch of Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccines donated by the Chinese government to help the country combat the pandemic.

On March 2, Iraq received the first batch of COVID-19 vaccines donated by the Chinese government to help combat the pandemic.

During the early stage of the pandemic in 2020, China sent several batches of medical aid to Iraq and a team of seven medical experts who spent 50 days in Iraq from March 7 to April 26 to help contain the disease, during which they helped build a PCR lab and install an advanced CT scanner in the capital Baghdad.