

New COVID-19 Wave Hits Besieged Gaza: Red Cross

GAZA STRIP (Press TV) – Palestinians in the blockaded Gaza Strip have been hit hard by an alarming increase in reported COVID-19 cases amid a critical shortage of essential medicines and medical equipment, the International Committee of the Red Cross(ICRC) has warned.

The ICRC said in a report that hospitals in the Palestinian enclave were struggling with insufficient ICU capacity and had been under immense pressure to admit new patients.

Almost all of Gaza has been currently declared as a red zone by the Palestinian health authorities because of widespread community transmission, it said.

Gaza has faced more than 1000 new infections each day for the past couple of weeks, with positivity rates of between 30 percent and 38 percent for all tested persons.

Palestinian health workers have voiced serious concerns about the rising infections across Gaza.

“The situation is scary. Every day



Palestinian children clad in masks and face-shields ride a bus in Gaza City amid the coronavirus pandemic, November 17, 2020.

I see people dying of COVID-19. When I am at home, I do every possible recipe that I can think of that could increase the immunity of my children. I always wonder how to protect them and how to protect myself so that they don’t have to face my death,” a Palestinian nurse and a mother of four said.

Local authorities in the Gaza

Strip struggled for months to lower the coronavirus infection rates through strict measures. However, the blockade by the Zionist regime has compounded the struggle of health workers in the occupied city, undermining their efforts to contain and track the spread of the virus.

Hundreds of Gazan patients have

already lost their lives in recent years due to the regime’s inhumane practices under the eye of the international community.

The Zionist regime has applied illegal policies and imposed barriers that hinder Palestinians from accessing proper medical care.

In December last year, two dozen lawmakers of the European Parliament signed a petition launched by a rights group, calling on the Zionist regime to allow immediate entry of necessary equipment and medical supplies into Gaza to assist in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

The regime also stands accused of practicing ‘vaccine apartheid.’

It does not provide jabs to the Palestinians, despite calls by several international organizations to ensure coronavirus vaccine doses are provided to Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza.

As of Tuesday morning, Palestinian health authorities recorded 310,555 cases of the virus, including 3,319 deaths.

UN Experts Demand Release of Dubai’s Princess Latifa

DUBAI (Dispatches) – UN human rights experts called on the United Arab Emirates to disclose the whereabouts of Princess Latifa two months after the BBC released a video showing the Dubai ruler’s daughter saying she was being held hostage by her father.

A joint statement by UN human rights experts, including investigators on torture and violence against women, called for Latifa’s immediate release, verification on her whereabouts and details on the conditions of where she is being held.

“We are alarmed that, following the public release in February of footage in which Sheikhha Latifa reported being deprived of her liberty against her will, and the subsequent official request for further information on her situa-

tion, no concrete information has been provided by the authorities,” the UN experts said in a joint statement on Tuesday.

“The statement issued by the Emirates authorities merely indicating that she was being ‘cared for at home’ is not sufficient at this stage.”

The joint statement comes after the UN said it sought a meeting with the UAE’s ambassador over the condition of Dubai’s Princess Latifa and her sister Shamsa, a UN spokeswoman said last Friday.

UN human rights spokeswoman Marta Hurtado said at a briefing in Geneva that the organization was “very worried” about the plight of the women, according to AFP, adding that a meeting between senior UN officials had in

principle been agreed.

She added that the UN still hasn’t received evidence that Latifa, the daughter of Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum, is alive, despite asking the UAE in February.

Back in February, 35-year-old Sheikhha Latifa said in a video broadcast by the BBC’s investigative news program Panorama that she was being held “hostage” in a locked villa surrounded by police.

“I am a hostage and this villa has been converted into a jail,” she said at the time. “All the windows are barred shut, I can’t open any window.”

The UAE princess said she was making the video in the bathroom of the villa, which is the only room she could lock herself into.

Appearing alert and speaking

calmly, Latifa said in the video that there were police officers stationed outside and inside the villa. “I just want to be free,” she noted.

Princess Latifa drew international attention in 2018, when she announced in a video that she was fleeing the UAE because of mistreatment and restrictions imposed by her family.

However, a source close to the Dubai government said on April 17 that year that the runaway princess “was brought back” to the Persian Gulf state.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) cited a witness as saying that authorities in the UAE had “intercepted Sheikhha Latifa on March 4, 2018, as she tried to flee by sea to a third country, and returned her to the UAE.”

Zionist Forces Storm Palestinian Prisoner Cells in Ofer

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – A Zionist special unit has morning stormed Palestinian cells in Ofer military prison, where dozens of Hamas members are being detained, and carried out an inspection drill amid rising tension in the Zionist regime’s jails.

The Palestinian Prisoners Media Office said that the storming of Ofer jail was “provocative” and could lead to an escalation with Palestinian prisoners.

There are currently 4,450 Palestinian prisoners in the regime’s jails, including 900 in Ofer. Palestinian prisoners in Ofer have taken part in several hunger strikes in recent years, demanding better living conditions inside the cells, regular family visits and an end to the policy of storming cells to carry out inspections.

Some Palestinian prisoners have been on hunger strikes that lasted over 100 days in protest against the so-called administrative detentions, a highly controversial practice used almost exclusively against Palestinians,

which allows for detention without charge or trial for renewable periods of three to six months.

In January, the regime bowed to international pressure and offered Palestinian prisoners the Covid-19 vaccines as part of its nationwide vaccination program.

The regime had dismissed calls to take protective measure inside the cells of Palestinians to minimize the risk of the spread of coronavirus since the pandemic hit the country in March 2020.

In November, around 73 Palestinian prisoners tested positive for Covid-19 inside the regime’s prison of Gilboa.

This is the second time this month that the Zionist regime’s special units have stormed the cells of Palestinian detainees at Ofer.

Separately on Tuesday, Zionist troops arrested six Palestinians, five in the occupied East al-Quds, and one in al-Khalil city, south of the occupied West Bank, Palestine’s official news agency Wafa reported.

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“Increasing the number of border crossings, while facilitating the achievement of common interests between Iran and Pakistan, will provide new job opportunities for border residents,” Pakistani Foreign Ministry spokesman Zahid Hafiz Chaudhry told media in Islamabad.

Minister Eslami said the gateways will transform cross-border exchanges and trade with Pakistan. “The addition of two official terminals for trade exchanges as well as six official border markets will help us move towards a good business,” he said.

Iran and Pakistan share 959 kilometers of border, which depended on the Mirjaveh-Taftan crossing for travel and trade exchange until last December.

The inauguration of the Rimdan-Gabd crossing point, about 130 km from the strategic Iranian port of Chabahar, has created a new momentum in exchange of goods between the two neighbors.

Pakistani citizens can now reach Chabahar, from where they can travel by plane or train to other cities across Iran, including the holy cities of Qom and Mashhad.

The crossing is also only 70 km from the Pakistani port of Gwadar which is being developed through the \$60 billion China Pakistan Economic Corridor to link with Xinjiang province.

Pishin is the southernmost gateway in Iran’s Sistan and Baluchestan province to Pakistan, marked by its proximity to many Pakistani towns and cities. It is only 20 km from Mand, 60 km from Temp, 120 km from Turbat and 600 km from Pakistan’s largest city and port of Karachi which will be reduced to 400 km with the construction of a new road.

There is also a railway plan in the works, where Iran, Pakistan and Turkey seek to revive a line connecting Istanbul to Tehran and Islamabad and ultimately extend it to China.

The three countries launched a container train service in 2009, but it only got as far as test runs and was never fully operational. Even so, they always planned to follow up the initial freight trains with passenger services and are now willing to launch the ITI transnational line with the aim of enhancing connectivity with China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

The railroad service, stretching for 6,540 km, will cut the 21-day journey between Pakistan and Turkey by sea to 10 days. And by extension, it will connect to China’s Xinjiang autonomous region which is populated by ethnically Turkic Uighur Muslims.

In February, Iran and Turkey signed three documents to expand transnational rail services linking them to Pakistan, Afghanistan and China.

Railways of the Islamic Republic of Iran (RAI) Managing Director Saeed Rasouli and his Turkish counterpart Ali Ihsan Uygun signed the papers in Ankara to maximize freight and passenger transport.

“Both the rail route connecting China to southern Europe and Turkey-Afghanistan and Turkey-Pakistan rail links as well as the connection of Iran’s southern ports to Turkey will be accelerated and operationalized by the signing of these documents,” Rasouli said.

He said the Istanbul-Tehran-Islamabad (ITI) transnational railroad is expected to enhance connectivity with China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) by providing a rail connection between China and Turkey.

Iran, Turkey and Pakistan are the founders of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), currently a 10-member political and economic intergovernmental organization established in 1985.

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multiple times, the newspaper reported.

Paula Bryant, the girl’s mother, and another family member said the teen called the police for help because girls were fighting outside of her house.

The incident quickly received widespread attention, including from Ben Crump, the Floyd family’s lawyer, who said, “Another child lost! Another hashtag.”

“As we breathed a collective sigh of relief today, a community in Columbus felt the sting of another police shooting as @ColumbusPolice killed an unarmed 15yo Black girl,” Crump said.

The incident comes more than a week after Daunte Wright, a 20-year-old African American, was shot and killed by a single bullet fired by a White police officer in the city suburb of Brooklyn Center.

Fatal attacks on people of color in the U.S. have witnessed a disconcerting surge in recent years, which activists have attributed to former president Donald Trump’s racist rhetoric.

Pakistan... (Continued From Page 2)

The foreign minister recalled the invitation already extended to Qalibaf by his Pakistani counterpart to visit Pakistan, expressing hope that the trip would further strengthen parliamentary cooperation between Pakistan and Iran.

Qureshi arrived in Tehran on Tuesday on a three-day official visit for talks on mutual relations and the latest regional security issues with senior Iranian officials.

His visit is taking place at the invitation of his Iranian counterpart Muhammad Javad Zarif, and includes a pilgrimage tour of the holy city of Mashhad.

Erdogan Replaces Turkish Trade Minister, Forms Two New Ministries

ISTANBUL (Reuters) – President Tayyip Erdogan appointed a prominent member of Turkey’s ruling AK Party, Mehmet Mus, as trade minister on Wednesday and split the Family, Labour and Social Policies Ministry into two ministries.

In a presidential decree Ruhsar Pekcan was replaced as trade minister by Mus, who has been a lawmaker for Erdogan’s AK Party since 2011 and served as the party’s deputy chairman in charge of the economy.

The decree, published in the Official Ga-

zette, gave no reason for the change, but it comes after opposition politicians accused Pekcan’s ministry of buying supplies from her family-owned company and called on her to resign.

The Trade Ministry confirmed that the purchase of sanitizers had been made, but said in a statement on Tuesday the choice was based on price alone and not due to “the name of the company making the sale.”

It said that the sale, worth some 500,000 lira (\$62,000), had been carried out in line with relevant regulations.

Erdogan’s overnight changes come amid speculation over a wider cabinet reshuffle, after he changed the country’s top economic management in November, including the central bank governor.

The president established two new ministries by splitting the Family, Labour and Social Policies Ministry into two separate ministries, according to the decree.

He appointed Derya Yanik as Family and Social Policies Minister and Vedat Bilgin as the Labour and Social Security Minister, replacing Zehra Zumrut Selcuk.