

UN Officials:

World Leaders Should Join Forces to End Syria Crisis

NEW YORK (Press TV) – Senior UN officials have called on world leaders to join forces in a bid to bring an end to the Syria crisis which has exacted a heavy toll on civilians.

“We need world leaders to put aside their differences and use their influence to bring about meaningful change in Syria,” the heads of the UN agencies for humanitarian affairs, health, food aid, refugees, Palestinian refugees, and children said in a joint statement on Friday, adding that the crisis has led to an “unconscionable” human cost.

The UN officials warned that the future generation of Syria is in danger due to the international community’s failure to find ways to termi-

nate the crisis which has entered its fifth year.

“The future of a generation is at stake. The credibility of the international community is at stake,” the statement added.

So far over 210,000 people have reportedly died in Syria, which has been gripped by deadly violence since March 2011.

New figures show that over 76,000 people, including thousands of children, lost their lives in Syria in 2014. Nearly 4 million Syrians have left their country since the beginning of the crisis, and 7.6 million civilians have been internally displaced.

The unabated conflict “continues to exact an unconscionable human

cost. A crisis that the international community has failed to stop,” the heads of the UN agencies said.

In the statement, the UN officials also stressed they will press ahead with their support for the Syrians who have been “caught in the middle of this war. People who are vulnerable. Besieged. With nowhere to go.”

The UN officials particularly brought up the suffering of the Syrian children and youth, saying, “Children and young people are subject to and surrounded by violence, despair and deprivation.”

They added that world leaders should use their influence to alleviate the tragedy of the Syrian people.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-

moon on Thursday called on the UN Security Council (UNSC) to take decisive measures to resolve the humanitarian crisis in war-torn Syria.

“The Syrian people feel increasingly abandoned by the world as they enter the fifth year of the war that has torn their country apart,” Ban said in a statement, noting, “I call upon the Security Council to take determined measures to resolve this crisis.”

On Thursday, 21 human rights and aid groups, including the International Rescue Committee, the Norwegian Refugee Council, Handicap International, the Syrian Relief Network, Oxfam and Save the Children, criticized the UNSC for “failing Syria.”

400 Illegal Migrants Detained Off Turkish Coast

ANKARA (Dispatches) – Turkey has captured some 400 illegal migrants traveling on board a ship destined for Italy, showing that Ankara is determined to counter the rising flow of migrants travelling through the country to Europe.

Turkish officials on Thursday stopped the vessel which was sailing through the Dardanelles Straits, in Turkey’s northwestern Canakkale Province.

The vessel had allegedly ignored warning shots. Security forces then boarded the ship and arrested all illegal travelers aboard.

Most of the migrants on the Doğan Kartal were Syrians, according to Canakkale Governor Ahmet Cinar.

“According to our initial information, around 400 illegal Syrian



File photo shows a Turkish coast guard vessel patrolling in the Mediterranean Sea.

immigrants were on board,” Cinar said, adding that the operation on the ship did not result in any clash-

es between the security forces and the migrants.

The governor denied the assault

was meant for a special security purpose, saying, “Our goal was to prevent people on board from any damage.”

The captured migrants have been transferred to Gallipoli, a port west of Dardanelles.

The migrants reportedly chanted “to Italy or death” when they faced the security forces. The crew of the ship which included three Syrian and two Turkish nationals were also detained.

Turkey has become a major transit hub for illegal migrants from Asia and the Middle East who embark on risky journeys through water to reach Europe.

According to the United Nations, more than 1,900 people were killed in 2014 in incidents related to migrants in the Mediterranean Sea.

Pakistan Orders Release of Suspect in Mumbai Attacks

ISLAMABAD (Press TV) – A top court in Pakistan has cancelled the detention order of Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi, the alleged mastermind behind the November 2008 terror attacks in the Indian city of Mumbai.

Justice Noorul Haq of Islamabad High Court on Friday accepted the 55-year-old’s appeal and declared void the detention orders of Lakhvi, ordering his immediate release.

Lakhvi, who has been imprisoned

in Adiala jail in the city of Rawalpindi, was granted bail by an anti-terrorism court on December 18, which spurred the fury of Indian officials. However, he was later detained under a public order law that was suspended by Islamabad’s High Court on December 29.

Although Islamabad High Court suspended that order, the Supreme Court reinstated it in January.

Meanwhile, India’s Ministry of

Home Affairs reacted to the announcement saying, “It is the responsibility of the Pakistan government to take all legal measures to ensure that Lakhvi does not come out of jail.”

The Mumbai attacks left 166 people dead and were blamed on the banned Pakistani militant group, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).

Mohammed Kassab, the Pakistani national who allegedly carried out

the attacks, was executed by India in 2012 after he was found guilty of a string of charges, including waging war against India, murder and terrorist acts.

Pakistan has promised to crack down on all terror groups, including those launching attacks in India, following the aftermath of the Peshawar school massacre that killed more than 140 people, mostly children, on December 16.

Sex Offenses in Zionist Regime’s Military Jumped by 40% in 2014

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – The Zionist regime’s military officials have admitted that sex offenses in the regime’s army increased by 40 percent in 2014.

On Friday, the chief prosecutor of the Israeli army, Udi Ben Eliezer, said that 37 Zionist officers and soldiers were indicted for sex offenses in 2014, showing a 40-percent jump in comparison with the previous year.

He added that most of the sexual harassment cases were perpetrated by military officials against their subordinates.

One of the indictments concerned a Zionist commander who pressured his female subordinates into sexual relationships “while utilizing his authority over them as their direct commander,” Eliezer confessed.

He also lashed out at the high-ranking officials of the regime’s military for turning a blind eye to the frequent sex offenses committed under their command.

“I expect commanders not to keep it to themselves but to come forward and report it. Sometimes we discover that there were large groups of people who knew of an abusive person for a long time, and no one was surprised when an investigation was opened. Commanders must not stand idly by and let these things happen,” he stated.

The issue of sexual misconduct in the occupying regime’s army has given rise to heated debates over the past years.

In 2014, it was revealed that the senior officials of the Israeli



The photo shows Zionist female soldiers at a checkpoint near the Egyptian border.

military covered up a sexual scandal in which six soldiers were harassed in Givati Brigade. The reports also said that

the criminal case was not reported to the regime’s judiciary and that the offender had just been transferred to another unit.

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change, “but American senators officially announced the commitment will be null and void after this government leaves office. Isn’t this the ultimate degree of the collapse of political ethics and the U.S. system’s internal disintegration?”

The Leader said that whenever the talks approach a deadline, “the tone of the other party, particularly the Americans, becomes harsher, harder and more violent. This is part of their tricks and deceptions”.

Ayatollah Khamenei then lashed out at the White House for accusing Tehran of terrorism, dismissing the accusation as “ludicrous, cheap and disgusting”.

Elsewhere in the remarks, the Leader took a swipe at efforts aimed at tarnishing the image of Islam, saying “Islamophobia will backfire” and, instead, put Islam at the center of attention for people around the world.

Ayatollah Khamenei noted that pure Islam, which supports the oppressed and is against oppression and reactionary attitudes, should be introduced and promoted.

The Leader said a “Zionist clown” had delivered a speech in Washington, an apparent reference to Benjamin Netanyahu’s address to U.S. Congress earlier this month, in which he argued against the emerging nuclear agreement.

Ayatollah Khamenei also repeated a call for Iran’s economy to diversify away from oil revenues to reduce the effectiveness of international sanctions isolating the oil sector. “If the country and economy were not dependent on oil revenues... could the enemy harm us with sanctions?”

On Wednesday, President Barack Obama extended Washington’s decades-old “state of emergency” with respect to Iran that keeps sanctions against the Islamic Republic in place for one more year.

Obama informed Capitol Hill that he was continuing the “state of emergency” against Iran because the crisis in Tehran-Washington relations “has not been resolved”.

The state of emergency has been in place since 1979 when Tehran and Washington severed diplomatic ties.

“...certain actions and policies of the government of Iran continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States,” Obama claimed in a notice to Congress.

“For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared with respect to Iran and to maintain in force comprehensive sanctions,” Obama wrote.

The state of emergency forms the basis for most U.S. sanctions against Iran. The extension came at a time when Tehran and the P5+1 are seeking to seal a comprehensive nuclear deal by July 1.

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bipartisan coalition of senators seeking to pass two crucial bills on Iran: one that would tighten sanctions on Tehran e in the event a nuclear deal falls apart, and another that would require congressional approval of any agreement with Tehran.

“My goal is to get 67 or more people on something that will affect the outcome,” Corker said, referring to the two-thirds Senate majority needed to overcome a presidential veto.

Obama ‘Embarrassed’

The U.S. president said he was “embarrassed” for Republicans. “I am embarrassed for them,” Obama said in an interview with Vice media, which is expected to be released Monday.

“For them to address a letter to ... (Iran) and their basic argument to them is: don’t deal with our president because you can’t trust him to follow through on an agreement. It’s close to unprecedented.”

A new round of talks between US Secretary of State John Kerry and Iranian Foreign Minister Muhammad Javad Zarif is due to take place in Lausanne,

Switzerland on March 15.

European allies are also joining the Obama administration in criticizing Republicans, saying the letter has been counterproductive and come at a particularly sensitive time in the talks.

“Suddenly, Iran can say to us: ‘Are your proposals actually trustworthy if 47 senators say that no matter what the government agrees to, we can subsequently take it off the table?’ ” German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said Thursday during a visit to Washington.

“This is no small matter we’re talking about,” Steinmeier warned in remarks at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. “This is not just an issue of American domestic politics.”

Germany, France and Britain, along with Russia and China, are U.S. negotiating partners in the Iran talks.

Secretary of State John F. Kerry told lawmakers that the letter to Iran by 47 Republican senators “risks undermining the confidence that foreign governments in thousands of important agreements commit to. It purports to tell the world that if you want to have any confidence in your dealings with America, they have to negotiate with 535 members of Congress”.

Following publication of the letter Sunday night, French Ambassador Gerard Araud, a diplomat of long experience in the U.S., posted a Twitter link to the letter and his own comment that “for a foreigner, Washington can be full of surprise”.

In London on Tuesday, British Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond told a parliamentary committee that new legislation on Iran “could become a spanner in the works” and “have an unpredictable effect on leadership opinion and public opinion in Tehran”.

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saying Thursday that the comments were inaccurately translated.

In Thursday’s statement, the Iranian embassy in Beirut stressed that Tehran’s foreign policy is based on a respect of international rules and highlighted that Iran’s 1979 Islamic Revolution was based on a rejection of the expansion of colonial powers.

“The era of empires is gone, never to return,” the statement read.

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Al-Samad said that Iranian officials had expressed readiness to provide Yemen with oil for one year and to build a 165-megawatt power plant in the energy-starved country.

The agreement also envisaged cooperation to expand and develop the Red Sea port of Al-Hudaydah, he added, referring to the strategic port that the group had seized months ago.

There has been a rise in the number of Yemeni delegations visiting Iran following the initiation of direct flights between Sanaa and Tehran late last month.

In late February, Yemen’s Houthis group – which now controls most government institutions in Sanaa – signed a memorandum of understanding with Tehran by which 28 direct flights would be operated between Sanaa and Tehran each week.

Hamas... (Continued From Page 2)

they differed on and that they had to take steps towards the development of bilateral relations based on common ground.

Larijani said Iran’s nuclear talks with the P5+1 group -- Britain, France, China, the United States and Russia plus Germany -- have featured progress.

However, he said, “We had to prioritize an intellectual perspective of the talks over a business-minded one.”