

Syria Slams 'Biased' OPCW Report on Khan Sheikun

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – Damascus has censured the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) for issuing a “false” report on a chemical weapons attack in the province of Idlib two months ago.

The Syrian Foreign Ministry said in a statement the OPCW report was based on testimonies provided by terrorists.

The statement also noted that the organization had better avoid using biased and flawed information in preparing its reports on Syria, saying findings of the organization on the April 4 attack in Khan Sheikun were in fact “the creation of a sick mind.”

It called on the OPCW to prepare “impartial and credible reports that have not been subjected to extortions by countries and parties that prevent it from reaching the truth.”

The OPCW report, issued on Friday,

said that sarin nerve gas was used in the controversial attack in Khan Sheikun that left over 90 people killed. The organization, however, did not blame any party to the conflict for the attack.

The United States and allies in the Middle East swiftly accused Syrian President Bashar al-Assad of having ordered the attack, saying Russian fighter jets also contributed to the bombardment. Syria and Russia denied any involvement. Moscow said at the time that terrorists supported by the West could have stored chemicals in a depot that was targeted by Russian and Syrian planes.

The incident, not a first of its kind in Syria’s six-year conflict, sparked fresh concerns of a Western military intervention in Syria and even a full-scale confrontation between the United States and Russia. In an apparent response to



A Syrian man collects and bags the body of a dead bird, reportedly killed by a suspected toxic gas attack in Khan Sheikun, Syria’s northwestern province of Idlib, April 5, 2017.

the Idlib attack, the U.S. military even fired missiles from a warship in the Mediterranean on an airfield in western Syria, killing several Syrian troops.

‘Detainee in Bahrain’s Jaw Prison Beaten, Sexually Assaulted’

MANAMA (Dispatches) – A Bahraini political dissident currently held at the notorious Jaw Prison has been tormented, a new report has revealed.

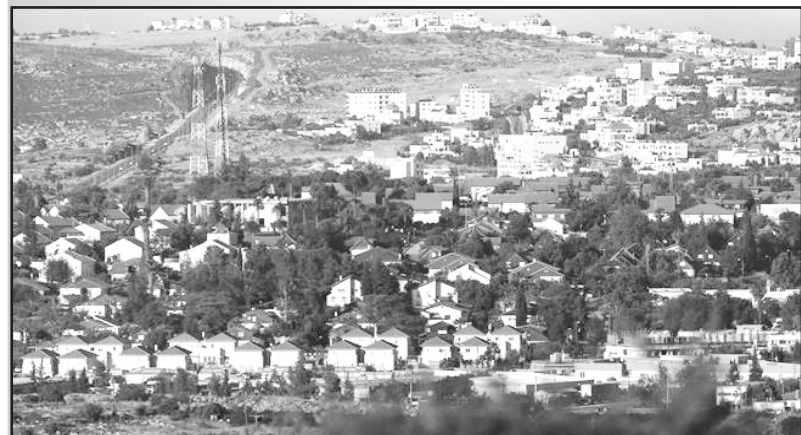
Policeman Mohammed Atef entered the cell of 21-year-old Yousef Ali Riza at the notorious Jaw Prison, south of capital Manama, early last month as he was sleeping and touched his leg, informed sources, requesting not to be named, told Britain-based Arabic-language Bahrain al-Youm news agency.

The police officer, confronted by Yousef, later alleged that the young prisoner had been trying to assault him. Prison officials removed Yousef from his cell and placed him in solitary confinement, where he was purportedly stripped of his clothes and sexually harassed. The sources noted that authorities at Jaw Prison have transformed solitary cells into torture chambers in the absence of closed-circuit televi-

sion cameras. Even though Yusuf has been returned to his cell, he is suffering from the effects of torture. He has been using cotton wool balls over the past few days to stop bleeding from his ear.

The notorious Jaw Prison, Bahrain’s central detention facility, is where Bahraini regime officials keep hundreds of people behind the bars for their participation in peaceful pro-democracy rallies. The ruling Al Khalifah regime continues to clamp down on opposition figures for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression. Thousands of anti-regime protesters have held demonstrations in Bahrain on an almost daily basis ever since a popular uprising began in the country in mid-February 2011. They are demanding that the Al Khalifah dynasty relinquish power and allow a just system representing all Bahrainis to be established.

Zionist Attorney General OK’s 1967 Settlement Order



This picture taken on June 27, 2017 shows the settlement of Ofra, north of the Palestinian city of Ramallah, in the occupied West Bank.

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – The Zionist regime’s attorney general has approved last year the use of a controversial 1967 order to legalize settler units built on private Palestinian land.

Avichai Mendelblit, during a meet-

ing attended by several Zionist judicial officials, said the “Order Concerning Government Property,” which was issued in July 1967, could be invoked to expropriate Palestinian land, the Israeli newspaper Haaretz reported on Sunday.

Clause 5 of the order states that “any transaction concluded in good faith between the authorities and another person ... will not be struck down and is valid, even if it is proven that the asset was not government property at the time of its purchase.” Mendelblit’s office said in a document that the clause had rarely been used in almost five decades, but “the need to make use of it has arisen now.” It further set out a number of conditions for invoking the clause, such as purchase in good faith, the existence of a contract and payment having been made for the land.

Back in February, the regime’s parliament, known as the Knesset, passed a law on the expropriation of privately-owned Palestinian land in the West Bank, where Israeli settlements or outposts have been constructed. However, Palestinians filed petitions to the Israeli High Court against the law. Mendelblit proposed that the Israeli parliament suspend the land garb law until the court rules on the petitions and the Knesset accepted the bid.

Dror Etkes, Israeli anti-settlement activist, said the document by Mendelblit’s office seems to be “a parallel path being prepared ... for the day after the High Court tosses the [expropriation] law into the garbage.”

“The purpose of this legal construction, rotten from the foundation, is to raise the claim of ‘good faith’ wherever Israel has stolen private Palestinian land and given it to settlers,” he said. “This is a situation in which lies, denial, violence and manipulation prevail – that is, everything except good faith.” About 600,000 Zionists live in over 230 settlements built illegally since the 1967 occupation of the Palestinian territories. The continued expansion of settlements is one of the major obstacles to the establishment of peace in the Middle East.

Zionist Regime Abducts Palestinian MP

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – Zionist troops have abducted a Palestinian legislator and a senior member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) during separate raids across the occupied West Bank.

On Sunday morning, a large number of Zionist troops raided the home of 55-year-old Khalida Jarrar in the central West Bank city of Ramallah, located 10 kilometers (six miles) north of al-Quds, and arrested her.

Her husband, Ghassan said Zionist troops seized computers during the raid.

The occupying regime’s internal spy agency, Shin Bet, announced in a statement that Jarrar was arrested along with a Palestinian activist for “promoting terror activities,” without providing any further information.

Jarrar is one of the most outspoken critics of the regime’s occupation and has repeatedly slammed the Tel Aviv regime’s atrocities against Palestinians.

The Israeli regime has been denying the lawmaker the right to travel outside the

occupied Palestinian territories since 1988. She campaigned for months in 2010 before receiving the permission to travel to Jordan for medical treatment.

Meanwhile, a Palestinian member of the Knesset (parliament) has headed to prison with “pride” as he began a two-year sentence on charges of giving cellphones and SIM cards to Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails.

Basel Ghattas of the Joint List, a political alliance of four Arab-dominated parties in Israel, said he was entering prison with his “head held high” and with “support from my people.”

More than 6,500 Palestinians are reportedly held at Israeli jails. Hundreds of the inmates have apparently been incarcerated under the practice of administrative detention.

The Palestinian inmates regularly go on hunger strike in protest against the administrative detention policy and their harsh prison conditions.

Two AKP Officials Killed in Turkey

ANKARA (Dispatches) – Suspected Kurdish militants have killed two officials from Turkey’s governing Justice and Development Party (AKP), Turkish authorities say.

Orhan Mercan, the AKP’s deputy head in the Lice district of the southeastern Diyarbakir Province, died in hospital of wounds he sustained when shot in front of his home on Friday night, the provincial governor’s office said.

Additionally, the governor’s office of Van Province said that Aydin Ahi, deputy head of the AKP in the Ozalp neighborhood, had been killed on Saturday night.

Turkish security sources said the gunmen had seized Ahi from his home at gunpoint and killed him nearby.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the incidents, but AKP officials blamed the killings on the outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party, also known as the PKK.

Turkish Energy Minister Berat Albayrak tweeted that the PKK militants had killed the two men.

Minister of European Union Affairs Omer Celik said the attacks on the AKP officials were aimed at Turkey as a whole.

“These attacks were staged against the entire political institution, legitimacy, democracy, and our nation. The political institution is one of the most important pillars that our nation is based on. An attack on the political institution is an attack against the national entity,” he tweeted.

Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmus said in a post on Twitter, “Such treacherous attacks will never disrupt our fight for freedom against terror organizations and their supporters in the region.”

Turkey has banned the PKK as a terrorist organization. The militant group has been calling for an autonomous Kurdish region since 1984. The conflict has left more than 40,000 people, mostly Kurds, dead.

President...

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of the United Nations Security Council – the United States, France, Britain, Russia and China – plus Germany signed the mammoth agreement in July 2015 and started implementing it in January 2016.

Under the JCPOA, Iran undertook to put limitations on its nuclear program in exchange for the removal of nuclear-related sanctions imposed against Tehran.

Larijani further stressed the importance of paying attention to the fact that the U.S. is making attempts to step up pressure against Iran on the international scene.

On June 15, U.S. senators voted 98-2 in favor of a bill that would impose new sanctions on Iran over its ballistic missile program as well as Iran’s alleged support for terrorism and human rights violations.

Iranian Parliament’s Committee on National Security and Foreign Policy has prepared a bill to counter Washington’s hostile measures.

Qatar ...

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were taken against Qatari companies and financial institutions.

It is unclear what further measures will be taken if Qatar fails to meet the demands, but the UAE ambassador to Russia Omar Ghobash warned last week that further sanctions could be imposed.

As well as expelling Doha from the six-member Persian Gulf Cooperation Council, the Arab states could tell their economic partners they need to make a choice between doing business with them or with Qatar, he told Britain’s Guardian newspaper.

Riyadh’s demands include ending Doha’s support for the Muslim Brotherhood, the closure of Al-Jazeera television, a downgrade of diplomatic ties with Iran and the shutdown of a Turkish military base in the emirate.

Qatar has long pursued a more independent foreign policy than many of its neighbors, who tend to follow the lead of regional powerhouse Saudi Arabia.

Doha has said it is ready for talks to end the crisis and Kuwait, which unlike most of its GCC neighbors has not cut ties, has taken the lead in mediation efforts.

U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has also called for compromise and hosted senior Persian Gulf officials, but his efforts have been undermined by remarks from President Donald Trump apparently supporting Riyadh’s position.

Newspapers in the UAE rounded on Qatar on Sunday, with prominent daily The National saying in an editorial: “Qatar’s wrong-headed behavior is depressingly predictable.”

“A conclusion to the crisis... can only arrive when Doha mends its ways and seeks to answer the Persian Gulf’s concerns. We doubt that day will come soon, even though Qatar must be aware that its actions will deliver profound consequences,” it wrote.

The Qatar Stock Exchange closed down 2.31% Sunday following Sheikh Muhammad’s remarks.

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The White House is partway through a 90 day review on whether to uphold the deal, although any move to abandon it would be strongly opposed by the other signatories - Britain, France, Germany, China and Russia.

Monday’s signing will mark Total’s return to Iran, which has the first-largest gas reserves and fourth-largest oil reserves in the world.

The French firm led development of phases two and three of South Pars in the 1990s and had signed up to develop phase 11 back in 2009.

But it was forced to abandon its projects in Iran in 2012 when France joined European Union partners in imposing sanctions, including an oil embargo, over the country’s nuclear program.

Iran’s oil officials have been keen to attract Western investment and expertise to improve the country’s outdated energy infrastructure.

Iran has also signed preliminary agreements with Shell and Russia’s Gazprom to develop oil and gas projects.

Such deals have not been without controversy in Iran, which has bitter memories of exploitation and interventions driven by foreign oil interests. Many Iranians criticized the move to award tenders to foreign firms last year.

Such criticisms forced the oil ministry to confirm that domestic conglomerates would be allowed to compete.

The first stage of the new 20 year project at South Pars will cost around \$2 billion and consist of 30 wells and two well-head platforms connected to existing onshore treatment facilities.

The site will eventually pump 50.9 million cubic meters of gas per day into Iran’s national grid.