

# Bahrain Denies Imprisoned Shia Cleric Urgent Surgery

MANAMA (Press TV) – Bahraini authorities are reportedly preventing an imprisoned Shia Muslim cleric from receiving appropriate medication and obstinately refusing to allow him to have a much-needed surgery.

The family of Sheikh Mirza al-Mahrous has voiced grave concerns over the wellbeing of the ailing cleric after his health condition worsened, and officials at the notorious Jau Prison, south of the capital Manama, prevented him from undergoing an emergency operation, Arabic-language and independent Manama Post online newspaper reported.

The family said they “received a phone call from him on Sunday, May 3, 2020, informing them of deterioration of his health condition due to the Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), and that the medicine he takes



Imprisoned Bahraini Shia Muslim cleric Sheikh Mirza al-Mahrous (C)

does not work and cannot ease symptoms.”

Sheikh Mahrous told them he urgently needs to have a surgery as diagnosed by a specialist, but the Jau Prison administration deliberately refuses to transfer him to hospital.

The sheikh is among a group of opposition leaders, rights ac-

tivists, bloggers and Shia clerics arrested in connection with their role in the mid-February 2011 popular uprising against the ruling Al Khalifah regime.

He was the vice president of the now-dissolved al-Zahraa Society of Orphans prior to his arrest.

A Bahraini court found the detained opposition figure guilty

of “attempting to overthrow the regime” and subsequently sentenced him to 15 years in prison.

Sheikh Mahrous has frequently gone on hunger strike in protest at prison authorities’ delay in his treatment and denial of the necessary health care in light of his chronic colon disease.

Anti-regime Bahraini protesters have been staging almost daily demonstrations in the tiny Persian Gulf kingdom ever since a pro-democracy uprising began there several years ago.

The demonstrators are calling for the ouster of the Al Khalifah regime and establishment of a just and conclusive system representing all Bahraini nationals.

The Manama regime, in return, has ignored the calls and is pressing ahead with its heavy-handed crackdown and persecution of human rights campaigners and political dissidents.

## UNRWA Operating on ‘Month-to-Month’ Basis

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – Scrambling to tackle COVID-19 in camps across the Middle East, the UN agency supporting Palestinian refugees says it only has enough cash to operate until the end of May because of American funding cuts.

In 2018 President Donald Trump’s administration halted annual payments of \$360m to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), which provides assistance to some 5.5 million registered refugees in the occupied West Bank, Gaza Strip, East al-Quds, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

Elizabeth Campbell, UNRWA’s director in Washington, told re-

porters the loss of U.S. aid had a “corrosive impact” on the agency’s ability to help vulnerable people.

“We are basically operating on a month-to-month basis. Right now, we have funding to pay our 30,000 healthcare workers until the end of this month,” Campbell said in a Zoom conference call from Washington.

She said UNRWA had only secured one-third of its \$1.2bn annual budget and it was suffering its ‘worst financial crisis’ since beginning operations 70 years ago.

The agency is trying to plug the \$800m shortfall in part by appeal-

ing to European and Persian Gulf countries for emergency donations, Campbell said.

Donations from the European Union, the United Kingdom, Germany, Sweden, Canada, and Japan have helped fill UNRWA’s 2020 budget gap.

The United States was by far UNRWA’s biggest donor until it withdrew funding, calling for reforms and suggesting its services be transferred to refugee host countries.

Palestinian refugees are mostly descendants of some 700,000 Palestinians who were driven out of their homes or who fled fighting in the 1948 war that led to the Zi-

onist regime’s occupation of Palestinian lands. Nearly one-third live in 58 camps where UNRWA provides services.

Many refugees fear the dwindling aid they receive could fall further as the coronavirus crisis persists and donors shift priorities.

UNRWA has tried to halt the spread of COVID-19 in and around camps, closing all of its 276 schools that are attended by close to 300,000 children.

It has launched a \$14m emergency appeal for coronavirus funding, and says it will issue another larger aid request in the coming days.

## Palestinian Detainee Taken to Hospital After Harsh Interrogation

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – A Palestinian detainee is taken to hospital after being subjected to harsh interrogation following his arrest by Zionist troops, the PLO’s Prisoners’ Committee has revealed.

General Bilal Al-Natsheh was among 13 Palestinians, most of them officials, who were arrested during raids by the Zionist troops in different parts of al-Quds and the West Bank.

According to the Committee’s lawyer, the interrogation of Al-Natsheh took place in an investigation center in al-Quds where he had been taken following his arrest at his home in the occupied city.

After a couple of hours of being interrogated, the head of the National Popular Conference in al-Quds had to be rushed to the Shaare Zedek Medical Center.

The Palestine Liberation Organization said that the Zionist regime

must take full responsibility for anything that happens to General Al-Natsheh. It also called for him to be released from custody without delay.

A senior Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) official condemned the Zionist regime’s detention of Palestinian officials in East al-Quds.

Hanan Ashrawi, member of the PLO Executive Committee, accused the occupying regime of escalating its violations against the Palestinian citizens and officials in al-Quds and its suburbs, including the storming of homes and searching into its contents.

The PLO Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs has earlier said in an emailed press statement that the regime’s authorities arrested earlier in the day 13 Palestinians in East al-Quds, most of them are leaders and officials.

## Dozen Wounded in Sharjah Residential Tower Fire

SHARJAH (Al Jazeera) – At least 12 people have been wounded after a fire broke out in a residential tower in Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates, the UAE’s Interior Ministry says.

Firefighters brought the fire under control in the 48-storey Abco Tower in Sharjah’s Al Nahda area, Sharjah’s government media office said.

Authorities gave no cause for the blaze, which shouldered into early Wednesday morning.

The blaze saw flaming debris shower neighboring dusty parking lots and left metal siding littering surrounding streets.

Firefighters used a ladder truck to spray water into the building, while its cement-block walls stood charred and exposed after the fire.

Civil Defense teams brought the blaze under control after two hours and the high-rise building was evacuated.

One side of the building was almost entirely damaged, the report said.

Local authorities said the Sharjah Civil Defense (SCD) teams were quick to prevent the situation from escalating, local media reported.

The SCD said the fire started around 9pm local time (17:00 GMT).

Syrian Fadlallah Hassoun, who had just finished his day’s iftar meal in his apartment in the tower, told The Associated Press he initially dismissed the fire alarm as a test.

“Me and family just directly went down with everything we just had and what we were just wearing and we came down immediately,” Hassoun said.

Many others similarly left the building with nothing other than their face masks required in the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. Hassoun praised authorities for swiftly offering help.

“They took our names so that they can see what they can do for us and help us because now we came out and we have no idea what we are going to do,” he said. “We are just

waiting in the street and seeing what’s going to happen.”

Local media said at least five buildings near the engulfed residential tower were evacuated while several cars in the area were damaged by the falling debris.

The UAE, including the skyscraper-studded emirate of Dubai, has suffered a spate of fires in its high-rises in recent years.

Building and safety experts blame a material used for the buildings’ sidings, aluminum composite panel cladding, for the blazes. While some types of cladding can be made with fire-resistant material, experts say those that have caught fire in the UAE and elsewhere were not designed to meet stricter safety standards and were often put onto buildings without any breaks to slow or halt a possible blaze.

Pieces seen on the ground afterwards resembled that material and the speed of the blaze suggested the tower may have been clad in it.

## Satellite...

(Continued From Page One)

of these gentlemen have mentioned that they haven’t fired any workers following the economic problems due to the coronavirus outbreak. This is very good.”

“Insurance, training, welfare, and health services are rights of workers and the responsibility of employers. Of course, if the needs of the families of workers, including their children’s education are fulfilled, it will strengthen worker-employer relationship, which is an auspicious thing,” he added.

## EU...

(Continued From Page One)

Italy and Spain — two of the countries hardest hit by the virus — and, to a lesser extent, France are among the economies that are expected to suffer most. Greece, which largely escaped the disease but whose economy was ravaged previously by its debt crisis and which relies heavily on tourism, is also high on the economic damage list.

France’s economy is expected to shrink by about 8.2%, while Germany will endure a more moderate contraction than most and recover better. Still, it is set to experience this year its worst recession since World War II. Its exports will be badly hit, with a drop in output of 6.5%.

While the virus hit every member country, the extent of the damage it ultimately inflicts will depend on the evolution of the disease in each of them, the resilience of their economies and what policies they put in place to respond.

Gentiloni said that the depth of the recession and the strength of recovery will be uneven across the world’s biggest trading bloc.

Much will depend, he said, on “the speed at which lockdowns can be lifted, the importance of services like tourism in each economy and by each country’s financial resources. Such divergence poses a threat to the single market and the euro area — yet it can be mitigated through decisive, joint European action.”

As recently as Feb. 13, the commission had predicted “a path of steady, moderate growth” this year and next of 1.2%. At that time, uncertainty over U.S. trade policy and a Brexit trade deal, plus tensions in Latin America and the Middle East, were the main threats.

The coronavirus outbreak in China was noted at the time as “a new downside risk,” but the commission’s assumption less than three months ago was “that the outbreak peaks in the first quarter, with relatively limited global spillovers.”

## Hindus ...

(Continued From Page One)

The trolls were given extra ammunition when it emerged that a Muslim group, Tabligi Jamaat, ignored coronavirus guidelines with a religious gathering in March in New Delhi.

At one point the group was linked to almost one third of India’s coronavirus cases, with around 40,000 people linked to the event or its attendees in quarantine.

Newspapers and television channels -- as well as the government -- have also been accused of stirring tensions, with alarmist anchors calling Tabligi Jamaat members “human bombs”.

As the misinformation has exploded, so too has real-world violence and anger against Muslims.

Around the country, Muslim truck drivers and nomads have been assaulted, and Muslim vendors pushed, shoved and threatened.

In one case confirmed by police, a Facebook video showed a young Muslim man bleeding and pleading as he

was beaten with sticks. One attacker is heard demanding: “Who sent you to spread the coronavirus?”

The animosity has also taken subtler forms, with “No Muslims” posters appearing in some villages. One hospital said Muslims would not be admitted without a certificate showing they were COVID-negative.

India’s 200 million Muslims have long complained of growing hostility under Modi, who came to power almost six years ago. Modi was in charge of the western state of Gujarat when religious riots killed around 1,000 mostly Muslims in 2002.

His first term as prime minister saw a rise in “cow vigilantism” -- Hindu extremists lynching Muslims accused of eating beef or killing cows, which are sacred to many Hindus, according to activists.

His second term last year began with revoking the autonomy of India’s only Muslim-majority state, and new citizenship legislation criticized as discriminatory.

In February, Delhi’s worst religious riots in decades left more than 50 dead, two-thirds of them Muslims. A local BJP lawmaker was accused of being a main instigator.

Activists say that in recent weeks, with media attention focused on the pandemic, police have stepped up arrests over the unrest, most of them Muslims and some under anti-terror laws.

“They are making sure there is no one to raise a voice for the community after the pandemic is over,” K. Rahman Khan, a former minority affairs minister, told AFP.

Modi has publicly sought to soothe tensions, calling for “unity and brotherhood”.

He tweeted that “COVID-19 does not see race, religion, color, caste, creed, language or borders before striking.”

But Shahid Siddiqui, from the Indian Muslims for Progress and Reforms, a civil society group formed to battle Islamophobia, said the state was involved in stoking the hatred.

Muslims were already “maligned and painted as dangerous under systematic propaganda,” Siddiqui told AFP.

Coronavirus had added a new dimension, turning Muslims into the new “untouchables”, Siddiqui said, a word usually used to refer to India’s lowest castes.

“It [has been] a deliberate attempt by media and the government to divert the attention of the country from the crises and allow hate politics to rule.”

## U.S. ...

(Continued From Page 2)

Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said the incident had occurred on Afghan soil, and Iranian border guards have denied having any involvement in it.

Iran has hosted millions of Afghans who have made a living for more than four decades and been provided with free education for their children and other amenities by the Islamic Republic.

According to official statistics, Iran spends eight billion dollars on Afghan migrants every year.

Last month, Afghanistan’s mission to Tehran lauded Iran for providing free health services to any Afghan immigrant found to have contracted the COVID-19 disease.

## IRGC...

(Continued From Page 2)

The IRGC responded with a multi-pronged offensive involving missile, drone and artillery units, pounding terrorist positions along the Iranian border with Iraq’s Kurdistan region.

In 2018, the IRGC hit PJAK headquarters in northern Iraq with precision-guided missiles, killing a number of the terrorist group’s top commanders.