

VIENNA (Dispatches) -- Iran's permanent ambassador to Vienna-based international organizations on Sunday said the United States must present a list of steps it would take to remove sanctions on Iran in order to prove its seriousness in the ongoing talks on the 2015 nuclear deal in Austria's capital.

"What is being pursued and discussed in Vienna is presentation of a clear and transparent image concerning the removal of the sanctions," Kazem Gharibabadi told reporters, IRNA reported.

"Identifying and listing the steps for the removal of sanctions (Continued on Page 7)

GAZA (Dispatches) -- Hamas said Sunday the anti-Israel struggle will continue until the full liberation of Al-Aqsa Mosque from the grips of the "Zionist enemy."

Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum praised the "legendary steadfastness" of his fellow Palestinians in the occupied city of Jerusalem Al-Quds, saying the true inhabitants of the city are "facing Israel's extreme racist plans and violations." He added that the regime's repression machine is constantly working against Palestinians in the occupied city, targeting their "existence, rights, identity and sanctities."

Viewpoint

Need for Palestinians to Upgrade Defences

At Least Five Injured in Quake in Southwest Iran



Persepolis Thrash Al-Rayyan at AFC Champions League



Hamas: Violations Against Al-Aqsa Herald Massive Uprising



Crackdown Intensifies as Protests Hit U.S. Cities

MINNESOTA (Dispatches) -- Hundreds of people gathered outside the Brooklyn Center Police Department on Saturday for a seventh night of protests over the fatal police shooting of Daunte Wright.

As the crowd gathered along Humboldt Avenue in front of two barriers ringing the police station, with letters reading "Stop State Terror" affixed to the chain-link fencing, fallout continued from a police crackdown on protesters and journalists the previous night.

Protesters also gathered earlier Saturday in Stillwater, Minn., outside the home of Washington County Attorney Pete Orput who is handling the case of Kim Potter, the former Brooklyn Center police officer who shot Wright during a traffic stop last Sunday. They called on Orput to file more-serious charges against Potter.

The protest started as a peaceful demonstration and march, but several hours later it quickly descended into chaos as a large contingent of law enforcement officers rushed, pursued and surrounded protesters.

More than 130 protesters were arrested, and journalists were also caught up in the crackdown and detained, with some pepper-sprayed and others required to be photographed and have their IDs photographed.

It was a drastic change in tactics from Thursday night, when authorities opted against enforcing a curfew and let protesters disperse on their own, without any arrests.

Criticism of the tactics used by law enforcement grew during the day Saturday, with photos and videos spreading across social media. The detention and pepper-spraying of journalists drew particular scrutiny, as it appeared to violate a court order filed hours before the protest.

Civil rights leader the Rev. Jesse Jackson met with protesters outside the police station on Saturday evening.

Police in Portland, Oregon, said Saturday they arrested four people after declaring a riot Friday night that started after police fatally shot a man while responding to reports of a person with a gun.

It came after the police shooting earlier Friday and also was part of vigils and demonstrations already planned for the night in the name of people killed in police shootings nationwide. They include 13-year-old Adam Toledo of Chicago and Wright.

Deputy Police Chief Chris Davis told reporters a white man in his 30s had been shot and

killed in Portland by police. The man was pronounced dead at the scene in Lents Park, a leafy, residential neighborhood of the city.

Two officers fired a 40mm device that shoots non-lethal projectiles, and one officer — an eight-year veteran — fired a gun, police said in a statement. Police identified the officer who fired his gun as Zachary DeLong. He is on paid administrative leave, authorities said.

Portland has been the site of frequent protests, many involving violent clashes between officers and demonstrators, since the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis in May.

Over the summer, there were demonstrations for more than 100 straight days. Earlier this week, a crowd set a fire outside the city's police union headquarters following recent fatal police shootings in Chicago and Minneapolis.

In Chicago, where Toledo was killed, thousands marched in Logan Square after the video of the 13-year-old being shot with his arms raised was released this week. The protesters planned to march to mayor Lori Lightfoot's home, some of them calling for her resignation.

The event was largely peaceful, though some police and protesters scuffled as the night drew to a close.

Iran Marks Army Day With Parades



Army units parade during ceremonies marking the National Army Day on April 18, 2021.

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- Iran on Sunday marked its National Army Day by parading the latest military achievements, including home-grown air defense systems, at selected military bases across the country due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Military units held a motorcade parade in the capital Tehran where various types of unmanned aerial vehicles, tanks, anti-aircraft batteries, advanced missile systems and different kinds of electronic

warfare systems were put on display.

Army chief Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi, and commanders of the army's air force, navy and ground force as well as senior commanders of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) were present to oversee the parade.

"The army has always stood with the people. Forty-three years ago, we supported the Iranian nation and we continue to do so," Mousavi

told Press TV.

Military authorities, however, decided to cancel march-pasts in compliance with the coronavirus restrictions.

The Army's air defense division unveiled three domestically-developed missile systems, including Zolfaghar low-altitude missile system that enjoys great mobility and can connect to electro-optic systems.

Majid missile system used for

intercepting and downing low-altitude targets as well as cruise missiles, and Khatam artillery fire control system capable of striking various aerial targets at low altitudes were showcased as well.

Damavand strategic and long-range system, which is used for downing various aircraft as well as cruise and ballistic missiles, was also displayed.

Ahead of the ceremonies, a message from Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei was read out, in which he extolled the contributions the Army has made to ensuring the security of the country.

The Leader on Saturday issued a message, calling on the Army to strengthen its preparedness as much as needed.

"Send my greetings to all the dear Army personnel and their honorable families. Today, the Army is present on the scene and stands ready to carry out its mission. Keep increasing the readiness as much as needed and play a role [in this regard]," the message addressed to Gen. Mousavi read.

The National Army Day was included in the Iranian calendar after a historic letter from the late founder of the Islamic Republic, Imam Khomeini, in 1979, in which he voiced his strong support for the Army and ordered its troops to hold nationwide parades on April 18 every year.

Nowruz Fallout: Highest Daily Deaths in Months

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- Iran's daily coronavirus death toll climbed over 400 for the first time in months on Sunday, as the country battles a post-holiday infection surge.

Iranian health authorities recorded 405 fatalities from the virus, pushing the total death toll to 66,732. Officials increasingly have warned about the impact of trends seen nationwide during the Persian New Year, or Nowruz. The two-week holiday last month brought increased travel, relaxed restrictions and large gatherings without precautions.

After COVID-19 cases broke record after record earlier this month, the Health Ministry reported 21,644 infections on Sunday, bringing the total count over 2.2 million. Hospitals are rapidly filling across the country, particularly in the capital. Authorities reported 130 deaths in Tehran alone, according to Mohsen Hashemi, head of the Tehran municipal council. The single-day death toll nationwide reached a peak of over 480 last November.

The coronavirus pandemic has hammered Iran for months, but the government has signaled it can't sustain the punishing lockdowns seen in the U.S. and Europe without risking economic impact. Iran's economy has struggled under harsh U.S. sanctions, reimposed when former

President Donald Trump abandoned the 2015 landmark nuclear deal that granted the country sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on its nuclear program.

Still, Iran has restricted business operations in more than 250 cities for a period of 10 days, shuttering restaurants, beauty salons, malls and bookstores, confectionaries and public parks.

They have the highest virus positivity rates and the most severe restrictions in place. Over 85% of the country now has either a red or orange infection status.

The government's inoculation rollout has gotten off to a slow start, but the country is producing and a range of domestically made vaccines.

Nevertheless, President Hassan Rouhani stressed the importance of importing foreign-made vaccines in a speech last week.

"We cannot wait for the domestic vaccine to reach mass production," he said. "We need to expand vaccination this spring by importing vaccines in appropriate ways."

COVAX, an international collaboration to deliver the vaccine equitably across the world, delivered its first shipment to Iran this month from the Netherlands containing 700,000 Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine doses.

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Afghanistan War Bill Put at \$2.26 Trillion

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) -- The nearly two-decade war in Afghanistan has cost the United States \$2.26 trillion, according to a new analysis by Brown University.

But even after the last American soldier leaves Afghanistan later this year, as the Biden administration has pledged, the costs will continue to rise, according to Brown's Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs.

In its Costs of War report, the Watson Institute tallies the staggering expense of the United States' longest war, as the Biden administration prepares to withdraw the last few thousand troops from Afghanistan no later than Sept. 11. The analysis collected the estimated congressional appropriations for the war, including operations in both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The greatest single expense -- \$933 billion, or 41% of the war's total costs -- came in the Pentagon's Overseas Contingency Operations spending, the report states. The controversial OCO budget, which was used to pay for the war, was unaffected by budgetary caps imposed on the rest of the department and grew significantly over the years.

But the Pentagon's base budget also saw its own war-related increases, apart from the OCO budget and the costs of actually waging war in Afghanistan. The Watson Institute said the military's overall budget grew by an additional \$443 billion, making it the third-largest cost of the war.

The interest costs, totaling \$530 billion, from borrowing money to pay for the war, make up the invasion's second-biggest expense.

The study said that the U.S. has also spent \$296 billion to care for veterans of the Afghanistan war.

The State Department's own OCO war budget cost \$59 billion, according to the report.

But these costs are not yet done accumulating. The Watson Institute said its analysis did not include the costs of lifetime care for war veterans or future interest payments on money the U.S. borrowed for the war.

The report estimates that up to 241,000 people died in Afghanistan and Pakistan as a direct result of the war.

The war cost the lives of 2,442 U.S. troops, six Pentagon officials, 3,936 U.S. contractors, and 1,144 allied troops, the report states. Between 66,000 and 69,000 Afghan national military members and police, as well as another 9,314 Pakistani troops and police, also died.

More than 71,000 civilians -- roughly 47,000 in Afghanistan and 24,000 in Pakistan -- died, according to the report. And more than 51,000 opposition fighters died in Afghanistan, as did another roughly 33,000 in Pakistan.

The report said that about 136 journalists and media workers, and 549 humanitarian workers, also died in the war.