

More Politicians Vocal Against U.S. Support for Zionist Regime



Al-Awda, the Palestine Right to Return Coalition, holds a demonstration at the Zionist regime's consulate in Los Angeles to support the rights of Palestinians in their conflict with the occupying regime on Tuesday, May 11, 2021.

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – Independent U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders condemned unconditional American support to the Zionist regime and Washington's disregard to Palestinian rights.

"We must recognize that Palestinian rights matter. Palestinian lives matter," Sanders wrote in an article published on Friday by the New York Times.

"Palestinian families in the Jerusalem (al-Quds) neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah have been living under the threat of eviction for many years, navigating a legal system designed to facilitate their forced displacement. And over the past weeks, extremist settlers have

intensified their efforts to evict them," he wrote.

He added that "those evictions are just one part of a broader system of political and economic oppression".

"For years we have seen a deepening Israeli occupation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem (Al-Quds) and a continuing blockade on Gaza that make life increasingly intolerable for Palestinians. In Gaza, which has about two million inhabitants, 70 percent of young people are unemployed and have little hope for the future," he wrote.

He slammed Zionist prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu's regime for marginalizing and demonizing

Palestinian citizens and pursuing "settlement policies designed to foreclose the possibility of a two-state solution".

He said, "Netanyahu has cultivated an increasingly intolerant and authoritarian type of racist nationalism."

"It is shocking and saddening that racist mobs that attack Palestinians on the streets of Jerusalem (Al-Quds) now have representation in its Knesset," he wrote.

He said Americans should not be "apologists for the right-wing Netanyahu government and its undemocratic and racist behavior."

"We must change course and adopt an evenhanded approach,

one that upholds and strengthens international law regarding the protection of civilians, as well as existing U.S. law holding that the provision of U.S. military aid must not enable human rights abuses," he wrote.

Earlier, several Democratic members of the House of Representatives also spoke out against the United States' military support for the Zionist regime and called for the protection of Palestinians' rights, in contrast to other Democrats and Republicans who expressed their full support for the regime during the ongoing escalation in the Gaza Strip.

In an emotional speech on the House floor, Rashida Tlaib criticized President Joe Biden and other top officials for offering statements that she said did not acknowledge "Palestinian humanity", Al Jazeera reported.

"To read the statements from President [Joe] Biden, Secretary [of State Antony] Blinken, General [Lloyd] Austin and leaders of both parties, you would hardly know Palestinians existed at all," said Tlaib, the U.S. Congress's only Palestinian-American member.

Wearing a keffiyeh and at times trying to hold back her tears, Tlaib added: "If our own State Department can't even bring itself to acknowledge the killing of Palestinian children is wrong, well, I will say it for the millions of Americans who stand with me against the killing of innocent children, no matter their ethnicity, or faith," she added.

SMEs in MENA Pay Bigger Price Over Pandemic

DUBAI (Arab News) – Staying in business through the COVID-19 pandemic has not been cheap for retailers, hoteliers or eateries — to name just a few types of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the Middle East and North Africa region.

All over the world, including the Arab region, SMEs have suffered the double whammy of lost custom combined with new expenditure on cleaning, testing, protective equipment and hand sanitizers.

Companies have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on hygiene protocols in a desperate bid to keep their doors open. Contact-intensive sectors such as leisure, hospitality and tourism have suffered more than

most. Airlines, spas, gyms and galleries have all been forced to limit footfall.

Although the rollout of vaccines has raised hopes of a turnaround this year, with people itching to book summer getaways and nights out on the town after months stuck indoors, a mixture of new virus mutations and the uneven distribution of vaccines means the world is still a long way from returning to normal.

According to an April report by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which assessed the impact of the pandemic on SMEs over the past year, such firms have been hit far harder than their larger counterparts.

"SMEs are overrepresented in the sectors most affected by the crisis, in particular in wholesale and retail trade, air transport, accommodation and food services, real estate, professional services, and other personal services," the report said.

"Smaller firms are typically more financially fragile and have smaller cash buffers than their larger counterparts. This makes them less resilient to crises."

Small companies also tend to have weaker supply chains and can "lag behind in terms of the uptake of digital tools and technologies which can help to build resilience in the current pandemic crisis."

Crucially, it would seem,

SMEs are also "less likely to have managerial capability to comply with new regulatory frameworks to guarantee customers' and employees' safety."

For Tala Badri, founder and executive director of the Center for Musical Arts in Dubai, most of the past year's excess expenditure has been spent on COVID-19 safety and hygiene measures for her patrons and staff.

When businesses in Dubai were cleared to reopen in the second half of 2020, under strict public health guidelines, Badri was legally obliged to hire an approved cleaning company to sanitize the entire premises, its equipment and its musical instruments.

Oman Lifts COVID-19 Movement Ban

MUSCAT (Arab News) – Muscat has allowed the resumption of commercial activities after the national task force handling the coronavirus pandemic in Oman has lifted the ban on movement of residents and vehicles.

However public health protocols remain in place, including a limited customer capacity inside business, a continued closure of gyms and sports clubs as well as delivery-only operations after 8:00 pm.

All commercial activities and shops after 8:00 pm will operate without the entry of customers, while delivery and handling system is allowed.

Customers can enter food stores throughout the day, while shopping malls, restaurants, shops, and cafes are allowed 50 percent of customers until 8 pm, a report from daily Times of Oman said.

Children below the age of twelve are not allowed entry into business establishments, the report added.

Oman's Supreme Committee earlier issued new directives, effective May 15, which lifted movement restrictions, barred in-store customers between 8 pm until 4 am and resumption of work in all government offices albeit in a 50 percent worker capacity.

Suez Canal Starts Dredging Work to Extend Double Lane

CAIRO (Reuters) – The Suez Canal Authority (SCA) has started dredging work to extend a second lane that allows for two-way traffic in a southern section of the canal near to where a giant container ship got stuck for six days in March, it said on Saturday.

The SCA has said previously that it planned to extend a second canal lane that opened in 2015 by 10 km to make it 82 km long, and that it would widen and

deepen a single lane stretch at the southern end of the canal.

The work had begun following directives from Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi "to immediately start implementing the proposed development plan and put in place a timetable for completion as soon as possible", the SCA said on Saturday.

The grounding of the 440-metre Ever Given container ship in a southern sec-

tion of the canal from March 23-29 delayed the passage of hundreds of vessels through the waterway, disrupting global trade.

The Ever Given, still loaded with thousands of containers, is being held in the Great Bitter Lake between two stretches of the canal, amid a dispute over an SCA compensation claim against the ship's Japanese owner Shoen Kisen.

Elections...

(Continued From Page One)

and Abolhassan Firouzbadi, the head of the Supreme Council of Cyberspace.

Since registration opened on Tuesday, other prominent candidates who signed up include former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps member Saeed Muhammad, former defense minister Saeed Dehqan, former petroleum minister Rostam Qasemi, and reformist Mostafa Tajzadeh.

Saturday was the last day for candidates to sign up to run in the June 18 election, in a process that began on Tuesday.

Entrants are now to be screened for their political and Islamic qualifications by the 12-member Constitutional Council vetting body.

President Hassan Rouhan cannot run again because of term limits.

Pro-Palestinian...

(Continued From Page One)

saying they would appeal the decision.

"We refuse to silence our solidarity with the Palestinians, and we will not be prevented from demonstrating," the Association of Palestinians in the northern Ile-de-France region said shortly after the court ban was announced.

Earlier, representatives of the association told news media that France was "the only democratic country to forbid these demonstrations."

The French interior ministry ordered police chiefs across the country to keep a close eye on planned demonstrations in support of Palestinians and ban them if necessary, as part of measures to bolster police protection of the Jewish community.

The lawyers for organizers of the rallies said they would appeal to France's top administrative court, and called the police ban "disproportionate" and "politically motivated."

Elsewhere in Europe, police in Denmark fired teargas and used batons to forcibly disperse pro-Palestinian activists in front of the Israeli embassy in the capital Copenhagen.

Media reports said several women and children were affected by the teargas, and that three protesters were arrested during the rally.

Also on Friday, police fired teargas to disperse a crowd of more than 200 people protesting in Kenya's capital, Nairobi, against the Israeli bombing of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Several demonstrators were taken into custody.

Protesters waved banners with the Palestinian flag and with the words, "Kenians stand with Palestine," and "Our freedom is incomplete without the Freedom of Palestine."

Zionist PM Benjamin Netanyahu and the regime's foreign minister Gabi Ashkenazi have thanked their leadership counterparts in the U.S. and Europe for their support for Tel Aviv's brutal aggression.

In the U.S., as many as 140 progressive groups called on President Joe Biden to uphold the stated principles of international law and condemn human rights violations against Palestinians.

In a joint statement, the groups urged the Biden administration to denounce efforts to evict Palestinian families in Jerusalem Al-Quds and "exert the utmost diplomatic pressure to prevent these potential war crimes from taking place."

The statement, signed by prominent advocacy groups, cited the United Nations' assessment that the displacement campaign in Jerusalem's Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood may constitute a war crime.

"This takes place in the broader context of Israel's ongoing policy to forcibly remove Palestinians from their homes through eviction, home demolition, and displacement, with the express intent of pushing Palestinians out of Jerusalem in order to create and maintain a Jewish majority and supremacy in the city," they said.

"We are horrified by Israel's use of disproportionate and deadly force against Palestinians in Gaza which have already resulted in the killings of dozens of Palestinians, including children."

Council...

(Continued From Page 2)

must, among other things, be a political and religious personality. The Iranian presidential election registration period began on May 11. The council will have until May 25 to examine the documents submitted by the hopefuls. It can extend the date by another five days if needed. The overseeing body will then release a final list of presidential candidates on May 26-27.

Slated for June 18, the next presidential election in Iran will be held simultaneously with council and midterm parliamentary and Assembly of Experts elections.