

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – Several hundred people have demonstrated in Tel Aviv against new coronavirus restrictions and vaccines by the occupying regime as positive cases and hospitalizations rose to levels not seen in months. The Zionist regime's health ministry reported Saturday that 2,435 new Covid cases had been recorded the day before — the highest number since March — driven by the more contagious Delta variant. There were 326 hospitalizations, the highest since April. The rise in infections flies in the face of the regime's 'efforts' to vaccinate large number of Zionists in the occupied territories.

# Iraq's PMU Launches Anti-Terrorist Operation in Diyala

## Taliban Rockets Hit Kandahar Airport, Clashes Intensify



Fighters from Iraqi Popular Mobilization Units gather around the Tal Afar airport as they and Iraqi army forces advance in their campaign to drive Daesh terrorist group out of the Iraqi city.

BAGHDAD (Press TV) – Iraqi anti-terror Popular Mobilization Units – better known as Hashd al-Sha'abi – have launched an operation to clear Daesh remnants from villages and rural areas in the eastern province of Diyala near the border with Iran.

Talib al-Mousawi, commander of Hashd al-Sha'abi operations

in Diyala, said in a statement that PMU brigades pushed into areas north of the provincial capital city of Baquba some 50 km northeast of Baghdad to chase Daesh militants.

A unit of Hashd al-Sha'abi forces carried out a rapid mopping-up operation in an area of the Hamrin heights where Daesh militants

were holed out, preparing for terrorist attacks against security forces and local civilians, he added.

The senior commander said PMU fighters detonated several explosive devices belonging to the terrorists, and successfully completed their mission despite scorching heat in the rugged mountainous area, adding they will continue to

pursue Daesh remnants.

Meanwhile, Hashd Sha'abi forces successfully foiled an infiltration attempt by a group of Daesh terrorists into an area in the central province of Salahuddin.

According to a report published by Iraq's al-Ahad television network, the 41st Brigade of Hashd Sha'abi responded on Saturday to a terrorist group attempting to cross into al-Ajiliyah area of the Yathrib district.

"Following the terrorist attack, Hashd al-Sha'abi forces launched an operation to hunt down Daesh elements and establish stability and security in the area," the report added.

The developments came a day after Daesh terrorists attacked a funeral in the Balad district of Salahuddin province, killing at least five people and wounding 20 others.

Hashd al-Sha'abi fighters have played a major role in the liberation of Daesh-held areas to the south, northeast and north of Baghdad, ever since the terrorists launched an offensive in the country in June 2014.



Kandahar international airport in southern Afghanistan

KABUL (Dispatches) – Taliban militants struck Kandahar airport in southern Afghanistan with at least three rockets overnight, the group's spokesman said on Sunday, adding that the aim was to thwart air strikes conducted by Afghan government forces.

"Kandahar airport was targeted by us because the enemy was using it as a center to conduct air strikes against us," Zabiullah Mujahid, a Taliban spokesperson, told Reuters.

Airport chief Massoud Pashtun also confirmed that the airport was hit with three rockets overnight.

Afghan government officials said the rocket attacks forced authorities to suspend all flights and that the runway was partially damaged. There were no immediate reports of casualties, they said.

Officials said the Taliban see Kandahar as a major strategic point, which they seem to be using as a control center for gaining complete dominance over five other provinces.

Clashes between Afghan forces and Taliban militants have intensified in the cities of Kandahar and neighboring Helmand province.

The Taliban now control more than 200 of the country's 419 district centers, according to reports.

In the west, Afghan officials said Taliban commanders were swiftly gaining control of strategic buildings around Herat city, forcing civilians to remain in their homes.

On the city's outskirts, government forces also targeted Taliban positions with airstrikes overnight. Herat provincial governor's spokesman Jailani Farhad said that around 100 militant fighters were killed in the attacks.

Defense Ministry spokesman Fawad Aman said hundreds of re-

inforcements arrived in the city on Sunday morning.

Four days of fighting forced scores of families to flee their homes and seek shelter closer to the heart of the city.

In the meantime, authorities in the southern city of Lashkar Gah called for more troops to rein in the assaults.

Violence surged across Afghanistan after the United States failed to meet a May 1 deadline for a complete withdrawal of its forces from the country, under a deal it had reached with the Taliban last year.

The 2001 invasion of Afghanistan ousted the Taliban from power, but it worsened the security situation in the country.

The invasion, which has led to the longest war in U.S. history, has left the nation "poor, aid-dependent, and conflict-affected," according to the latest report submitted to the U.S. Congress.

In another scourge, the death toll from this week's flooding in Afghanistan's eastern province of Nuristan has risen to at least 113, with dozens of people still missing, officials said.

Rescue operations were still under way on Sunday, days after heavy rains overwhelmed Kamdesh district in the remote, Taliban-controlled province, about 200 kilometers (120 miles) northeast of the capital, Kabul, on Wednesday.

Abdul Samai Zarbi, spokesman for Afghanistan's National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA), told dpa news agency more than 170 houses had been either "partially or completely" destroyed, affecting about 300 families.

While he gave an injury toll of 34, Zarbi noted figures were preliminary and subject to change.

## Tunisia's Ennahda Blames UAE for Power Grab

TUNIS (Dispatches) – Tunisia's parliament speaker and leader of the Ennahda party, Rached Ghannouchi, has blamed the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for the political turmoil in his country, which has seen President Kais Saied suspending parliament and seizing executive power.

Speaking to the Times newspaper, Ghannouchi said the Persian Gulf country was determined to "finish off" the Arab Spring, the 2011 uprisings that saw long-term rulers overthrown

across the Middle East and North Africa.

"It has taken upon itself the idea that the Arab Spring was born in Tunisia and must die in Tunisia," he said, adding that the UAE saw the brand of Islamic democracy propounded by Ennahda as a threat.

However, he said that he thought it was unlikely Tunisia would see something happen akin to the military takeover that happened in Egypt in 2013, a move that was backed by the UAE.

"Tunisia is not Egypt.

There is a different relationship between the army and the government," Ghannouchi said.

"Here, since the revolution, the army has protected freedom and the ballot box."

Tunisia, the cradle of the Arab Spring protests a decade ago, was thrust into a constitutional crisis last Sunday after Saied sacked Prime Minister Hichem Mechichi and suspended the country's parliament for 30 days.

Saied said he would be running the country's executive

affairs in cooperation with a premier of his own choosing in the wake of violent protests across the nation over the government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ailing economy.

Ghannouchi also said that the UAE was already worried about the possibility of a peace deal in neighboring Libya, which could also potentially lead to democratic elections.

"They have a great fear that democratic transitions might spread to the rest of the Arab region," he stressed.

## Haniyeh Re-Elected as Hamas Chief

GAZA (Dispatches) – Ismail Haniyeh has been elected to a second term as head of Hamas, the Palestinian resistance movement based in the Gaza Strip, two Palestinian officials told Reuters on Sunday.

"Brother Ismail Haniyeh was re-elected as the head of the movement's political office for a second time," one official told Reuters. His term will last four years.

Haniyeh, the group's leader since 2017, has controlled its political activities throughout armed resistance against the Zionist regime - including an 11-day bombardment of the strip by the Zionist regime in May that left over 250 dead in Gaza.

He was the right-hand man to Hamas founder Sheikh Ahmed Yassin in Gaza, before the wheelchair-bound leader was as-

sassinated in 2004.

Haniyeh, 58, led Hamas' entry into politics in 2006, when they were victors in Palestinian parliamentary elections, defeating a divided Fatah party led by President Mahmoud Abbas. Haniyeh became prime minister shortly after the January 2006 victory.

The Zionist regime has imposed a blockade of Gaza since then.

In another development, the resistance movement on Saturday slammed the United States for continuing to provide military support to the Zionist regime in light of a new arms deal between the two allies.

"The U.S. decision to present a massive arms deal to the Zionist entity encourages the occupation to continue its aggression

against our people and their sanctities," Hamas Spokesman Hazem Qassem said in a statement, Anadolu news agency reported.

Qassem said the U.S. risks being an accomplice in the regime's aggression against the Palestinians by continuing to support it "with weapons, money and political cover for the occupation policies".

He noted such an approach by the U.S. emboldens the Zionist regime to rebel against international laws and resolutions and heightens tensions in the region.

The U.S. State Department said in a statement Friday that it approved the sale of 18 Sikorsky CH-53K heavy-lift helicopters to the occupying regime as part of a \$3.4 billion deal.

## President Assad Asks PM Arnous to Form New Cabinet

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has tasked Prime Minister Hussein Arnous with forming a new government following an election in May that extended Assad's presidency.

Assad originally named Arnous as prime minister last August to replace Imad Khamis.

Assad asked the former water resources minister in a presidential decree to move quickly and form a new government, Syria's official news agency reported on Sunday.

President Assad took the oath last month after a presidential election last May which the

55-year-old leader won with 95.1% of the votes.

Hamoudeh Sabbagh, the parliament speaker, said Assad won 95.1 percent of the vote as opposed to 88.7 percent in the 2014 election.

He said about 14 million of the estimated 18 million eligible voters inside and outside Syria had cast their ballots, with a turnout rate of 78.64 percent.

Assad's competitors, former deputy cabinet minister Abdallah Saloum Abdallah and head of a Syrian opposition party, Mahmoud Ahmed Marei, won 3.3 percent and 1.5 percent of the vote respectively.