

TEHRAN -- Iranian Foreign Minister Hussein Amir-Abdollahian congratulated Lebanon on the formation of a new government, reaffirming Tehran's support for the Lebanese nation.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran believes that peace and stability in Lebanon have been achieved through a democratic approach and in light of domestic consensus and solidarity and without foreign interference," he said in a message to his Lebanese counterpart Abdullah Bou Habib.

KIEV (AFP) -- Gunmen opened fire with automatic weapons on a car carrying a senior aide to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Wednesday, in what officials said was an attempted assassination in response to his crackdown on oligarchs.

Sergiy Shefir, a 57-year-old former scriptwriter and longtime associate of comedian-turned-politician Zelensky, was reported to have escaped without serious injury. Shefir's driver was "seriously injured" and that police had launched a special operation in the area.

Viewpoint

President Raisi's UN Address Awakens Frozen Consciences

JCPOA's Revival Should Benefit Iran



Iran Trounce Bangladesh at AFC Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers



Yemeni Forces Regaining Full Control of Ma'rib Capital



Hospitals Overwhelmed,

'Devastating': COVID Deaths Rage On in U.S.

WASHINGTON (AP) -- COVID-19 deaths in the U.S. have climbed to an average of more than 1,900 a day for the first time since early March, with experts saying the virus is preying largely on a distinct group: 71 million unvaccinated Americans.

The increasingly lethal turn has filled hospitals, complicated the start of the school year, delayed the return to offices and demoralized health care workers.

"It is devastating," said Dr. Dena Hubbard, a pediatrician in the Kansas City, Missouri, area who has cared for babies delivered prematurely by cesarean section in a last-ditch effort to save their mothers, some of whom died. For health workers, the deaths, combined with misinformation and disbelief about the virus, have been "heart-wrenching, soul-crushing."

Twenty-two people died in one week alone at CoxHealth hospitals in the Springfield-Branson area, a level almost as high as that of all of Chicago. West Virginia has had more deaths in the first three weeks of September — 340 — than in the previous three months combined. Georgia is averaging 125 dead per day, more than California or other more populous states.

The nation was stunned back in December when it was witnessing 3,000 deaths a day. But that was when almost no one was vaccinated.

Now, nearly 64% of the U.S. population has received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. And yet, average deaths per day have climbed 40% over the past two weeks, from 1,387 to 1,947, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.

"I think this is a real failure of society and our most egregious sin to be at this stage where we have hospitals overwhelmed, ICUs overwhelmed and hitting this mark in terms of deaths per day," Dr. William Moss of Johns Hopkins lamented.

In Kansas, 65-year-old cattleman Mike Limon thought he had beaten COVID-19 and went back to work for a few days. But the virus had "fried" his lungs and he died last week, said his grandson, Cadin Limon, 22, of Wichita.

Cases are falling in West Virginia from pandemic highs, but deaths and hospitalizations are expected to continue increasing for

as many as six more weeks, said retired National Guard Maj. Gen. James Hoyer, who leads the state's coronavirus task force.

Dr. Greg Martin, who is president of the Society of Critical Care Medicine and practices mostly at Grady Hospital in Atlanta, said the staff is buckling under the strain.

"I think everyone in 2020 thought we would get through this. No one really thought that we would still be seeing this the same way in 2021," he said.

Wyoming Gov. Mark Gordon activated the state's National Guard on Tuesday to provide assistance to hospitals dealing with a surge of COVID-19 patients.

In Oklahoma, Hillcrest South Hospital in Tulsa is among several medical centers around the country to add temporary morgues. Deaths are at an all-time high there, at three to four times the number it would see in a non-COVID-19 world, said Bennett Geister, hospital CEO.

He said the staff there, too, is worn out.

"They didn't sign up to be ICU nurses only to have people pass away on them," he said. "They signed up to be ICU nurses to take people to recovery and heal people from the brink of death."

Says Westernized Hegemony Has Miserably Failed

President Raisi: We Don't Trust U.S. Promises



Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi remotely addresses the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly, Sept. 21, 2021 at UN headquarters.

TEHRAN — Iran's new president slammed U.S. sanctions imposed on his nation as a mechanism of war, using his first UN address since his swearing-in to forcefully call out Washington's policies in the region and the growing political schism within America.

President Ebrahim Raisi, who was sworn in last month after an election, on Tuesday delivered a far more critical and blunt take on American foreign policy than his predecessor, Hassan Rouhani, had

done in previous speeches to the UN General Assembly.

His speech espoused Iran's Islamic political identity and where the Muslim nation sees its place in the world, despite the most draconian U.S. sanctions that have hurt its economy and ordinary Iranians. "Sanctions are the U.S.' new way of war with the nations of the world," Raisi said, adding that such economic punishment during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic amounts to "crimes against human-

ity." U.S. sanctions have made international purchases of medicine and equipment much more difficult. Iran has endured multiple waves of the coronavirus, with nearly 118,000 deaths recorded.

In taking aim at the United States, Raisi also referenced the shocking Jan. 6th raid on Capitol Hill by supporters of then-President Donald Trump, and the horrific scenes at Kabul airport last month as desperate Afghans plunged to

their deaths after clinging to a U.S. aircraft evacuating people.

"From the Capitol to Kabul, one clear message was sent to the world: the U.S.' hegemonic system has no credibility, whether inside or outside the country," Raisi said.

"What is seen in our region today proves that not only the hegemonist and the idea of hegemony, but also the project of imposing Westernized identity, have failed miserably."

The Iranian president said "the project of imposing Westernized identity" has failed, and added that "today, the U.S. does not get to exit Iraq and Afghanistan but is expelled."

Iran shares long borders with Afghanistan to its east and Iraq to its west.

The perseverance of nations, he said, is stronger than the power of superpowers. In a dig at the political slogans used by Trump and his successor President Joe Biden, Raisi said: "Today, the world doesn't care about 'America First' or 'America is Back.'"

Speaking remotely via video from Tehran, Raisi praised Iran's Islamic Revolution of 1979 as the fulfillment of "religious democracy" and linked the growth of "indigenous terrorism in the West" to a decline in spirituality.

Referring to the nuclear talks in Vienna to bring back the U.S. to compliance, Raisi said Iran considers

(Continued on Page 7)

U.S. Dems Nix \$1bn for Zionist Regime's Iron Dome

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) -- U.S. House Democrats have removed \$1 billion in military funding for Israel from a major budget bill after objections from liberal lawmakers, with the Democratic leadership promising to introduce a stand-alone bill later this week to fund the occupying regime's Iron Dome missile system.

Tuesday's decision comes after the House debated legislation to fund the federal government through December 3 and raise the nation's borrowing limit.

Some members of Democrat's Congressional Progressive Caucus objected to a provision in a stopgap spending bill to provide the additional funding so the Zionist regime can replenish its aerial missile system.

The call to remove the Iron Dome funding from the spending bill was spearheaded by Congresswomen Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Betty McCollum, successfully mediated by Rosa DeLauro, according to a Congress member who spoke to The Times of Israel.

Congresswomen Rashida Tlaib, Ilhan Omar, Ayanna Pressley and Pramila Jayapal also threatened to vote against the bill if the Iron Dome funding was included, a Congressional aide told the paper.

The plan has drawn strong condemnation from the Republicans, with House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy accusing the Democrats of capitulating to "the anti-Semitic influence of their radical members".

Pro-Zionist Republican senator, Ted Cruz, called the decision "an outrage and a disgrace" and urged the Democratic rank-and-file to denounce the party's leadership.

"Tragic. Dem leadership surrenders to the anti-Semitic Left. They hate Israel so much that Dems are stripping \$1 BILLION in funding for Iron Dome."

"Will any Dems have the courage to denounce?" the conservative from Texas tweeted.

The drama has also drawn heat from some fellow Democrats.

Dean Phillips, a Jewish Democratic congressman from Minnesota, told CNN that he was "incredulous" that the funding for Iron Dome had been stripped "at the request of some progressive Democrats".

Some liberal Democrats objected to U.S.-Israel policy this year, including citing the many Palestinian casualties after the occupying regime attacked Gaza in May.

Palestinian resistance groups responded with unprecedented volleys of rockets that

(Continued on Page 7)

Biden Scraps Waiver for Afghan Imports of Iran Fuel

NEW YORK (Dispatches) -- The Biden administration is reviewing a 2018 sanctions waiver which allowed Afghanistan to purchase Iranian fuel, following the takeover of the country by the Taliban, the State Department has said.

A State Department spokesperson told Middle East Eye that the waiver policy put in place by the Trump administration "remains under active review" following the ousting of the previous government.

Earlier this month, Iran said it had resumed fuel exports to Afghanistan following a request by the country's new leadership. Exports were paused earlier this year due to fighting but have spiked since the armed group seized power.

Heavily reliant on Iranian fuel to meet its energy needs, Kabul imported around 400,000 tonnes of fuel between 2020 and May 2021.

The Trump administration had granted the waiver to the previous Afghan government and U.S. ally in 2018.

Alex Zerden, who led the Treasury Department's office at the U.S. embassy in Kabul from 2018-2019, said at the time the waiver was intended to "protect" Kabul even as Washington pursued its "maximum pressure campaign" against Tehran.

"There were real concerns about Iran sanctions harming Afghanistan's economy and a waiver to import Iranian fuel was seen as crucial," he said.

The Trump administration imposed sweeping economic sanctions against Iran in 2018 as part of an effort to pressure Tehran.

According to Zerden, the 2018 waiver was intended to allow fuel traders to bypass Iranian sanctions, but not Taliban sanctions.

"We haven't seen any Afghan individuals or private businesses sanctioned yet for trading oil with Iran," Zerden said.

"While the Taliban are already under sanctions, this could leave open the possibility that private individuals with no direct or indirect links to the Taliban would be subject to new sanctions," he added.

An amendment to repeal a part of the waiver reached the House Foreign Relations Committee last month but was blocked by Democratic Congressman Gregory Meeks, the committee chairman.

According to Shatz, even if Washington wanted to enforce the sanctions, it could prove difficult. "We don't have a lot of leverage with Iran and Afghanistan," he said.

The fuel sales take place in cash at the Iranian-Afghan border, with some deals facilitated

(Continued on Page 7)