

Sweden Moves to Criminalize Support for Palestine

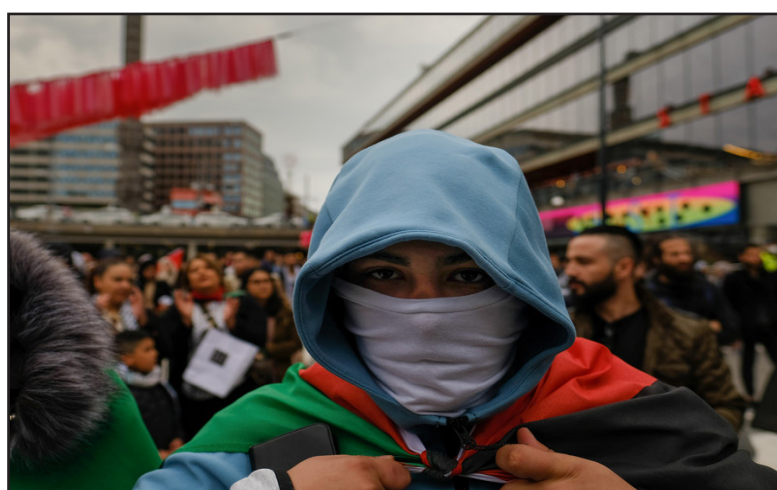
MALMO (Dispatches) – In 2016, Sweden distinguished itself among European states by affirming that the Palestinian-led boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) campaign is a legitimate political movement that should be protected from repression.

But now, the government of Prime Minister Stefan Löfven is moving towards criminalizing criticism of the Zionist regime and its racist ideology Zionism under the guise of combating ‘anti-Jewish bigotry’.

This week, Sweden is hosting the Malmö International Forum on Holocaust Remembrance and Combating Antisemitism.

It is being attended by Zionist lobbyists and EU officials committed to muzzling criticism of the occupying regime’s violations of Palestinian rights.

High-profile speakers include UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Isaac Herzog, the occupying regime’s new president who has long dehumanized Palestinians and Muslims and promoted vio-



Hundreds of people rally in Stockholm’s Sergel Torg Plaza on 16 May to protest the Zionist regime’s bombardment of Gaza.

lence against them.

Herzog was also involved in the ongoing defamation campaign to paint Jeremy Corbyn and his supporters in the UK Labour Party as anti-Jewish because of their support for Palestinian rights.

One of the Malmö gathering’s main purposes is to further entrench the so-called IHRA definition of anti-Semitism, a document heavily promoted by the Zionist regime and its lobby.

This definition notoriously conflates criticism of the Zionist regime and Zionism, on the one hand, with anti-Jewish bigotry, on the other.

As host, Sweden has pledged to introduce its own ‘action program’ against anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and other forms of bigotry.

This will include ‘enhanced efforts by the police to counter racism and hate crime’ as well as

assigning a ‘research agency’ working under Sweden’s defense ministry to ‘continuously monitor anti-Semitism and other forms of racism.’

‘Organized racism and support for organized racism will be criminalized,’ the Swedish government asserts.

What should raise particular alarm about these pledges is that Sweden’s approach to anti-Semitism will be based on the IHRA definition – opening the way to criminalization of support for Palestinian rights by falsely defining it as ‘hate.’

While that may sound extreme, dozens of international anti-Semitism scholars, many of them Jewish, have issued what they call a ‘stark warning against the political instrumentalization of the fight against anti-Semitism.’

They are calling on leaders attending the Malmö meeting to ‘reject and counter this instrumentalization.’

‘We notice coordination with and reliance on lobby organizations shielding the Israeli regime,’ the scholars state.

Hamas Rejects Egypt Proposal to Form Unity Gov’t With Fatah

GAZA STRIP (Dispatches) – Palestinian Hamas resistance movement has rejected an Egyptian proposal to form a unity government with Fatah, citing previous unity agreements foiled by the Ramallah-based movement.

In remarks made to Arabi Post, Hamas spokesman Abdul-Latfi Al-Qanou said: ‘Hamas’ vision is to reevaluate the national temporary mechanisms. It had been proposed to end the internal division.’

Meanwhile, he stressed: ‘Hamas’ vision is to continue the agreed-upon deals reached by Hamas, Fatah, and the other Palestinian factions that the Palestinian people should choose their leadership through elections.’

These remarks came following the report published by Israeli newspaper Haaretz which revealed an American proposal made for Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas

to form a government with the participation of Hamas or a technocrat administration that would recognize all PLO agreements with the Zionist regime and renounce resistance.

Egypt proposed Hamas take part in a partnership with Fatah to form a government that would carry out the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip because the U.S. and the Zionist regime have rejected channeling donations to Gaza while Hamas is in control.

Al-Qanou stressed that his movement ‘rejects all the Israeli and American attempts to link the reconstruction of Gaza to any other political issue.’

Meanwhile, Hamas asked Egypt to put pressure on PA President Mahmoud Abbas to issue a presidential decree to carry out the elections, which he cancelled several months ago, in order to let the Palestinians choose their leadership ‘freely and democratically.’

PMU Commander’s House Targeted in Baghdad

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – The house of a brigade commander of Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), also known as Hashd al-Sha’abi, has reportedly come under a terrorist attack in the capital, Baghdad.

The PMU announced the attack in a statement, saying, ‘A sound bomb explosion targeted the house of Lieutenant-Colonel Haqqi Ismail Amin (Abu Akbar al-Khalidi), commander of the 33rd Brigade in the Popular Mobilization Forces, in the al-Shu’ala area in the capital, Baghdad.’

The statement added that ‘the explosion resulted in minor injuries to two family members, who were taken to hospital for treatment.’

The Iraqi media said the perpetrators of the terrorist act had escaped the scene.

The PMU, which is the largest coalition of Iraqi resistance groups, has played a key role in Iraq’s 2017 victory against the Daesh terrorist group.

Since the defeat of Daesh, however, the anti-terror group has been targeted repeatedly by the U.S. military, prompting Iraqi resistance groups to step up efforts to push the U.S. out of their country over its destabilizing activities.

The event comes after the preliminary results of general elections were announced in the country.

The announcement came as Shia-dominated political factions close to the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) disputed the preliminary results of the legislative elections.

Iraq’s Fatah (Conquest) Alliance political coalition said it will con-

tinue to fight the preliminary vote results and will not back down from protecting the ballots cast in Sunday’s general elections.

Ahmed al-Assadi, the spokesman of Fatah Alliance, said in a televised statement that the coalition would appeal against the results of the election as it had suffered a sharp decline from 48 to about a dozen seats in parliament.

Influential Shia Muslim cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, whose Sairoon Alliance has come first in Iraq’s disputed parliamentary elections, has criticized the election commission’s failure to meet a deadline for releasing the final vote results, saying such a delay besides political disputes will only harm the Iraqi people.

‘It does not matter who won the elections but it is important to

serve Iraqi people and the country’s security,’ he said in a statement released on Tuesday.

‘Political disputes over ballot boxes besides delays in announcing the final results and pressure on the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) will inflict damage on the nation, not political groups,’ Sadr added.

He called on all Iraqi political factions to exercise self-restraint and adhere to the legal means of protest.

Earlier in the day, IHEC said it would not meet a deadline to announce final results from the national poll held two days earlier. The Commission’s officials said they needed more time to manually count unopened ballot boxes in all provinces and ensure the election was free and fair.

Multi-Layered... (Continued From Page One)

threats, and thank God, there is no threat with which we have not thought of a way to deal,’ he said.

The occupying regime of Israel’s prime minister Naftali Bennett bragged in an address to the UN General Assembly last month that his country ‘will not allow’ Tehran to develop a nuclear weapon.

Nuclear weapons are haram or forbidden in Iran under a fatwa issued by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei. The most intensive inspections ever by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have repeatedly confirmed the peaceful nature of Iran’s nuclear activities.

Both Biden and Bennett were hinting at a possible use of military means, Ali Shamkhani, secretary of the Supreme National Security Council of Iran, has tweeted.

Wheat... (Continued From Page One)

‘This radical level of increase in wheat imports will impact and severely limit Iran’s ability to import other soft commodities as extensively as previous years including soy or corn,’ Mostofi said.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) this week raised its forecast for Iran’s wheat imports to 4.5 million tonnes for the 2021/22 season, from 2.5 million tonnes estimated previously, while the International Grains Council (IGC) has estimated that imports will total 2.4 million tonnes.

Muhammad Javad Asgari, deputy head of Iran’s parliamentary agriculture committee, said in July the country was experiencing a shortfall of wheat this year and would separately require large imports of other crops such as corn, soybeans and barley.

Asgari, quoted by Iran’s Mehr news agency, said that Iran would need to import 5 to 7 million tonnes of wheat.

Iran will be buying at a bad time - with global wheat prices hitting their highest levels since 2013 in August.

The high prices reflect global food security concerns, fuelled partly by economic hardship caused by COVID.

The International Grains Council is forecasting a global deficit in the current 2021/22 season (July/June), which will lead to the world consuming more wheat than it produces, leaving less in storage at the end of the year.

‘There is no cause for concern about the supply of wheat as a basic good because providing basic goods is an essential issue for the government and it has started taking strong measures in this regard,’ Agriculture Minister Javad Sadatinejad told state media in September.

In recent weeks Iran has purchased up to 240,000 tonnes of wheat from Russia, trade sources said.

The United States has repeatedly said that food and medicine shipments were exempt from sanctions. But caution by international banks makes it difficult to get Western trade finance.

‘Although the U.S. says that import of humanitarian goods are okay, shortages of foreign exchange are hurting,’ an Iranian finance source said. ‘We are under a lot of pressure.’

Iran plans to increase purchases of wheat from Russia using only a small fleet of vessels that operate in the Caspian Sea, the Interfax news agency reported on Sept 10, citing Iranian Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali.

Russian wheat exports to Iran reached 2.4 million tonnes in the July 1-Sept 27 period, Prozero agriculture consultancy said in a recent note.

The amount exceeds supplies of Russian wheat to Iran in the entire 2020/21 season, when 1.4 million tonnes were exported, Prozero added.

Self-sufficiency in wheat has been a cornerstone of the country’s food security policy in recent years. The former administration of president Hassan Rouhani snapped the achievement last year when Iran imported more than 3 million tonnes of the strategic staple food at a cost of \$3.8 billion.

While his government was apt to blame the situation entirely on drought and other climate extremes, some of the responsibility lies squarely on its own shoulders largely as a result of years of what critics say is mismanagement.

One of the reasons for the sharp decline in guaranteed purchases was the low price which the former government offered to Iranian farmers.

UK... (Continued From Page One)

‘The government takes its export re-

sponsibilities seriously and rigorously assesses all export licenses in accordance with strict licensing criteria,’ it said, a line repeated when queries are made about the human rights implications of weapons sales.

A group known as the UK Export Control Joint Unit, whose reports formed the basis of the AOAV research, approves tear gas exports from UK companies. A license should not be granted, its approval criteria reads, ‘if there is a clear risk the items might be used for internal repression’.

In 2019, when it was proven that UK-made gas canisters had been used to quell demonstrations in Hong Kong, the UK issued a ban on exports of ‘crowd control equipment’ to the Chinese administrative region.

But many Middle Eastern recipients of UK tear gas, which can cause numerous grave health side effects, including blindness and even death, have a history of using the chemical irritant to violently clamp down on protests, and data show export requests are rarely refused.

What’s more, several of the UK export approvals came after documented misuse of tear gas.

‘The case of Hong Kong shows that they do have the mechanisms to prevent British-made weapons being used for internal repression,’ Murray Jones, the author of the AOAV report, said. ‘So [the UK government’s] inaction on sales to the UAE, Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait and Oman becomes even harder to defend.’

The single largest approved export to any Middle Eastern country in the data is a 2014 deal for tear gas and ‘crowd control ammunition’ to the UAE worth £6,124,000. It is one of five licenses approved to the Persian Gulf kingdom since 2012.

In 2011, the UK reviewed its licenses to Bahrain, when it emerged that UK-supplied tear gas had been used against peaceful demonstrations in the Persian Gulf island of Bahrain, during what is known as Bloody Thursday.

A report published the following year found that in a 12 month period at least 13 people had died as a direct result of the Bahrain authorities’ use of tear gas.

The report, written by Physicians for Human Rights, found that areas regularly tear-gassed had seen large increases in miscarriages and respiratory problems.

Despite the review, Britain approved four more licenses for tear gas ammunition to Bahrain, in 2013, 2014, 2015 - when authorities again used tear gas on civilians to repress anti-corruption protests - and 2018.

A foreign office statement on human rights in Bahrain last year stated: ‘Challenges around freedom of expression, lack of media diversity, and a culture of self-censorship also persisted, with Bahrain dropping to 169 out of 180 countries in the 2020 World Press Freedom Index.’

Iran... (Continued From Page 2)

After meeting General Raza, the top Iranian general was to travel to Karachi on the second leg of his Pakistan tour where he would visit military and naval installations.

The Iranian and Pakistani military officials were expected to discuss boosting joint cooperation against terrorism, exchanging training delegates, strengthening border management, exchanging information and expanding defense consultations.

This is Baqeri’s second official visit to Pakistan over the past three years.

Azerbaijan... (Continued From Page 2)

Last year’s war ended with a Russian-brokered ceasefire that saw Yerevan return swaths of territories, including a section of Azerbaijan’s 700km (430-mile) border with Iran which for decades had been under Armenian occupation.

Azerbaijan’s recent decision to impose a ‘road tax’ on Iranian trucks passing through areas it regained has also fuelled tensions between Tehran and Baku.

Earlier this month, Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev said the number of Iranian transit vehicles passing through those roads gradually reached zero after the levies were rolled out.

Wednesday’s statement from Azerbaijan’s foreign ministry said the two sides agreed it was ‘necessary to establish direct dialogue’ on transit issues.

In talks with Armenia’s Foreign Minister Araray Mirzoyan in Tehran last week, Amir-Abdollahian said the pair agreed to finalize the construction of a transit road that would not pass through Azerbaijani soil. The road is slated to be launched later this year.

Palestinians Cancel FIFA Chief’s Visit After Muslim Cemetery Event

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – Palestinian football officials have cancelled a meeting with FIFA president Gianni Infantino, following his attendance at an event in a building atop a Muslim cemetery in occupied Al-Quds.

Infantino met on Tuesday with Zionist prime minister Naftali Bennett, and Steven Mnuchin and David Friedman, former U.S. officials in Donald Trump’s administration, to discuss the idea of the Zionist regime and Arab countries co-hosting the football World Cup in 2030.

Infantino made the announcement in a conference in the so-called Museum of Toler-

ance, built atop Mamilla Islamic cemetery in Al-Quds.

Infantino’s visit to Ramallah in the occupied West Bank to meet Jibril Rajoub, the president of the Palestinian Football Association (PFA) and the Olympic Committee, was called off at the last minute.

The PFA said in a statement that it ‘regrets’ Infantino’s decision to attend an event ‘in the so-called ‘Museum of Tolerance’, an edifice built over the Ma’man Allah Islamic cemetery, the oldest Muslim burial site in Al-Quds, dating back to the 11th century, along with Zionist Evangelicals and former officials of

U.S. administration of [Trump]’.

The PFA sent a letter to the FIFA president, setting out the ‘dangers’ of politicizing sport and ‘supporting Zionist evangelical groups which are outspoken in their denial of basic rights of Palestinian people and their call to breach the international law...’

‘Building a museum in this site violates the sanctity of a cemetery that contains the remains of [the Prophet Mohammed’s] companions and Muslim scholars, who were buried in this Islamic endowment land over hundreds of years of Jerusalem’s history,’ the PFA statement said.