

Zionists to Build Thousands of Illegal Settlement Units

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – The current far-right Zionist administration is planning to take unprecedented steps to pave the way for further expansion of unlawful settlement construction in the occupied West Bank, media sources say.

According to Israeli Hayom, Zionist prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s cabinet has begun discussing measures to speed up and increase the construction of settlements in the West Bank, in defiance of international law.

Netanyahu, war minister Yoav Galant, and finance minister Bezalel Smotrich met earlier this week to finalize the process.

During the meeting, some of the components of the plans were revealed, said the Israeli newspaper.

These steps include approving the establishment of some 18,000 new settlement units in the coming months and creating a separate body that would approve the construction of non-residential build-



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ings, such as industrial companies, among other things.

The approval of such steps could result in a massive increase in the population of settler communities in the occupied West Bank over the coming years, Israel Hayom said.

In December, Netanyahu issued a

policy statement on the part of his incoming cabinet, calling expansion of the regime’s illegal settlements across the occupied Palestinian territories and elsewhere a top priority.

The cabinet, he announced, “will advance and develop” the illegal settlements throughout the occu-

pied territories, including “in the Galilee, the Negev Desert, the Golan Heights, and Judea and Samaria (the West Bank).”

The Zionist regime proclaimed existence in 1948 after occupying huge swathes of regional territories during a Western-backed war.

It occupied more land, namely the West Bank, which includes East Al-Quds, the Gaza Strip, and Syria’s Golan Heights in another such war in 1967.

Ever since, Tel Aviv has built more than 250 settlements upon the occupied lands and deployed the most aggressive restraints on Palestinian freedoms there. Between 600,000 and 750,000 Zionists occupy the settlements.

All settlements are illegal under the international law due to their construction upon occupied territory. The United Nations Security Council has condemned the regime’s settlement activities through several resolutions.

Lebanon Prosecutor Orders Release of Beirut Port Blast Detainees

BEIRUT (AP) – Lebanon’s top prosecutor Wednesday ordered all suspects detained in the investigation into the deadly 2020 port blast in Beirut released, a lawyer for two detainees and judicial officials said.

The move by chief prosecutor Ghassan Oweidat is another blow to the investigation, which has stalled for years.

The decision came after Judge Tarek Bitar on Monday resumed the investigation into the devastating port blast, following a 13-month halt over legal challenges raised by politicians accused in the probe — including the chief prosecutor.

Bitar in a statement Wednesday

said Oweidat’s decision to release the detainees was “illegal” and said he was committed to completing the investigation. “Judge Oweidat cannot charge a judge who previously charged him in the port investigation due to conflict of interests,” Bitar’s statement read.

Seventeen detainees have been held for years in pre-trial detention after the massive port blast on Aug. 4, 2020. Hundreds of tons of highly explosive ammonium nitrate, a material used in fertilizers, detonated at Beirut Port, killing 218 people, injuring over 6,000 and damaging large parts of the Lebanese capital.

Lawyer Sakher El Hachem, who represents former port authority head Hassan Koraytem and a former port official, U.S. citizen Ziad al-Ouf, told The Associated Press that they received confirmation of the decision from the judiciary and that his clients would be released Wednesday.

The judicial officials added that Oweidat, who defied Bitar’s decision to resume the paralyzed investigation, will press charges against him. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the press.

The officials added that Oweidat sent a police officer to Bitar’s

residence to notify him of the charges and instruct Bitar to visit his office, but the maverick investigator declined to speak with him.

Oweidat did not immediately respond to calls from the AP seeking comment.

Mody Koraytem, the sister of the former port authority head, said the detainees’ release was long overdue and she said that they were all innocent.

“As port administration there wasn’t anything they could have done about it (the ammonium nitrate),” she said, adding that they did their jobs given that the judiciary cleared the deadly cargo to enter the port.

Russia: Militants Planning Sabotage, Terror Attacks in Syria

MOSCOW (Dispatches) – Russia has warned that foreign-backed terrorists are preparing to stage a series of acts of sabotage and terror attacks in Syria’s northwestern province of Idlib to implicate Syrian and Russian military forces, and fabricate pretexts for military action in the war-ravaged Arab country.

Major General Oleg Yegorov, the deputy head of Russian Defense Ministry’s Center for Reconciliation of the Opposing Sides in Syria, said on Tuesday that the center had received information that the foreign-sponsored terrorists were seeking to escalate tensions in the Idlib de-escalation zone and disrupt joint patrols being carried out by Russian and Turkish military forces through attacks on the positions of Syrian government forces and Russian troops.

Yegorov noted that militants were amassing armored vehicles, drones and multiple-launch rocket systems near al-Ziyarah, Kafrinjah and Karkur villages, preparing to launch their strike and provoke Syrian and Russian soldiers to return fire.

“Subsequently, the militants plan to publish videos on social networks that would show alleged damage to civilian infrastructure. They would then accuse the Russian and Syrian military forces of indiscriminate strikes on territories controlled by them,” the senior Russian general said.

The White Helmets group, which claims to be a humanitarian NGO, is known for its coordination with terror outfits in Syria to carry out staged chemical attacks in order to falsely incriminate Syrian government forces and fabricate pretexts for military strikes by a U.S.-led military coalition present in Syria since 2014.

On April 14, 2018, the United States, Britain, and France carried out a string of airstrikes against Syria over a suspected chemical weapons attack on the city of Douma, located about 10 kilometers northeast of the capital Damascus.

That alleged attack was reported by the White Helmets group, which published videos showing them purportedly treating survivors.

Washington and its allies blamed Damascus for the Douma attack, an allegation strongly rejected by the Syrian government.

The Western media and governments have repeatedly accused the Syrian government of using chemical weapons against its own citizens in the war against terrorists.

This is while Syria surrendered its stockpile of chemical weapons in 2014 to a joint mission led by the United States and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which oversaw the destruction of the weaponry. It has also consistently denied using chemical weapons.

UNESCO Lists Yemen, Lebanon Sites as World Heritage in Danger

BEIRUT (AFP) – The United Nations on Wednesday inscribed an ancient city and its dam in Yemen and a futurist park in Lebanon on its world heritage list.

The UN cultural agency listed both as world heritage sites in danger, the first because of the Saudi-led conflict in Yemen since 2014, and the second because of “its alarming state of conservation” and the lack of resources in Lebanon to maintain it.

Seven archaeological sites were added in Yemen’s province of Marib for bearing witness to the achievements of the Saba kingdom from the first millennium BC to the arrival of Islam in around 630, UNESCO said.

The kingdom, known for the legendary Queen of Sheba, at the time controlled much of the incense route across the Arabian Pen-

insula.

The newly listed sites include the ancient city of Marib, two temples and the remains of the city’s ancient dam, a feat of ancient hydrological engineering whose bursting is mentioned in the Qur’an.

The UN body said it hoped the decision would help “mobilize the entire international community for the protection of sites”.

UNESCO’s world heritage committee also voted to add the Rachid Karamah International Fair in Lebanon’s northern coastal city of Tripoli to the list.

The concrete park, a short walk away from the seafront, was designed by legendary Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer, but activists have warned it risked crumbling into ruin in recent years.

“The fair was the flagship project of Lebanon’s modernization policy in the 1960s,” UNESCO said, describing it as “one of the major representative works of 20th century modern architecture” in the region.

Its inscription as a world heritage site in danger “opens access to enhanced international assistance” to preserve it.

Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati, who hails from the city, welcomed the decision as “a great achievement for Lebanon and Lebanese, especially for the city of Tripoli”.

Activists had been hoping for a UNESCO listing to open the way to donor funding to save the park, in a country mired since 2019 in one of the worst financial crises in recent history.

More...

(Continued From Page One)

charged him and wrestled the gun away from him, Luna said. Eleven people died and several others were wounded.

Less than a day later, Tran was found dead inside a white van about 30 miles away in Torrance. He died following a self-inflicted gunshot wound, the sheriff said.

The suspect was familiar with the dance hall, but it’s unclear whether he knew any of those killed, authorities said.

In Yakima, a man walked into a Circle K early Tuesday and opened fire, killing two people inside, then walked out of the store and shot and killed a third person, Police Chief Matt Murray said.

Police were eventually pointed to the suspect’s location Tuesday after getting a call from a woman in Yakima who had lent the suspect her phone and heard him make “several incriminating statements including ‘I killed those people,’” Murray said during a news conference.

Police responded and later announced the suspect had died of an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Police earlier had identified the “presumed homicide suspect” as Jarid Haddock, 21.

The motive behind the shooting was being investigated, but Murray said the attack appeared “very much random.”

Up to 50 people were out filming a music video when “gunfire broke out from multiple shooters in various directions” on Monday evening in Oakland, the city’s acting police chief said.

Officers got an alert via gunshot detection technology and responded to find “some castings” but no victims. They later learned that gunshot victims showed up at several area hospitals, Acting Chief Darren Allison said.

Five people were shot, including an 18-year-old man who died. A driver and passengers were also injured when they crashed while fleeing the scene, Allison said.

It was a “targeted shooting,” and investigators are “looking into the possibility of a gang or group connection with this incident,” he said.

On Monday afternoon, police and fire personnel in Des Moines, Iowa responded to a report of a shooting at an educational program for at-risk youth.

They found three shooting victims, who were taken to hospitals. Two students, ages 18 and 16, died, and the program’s founder was hospitalized in serious condition, authorities said.

A suspect, Preston Walls, 18, was charged with two counts of first-degree murder, attempted murder and criminal gang participation, police said. CNN hasn’t been able to determine if he has a lawyer.

“There’s nothing random about this. It was certainly a targeted incident,” Des Moines police Sgt. Paul Parizek said of the shooting. “But as far as getting motive, that is something that we are going to try and figure out.”

Ukraine...

(Continued From Page One)

United States into the decision was crucial, to avoid Europe facing a nuclear-armed Russia alone.

But he also noted the deeper historic significance of the decision.

“German-made tanks will face off against Russian tanks in Ukraine once more,” he said, adding that this was “not an easy thought” for Germany, which takes its responsibility for the horrors of World War II seriously.

German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius cautioned that it would take about three months for the first tanks to be deployed in Ukraine.

The German government said it planned to swiftly begin training Ukrainian tank crews in Germany. The package being put together would also include logistics, ammunition and maintenance.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov described German and U.S. intentions with the tanks as “a rather disastrous plan.”

“I am convinced that many specialists understand the absurdity of this idea,” Peskov told reporters Wednesday.

“Simply because of technological aspects, this is a rather disastrous plan. The main thing is, this is a completely obvious overestimation of the potential (the supply of tanks) would add to the armed forces of Ukraine. It is yet another fallacy, a rather profound one,” the Kremlin official said.

Peskov predicted “these tanks will burn down just like all the other ones. ... Except they cost a lot, and this will fall on the shoulders of European taxpayers,” he added.

Germany has already provided considerable amounts of military hardware to Ukraine, including powerful PzH 2000 howitzers, Iris-T air-defense systems and Gepard self-propelled anti-aircraft guns to target Russian drones. It also announced plans to supply a Patriot air-defense battery and Marder infantry fighting vehicles.

Two opposition parties criticized the move. The far-right Alternative for Germany, which has friendly ties to Russia, called the decision “irresponsible and dangerous.”

“Germany risks being drawn directly into the war as a result,” party co-leader Tino Chrupalla said.

The Left party, which also has historic links to Moscow, warned of a possible escalation in the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Recent opinion polls showed German voters split on the idea.

Other European nations, such as Finland and Spain, indicated a willingness Wednesday to part with their own Leopard or similar battle tanks.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak of Britain, which had said it planned to send 14 of its Challenger 2 tanks to Ukraine, welcomed Germany’s decision to further “strengthen Ukraine’s defensive firepower.”

Still, it isn’t clear whether Ukraine will receive the estimated 300 tanks that analysts say are required to keep Russia from advancing in Donetsk, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia provinces and to press a counteroffensive in the country’s southeast.

Andriy Yermak, head of the Ukrainian president’s office, said on Telegram after Germany’s announcement that “many Leopards are needed.”

Ministry ...

(Continued From Page One)

violence and unrest in Iran, dissemination of false information about Iran and participation in the escalation of cruel sanctions against Iranian people as an economic terrorism.”

Among the 22 EU individuals and three entities who face the travel ban and asset freeze include the Paris mayor Anne Hidalgo, the publishing manager of Charlie Hebdo magazine Laurent Sourisseau, notorious journalist Bernard-Henri Levy, as well as Danish far-right politician Rasmus Paludan.

The ministry also announced sanctions against a British entity and eight individuals, including the attorney general for England and Wales Victoria Prentis, former head of MI6 spy agency Richard Dearlove, and head of the British Army Patrick Sanders.

Tehran slammed London and Brussels for supporting, facilitating, and failing to counter the destructive acts of the sanctioned individuals and entities, noting that such measures are in contravention of international obligations regarding the fight against terrorism.

The EU and UK sanctions, read the statement, are “obvious violation of fundamental principles of international law set forth in the United Nations charter.”

It came two days after the European Union announced sanctions on more than 30 Iranian officials and organizations.

The sanctions targeted a number of senior Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) officials as well as senior managers of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB).