

ANKARA (Dispatches) – Turkish warplanes have again bombed areas in northern Iraq targeting a PKK Kurdish militant bastion. Turkish fighter jets launched airstrikes against a village in the Anadiya District of Duhok Governorate in the Kurdistan Region on Saturday, Iraqi sources reported. The Iraqi sources stated that the PKK bases were targeted in the bombing. Turkey has built many military bases on Iraqi soil despite opposition and condemnation from the Iraqi and Kurdish authorities to fight against the PKK. The Turkish army has recently launched a new operation (Claw-Lock) in northern Iraq against PKK, using fighter jets, artillery, and ground special forces.



## Yemen's Ansarullah: Qur'an Burning Amounts to Declaration of War Against Muslims

SANA'A (Dispatches) – The leader of Yemen's Ansarullah resistance movement has severely censured the desecration of the Holy Qur'an by a far-right Swedish-Danish politician in Stockholm and Copenhagen, terming the sacrilegious move as a declaration of war against the Muslim world.

Addressing a ceremony in the Yemeni capital city of Sana'a, Abdul-Malik al-Houthi stated that the spread of Islam in European and Western societies has been a source of constant worry for enemies of Islam, and prompted anti-Islam individuals to set fire to the copies of the Muslim holy book in a show of desperation.

He stressed that the burning of the Holy Qur'an in European countries falls within the framework of their hostile war on human societies, and their efforts to distance societies from Qur'an, and create animosity towards Islam.

On Friday, Swedish-Danish right-wing extremist Rasmus Paludan torched copies of the Holy Qur'an near a mosque and outside the premises of the Turkish Embassy in the Danish capital Copenhagen.



A woman holds up a copy of Qur'an, Islam's holy book, during a protest to denounce the recent desecration of Islam's holy book by far-right activists in Sweden, after Friday Prayers in Tehran, Iran, Friday, Jan. 27, 2023.

Paludan had already infuriated the Muslim world by staging a Qur'an-burning protest in Sweden's capital Stockholm on Jan. 21. The right-wing extremist has vowed to continue the stunt every Friday until Sweden is admitted into the U.S.-led NATO.

"The burning of the Holy Qur'an is not justifiable by any means. It is considered a hostile, criminal and profane action against all holy books," Houthi said.

The Ansarullah chief noted, "Oppressors are trying to put up a barrier between world nations and the Qur'an, because they view it as the biggest danger for themselves and the biggest savior for human beings."

"Burning of the Holy Qur'an and declaring enmity towards it and Islam amount to a blatant disrespect for all Muslims. Such an approach also attests to the extent of satanic forces' anger towards Qur'an and

their weakness in the face of the sacred book," he noted.

Houthi also condemned the burning of the Holy Qur'an as the gravest act of hostility against Islam and Muslims, emphasizing that the pro-Zionist lobby stands at the forefront of the aggressive campaign against Islam, Qur'an and Muslims.

"Satanic forces try to perpetrate grievous sins and despicable crimes in the name of freedom of thought and speech, and enlist political and legal support for them," the leader of the Ansarullah movement said.

Many Arab and Muslim countries, including Iran, Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan and Kuwait – as well as social media users – condemned the act, expressing their concerns amid a rise of extremist tendencies in Europe.

In Bahrain, people poured onto the streets to condemn the burning of copies of the Holy Qur'an.

Demonstrators took part in mass rallies across the kingdom, including the capital Manama, Ras Rumman neighborhood, Sanabis village and Sitra Island, on Friday to express their outrage over the sacrilegious act.

## UN Food Agency: Afghan Malnutrition Rates at Record High



The World Food Program spokesperson says half of Afghanistan endures severe hunger throughout the year.

KABUL (AP) – Malnutrition rates in Afghanistan are at record highs with half the country enduring severe hunger throughout the year, a spokesman for the World Food Program says.

The Taliban takeover in August 2021 drove millions into poverty and hunger after foreign aid stopped almost overnight. Sanctions on Taliban rulers, a halt on bank transfers and frozen billions in Afghanistan's currency reserves restricted access to global institutions and the outside money that supported the country's aid-dependent economy before the chaotic withdrawal of U.S. and NATO forces.

"Half of Afghanistan endures severe hunger throughout the year, regardless of the season, and malnutrition rates are at a record high for Afghanistan," said Phillippe Kropf, a spokesman for the UN food agency in Kabul.

"There are four million children (under the age of 5) and mothers who are malnourished, in a country with a population of 40 million."

Afghans are not starving to death, he said, but they have no resources left to stave off the humanitarian crisis.

Aid agencies have been providing food, education and healthcare support to Afghans, including heating, cash for fuel and warm clothes. But distribution has been severely impacted by a Taliban edict banning women from working at national and international nongovern-

mental groups.

"The ban has come at the worst possible moment," said Kropf. "Families and communities don't know where their next meal is coming from."

The WFP scaled up its delivery and distribution of aid in anticipation of a tough winter before the ban came in, planning to reach 15 million this month with emergency food assistance and nutrition support. While it is not directly affected by the ban, 19 of its NGO partners suspended operations in Afghanistan following the Dec. 24 edict.

The NGO ban on women workers has seen the suspension of 115 of 437 mobile health clinics, affecting 82,000 children, and pregnant and lactating women. The suspension of a training project is hurting 39,300 people, mostly women, while the pause of a school snack program has hit 616,000 students.

At a nutrition clinic in Kabul, 32-year-old nurse Anisa Samadi said most children and mothers will die without support from agencies like the WFP and World Health Organization. Their help is needed now more than ever, she told The Associated Press on Thursday.

"In the last five months I have seen the number of patients increasing. Three months ago we had 48 patients. Last month, we had 76 and this month so far we have 69 or 70, mostly we have twins who are so weak, while their mothers are also weak."

## Report: Netanyahu Cabinet Planning to 'Legalize' Dozens of Existing Settlements

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – The right-wing occupation cabinet of the Zionist regime led by Benjamin Netanyahu is reportedly planning to proceed with the "legitimization" of existing settlements and outposts in the occupied Palestinian territories.

In a report prepared by Hanan Greenwood, Israel Hayom stated: "The cabinet is poised to vote on a series of measures aimed at retroactively approving dozens of unauthorized outposts in Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) at the cost of several billions of shekels."

According to the coalition agreement between the Likud

party and the Otzma Yehudit party, headed by extremist minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, "The cabinet has pledged to start settling this settlement quickly."

The newspaper revealed that "The goal is to settle the settlement through a plan that legitimizes dozens of settlements in the regions."

Israel Hayom added that the agreement stipulates, "A ministerial forum headed ... Netanyahu will have to be formed within 30 days of the cabinet being sworn in and that within sixty days, the cabinet will have to pass a resolution to

have those communities get official recognition, launching an 18-month process that would culminate in them being connected to the electricity grid and water infrastructure, as well as other essential services and security."

Meanwhile, Bethlehem Radio 2000 reported on Friday that the extremist right-wing cabinet led by Netanyahu is pushing for a gigantic settlement plan to pour over a million Zionist settlers into the occupied West Bank.

According to the Palestinian radio station, which reported Israeli Hayom, the Zionist rul-

ers plan to relocate 100,000 settlers to Area C in the occupied West Bank in the coming two years.

The regime is also planning to relocate 500,000 settlers to the same area in the coming ten years.

Israel Hayom revealed that the number of settlers in the occupied West Bank would be more than a million if the number of settlers currently living there added to the total number of settlers in the occupied West Bank.

According to the Israeli newspaper, the plan "is the closest to annexation."

## Philippines Probes Labor Abuses in Kuwait After New Killing

MANILA (AP) – The Philippine government said Saturday it will take steps to assess and prevent abuses including rape and maltreatment of Filipino workers in Kuwait, after a housemaid was killed and dumped in a desert in the oil-rich emirate.

The remains of Jullebee Ranara were flown home Friday night from Kuwait, where the 35-year-old was reportedly killed by her employer's son then dumped with burn marks, Migrant Workers Secretary Susan Ople said.

Filipino officials were trying to confirm news reports that she was raped and was pregnant when she was killed by the 17-year-old suspect, who has been taken into custody by Kuwaiti police, she said. The Philippine government would do everything to ensure justice for the victim, she said.

"It's a very gruesome, senseless crime and so the perpetrator must be punished," Ople said in an online news conference.

Her killing is the latest tragedy to befall an overseas worker from the Philippines, where about a tenth of its more than 110 million have left mainly due to unemployment and poverty and now work or live in more than 200 countries to provide

for families back home. The huge income they send home has helped keep Manila's economy afloat.

Ople said she would send a team of officials to Kuwait to find out what sparked a rise in cases of abuse of Filipino workers in recent years in the tiny emirate and what preventive steps could be taken. Sexual abuse and rape, human trafficking, labor contract violations and illegal terminations were among the common complaints of Filipinos, she said.

About 268,000 Filipinos currently work in Kuwait, including many housemaids. More than 400 Filipinos sought shelter in recent weeks in an emergency center run by the Philippine Embassy due to labor problems, and nearly half have flown back to Manila, Migrant Workers Undersecretary Hans Cadac said.

Kuwait's ambassador to Manila, Musaed Saleh Althwaikh, expressed his condolences and assured Ople that Ranara's "tragic passing" was an isolated case.

"Kuwaiti society is shocked and saddened to hear about the demise of Mrs. Ranara," the ambassador said in the letter, copies of which were provided to journalists. "Our justice system will not lose sight in ensuring justice for Mrs. Ranara."

## Report: U.S. Treasury to Warn Mideast Countries Over Sanctions Evasion

WASHINGTON (Reuters) – The U.S. Treasury Department's top sanctions official on a trip to the Middle East next week will warn countries and businesses that they could lose U.S. market access if they do business with entities subject to U.S. curbs as Washington cracks down on Russian attempts to evade sanctions imposed over its war in Ukraine.

Brian Nelson, undersecretary for terrorism and financial intelligence, will travel to Oman, the United Arab Emirates and Turkey from Jan. 29 to Feb. 3 and meet with government officials as well as businesses and financial institutions to reiterate that Washington will continue to aggressively enforce its sanctions, a Treasury spokesperson told Reuters.

"Individuals and institutions operating in permissive jurisdictions risk potentially losing access to U.S. markets on account of doing business with sanctioned entities or not conducting appropriate due diligence," the spokesperson said.

While in the region, Nelson will discuss treasury's efforts to crack down on Russian efforts to evade sanctions.

The trip marks the latest visit to Turkey by a senior treasury official to discuss sanctions, following a string of warnings last year by Treasury and Commerce Department officials, as Washington ramped up pressure on Ankara to ensure enforcement of U.S. curbs on Russia.

Nelson's trip coincides with a period of

strained ties between the United States and Turkey as the two NATO allies disagree over a host of issues.

Most recently, Turkey's refusal to green-light the NATO bids of Sweden and Finland has troubled Washington, while Ankara is frustrated that its request to buy F-16 fighter jets is increasingly linked to whether the two Nordic countries can join the alliance.

Nelson will visit Ankara, the Turkish capital, and financial hub Istanbul on Feb. 2-3. He will warn businesses and banks that they should avoid transactions related to potential dual-use technology transfers, the spokesperson said.

Dual-use items can have both commercial and military applications.