

GAZA (MEMO) – Islamic Jihad members have re-elected Ziad Al-Nakhala as the movement's secretary-general for a second four-year term. Islamic Jihad's Central Elections Committee announced the results of the internal elections on Sunday evening. Akram al-Ajouri, Youssef al-Hassayna, Naftiz Azzam, Mohammed al-Hindi, Ali Abu Shahin, Walid al-Qutatti, Ahmed al-Mudallal, Mohammed Humaid and Ihsan Ataya were elected as members of the movement's political bureau. The Palestinian movement said in a statement that the elections took place in a democratic manner and with a high turnout of 95 percent of members in the Gaza Strip and abroad who are eligible to vote.

Belief in His Power means recognizing and accepting His Majesty, acceptance of His Majesty means fulfilling the obligations laid down by Him and fulfillment of obligations means actions.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

'Crime Against Humanity'

Afghanistan Universities Reopen But Women Still Barred

KABUL (AFP/Reuters) – Male students have trickled back to their classes after universities reopened in Afghanistan following a winter break, but women remain barred by the ruling Taliban.

The university ban is one of several restrictions imposed on women since the Taliban stormed back to power in August 2021 and has sparked global outrage.

"It's heartbreaking to see boys going to the university while we have to stay at home," said Rahela, 22, from the central province of Ghor.

"This is gender discrimination against girls because Islam allows us to pursue higher education. Nobody should stop us from learning."

The Taliban government imposed the ban accusing female students of ignoring a strict dress code and a requirement to be accompanied by a male relative to and from campus.

Most universities had already introduced gender-segregated entrances and classrooms, as well as allowing women to be taught only



Male students attend computer science class at a university in Kabul.

by female professors or old men. "It's painful to see that thousands of girls are deprived of education today," Mohammad Haseeb Habibzadah, a student of computer science at Herat University, told AFP news agency.

"We are trying to address this issue by talking to lecturers and other students so that there can be a way where boys and girls could study and progress together."

Several Taliban officials say the

ban on women's education is temporary but, despite promises, they have failed to reopen secondary schools for girls, which have been closed for more than a year.

They have wheeled out a litany of excuses for the closure, from a lack of funds to the time needed to remodel the syllabus along their ideological lines.

Taliban authorities have effectively squeezed women out of public life since retaking power.

The Taliban's treatment of women and girls in Afghanistan could amount to a crime against humanity, according to a UN report presented on Monday at the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

The Taliban seized power in August 2021, drastically curtailing women's freedoms and rights, including their ability to attend high school and university.

In a report covering July to December 2022, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, found that the Taliban's treatment of women and girls "may amount to gender persecution, a crime against humanity".

"The Taliban's intentional and calculated policy is to repudiate the human rights of women and girls and to erase them from public life," Bennett told the United Nations Human Rights Council. "It may amount to the international crime of gender persecution for which the authorities can be held accountable."

Ben-Gvir Orders Demolition of Palestinian Homes During Ramadan



Construction vehicles belong to the Zionist regime demolish Palestinians houses which are claimed unlicensed by Zionist regime authorities.

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – The Zionist regime's far-right minister Itamar Ben-Gvir has ordered the occupying regime's troops to continue the demolition of "illegally built" Palestinian homes in Occupied East Al-Quds during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, Israeli public broadcaster, KAN, reported Monday.

Ramadan, during which Muslims fast from dawn to sunset, is set to start later this month, Anadolu News Agency reports.

The occupying regime did not carry out home demolitions during Ramadan in the past years to avoid tension with the Palestinians.

While Palestinians see the occupying regime's demolition policy as an attempt to drive them out of East Al-Quds and strengthen the occupation of the city, Israeli authorities consider these houses illegally built, without a permit.

Meanwhile, Israeli newspaper, Yedioth Ahronoth, said the regime's police warned Ben-Gvir that the fasting month of Ramadan could be extremely volatile as they are already stretched to the limit amid tension across the occupied West Bank.

Ben-Gvir holds far-right views on the Palestinians and has called for their displacement. He has repeatedly joined settlers in storming the flashpoint Al-Aqsa Mosque complex in East Al-

Quds.

In November 2022, Zionist president Isaac Herzog warned in a leaked audio that "the whole world is worried" about Ben-Gvir's far-right views.

The Zionist regime occupied East Al-Quds during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. It annexed the entire city in 1980 in a move never recognized by the international community.

International law regards both the West Bank and East Al-Quds as Occupied Territories and considers all settlement-building activity there illegal. Meanwhile, Jordan's King Abdullah told vesting U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin a surge in West Bank violence threatened regional stability.

Austin arrived in Jordan earlier at the start of a Middle East tour that will also take him to the Israeli-occupied territories and Egypt, U.S. officials said.

King Abdullah, whose country hosted the first Zionist-Palestinian meeting in Aqaba last week with the participation of top US and Egyptian officials, said efforts must be accelerated to bring about a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace deal based on a two-state solution.

"There is a need for calm and to reduce escalation in Palestinian territories and stop any unilateral steps that undermined stability and abort chances of attaining peace," a palace statement said after the talks between the king and Austin.

Yemen's Parliament Calls for Confrontation With Foreign Occupation Forces

SANA'A (Dispatches) – Yemen's parliament has reiterated its rejection of the presence of foreign occupation troops in the country.

The lawmakers called on the Yemeni people to confront the foreign forces to prevent any outside intervention in the country's internal affairs.

The Yemeni parliament warned in a statement of American plots to target the unity and sovereignty of the country amid the U.S.-British-Saudi presence in the southeastern province of al-Mahrah, according to Yemen's al-Masirah television network.

It called for standing united in the face of invaders and occupiers while blaming the coalition of aggression and its mercenaries for

tampering with the wealth of the Yemeni people and forfeiting the sovereignty, independence and unity of Yemen and its territorial integrity.

The statement strongly condemned any foreign presence in "Yemeni lands, islands and waters, whatever its justifications."

The House of Representatives also condemned the suspicious American movements taking place in the occupied Yemeni provinces, the latest of which was a visit by the American ambassador and the commander of the U.S. Fifth Fleet under the pretext of combating smuggling.

The U.S. military moves in the southeastern provinces of al-Mahra and Hadhramaut have

escalated significantly and provocatively over the past months, in parallel with Washington's attempts to thwart peace efforts and circumvent the demands of the Yemeni People and the requirements for a solution, including the complete departure of foreign forces from Yemen.

The American news website Huffington Post recently confirmed that the United States is moving in the path of seizing al-Mahra Province for "geopolitical purposes and long-term economic ambitions and goals, including control of the governorate's coasts and ports."

The site revealed that "U.S. soldiers and military experts frequent the province, moving

around it, away from the media spotlight."

Saudi Arabia launched the devastating war on Yemen in March 2015 in collaboration with its Arab allies and with arms and logistics support from the U.S. and other Western states.

The objective was to reinstall the Riyadh-friendly regime of Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi and crush the Ansarullah resistance movement, which has been running state affairs in the absence of a functional government in Yemen.

While the Saudi-led coalition has failed to meet any of its objectives, the war has killed hundreds of thousands of Yemenis and spawned the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

Four People Arrested in Bahrain for Protesting Formula One

MANAMA (Middle East Eye) – Four people have been arrested near the Bahrain Grand Prix for peacefully protesting and demanding the release of political prisoners, according to the UK-based Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (Bird).

Former political prisoners Hajer Mansoor and Najah Yusuf were among those arrested. Yusuf told Middle East Eye that they were then "treated inhumanely" by a senior police officer. "The officer described us as criminals, belittled and disrespected us with such an inappropriate description," Yusuf said.

The two Bahraini women were both imprisoned and allegedly tortured in 2017 after protesting against Formula One's presence in the kingdom.

The two men arrested alongside them on Sunday were Ali Muhana and Muneer Mushaima.

Muhana is the father of a Bahraini political prisoner, Husain Muhana. Mushaima is the

brother of Sami Mushaima, a Shia man executed by the Persian Gulf kingdom in 2017. Redha Mushaima, Muneer's other brother, is currently in prison in Bahrain.

The arrest happened at Formula Petrol Station, which is just a few meters away from the Bahrain International Circuit, where Sunday's race took place. Video footage showed the protesters being surrounded by police cars, with one of the demonstrators reporting that there were seven police vehicles present before the arrests took place at 6.24pm local time.

Najah Yusuf had been holding a sign that read: "For protesting F1 in 2017, I was beaten, tortured and served two years in prison. I am still dismissed from my job. Meanwhile, F1 makes millions from our suffering. Shame on them."

Hajer Mansoor's sign read: "My son Sayed Nizar completed six years of his arbitrary sen-

tence this week. He was arrested when he was 18 and subjected to harrowing torture. The UN called for his release. @F1 shame on you for refusing to meet torture victims."

In October last year, both women filed a legal complaint against F1 saying it had breached the human rights standards it pledged to follow by hosting the Grand Prix in Bahrain.

After being held for around two and a half hours at Eastern Riffa police station, Bahraini authorities confiscated the protesters' signs and took their IDs.

Bahrain continues to imprison its population at the highest rate of any country in the Middle East, with an estimated 1,300 political prisoners in a country of half a million. Formula One has held races in Bahrain since 2004.

Since 2017, Bahraini authorities have banned all independent media in the country and dissolved all significant opposition groups, according to Human Rights Watch.

Turkish Parties Rush to Salvage Alliance Against Erdogan

ANKARA (AP) – Opposition politicians sought Monday to salvage an alliance that was left in disarray following a dispute over the nomination of a joint candidate to challenge President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in elections scheduled for May.

Meral Aksener, who leads the nationalist Iyi Party, broke away from a six-party alliance on Friday, rejecting the likely nomination of main opposition Republican People's Party, or CHP, leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu.

Aksener went on to call on the popular mayors of Ankara and Istanbul — both from the CHP party — to defy the party leadership and run in the elections instead of Kilicdaroglu.

Aksener's split from the alliance — less than three months before presidential and parliamentary elections — was seen as a major boost for Erdogan, whose popularity has suffered amid a weak economy as well as his government's response to a devastating earthquake last month.

Aksener, a former interior minister whose party is the second largest in the opposition bloc, was reported to have favored either of the mayors instead of Kilicdaroglu, who has failed to win a national election

in the 13 years he has led the CHP. The two mayors have been showing more favorable poll ratings against Erdogan than Kilicdaroglu.

On Monday, Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu and Ankara Mayor Mansur Yavas met with Aksener in an apparent attempt to convince her to return to the alliance.

"There is an election in front of us. Our nation cannot tolerate a separation," Yavas told reporters.

Aksener and Kilicdaroglu then met, during which the two discussed a compromise solution where the mayors could be nominated as vice-presidents, said an Iyi Party spokesman.

Hamish Kinnear, Middle East and North Africa Analyst at risk intelligence company Verisk Maplecroft said the opposition was still able to unify behind a joint candidate.

"But the opposition alliance is running out of time ... and already missed a golden opportunity to solidify opposition to Erdogan in the wake of February's devastating earthquake," he said.

Erdogan took a dig at the fractured opposition on Saturday.

"We said months ago that this would be the case. They sat, they talked and they dispersed — as I said they would," Erdogan said.