

# Thousands in London Mark 74th Nakba Anniversary



People participate in a rally in the central London, the United Kingdom, on May 14, 2022, to mark the 74th anniversary of the 'Nakba', or Catastrophe.

LONDON (Dispatches) – Thousands of people from all walks of life staged a mass rally in the UK capital London on Sunday to commemorate the 74th anniversary of the 'Nakba,' or Catastrophe, when the ethnic cleansing of more than 700,000 Palestinians took place along with the destruction of more than 500 villages as the Zionist regime was created in 1948.

People gathered in front of Broadcasting House, the headquarters of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), in central London on Saturday afternoon before marching to Number 10, the official residence and executive office of the prime minister, in Downing Street.

The participants waved Palestinian flags, chanted slogans and expressed anger at the ongoing brutal oppression of Palestinians at the hands of Zionist troops.

They also strongly condemned the

cause what it said was a risk of inflammatory or "anti-Semitic" calls and violence.

Reacting to the prohibition, the Palestinian civic group "Palestine Speaks" strongly criticized the ban on their demonstrations as an attack on the basic rights of freedom of assembly and freedom of expression.

"The ban on the commemorative events by the Berlin police restricts Palestinians in Germany in their fundamental rights and is worrying on several levels according to the standards of a democratic constitutional state," the group said in a statement.

"The Nakba commemorative events are an important way for us, Palestinians, in Germany to remember the injustice perpetrated against our ancestors and to take a stand for the human rights of Palestinians everywhere," according to an unnamed spokesperson for "Palestine Speaks".

Palestinian groups had announced that they would protest against Zionist regime policies on the day of expulsion, Nakba (Catastrophe), especially on Saturday and Sunday.

Palestinian civic leaders in Berlin have repeatedly made clear they do not condone anti-Semitic slurs in their demonstrations, saying their only objective is to highlight the ongoing Zionist repression in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Germany is an ardent ally of the occupying regime and has repeatedly been silent on the regime's continued brutal crackdown in the occupied West Bank and East Al-Quds.

Shireen Abu Akleh is the 55th journalist to be murdered by Israeli occupation forces since 2000," a placard put up next to the memorial book read.

The rally in London comes as a Berlin court, on Friday, upheld a ban on all Palestinian "Nakba Day" demonstrations which were scheduled to take place in the German capital this weekend, the Berlin-based Tagesspiegel newspaper reported.

The administrative court outlawed five Palestinian demonstrations be-

cause what it said was a risk of inflammatory or "anti-Semitic" calls and violence.

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## Report: U.S. Intelligence Opens Review of Military Failures



US soldiers with the 4th Security Force Assistance Brigade conduct medical training on Feb. 27, 2020. The 4th SFAB, based at Fort Carson, Colorado, is due to deploy to Afghanistan in the fall. (File photo)

WASHINGTON (CNN) – The U.S. intelligence community has launched a comprehensive review of its assessments of foreign militaries following failures in Ukraine and Afghanistan, according to informed sources.

Both the CIA and the Defense Department underestimated Ukrainian forces and overestimated the ability of Afghan fighters to hold off the Taliban (under UN sanctions for terrorism), according to the sources who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The Senate Intelligence Committee sent a classified letter to the office of the director of National Intelligence, the Defense Department and the CIA.

They are questioning the methodology behind the intelligence findings and the assumptions made, the sources stated.

The lawmakers are reportedly dissatisfied with the incorrect intelligence conclusion that the Afghan authorities, after the withdrawal of U.S. military, would be able to restrain the Taliban longer than it actually turned out. The senators were also dissatisfied with the widespread assessment that Kiev would fall under the control of Russia a few days after Russian troops enter the country.

U.S. forces left behind military equipment worth more than \$7 billion during their chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan last August, the Pentagon has reportedly revealed in a long-awaited declaration.

Washington gave Afghan govern-

ment forces \$18.6 billion of weaponry from 2005 to 2021, and \$7.1 billion of that gear remained in the war-torn country after the U.S. withdrawal on August 30, according to the Pentagon.

The congressionally mandated report is yet another reminder of the severe losses incurred during the chaotic U.S. pull-out, which resulted in 13 troop deaths and the abandonment of thousands of American citizens and Afghan allies. Critics of President Joe Biden's administration have decried the Pentagon's failure to keep U.S. weapons from falling into Taliban hands.

"Nobody ever thought such stupidity as this feeble-brained withdrawal was possible," noted former president Donald Trump, who called for sending in troops to retrieve the equipment or bombing the gear to destroy it.

Some of the abandoned materiel, including 78 aircraft that were left at Kabul airport, was permanently disabled before U.S. forces withdrew, the Pentagon report showed. More than \$920 million worth of American planes remained in Afghanistan after Washington's exit, as did 40,000 military vehicles.

Also left behind were communications gear, more than 300,000 weapons and almost all of the 42,000 pieces of specialized equipment that had been given to Afghan government forces. Those pieces included radio systems, encryption devices, transmitters, night vision goggles, surveillance gear and "biometric and positioning equipment", the Pentagon announced.

## China: U.S. Owing Largest Amount of Dues to UN Since '80s

BEIJING (Xinhua) – The United States should shoulder responsibilities, take the lead in fulfilling its financial obligations to the UN, and act upon its commitment to multilateralism, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian says.

Zhao made the remarks at a daily press briefing in response to a query that the U.S. has owed more than one billion U.S. dollars of dues for the UN's regular budget and over 1.4 billion dollars of peacekeeping assessment according to the latest data released by the UN in May.

Zhao said that as one of the UN's founding members and the largest contributor, whether the U.S. has paid its full assessed contributions matters to the normal operation of the UN.

The payment is also an important way for the U.S. to fulfill its international obligations and practice multilateralism, Zhao added.

However, the U.S. has always owed the largest amount of dues to the UN since the 1980s.

"In recent years, it often owes up to one billion dollars, accounting for 60 percent or 70 percent of the total unpaid dues. In terms of peacekeeping assessment, the U.S. often owes the largest share of contributions for years. In 2019, it owed as much as 2.378 billion dollars, accounting for 66 percent of the total unpaid assessment," Zhao said.

The United States refused to pay its

huge arrears of UN budget while the Joe Biden administration promised "a return to multilateralism" and claimed to defend a "rules-based international order", the spokesperson said.

"How would the U.S. respond to this? Instead of paying its huge arrears of regular budget and assessment, the U.S. has been using financial means to fulfill its political agenda, pressure the UN and shift responsibilities to other UN member states. By what rules is the U.S. playing?" he said.

Although the U.S. side has missed deadlines of U.S. assessment payment, it has spent huge sums on waging wars, transferring weapons and fanning the flame all over the world, Zhao said.

"Is this how the U.S. defines defending multilateralism? Is this defending 'rules-based international order' by the U.S. standard?" he asked.

Noting that the arrears the U.S. accumulates to the UN regular budget and peacekeeping assessment doesn't go away but mounting as days go by, Zhao said that the greater deficit in the U.S. credibility, the longer the U.S. would live with the label of "the biggest debtor nation" in the UN.

"The U.S. should shoulder responsibilities, pay its assessments in full and on time, make up for the arrears, take the lead in fulfilling its financial obligations to the UN, and act upon its commitment to multilateralism," he said.



TBILISI (AFP) – The leader of Georgia's breakaway region of South Ossetia has set July 17 as a date for a referendum on joining Russia. "Anatoly Bibilov signed a decree on holding a referendum in the Republic of South Ossetia," his office said in a statement, citing his people's "historic aspiration" to join Russia. South Ossetia was at the center of the Russian-Georgian war in 2008 after which the Kremlin recognized the territory – along with another separatist region, Abkhazia – as an independent state and stationed military bases there. "We are coming home," Bibilov said on messaging app Telegram. "The time has come to unite once and for all. 'South Ossetia and Russia will be together. This is the start of a big new story,' the outgoing leader added. Georgia's officials have previously denounced as "unacceptable" plans by South Ossetia to hold such a referendum. South Ossetia broke away from Georgia in the early 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, the pro-Western government in Tbilisi has never recognized the independence of South Ossetia. The region was at the center of the Russian-Georgian war in 2008 after which the Kremlin recognized the territory – along with another separatist region, Abkhazia – as an independent state and stationed military bases there.

MILWAUKEE (NBC News) – A mass shooting in downtown Milwaukee left 17 people wounded late Friday shortly after fans left a nearby NBA playoff game, according to the Milwaukee Police Department. The shooting took place around 11 p.m. just blocks away from Fiserv Forum, where thousands of fans attended the Bucks' Game 6 loss to the Boston Celtics in the Eastern Conference semifinal playoff series hours earlier. The victims range from 15 to 47 years of age, police said in a news release. All are expected to survive, it said. It added that 10 people had been taken into custody and nine guns recovered. The shooting came hours after three people were shot in a separate incident nearby, according to NBC affiliate WTMJ. The extent of their injuries is unclear.

ANKARA (AFP) – Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan says Ankara does not have a "positive opinion" on Finland and Sweden joining NATO, throwing up a potential obstacle for the nations' membership bid. The leader of NATO member Turkey spoke ahead of expected confirmations from the Nordic nations on Sunday that they will apply to join the Western military alliance. Once a country has decided to apply for NATO membership, the alliance's 30 members must agree unanimously to extend a formal invitation, which is followed by membership negotiations. Erdogan accused both countries of harboring "terrorist organizations" in his unfavorable assessment of the membership bids. "We do not have a positive opinion," Erdogan told journalists in Istanbul. "Scandinavian countries are like a guesthouse for terror organizations," he said. Turkey has long accused Nordic countries, especially Sweden, which has a strong Turkish immigrant community, of harboring extremist Kurdish groups as well as supporters of Fethullah Gulen, a U.S.-based preacher wanted over a failed 2016 coup.

NEW DELHI (AP) – Police arrested two owners of a company that manufactures and sells security cameras after a massive fire reportedly started in their office in a four-story commercial building in the Indian capital, killing 27 people and injuring 12 others, police and fire officials said Saturday. The police registered a case of culpable homicide not amounting to murder and a criminal conspiracy that is punishable with life imprisonment or 10 years in jail. The building had no clearance from the fire department and it was not equipped with fire safety equipment like extinguishers, said Atul Garg, director of Delhi Fire Services. Garg said the fire started on the first floor of the building on Friday evening and spread quickly to other areas where inflammable plastic material used to manufacture equipment including security cameras and a large quantity of cardboard used for packaging were stored. At least 50 people were rescued from the building, which contains mainly shops, the fire control room said. The building is located in the Mundka area in western New Delhi. Fires are common in India, where building laws and safety norms are often flouted by builders and residents. In 2019, a fire caused by an electrical short circuit engulfed a building in New Delhi and killed 43 people.

MOGADISHU (Reuters) – Police in Somalia have announced a 33-hour curfew on the capital Mogadishu that will keep almost all residents at home during a presidential election by lawmakers on Sunday, in which incumbent leader Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed is seeking a second term. Police spokesperson Abdifatah Aden announced at a press conference on Saturday a full curfew in the city, covering both traffic and people, from Saturday at 9:00 p.m. until Monday at 6:00 a.m. Lawmakers, security personnel and all other officials involved in the vote are still free to move during those hours. The indirect election, in which lawmakers will pick a president, will take place in an airport hangar behind blast walls to help fend off potential attacks or meddling by factions within the security services. Mohamed is facing 37 opponents in the vote, including two former presidents, Sharif Sheikh Ahmed and Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, who analysts see as the frontrunners. Originally they were 39, but between Thursday and Friday two candidates announced they were exiting the race.

SYDNEY (Reuters) – A Chinese intelligence ship tracked off Australia's west coast within 50 nautical miles of a sensitive defense facility did not breach international maritime laws, Australia said on Saturday. Australia tracked the spy ship over the past week as it sailed past the Harold E Holt naval communications station at Exmouth, in Western Australia, which is used by Australian, U.S. and allied submarines. Prime Minister Scott Morrison said on Friday the Chinese navy vessel was not in Australian territorial waters. Asked on Saturday about whether the vessel's conduct was a "red line," Morrison said freedom of navigation was permitted around the world and the ship had not broken maritime laws. "International law of the sea has not been breached," he told reporters on the campaign trail in Melbourne. Defence Minister Peter Dutton claimed this week that he considered the vessel's movement "an act of aggression" for travelling so far south.

## Kim Warns of 'Great Turmoil' North Korea Battles Covid Outbreak



North Korea announced its first coronavirus infection more than two years into the pandemic Thursday, as leader Kim Jong-un called for raising Covid-19 preventive measures to maximum levels.

SEOUL (AFP) – North Korea on Saturday reported 21 additional deaths from "fever," two days after the country announced its first-ever cases of Covid-19 and ordered nationwide lockdowns.

State media said 174,440 new fever cases were discovered on Friday alone and that 21 people had died, as it moved into "maximum emergency quarantine system" in a bid to slow the spread of disease through its unvaccinated population.

"On May 13, 174,440 new cases of fever were reported nationwide,

181,430 recovered, and 21 died," the KCNA reported said.

The KCNA report did not specify whether the victims were positive for Covid-19, but experts say the country lacks mass testing capacity.

"The total number of sick people nationwide was 524,440, of which 234,630 were fully recovered, 288,810 were receiving treatment, and the number of deaths so far is 27," it added.

North Korea held its second Politburo meeting this week, overseen by leader Kim Jong-un, who said the

outbreak was causing "great turmoil" in the country, KCNA reported.

"The spread of the malignant epidemic is a great turmoil to fall on our country since the founding," Kim told the emergency meeting of North Korea's ruling Workers' Party.

"But if we don't lose focus in implementing epidemic policy and maintain strong organization power and control based on single-minded unity of the party and the people and strengthen our epidemic battle, we can more than overcome the crisis."

The KCNA said the Workers' Party meeting heard reports of about 280,810 people being treated and 27 deaths since a fever of unidentified origins was reported starting in late April.

The North Korean leader said the health crisis had been caused by the incompetence and irresponsibility of party organizations, but transmission was not uncontrollable and the country must have faith in its battle to overcome the crisis in the shortest possible period.

Kim offered to donate medical supplies, which had been kept in his household, to be used by families that are experiencing particular hardship "with his resolution to always share the destiny with the people."

## UN: Export Restrictions Worsen Global Food Crisis

ROME (Anadolu) – A top UN official has warned countries against restricting food exports, saying they are the wrong response to a global food crisis that is escalating due to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict that started on Feb. 24.

Poorer nations have had to grapple with rising food prices for the past two years, but the situation has become worse due to shortages caused by the war between Russia and Ukraine, two major producers and exporters of wheat and other foodstuffs.

In this scenario, governments should "refrain from imposing export restrictions, which can exacerbate food price increases and undermine trust in global markets," the head of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Qu Dongyu, said.

Qu said greater transparency in global food markets via the expansion of a food prices platform hosted by the FAO, and cheap loans to poorer countries to help them meet their soaring food bills, could alleviate the crisis.

He made the remarks while addressing a meeting of G7 countries' agriculture ministers in Stuttgart, Germany, the FAO said in a statement.

The G7 brings together the U.S., Canada, France, Britain, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the EU.

The U.S.-based International Food Policy Research Institute lists Argentina, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, and Kazakhstan among the "notable" countries that have responded to the war in Ukraine with export restrictions on foodstuffs.

Meanwhile, at a parallel G7 meeting of foreign ministers, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock accused Russia of blocking grain exports from Ukrainian ports, casting the move as part of a "hybrid war."

The FAO said Egypt, Turkey, Congo, Eritrea, Madagascar, Namibia, Somalia, and Tanzania are among the countries that rely the most on wheat imports, while Argentina, Bangladesh, and Brazil are heavily dependent on fertilizers imported from Russia.