

Palestinian Wounded in April Clashes With Zionists Martyred

AL-QUDS (Dispatches) — A Palestinian man was martyred on Saturday after he sustained wounds last month during clashes with Zionist police at Al-Quds' flashpoint Al-Aqsa mosque compound.

Walid al-Sharif, 23, was taken to Hadassah Ein Kerem hospital with a "head injury" on April 22 and he was "pronounced dead this morning", a hospital in the occupied territories said in a statement.

His family confirmed his death in an audio message shared with journalists.

Al-Aqsa mosque compound in East Al-Quds is Islam's third-holiest site. Palestinians have been angered by an uptick in Zionists' visits to the compound, where by longstanding convention Jews may go but are not allowed to pray.

Palestinian news agency Wafa, quoting a family member, said Sharif had been shot in the head with "a rubber-coated metal bullet fired by Israeli occupation forces".

In another development, fifteen European countries have urged the Zionist regime to stop plans for more illegal settlements in the West Bank, according to an official statement.

"We are deeply concerned by the decision of the Israeli Higher Planning Coun-



Palestinians gather to protest after Friday prayers, the third of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, at Al-Quds' Al-Aqsa mosque compound, on April 22, 2022.

cil to advance plans for the construction of nearly 4,500 housing units in the West Bank," said spokespersons for the foreign ministries of France, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain and Sweden.

"We urge the Israeli authorities to reverse this decision," the statement added.

The statement said the Zionist settlements are in "clear violation of inter-

national law and stand in the way of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace between Israelis and Palestinians."

"This decision, as well as demolitions and evictions affecting the Palestinian populations in East-Jerusalem (Al-Quds) and Area C, directly threaten the viability of a future Palestinian state," it added.

The EU nations also urged the occupying regime "not to proceed with any planned demolitions or evictions, especially in Masafer Yatta."

Peace Now, an Israeli anti-settlement organization, said on Thursday that the high planning committee of the so-called Israeli Civil Administration had given the final approval to a total of 4,427 units, including 2,791 housing units and initial endorsement for another 1,636 units.

"This is bad news for Israel and deepens the occupation, making it harder to achieve [the so-called] future peace," Hagit Ofran of Peace Now said.

Meanwhile, dozens of Zionist settlers took over a Palestinian building in the southern West Bank city of Al-Khalil, situated 30 kilometers south of Al-Quds, on Friday, while flanked by Zionist troops.

Issa Amro, director of the Youth Against Settlements activist group, tweeted a video of the scene which showed extremist settlers carrying their belongings, including mattresses and suitcases, as they stormed the three-story building.

The official Palestinian news agency Wafa reported that the building belonged to local Palestinian resident Walid al-Ja'abri, and it was undergoing renovations at the time that the settlers stormed in.

Iraq Exhumes Remains of Saddam-Era Victims From Mass Grave

NAJAF (AFP) — Iraqi authorities have exhumed the remains of 15 people from a mass grave believed to hold dozens more likely killed under dictator Saddam Hussein, an official said Saturday.

The mass grave was first discovered in April near the southern city of Najaf, during work to build a residential compound.

It is believed to date back to the 1990s, when Saddam unleashed a deadly campaign

against members of the majority Shia Muslim community in southern Iraq that left nearly 100,000 dead.

"There could be 100 victims in this grave. It is an estimation, the number could be higher due to the large size of the area," said Abdul Ilah al-Naeli, who heads a government foundation tasked with finding mass graves and identifying the remains.

Calling the burial "the scene

of the crime," Naeli said the mass grave dates back to the "1991 popular (Shia) uprising" against Saddam.

An AFP correspondent saw skulls and other human remains near the construction site where cement buildings have been erected.

According to Iraqi authorities, Saddam's regime forcibly disappeared more than one million people — including from the Kurdish minority — in the 1980s

and 1990s, and many of their families are still trying to ascertain what happened to them.

Iraq pays tribute to the missing on May 16, which is known in the war-wracked country as the National Day of Mass Graves.

Saddam was toppled in the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 and executed in December 2006 after being convicted by an Iraqi court of crimes against humanity.

Syria Intercepts Zionist Missiles

DAMASCUS (Xinhua) — Syria has intercepted Zionists missiles in its central coast region, state news agency SANA has reported.

Explosions were heard late on Friday in the Syrian coast cities of Banyas, Tartous, and Jableh in northwestern province of Hama, according to the report, adding most of the missiles were intercepted before reaching their targets.

While most of the missiles were reportedly intercepted by Syria's defense systems, at least five people were killed and seven others were wounded, including a child.

A report in Lebanon-based Al-Mayadeen cited Syria's defense ministry as saying that the occupying regime carried out the aggression from the direction of the sea, eyeing targets in the central region.

It said the Syrian air defense systems intercepted most of the missiles and shot them down.

The UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said Israeli aircraft fired at least eight missiles toward Masyaf, which led to

several fires. Ambulances were seen rushing to the area, it added.

The monitoring body said it was the 12th attack by the Zionist regime on Syrian territory since the start of the year.

Syria and the Zionist regime are effectively at war due to the latter's illegal occupation of Syria's Golan Heights since 1967, resulting in frequent escalations.

The Tel Aviv regime has repeatedly targeted the positions of the Syrian army and its allies.

The aerial bombardment intensified in scale and frequency after 2011 when the Arab country found itself in the grip of foreign-backed militancy and terrorism.

Damascus says Tel Aviv carries out attacks on the Arab country to aid terrorist groups against the Syrian army. It has repeatedly complained to the United Nations, calling the aggression a blatant violation of the country's sovereignty and international law.

The regime has in the past provided safe passage and medical treatment to terrorists operating on Syrian soil.

Afghan Women Defy Taliban Burqa Edict

KABUL (AFP) — The Taliban earlier this month issued a decree urging women to stay home and ordering those who have to go out to cover their faces with a burqa. But some Afghan women have vowed to defy the restrictive edict.

A day after the Taliban issued a decree on May 7 ordering women to fully cover their faces in public — ideally with the burqa — a group of women took to the streets of Kabul to protest the edict.

One of the women at the protest, who declined to be identified for security reasons, said the Taliban did not let them continue the demonstration.

"They insult us. We can't even reply because they have guns and their fingers are always on the trigger. They don't care that we are women, they don't value women. I am not just defending my own rights, but the rights of all women in Afghanistan," she said.

The decree from Taliban leader Hibatullah Akhundzada also said that if women had no impor-

tant work outside then it was "better they stay at home", and outlined punishments for their male guardians if they did not comply with the new dress code.

It was a major blow for women's rights in Afghanistan, following two decades of relative freedom.

"When you wear this, you can't even breathe. Even if they threaten to hang me, I will not wear the burqa," said another woman.

The decree was issued by the ministry for the promotion of virtue and suppression of vice, a department opened after the August 2021 Taliban takeover of Afghanistan following a chaotic U.S. military exit. On the exterior walls of the ministry, a banner urges Afghan women to wear the proper veil.

"The proper dress covers from head to toe, including the face... The implementation of the decree started the day we announced it. For now, we are explaining things and acting gently towards our sisters," said Mohammad Afif Mu-

hajir, a ministry spokesman.

In some parts of Kabul, there are still women who do not cover their faces in public. But since the decree was issued, their numbers are decreasing.

Meanwhile, a rising number of Afghan families have moved to neighboring Iran after the Taliban government failed to deliver on its promise to allow girls to recommence their education at schools following a disgraceful U.S. pullout.

The Afghan families made the decision to take refuge in Iran after the Taliban reneged on their promise to allow thousands of girls in Afghanistan to resume studying at the start of the new school year in March.

Before and after the Taliban's return to power following the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan, the group kept telling girls that they would be allowed to attend schools, but as thousands of teenage girls across the country were prepared to return to schools on March 23, the decision was reversed.

Murder ... (Continued From Page One)

of national publicity as key players in the affair.

Colonel North, still an officer on active duty at the time, was an enthusiastic player in the scheme.

In his memoir, McFarlane recalled that at first he had liked Colonel North, his fellow Marine, and thought that they had much in common. That changed after he discovered, he said, that Colonel North had deceived him about many of his ac-

tivities.

McFarlane served a sentence of 200 hours of community service, in part by helping to establish an independent living program for the disabled in suburban Washington, and by setting up a computer program listing after-school recreational programs for area youths.

Before he left office, President George H.W. Bush pardoned McFarlane on Christmas Eve, 1992, along with others involved in the Iran-contra affair, including Defense Secretary Casper W. Weinberger.

An unresolved question at the heart of the Iran-contra matter was the extent of President Reagan's knowledge and support. The episode has been an important area of study for scholars pondering if Reagan — who after his retirement was acknowledged to have Alzheimer's disease — had begun to lose his mental acuity in the White House. McFarlane, in interviews and in his memoirs, depicted the president as sometimes confused or vague about the details of what was happening with Iran and the contras.

Afghan... (Continued From Page One)

places of worship in several provinces of Afghanistan.

The attacks came despite the Taliban's repeated claims that once they came to power and the U.S.-led occupation had ended, safety and security would finally return to the nation.

Yet one international organization has said that nearly 20 million Afghans, or 47 percent of the population, were facing food insecurity due to the economic downturn, drought, aid cutbacks and Washington's withholding of billions in Afghan assets following the Taliban's return to power.

Zainab Sajadi, the principal at a non-governmental school for Afghan refugees in Mashhad, told MEE that the enrolment of undocumented students had risen since the Taliban takeover last summer.

"We received hundreds of new students. Our classrooms are completely full," Sajadi, 41, said. "We don't have enough chairs. Some students stand in class, others have to share their chairs."

Sajadi said the school had started to hold three different shifts of classes a day, with the teachers doing extra lessons voluntarily and without additional pay.

But Sajadi feared that no matter how many steps they took, it would never be enough to meet the outsized demand.

"Even if we keep teaching three shifts a day and continue enrolling students, there will still be thousands of other students who will be unable to attend school," she told MEE.

Sixty percent of the pupils in Sajadi's school are Afghan girls.

"They are the most intelligent students in our school," she said. "I can see just how much they are starving for education."

But the journey to Iran for Afghans is fraught with dangers and difficulties.

Paying smugglers to get you across the border can cost upwards of \$400 per person, and with bank restrictions on weekly withdrawals in place and millions of people unemployed or on severely reduced wages since the Taliban returned to power, such fees are beyond many Afghans.

Ukraine... (Continued From Page One)

been muted, though Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko said Saturday that their accession to NATO would heighten security tensions in the Arctic, "turning it into an arena of military competition."

The Nordic nations' potential bids were thrown into question Friday when Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said his country is "not of a favorable opinion" toward the idea.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is scheduled to meet his NATO counterparts, including the Turkish foreign minister, this weekend in Germany.

Killing himself, McFarlane believed at the time, was "the honorable thing to do," he said in an interview for this obituary in January 2016 at his home in the Watergate complex in Washington. "I so let down the country," he said.

McFarlane always asserted — and he was supported by evidence — that he had been involved mostly in the Iran part of the scandal, and that he had been ignorant of the more blatantly illegal portion, the sending of profits from the weapons sales to the Nicaraguan contras.

The scheme began to unravel on Oct. 5, 1986, when a plane supplying arms to the contras was shot down in Nicaragua, exposing the mission and prompting an investigation by a joint congressional committee and televised hearings. Summoned to testify, McFarlane and his former deputy, Lt. Col. Oliver L. North — White House figures little known to the public until then — emerged into the glare

detect the spikes, cores, and envelopes.

"If we complete the third booster shot rollout, and if the high-risk population receives the fourth shot, we can be confident that, even if there's a new variant, it won't drag the country into another crisis," he said.

Dr. Nader Tavakkoli, a member of Tehran's coronavirus combat headquarters, told Press TV that the infections' curve has seen significant downward tilt in recent months.

"It's safe to say that we're currently experiencing the calmest time in the past two years or so since the COVID-19 pandemic started," he said.

"We're in a good position in terms of hospitalizations, infections, and the death rate to the point that Tehran's COVID-related mortalities have been zero over the past few days."

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