

Six Dead After Migrant Boat Sinks Off Turkish Coast

ISTANBUL (Reuters) – Six people including children drowned when a boat carrying migrants from Lebanon destined for Italy sunk off the coast of southwestern Turkey, the Turkish coast guard says. In a statement, the coast guard said a total of 73 migrants from four life boats were rescued on Tuesday while search and rescue operations for the five missing continued with two boats and a helicopter. One woman, three children and two babies died, the statement said. The Turkish coast guard did not disclose the nationalities of the

One who takes lessons from the events of life, gets vision, one who acquires vision becomes wise and one who attains wisdom achieves knowledge.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

Saudi Arabia Jails Tribesmen for 50 Years for Rejecting Displacement

RIYADH (Middle East Eye) – Two members of the Howeitat, a tribe in Saudi Arabia forcibly displaced to make way for the \$500bn Neom megacity, have received lengthy sentences over their protests against the project, a UK-based rights group has reported.

Abdulilah al-Howeiti and his relative, Abdullah Dukhail al-Howeiti, were both handed a 50-year prison term and 50-year travel ban for supporting their family's refusal to be forcibly evicted from their homes in the Tabuk province of northwestern Saudi Arabia, according to Alqst.

The rulings in their cases, made by the Specialized Criminal Court of Appeal in August, come among a raft of similarly long sentences handed down by Saudi courts this summer.

Two women - Salma al-Shehab, a Leeds University student and mother of two, and Nourah bint Saeed al-Qahtani, a mother of five - were given 34 years and



Abdullah Dukhail al-Howeiti (left) and Abdulilah al-Howeiti (right) were sentenced last month to 50 years in prison and 50-year travel bans.

45 years respectively over tweets critical of the Saudi government. Osama Khaled, a writer, translator and computer programmer, was sentenced to 32 years over "allegations relating to the right of free speech", Alqst said last week.

Unverified reports have suggested a Saudi court also recently sentenced a third member of the

Howeitat to a lengthy sentence.

"The lengthy prison sentence handed [out] against members of the Howeitat tribe follow a dangerous pattern we are seeing unfold in Saudi Arabia," Ramzi Kaiss, legal and policy officer at MENA Rights Group, told Middle East Eye.

Kaiss said that since U.S. Presi-

dent Joe Biden's visit to Saudi Arabia in July, there had been a "more repressive approach by the Saudi state security and judicial authorities against individuals exercising their right to freedom of speech".

Lina al-Hathloul, Alqst's head of monitoring and communications, said: "This is becoming a new trend. No one will be saved from this. I think that anyone who gets arrested now will be handed a lengthy sentence."

Plans for Neom were first announced by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in 2017, when he promised a futuristic city would be built on Saudi Arabia's northwest coast. So far, little has been constructed, but large sums have been paid to consultants and increasingly outlandish plans revealed. Yet Saudi authorities have sought to clear areas along 170km of Tabuk province of its residents, many of whom belong to the Howeitat tribe.

Report: Occupying Regime Has Detained 135,000 Palestinians Since Oslo Accords



People take part in a march held for Palestinian Prisoners' Day in Ramallah, West Bank on 17 April 2022.

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – A prisoners' advocacy group says the Zionist regime has detained more than 135,000 Palestinians since the signing of the Oslo Accords on September 13, 1993.

In a statement, the Prisoners Affairs Commission (PAC) said some 20,000 children and 2,500 women had also been among those detained by Zionist troops during that span of time.

The occupying regime has persisted in detaining Palestinians from all segments of the society, the statement said, adding that a number of ministers and hundreds of academics, journalists, and staff from civil society and international organizations had been arrested. Zionist regime authorities never complied with their obligations to release prisoners in line with the Oslo Accords and all the subsequent agreements.

According to all the testimonies obtained, all prisoners had been subject to various forms of physical or psychological torture and cruel treatment.

Elsewhere in the statement, the commission said that Zionist regime authorities had also discussed and passed a large set of laws and legislation to undermine the prisoners' legal status and rights.

Regime authorities use torturous techniques even after transferring Palestinian detainees for interro-

gation and then to detention centers. The group has also recorded various injuries endured by the Palestinian detainees, some of whom were shot by the occupation military.

Palestinian prisoners are held for lengthy periods without being charged, tried, or convicted, which is in sheer violation of human rights. Advocacy groups describe the Zionist regime's use of the so-called administrative detention as a "bankrupt tactic" and have long called on the regime to end its use.

The Israeli Prison Service (IPS) keeps Palestinian prisoners under deplorable conditions, lacking proper hygienic standards. Prisoners have also been subjected to systematic torture, harassment, and repression all through the years of occupation of the Palestinian territories.

The statement comes on the 29th anniversary of the inking of the agreements in 1993, which marked the first time the occupying regime and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) recognized each other. The Gaza-based Hamas resistance movement has called on the Palestinian Authority (PA) to revoke the so-called Oslo Accords and end any kind of cooperation with the occupying regime, stressing that "comprehensive resistance" is the only way to realize the rights of the Palestinian people.

U.S. Introduces New Scheme, Refuses to Release Frozen Afghan Money

WASHINGTON (AFP) – The United States said Wednesday it was setting up an outside fund to manage \$3.5 billion in Afghanistan's reserves, claiming it cannot trust the Taliban leadership with the country's money.

The new Afghan Fund, based in Geneva, will be put in charge of core central bank functions such as paying Afghanistan's international arrears and for its electricity imports and potentially for future necessities such as printing currency.

The decision comes after talks between the Taliban and the United States failed to convince President Joe Biden's administration that it should hand over assets frozen when the Taliban returned to power 13 months ago, despite the dire humanitarian needs in Afghanistan.

The Afghan Fund will be incorporated in Switzerland with a board of two appointed Afghan economists unaffiliated with the Taliban and rep-

resentatives of both the U.S. and Swiss governments.

It will maintain an account with the Bank for International Settlements, which is owned by the world's central banks, and also pay for key functions such as Afghanistan's access to the global SWIFT banking payment system.

The United States expects the bulk of the reserves to be preserved and "responsibly managed" until the situation changes, a senior official said.

The United States froze \$7 billion in Afghan assets maintained in New York in August 2021 when the two-decade-old Western-backed government swiftly collapsed with Biden's pullout of U.S. troops.

Biden in February said that half of the assets would be made available to victims of the September 11, 2001 attacks, which prompted the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan that toppled the Taliban, although Afghanistan had nothing to do with the attacks.

Syrian Troops Block U.S. Military Convoy, Force It to Turn Back

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – Amid smoldering public resentment over the deployment of American occupation forces in northeastern Syria, government troops have blocked a U.S. military convoy as it was attempting to pass through a community in the energy-rich province of Hasakah.

According to a report published by Syria's official news agency SANA, Syrian army troops, deployed at a security checkpoint in the Munsif district, intercepted the convoy of four armored vehicles and a pickup truck on Tuesday.

The American troops were subsequently forced to turn around and go back in the direction they came from. There were no reports of clashes or injuries.

Back on July 21, residents of Tal Aswad village on the outskirts of Qamishli city in Hasakah province blocked a U.S. convoy from advancing in the region and forced it to retreat.

SANA cited local sources as saying that the convoy was made up of four military vehicles that tried to rumble through a checkpoint, but was forced to return to where it had come from.

The U.S. military has for long stationed its forces and equipment in northeastern Syria, with the Pentagon claiming that the deployment is aimed at preventing the oilfields in the area from falling into the hands of Daesh terrorists.

Damascus, however, maintains the deployment is meant to plunder the country's natural resources. Former U.S. president Donald Trump admitted on several occasions that American forces were in the Arab country for its oil wealth.

On August 30, a Chinese foreign

ministry spokesman denounced the illegal presence of U.S. military forces in Syria, saying Washington's continued looting of the war-torn country's energy and mineral resources has only exacerbated the suffering of the Syrian people.

"It is appalling to see the sheer scale of U.S. plundering in Syria, which has been going on as the country tries to emerge from a crisis that has dragged on for over a decade and a grave humanitarian crisis facing its people," Zhao Lijian said at a regular press conference in Beijing.

40 Years on, Survivors Recall Horror of Lebanon's Sabra, Shatila Massacre

BEIRUT (AFP) – Forty years after Christian militiamen massacred Palestinian refugees and Lebanese nationals in the country's Sabra and Shatila refugee camps, the horrors of the tragedy remain seared into survivors' memories.

Najib al-Khatib, whose father and 10 other family members were killed in the massacre, still remembers the stench of corpses.

It "lingered for more than five or six months. A horrible smell," the 52-year-old Lebanese survivor said.

"They would spray chemicals every day, but the smell stayed," he told AFP from the Sabra camp for Palestinian refugees, where he lives with his family.

From September 16 to 18, 1982, Christian militiamen allied with the Zionist regime massacred between 800 and 2,000 Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila camps on Beirut's outskirts. They also murdered at least 100 Lebanese and some Syrians.

Zionist troops, who had invaded in June that year as Lebanon's civil war raged, sealed off the camp while the militiamen went on their killing spree, targeting unarmed civilians.

Camp residents have been readying to mark the massacre's 40th anniversary on Friday.

"Until today, the smell is still in our heads -- the smell of the dead," Khatib said.

Khatib walked down an alleyway in the impoverished Sabra camp where he witnessed the atrocities four decades earlier.

"This is my grandmother's house. During the massacre, it was full" of dead bodies, he recalled. "They were piled up here. Horses and corpses, all on top of each other."

"This area was full of people they killed," he said.

One of Khatib's most harrowing memories was finding his father's body at the door of his house.

"He was shot in his legs," he said. "They

had hit him in the head with a hatchet."

Despite global outcry, no one has ever been arrested or put on trial for the massacre.

It came just days after the assassination of Lebanese president-elect Bashir Gemayel -- hated by many in Lebanon for his cooperation with the Zionist regime.

In the Israeli-occupied territories, an inquiry found a number of officials, including then war minister Ariel Sharon, were indirectly responsible.

It laid blame on Elie Hobeika, spy chief of the Lebanese Forces -- a right-wing Christian militia -- for the killings.

The LF, then allied to the Zionist regime, has maintained silence, never responding to the accusations.

A group of survivors tried to launch a lawsuit in Belgium against Sharon, but the court threw out the case in September 2003.