

UNITED NATIONS (Dispatches) –Restrictions imposed by Zionist regime authorities on Palestinian development in Area C of the Occupied West Bank cost the Palestinian economy an estimated \$50 billion between 2000 and 2020, the United Nations has said in a report. The UN found that the extra restrictions in Area C, which accounts for about 61 percent of the Occupied West Bank, had cost \$2.5 billion per year. “Despite several UN Security Council and General Assembly resolutions that emphasize the illegality, under international law, of settlements and the acquisition of territory by force, they continue to grow and expand,” the UN’s development agency, UNCTAD, said.

# UN Envoy Seeking Renewed Truce in Yemen, Says Situation Alarming

UNITED NATIONS (Dispatches)

The UN special envoy for Yemen says he is not only trying to renew and expand the truce that expired last month but to get the warring parties to initiate talks on a path toward a settlement of the eight-year conflict.

Hans Grundberg told the UN Security Council that he outlined ideas and options to the Sana’a-based government and the Saudi-backed allies and mercenaries and has been in constant contact with them on the issues that prevented an extension of the truce.

“And these discussions are making progress and they are ongoing,” he told reporters later.

Pressed on what the obstacles are, he refused to elaborate, stressing the need for discreet diplomacy and saying only: “We are seeing challenges in how to frame issues related to the economic matters such as the payment of salaries, and also broader issues which have an implication on the more long-term settlement of the conflict.”

The UN-backed truce initially took effect in April and raised



*Women hold their malnourished children at Hays Rural Hospital in Hodeida, Yemen, Oct. 11, 2022.*

hopes for a longer pause in fighting than six months.

Meanwhile, the UN special envoy for Yemen sounded the alarm over a worsening economic and humanitarian situation in the war-ravaged country, which remains under a crippling Saudi-led siege.

“Even though overall levels of violence have only increased slightly compared to the six-month truce period, in recent weeks we have seen a concerning uptick in

incidents,” Grundberg said.

He said the situation is fragile, and that all parties need to urgently reach an agreement to renew the truce.

The special envoy said that the international community and, more importantly, the Yemenis expect to see actionable commitment to a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Spokesman of Yemen’s Ansarul-lah resistance movement, Moham-

med Abdul-Salam, clearly stated in September that Yemen’s view regarding the ceasefire is that “the siege must end and foreign forces must leave Yemen,” and that “until these goals are achieved, the ceasefire must not be further extended.”

Addressing the same Security Council session, Reena Ghelani, the operations director in the UN humanitarian office, warned that “hunger continues to haunt more than half the population in Yemen, preying on the most vulnerable.”

The UN official added, “17 million people still do not know where they will get their next meal.”

According to recent figures, two out of three Yemenis are currently suffering from food insecurity. Also, malnutrition rates among Yemeni women and children are among the highest in the world, with 1.3 million pregnant or breastfeeding women and 2.2 million children under five needing treatment for acute malnutrition.

Saudi Arabia began the devastating war on Yemen in March 2015 in collaboration with its Arab allies.

## Erdogan Vows New Ground Operation in Syria ‘When Convenient’



*People look at a site damaged by Turkish air attacks that hit an electricity station in the village of Tal Bal, in Hassakeh province, Syria, on Sunday, November 20, 2022.*

ANKARA (Reuters) – Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said that his country’s air operations against the YPG militia in northern Syria were only the beginning and that it would launch a land operation there when convenient.

Erdogan said on Wednesday that Turkey was more determined than ever to secure its southern border with a “security corridor” while ensuring the territorial integrity of both Syria and Iraq, where it has been conducting operations against the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), and groups it considers to be affiliated, such as the YPG, or People’s Protection Units.

“We are continuing the air operation and will come down hard on the terrorists from land at the most convenient time for us,” Erdogan said in a speech to his AK Party politicians in parliament.

“We have formed part of this corridor (and) will take care of it starting with places such as Tal Rifaat, Manbij and Ayn al-Arab (Kobane), which are the sources of trouble,” he added.

Erdogan had said on Tuesday that Turkey’s military operations in Syria would not be limited only to an air operation.

Turkey has previously mounted major military operations in Syria against the largely Kurdish YPG militia. The YPG shares close ide-

ological links to the PKK, and Turkey has long labeled it the Syrian wing of the organization.

While the PKK is a designated “terrorist” group in Turkey, many other Western countries back the YPG-dominated so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

Ankara launched the air operations at the weekend, saying they were retaliation for an Istanbul bomb attack a week earlier that killed six people, and which authorities blamed on the PKK and the YPG. Nobody has claimed responsibility and the PKK and YPG have denied involvement.

Turkey has for months signaled its intention to launch a ground operation against the YPG in northern Syria, hoping to root it out from the Syrian side of the Turkey-Syria border.

Western countries, as well as Russia and Iran, have put pressure on Turkey to not attack.

Turkish Defence Minister Hulusi Akar said the army had hit 471 targets in Syria and Iraq since the weekend in what he said was Turkey’s biggest air operation of recent times.

He received briefings and gave instructions late on Tuesday in a video conference with the chief of general staff, the land forces commander and the commanders of border units, his ministry said on Wednesday.

## Dozens Hurt After Magnitude-6.1 Quake in Turkey

ANKARA (AFP) – A magnitude-6.1 earthquake struck northwest Turkey during Wednesday’s early hours, injuring dozens of people, according to health chiefs.

The shallow tremor struck about 170 kilometers (105 miles) east of Istanbul, the country’s largest city, according to the US Geological Survey.

Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu posted on Twitter that there was no information on loss of life.

Health Minister Fahrettin

Koca tweeted that dozens of people were injured -- including one who was seriously hurt after jumping from a building out of panic.

Turkish authorities said the quake’s epicenter was in Duzce province’s Golyaka district, though it was also strongly felt in Istanbul.

Initial images showed people covered in blankets outside their homes during the early morning.

Turkey’s disaster agency, the AFAD, said there were con-

trolled blackouts in the Duzce region, warning residents not to panic.

Turkey is situated in one of the world’s most active earthquake zones.

A magnitude 6.8 quake hit Elazig in January 2020, killing more than 40 people.

In November that year, a powerful 7.0 magnitude quake hit the Aegean Sea, killing 114 people and wounding more than 1,000.

About 800 people were killed

in a powerful earthquake that hit Duzce on November 12, 1999. In August of that year, 17,000 people were killed by another powerful temblor that devastated nearby Kocaeli province and other parts of northwest Turkey.

Officials said about 80 percent of the buildings in the area were rebuilt or fortified following the 1999 earthquakes, which helped minimize damage.

Turkey sits on top of major fault lines and is frequently shaken by earthquakes.

## Palestinian Activist Joins UK Lawsuit Against NSO Group, UAE, Saudi Arabia

LONDON (Middle East Eye) – A British-Palestinian academic and activist has joined a legal challenge in the UK’s High Court against NSO Group, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates over reports that NSO’s Pegasus spyware was used against him.

Azzam Tamimi was targeted with the Zionist firm’s military-grade spyware by Saudi Arabia on several occasions between 2018 and 2021, his lawyers said on Wednesday.

Tamimi, who was a long-standing friend of Jamal Khashoggi, says his phone was infiltrated while he was in touch with the journalist, who was murdered by a Saudi kill team in October 2018.

Khashoggi also appeared on Tamimi’s show on the satellite TV channel Al-Hiwar a month before the first verified example of Tamimi’s phone being hacked, his lawyers say.

“This deliberate and evil act

shows that the regime will stop at nothing to crush free speech and the human rights of those who criticize it,” Tamimi said in a statement on Wednesday.

“We will bring these matters into the light and believe that justice will prevail in the end.”

MEE has sought comments from Saudi Arabia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and NSO Group.

Tamimi joins three other UK-based activists - Yahya Assiri, a Saudi human rights defender, Anas Altikriti, head of the Cordoba Foundation, and Mohammed Kozbar, chairman of Finsbury Park Mosque - in the legal action they began earlier this year.

Their action was given a potential boost in August when the High Court ruled that prominent Saudi Arabian satirist and dissident Ghanem al-Masarir could proceed with his own spyware lawsuit against the kingdom. Masarir alleges that Riyadh installed

spyware on his phones and ordered an assault on him.

The judgment in his case was the first ruling in a UK court involving spyware and a foreign country. It will likely set a precedent for future cases involving UK-based individuals allegedly targeted by foreign states on British soil.

Claimants in the legal action brought by the London-based Bindmans law firm and the Global Legal Action Network, now joined by Tamimi, have previously told Middle East Eye of the emotional toll that the alleged infiltrations have had on their lives and the tangible costs to their work.

Altikriti, who works as a hostage negotiator in addition to running the UK-based Cordoba Foundation, said he was in the middle of a negotiation for the release of a young woman when his phones were hacked, by the UAE.

## Whereabouts of Prominent Saudi Activist Unknown as Prison Sentence Ends

RIYADH (Middle East Eye/MEMO) – Rights groups have expressed concern for the whereabouts of Saudi activist Mohammad al-Qahtani as his 10-year prison term came to an end.

Qahtani is a Saudi economics professor, political activist, and one of the founding members of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA), a now-disbanded organization.

In 2012, he and ACPRA’s other co-founder Abdullah al-Hamid were arrested and were handed 10- and 11-year prison sentences, respectively, over accusations that include “breaking allegiance to the ruler”, “questioning the integrity of officials”, “seeking to disrupt security and inciting disorder”, and “instigating international organizations against the kingdom”.

According to campaigners, Qahtani’s sentence ended on Tuesday, however, his current whereabouts are unknown.

“Dr Mohammad al-Qahtani’s prison term has expired and he has not been released,” Adel al-Saeed, an activist with the European Saudi Organization for Human Rights (ESOHR), told Middle East Eye.

“His wife said more than 20 days ago that the prison administration had prevented him from communicating and transferred him to another unknown location.”

ESOHR said that Qahtani was transferred after he submitted a complaint to prison authorities that he was being harassed by other inmates.

Meanwhile, Hamid, a pioneering Saudi human rights defender, died in prison while serving his sentence in 2020.

He suffered a stroke two weeks before his death but was kept in detention despite being in a coma at the hospital.

Several other founding members of ACPRA are also behind bars, including Waleed Abu al-Khair and Mohammed al-Bajadi, who has been detained without charge or trial since 2018.

Saeed said Saudi Arabia was pursuing a “systematic policy” of not releasing political prisoners despite them having served out their terms.

Meanwhile, the United Nations human rights office has censured Saudi Arabia over the ultraconservative kingdom’s near daily executions in recent weeks and termination of a 21-month moratorium on implementing the death penalty for drug-related offenses.