

At Least Two Killed in Flash Floods in Iran

TEHRAN — Heavy rains have triggered flash flooding in northern and western Iran, killing at least two people, national television reported Thursday.

According to Pirhussein Koulivand, the head of the country's emergency services, one fatality was reported in Qazvin province and the other in Ilam province in the past 24 hours. Koulivand also reported a third fatality, in West Azerbaijan province, where a person died from a lightning strike. Iran's meteorological department has warned of the seasonal rains in many areas across the country, including in the capital of Tehran.

Kayhan

International



Former Iranian Lawmaker Passes Away

TEHRAN -- Emad Afrough, a former member of the Iranian parliament who offered outspoken critiques of his own Principlist Party, has passed away at the age of 66.

Afrough died of complications caused by cancer at a Tehran hospital on Friday, his son announced. Afrough, who held a doctorate of philosophy in sociology, was a Principlist lawmaker in the Seventh Parliament, from May 2004 to May 2008, representing Tehran, and chaired the Cultural Committee of the Iranian legislature.

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Saturday, April 15, 2023, Farvardin 26, 1402, Ramadhan 24, 1444, Price 200,000 Rials

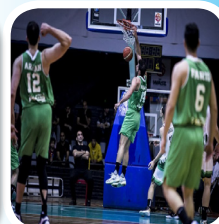
Viewpoint

Multimillion Rallies in Iran & Abroad for Liberation of Palestine

Iran, China, Russia, Pakistan Meet on Afghan Security



Zob Ahan Beat Al Naft to Reach WASL-West Semis



Resistance Leaders Reiterate Liberation of Palestine



International Quds Day

Hundreds of Thousands Pray at Al-Aqsa Muslims March for Liberation of Al-Quds

TEHRAN — Millions of people in Iran and elsewhere took to the streets Friday to mark Al-Quds Day in solidarity with Palestinians at a time of ramped-up Israeli atrocities.

In the occupied territories, some 250,000 Muslim worshippers performed prayers at Al-Aqsa Mosque.

The rallies, an annual fixture since Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution, are held on the last Friday of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

"The Palestinians are actively confronting Israeli aggression from Gaza to the heart of Tel Aviv," said parliament speaker Muhammad Bagher Ghalibaf.

Recent weeks saw deadly attacks and clashes in Occupied Palestine, annexed East Al-Quds and the occupied West Bank, as well as cross-border fire between Zionist forces and resistance fighters in the Gaza Strip, Lebanon and Syria.

"Yesterday they (Palestinians) were fighting with stones, and now they hit (Israel) with rockets," Ghalibaf said in a speech in the capital Tehran.

Rallies were held in Tehran and other major Iranian cities including Tabriz in the northwest, Hamedan in the west, Yazd in the centre, Bandar Abbas in the south and Abadan in the southwest, according to images broadcasted by national television.

"Death to Israel and to America," protesters chanted, waving Palestinian and Iranian flags as well as those of Lebanon's Hezbollah.

Some banners raised by demonstrators read "the destruction of Israel is near" and "Palestine is the axis of unity of the



This composition of pictures shows people participate in Quds Day rallies in Tehran on Friday.

Muslim world". Iran does not recognize Israel.

In central Tehran, protesters burnt U.S. and Israeli flags and images of the Zionist regime's prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"We have witnessed conspiracies by enemies in recent times," Ghalibaf told the crowd in Tehran. "If it wasn't for God's grace and our nation's intelligence... they would have had their dreams."

"It shows we must act now with greater focus and try to eliminate our weak points," he added, pointing specifically

to Iran's economy battered by years of sanctions.

"Today, the most important fight of all officials is against high costs, because it is a weak point exploited by the enemy," Ghalibaf said.

In their final communiqué in Tehran, the demonstrators described unity and solidarity within the Muslim world as the key to triumph over global arrogant powers and their conspiracies.

The Axis of Resistance, it said, has confronted Zionists and driven the corrupt and far-right administration of Netanyahu

to despair. "The child-killing regime is experiencing gradual deterioration, political instability as well as severe bipolarity."

"The unfolding developments across the Israeli-occupied territories and the reverse migration of Israeli settlers clearly show that the fake Zionist regime has reached an irreversible point of decline and is moving closer to collapse," it said.

The protesters also underscored the need to reinforce support for the anti-Israel resistance front, saying it is the only viable solution to resolve the Palestinian

issue as the first and foremost issue of the Muslim world.

The statement went on to emphasize the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their lands from which they were expelled in 1948, and hold a free referendum to determine their future.

The demonstrators also condemned Israeli raids on the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound and Palestinian worshippers, terming them as part of Tel Aviv's attempts to escape from the political and economic turmoil it is currently suffering from.

The statement touched on a new intifada (uprising) in the making in the occupied West Bank, saying the Zionist regime is alarmed by the unity of Palestinian groups and the mass mobilization of young Palestinians to join resistance groups.

The participants also hailed retaliatory missile strikes by Palestinian resistance fighters, warning Israeli officials against committing any new blunder against Al-Aqsa Mosque.

"Any future desecration of the holy site would inflict a heavy price upon the Zionists, and a new military confrontation will accelerate the collapse and destruction of the racist and usurping Israeli regime," they said.

The protesters finally condemned the silence and inaction of international institutions and human rights institutions toward "barbaric" Israeli crimes, urging the UN to suspend Israel's membership and subsequently expel the "occupying, racist and child-killing Zionist regime" from the world body and other international bodies.

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Yemen-Saudi Peace Talks Make Progress

RIYADH/ADEN (Dispatches) -- The top negotiator of Yemen's Ansarullah movement said Friday peace talks with Saudi Arabia had made progress and further discussions would be held to iron out remaining differences.

In a significant confidence-building measure, the conclusion of talks in the Yemeni capital Sanaa was followed by an announcement on Friday from the International Committee of the Red Cross that the warring parties had begun an exchange of nearly 900 detainees.

Saudi Arabia says it is seeking a permanent ceasefire deal to end its military involvement in a war that has killed tens of thousands of people and left millions hungry.

The kingdom leads a coalition that has been attacking the impoverished country since 2015. But Saudi Arabia wants to extricate itself from "a swamp that is very costly on all levels", according to Arab diplomats.

The visit by the Saudi delegation, which departed Sanaa on Thursday, signaled willingness to build on an expired UN-brokered truce.

Ansarullah chief negotiator Mu-

hammad Abdulsalam said on Friday the negotiations with envoys from Saudi Arabia and Oman, which is facilitating the talks, have been "serious and positive".

"There was advancement on some issues with the hope of continuing studying outstanding issues at another time," he said in a Twitter post, without elaborating.

The talks are reportedly focused on a ceasefire, full reopening of southern ports and Sanaa's airport, payment of public sector wages, rebuilding efforts, and withdrawal of foreign forces from Yemen.

Sources familiar with the negotiations say the main sticking points include payment of civil servant, using oil revenue and a timeline for foreign forces to exit the country.

Ansarullah and its allies are de facto authorities in northern Yemen.

Local media reports said the movement has agreed to release 181 detainees, including Saudis and Sudanese soldiers who were part of the Saudi-led war on Yemen which received logistical and intelligence support from the U.S. and other Western countries.

In exchange, 706 prisoners held

by the Saudi-backed former Yemeni regime will be released in the UN and ICRC-brokered prisoner swap deal reached last March in Switzerland.

The Red Cross said that on Friday, there would be two rounds of simultaneous flights between Aden and Sanaa to transfer the prisoners. The three-day operation is the most significant prisoner exchange in Yemen since both sides freed more than 1,000 detainees in October 2020.

On Thursday, a Saudi delegation left war-torn Yemen with an "initial agreement" on a truce and a commitment to hold a second round of talks with Ansarullah, one week after Riyadh had informed Sanaa its decision to put an end to the war.

"There is an initial agreement on a truce that should be announced later on if finalized," an Ansarullah official told AFP on condition of anonymity. "There is an agreement to hold another round of talks."

"There is an agreement to hold another round of talks to further discuss points of difference," the official said.

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France Braces for Flare-Up as Protests Continue

PARIS (Dispatches) -- France's top constitutional body was expected to rule Friday on whether President Emmanuel Macron's contested plan to raise the retirement age passes muster, a decision that could calm or further enrage opponents of the measure.

All eyes were on the heavily guarded Constitutional Council, which can nix all or parts of a complex pension reform plan that Macron pushed through without a vote by the lower house of parliament. Security forces stood behind a metal fence erected in front of the edifice where the decision was being made.

Spontaneous demonstrations were likely around France ahead of the nine-member council's ruling. Opponents of the pension reform blockaded entry points into some cities, including Rouen in the west or Marseille in the south, slowing or stopping traffic.

French Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne was interrupted while visiting a supermarket outside Paris by a group of people chanting "We don't want it," referring to the way she skirted the vote by lawmakers to advance the pen-

sion reform.

The government's decision to get around a parliamentary vote in March by using special constitutional powers heightened the fury of the measure's opponents, as well as their determination. Another group awaited Borne in the parking lot.

The president's drive to increase the retirement age from 62 to 64 has provoked months of labor strikes and protests. Violence marked the 12 otherwise peaceful nationwide marches that unions organized since January.

Hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets across the country on Thursday. As on previous protest days, there were scuffles between police and protesters across the country, while demonstrators also stormed the headquarters of French luxury goods firm LVMH in Paris.

Paris police chief Laurent Nunez had warned in advance that protesters might "hit out, often against what they see as capitalist signs".

Workers blocked the entrance to the Feyzin refinery near Lyon for two hours before police inter-

vened. Others blockaded a rubbish incinerator outside Paris.

On the Rhine river, cargo traffic was disrupted after workers cut power at a waterway lock near the border with Germany and Switzerland.

In addition to ruling on the pension reforms, the Constitutional Council also would decide on a request by lawmakers who oppose the plan to use a little-used and lengthy process that could ultimately lead to a referendum on a proposal for the legal retirement age not to exceed 62.

The council members can reject the pension legislation in whole or in part. Any sections they conclude are constitutional must be promulgated into law, whether or not the council also grants the referendum request.

Union leaders have said the body's decisions would be respected. However, eight unions sent a "common declaration" to the Constitutional Council spelling out their position.

The leftist CGT union said Friday it had filed "more precise observations" with the council.

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