

Zionist Troops Arrest Palestinians, Including Children

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – Zionist regime forces have arrested at least twenty Palestinians, including children, during raids in the West Bank and Al-Quds, as the occupying regime continues its wide-scale arrest campaign in several areas across the occupied territories.

Palestine's official Wafa news agency, citing local sources, reported that Zionist troops arrested three children -- identified as Musa, Fo'ad and Omar Jibril-- after raiding their family home in the Silwan neighborhood of Al-Quds on Sunday.

Zionist troops detained at least three other Palestinians in the occupied East Al-Quds neighborhood of al-Tur, while another six were arrested after the regime's troops stormed their houses in the occupied Old City of Al-Quds.

Six other Palestinians were also arrested after the occupying regime forces attacked their house in the West Bank village of Husan, west of Bethlehem.

The troops also arrested a Pal-



Zionist troops run during a raid in Jenin in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

estinian from the village of Tuqu, southeast of Bethlehem, during the regime's latest violence against Palestinian worshippers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in Al-Quds.

In the West Bank city of Qalqilya, Zionist troops also arrested at least one Palestinian during a raid on the town of Azzun.

Over the past months, the occupying regime has ramped up

attacks on Palestinian towns and cities throughout the occupied territories. As a result of these attacks, dozens of Palestinians have lost their lives and many others have been arrested.

Most of the raids have focused on Nablus and Jenin, where Zionist troops have been trying to stifle a growing Palestinian resistance against occupation.

Local and international rights

groups have condemned the regime's excessive use of force and "shoot-to-kill policy" against Palestinians.

Since the start of the holy month of Ramadan, the occupying regime has imposed strict restrictions on the entry and exit of Palestinians to and from the gates of Al-Aqsa Mosque.

On April 4, heavily armed Zionist troops stormed the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound before firing tear gas and stun grenades into the Qibli prayer hall, where hundreds of men, women, elderly people, and children were staying overnight to pray. Some eyewitnesses said rubber-coated steel bullets were also fired.

Zionist troops have wounded and rounded up hundreds of Palestinians during the attacks that have seen a rise since the beginning of the fasting month of Ramadan. Illegal Israeli settlers have, meanwhile, been freely violating the compound under the Israeli military and police force's protection.

the West and the United States for pursuing a politically-motivated approach and exploiting the Human Rights Council by establishing a so-called mechanism to investigate the riots in the country.

"The same countries that consider themselves supporters of the rioters in Iran are -- both in law and in practice -- committing the most heinous crimes to systematically violate the right to peaceful assembly."

Saudi...

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delegations to review the process of reopening their diplomatic missions.

On April 8, a delegation of Saudi technical officials arrived in Iran to visit the kingdom's diplomatic missions in the Islamic Republic and discuss procedures for reopening them.

The team arrived in the capital, Tehran, a few days after Iran and Saudi Arabia officially restored diplomatic relations, which have been severed over the past seven years.

An Iranian technical delegation also traveled to Saudi Arabia on April 11, to make arrangements for the reopening of Iran's embassy in Riyadh, the consulate general in Jeddah, and the representative office of Iran at the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

On March 10, after several days of intensive negotiations hosted by China, Iran and Saudi Arabia agreed to resume their diplomatic relations and reopen their embassies and diplomatic missions after seven years of estrangement.

In a joint statement after signing the agreement, Tehran and Riyadh highlighted the need to respect each other's national sovereignty and refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of one another.

The two sides agreed to implement a security cooperation agreement signed in April 2001 and another accord reached in May 1998 to boost economic, commercial, investment, technical, scientific, cultural, sports, and youth affairs cooperation.

Much to the dismay of the U.S. and the occupying regime of Israel, the rapprochement has the potential to reduce tensions across a region replete with chaos and calamities for decades.

Islamic...

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that were du jour in Europe at that time.

Was this really how the British Museum intended to demonstrate Islam's influence on Western art?

Walking around this mishmash of outdated notions of Islam revived for a new generation proved very frustrating. The exhibition could have included the work of William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones and others from the arts and crafts movement -- or even illustrations or oil paintings that depict rich textures, patterns, and Arabic calligraphy found on silk and cloth imported from the East. The curators could have focused on art and architecture -- or glass lamps, carpets, silk and fabric embroidery, or illuminated manuscripts and binding. Such a collection would have been at least a respectable start in honoring the influence Islam has had on Western art over the past millennium.

The exhibition ran for four months and received almost universal praise, even from Muslims, for its boldness in "finally" recognizing Islam's influence on the world of Western art. It makes me wonder if we all saw entirely different exhibitions.

It is rare that Muslims are given an opportunity to exhibit and curate their culture and history -- and it's even rarer for these opportunities to be provided by major European museums. The lack of vision and courage to be bold when there are now platforms for the curation and exhibition of Muslim heritage and identity is disappointing indeed. End

What...

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of exactitude that we could desire (they really believe that, the mad fools!), then photography and Art are the same thing." Baudelaire contested the categorization of photography as an art form but also the claim that it functioned as a perfect transcription of reality.

Numerous types of photographic technologies emerged in the nineteenth century, each with their own technical idiosyncrasies. Daguerreotypes looked different from calotypes, and all were fuzzy compared to photographs today. Which of these could be said to best represent reality? Individual cameras could consistently replicate certain types of visual information, but this was not yet true of photography as a genre.

Despite the protests of aristocratic art critics, commercial photography cemented itself as a market in France over the course of the nineteenth century. Arguments about its lack of creative merit gradually faded in the face of photography's mounting profitability. Because of its technical novelty however, it was unclear whether photography involved sufficient human creativity to qualify for protections under French copyright law. Erasing human influence from the photographic process was good for underscoring arguments about objectivity, but it complicated commercial viability. Ownership would need to be determined if photographs were to circulate as a new form of property. Was the true author of a photograph the camera or its human operator?

In the mid-nineteenth century, answers to this question were hastened by the material stakes. The first legal designation of photography as a creative art form occurred in April of 1862, when the French photographers Mayer et Pierson successfully prevented the sale of retouched and altered celebrity portraits taken by their studio. Because they had taken the original photographs, Mayer et Pierson argued that the portraits were theirs alone to monetize. The court's ruling represented a hard-won success. Earlier that year, it had rejected their suit on the grounds that photography was functionally automated -- the medium was little more than a chemical process for fixing the image of external objects using a machine.

What changed this thinking? When Mayer et Pierson appealed the decision in April of 1862, they used an argument that reintroduced human agency into the photographic process. By reframing photographs as *les dessins photographiques* -- or photographic drawings, the plaintiffs successfully established that the development of photographs in a darkroom was part of an operator's creative process. In addition to setting up a shot, the photographer needed to coax the image from the camera's film in a process resembling the creative output of drawing. The camera was a pencil capable of drawing with light and photosensitive surfaces, but held and directed by a human author. Copyright protections helped photography commercialize in nineteenth-century France, but rather than clarifying what the photographic process was doing, this development codified it as both art and documentation simultaneously.

If the court had ruled that photographs weren't protected because the camera performed the bulk of the work, then an entirely new set of problems would have emerged with respect to the creative process. What of the painter who employed a team of apprentices in a large studio? An engraver that sold hand-made etchings based on famous paintings? Could a well-dressed portrait sitter exert some claim over the artistic process once the work was completed? Might the gardener of a meticulously maintained landscape declare authorship over a watercolorist's portrayals? Establishing photography's dual function as both artwork and document may not have been philosophically straightforward, but it staved off a surge of harder questions.

Over the nineteenth-century, most western art markets established some form of copyright protection for photography, ceding that the medium involved substantive creative human input. In the popular imagination, however, photographers were still viewed largely as technicians. By 1899, Alfred Stieglitz lamented the view that "after the selection of the subjects, the posing, lighting, exposure and development, every succeeding step ... require[ed] little or no thought." Human intervention in the photographic process still appeared to happen only on the ends -- in setup and then development -- instead of continuously throughout the image-making process. Photography won its legal designation as an art form in the nineteenth century and spent the bulk of the twentieth convincing skeptical museum curators why.

Iraq's Ancient Treasures Sand-Blasted by Climate Change

UMM AL-AQARIB, Iraq (AFP) -- Iraqi archaeological marvels that have survived millennia and the ravages of war now face a modern threat: being blasted and slowly buried by sandstorms linked to climate change.

Ancient Babylonian treasures, painstakingly unearthed, are slowly disappearing again under wind-blown sand in a land parched by rising heat and prolonged droughts.

Iraq, one of the countries worst hit by climate change, endured a dozen major sandstorms last year that turned the sky orange, brought daily life to a halt and left its people gasping for air.

When the storms clear, layers of fine sand cover everything --

including the Sumerian ruins of Umm al-Aqarib, "the Mother of Scorpions", in the southern desert province of Dhi Qar.

Sandstorms have slowly begun to reverse years of work there to unearth the temples' terracotta facades and many priceless artifacts, said archaeologist Aqeel al-Man-srawi.

Archaeologists in Iraq have always had to shovel sand, but now the volumes are growing.

After a decade of worsening storms, sand at Umm al-Aqarib now "covers a good part of the site", that dates back to around 2350 BC and spans more than five square kilometers, he said.

In the past, the biggest threat was

looting of antiquities at the ruins, where pottery fragments and clay tablets bearing ancient cuneiform script have been discovered.

Now the changing weather and its impact on the land, especially creeping desertification, spell an additional threat to ancient sites all across southern Iraq, said Mansrawi.

"In the next 10 years," he said, "it is estimated that sand could have covered 80 to 90 percent of the archaeological sites."

The fabled land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers hosted some of the world's earliest civilizations, the remains of which are under threat in modern-day Iraq.

The oil-rich country is still recov-

ering from decades of dictatorship, war and insurgency and remains plagued by misrule, and widespread poverty.

Compounding its woes, Iraq is also one of the five countries most impacted by some effects of climate change, including drought, says the United Nations.

Upstream dams in Turkey and Iraq have reduced the flow of its big rivers, and more water is wasted by Iraq's ancient irrigation system and outdated farming practices.

Summer temperatures topping 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit) now often batter Iraq where droughts have parched agricultural areas, driving farmers and pastoralists into crowded cities.

thousands of protesters as only part of the countermeasures.

Referring to Britain's introduction of amendments to the Public Order Bill to increase police powers to deal with protesters at rallies, he said the "repression bill" leads to a "significant and unprecedented increase in the powers of the police force to impose undue restrictions on peaceful protests and ... it criminalizes assemblies under the pretext of deprivation of public comfort and provides a sentence of up to 10 years of imprisonment."

Gharibabdi pointed to a sit-in protest in Germany. He said over 3,000 German police and security forces arrested hundreds of political opponents under the pretext of plotting to stage a coup d'état.

"In yet another move, the German government seeks to pass a law that will expel its opponents from all government jobs under the pretext of extremism." The top Iranian rights official said most European countries have been the scene of peaceful protests over the past months which were "suppressed and dispersed with the most severe attacks by law enforcement forces."

Referring to the recent riots in Iran, Gharibabadi said, "Egged on by incitement and backing of particular states, media outlets and terrorist groups, the recent gatherings in the Islamic Republic of Iran deviated from their peaceful nature and morphed into riots, causing violations of the fundamental rights of citizens."

On the contrary, he said, Iran took a responsible policy, and established an investigative committee to launch inquiries into the possible physical and financial damages and the violations of the rights of all parties.

The Iranian vice-president slammed

playing host to such despicable acts on their soils over the past months, drawing far-and-wide condemnation from the world's Muslim countries.

In January, dual Danish and Swedish citizen Rasmus Paludan burned a copy of the Holy Qur'an in front of the Turkish embassy in Stockholm, and later again in front of a mosque.

Days later in the Netherlands, far-right extremist Edwin Wagensveld, who leads the anti-Muslim PEGIDA party, tore a copy of the Qur'an apart before setting it on fire.

Muslim countries across the world, especially in the West Asia region, have issued separate statements, condemning in the strongest terms desecration of the Holy Qur'an in Denmark. They asserted that such insulting acts hurt the feelings of the world Muslims during the fasting month of Ramadan.

Turkey's foreign ministry described such acts as a form of hate crime, saying that Ankara would not accept "vile actions being allowed under the guise of freedom of expression."

Official...

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and Germany, over the last six months regarding the "right to freedom of assembly and of association."

Pointing to massive public demonstrations in France in protest against the government's policies, the Iranian rights official said, "Instead of listening to the protesters' demands and trying to improve the situation, the French government resorts to large-scale violence to deal with the gatherings."

Gharibabadi censured the French government for using anti-riot equipment, assaulting people, and arresting

Over...

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Opponents have said it will destroy a system of checks and balances by concentrating power in the hands of Netanyahu and his allies in parliament.

They also have said that Netanyahu has a conflict of interest at a time when he is on trial.

Saturday's demonstration came a day after U.S. rating agency Moody's announced it was lowering Israel's rating from "positive" to "stable".

It said the change reflects a deterioration of Israel's governance, as illustrated by the recent events around the regime's proposal for overhauling the country's judiciary.

"While mass protests have led the cabinet to pause the legislation and seek dialogue with the opposition, the manner in which the cabinet has attempted to implement a wide-ranging reform without seeking broad consensus points to a weakening of institutional strength and policy predictability," Moody's noted.

Four...

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Their figure includes shootings that happen both in homes and in public places.

The deadliest such attack, in Las Vegas in 2017, killed more than 50 people and left 500 wounded. The vast majority of mass shootings, however, leave fewer than 10 people dead.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a total of 45,222 people died from gun-related injuries of all causes during 2020, the last year for which complete data is

available.

In 2020, more than 19,000 of the deaths were homicides, according to the CDC. The figure represents a 34% increase from 2019, and a 75% increase over the course of the previous decade.

The data also shows nearly 53 people are killed each day by a firearm in the U.S.

Provisional data for the following year suggests nearly 49,000 gun-related deaths in 2021.

That's a significantly larger proportion of homicides than is the case in Canada, Australia, England and Wales, and many other countries.

While calculating the number of guns in private hands around the world is difficult, the latest figures from the Small Arms Survey - a Swiss-based leading research project - estimate that there were 390 million guns in circulation in 2018.

The U.S. ratio of 120.5 firearms per 100 residents, up from 88 per 100 in 2011, far surpasses that of other countries around the world.

More recent data out of the U.S. suggests that gun ownership grew significantly over the last several years. A study, published by the *Annals of Internal Medicine* in February, found that 7.5 million U.S. adults became first new gun owners between January 2019 and April 2021.

This, in turn, exposed 11 million people to firearms in their homes, including 5 million children. About half of new gun owners in that time period were women, while 40% were either black or Hispanic.

Iran...

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Several European countries have been