

Arab League Holds Emergency Meeting to Discuss Gaza Onslaught

CAIRO (Dispatches) – The Arab League opened an emergency meeting in the Egyptian capital, Cairo, on Monday to discuss the Zionist regime’s deadly carnage in the Gaza Strip, Anadolu Agency reports.

Held at the level of permanent delegates, the meeting convened upon a request from Palestine to discuss ways of halting the Israeli war, which has killed more than 25,000 people since 7 October.

Monday’s meeting, chaired by Morocco, was not attended by Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul-Gheit, who is currently in Brussels to attend a meeting with the foreign ministers of the EU, Israel, Palestine, Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

The meeting discussed preparations for an international peace



A man takes a solar panel from a mosque destroyed in an Israeli airstrike against the city of Khan Younis, in southern Gaza Strip, on October 8, 2023.

conference aimed at implementing the “two-state solution” for the Zionist-Palestinian conflict. Participants discussed the pos-

sibility of imposing sanctions on Zionist settlers over the ongoing violence against Palestinians in the West Bank.

The occupying regime launched a deadly onslaught on the Gaza Strip on 7 October, killing at least 25,295 Palestinians and injuring 63,000. Nearly 1,200 Zionists are believed to have been killed in the Hamas operation.

However, since then, it has been revealed by Haaretz that helicopters and tanks of the Israeli army had, in fact, killed many of the 1,139 soldiers and civilians claimed by the regime to have been killed by the Palestinian resistance.

The Israeli genocide has left 85 percent of Gaza’s population internally displaced amid acute shortages of food, clean water and medicine, while 60 percent of the enclave’s infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed, according to the UN.

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and build a temple began to build momentum again in the 1980s. By 1990, the leaders of the BJP – back then an emerging political party – threw their weight behind the movement, leading marches to Ayodhya.

In December 1992, as a mob marched into Ayodhya and began to tear down the mosque using sledgehammers, axes and iron rods, bringing it to the ground within hours, several senior BJP figures were present.

In November 2019, the supreme court declared the destruction illegal but awarded the land title to the Hindu side. No one has been convicted for the demolition or the violence in Ayodhya that followed it, which killed 17 Muslims in the town and set off riots across the country that left more than 2,000 people dead.

Yet for the Muslims of Ayodhya, many of whom lost relatives or had their homes destroyed in 1992 amid the violence that broke out around the mosque demolition, Monday’s ceremony only brought up old trauma and fear.

Abdul Wahid Qureshi, 44, a shopkeeper, recalled that day in 1992, when the rightwing Hindu mob went on a rampage through his locality, killing any Muslims in their path. Among those who died was his neighbor, a frail elderly man who was burned alive in his home. Qureshi survived the violence only because a Hindu living close by gave them shelter.

“I can never forget those gory scenes,” he said. “They burned down everything which had any resemblance of Muslims. That day changed everything for us as Muslims in Ayodhya. We returned after a couple of weeks and my father managed to build a new house. But since then, the sense of security is gone.”

Qureshi said many Muslims were fearful that as hundreds of thousands of outsiders would continue to flock into Ayodhya, they would once again become a target. Half the Muslim households were deserted as the temple festivities took place. “All this takes me back to 1992,” he said. “I am afraid, like all other Muslims here, what will happen to us after the dignitaries are gone and security is lifted.”

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plans in the future, including its nuclear program.

On the other side, as Ze’evi-Farkash said, Iran has a clear “prospect” and believes, “Israel must be wiped off” the face of the region.

The Islamic Republic “knows that it is not a matter of one or two days, or one year or two, which makes a tremendous difference as opposed to someone who believe in Israel from the river to the sea,” the former Israeli official underlined, in a geographical reference to the area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

“Iran believes in a West Asia region where Shia Muslims are dominant and Israel has vanished,” Ze’evi-Farkash said. “Iran knows that this issue requires what is called patience. Ample patience and perseverance is what Iranians have more than us.”

Ze’evi-Farkash also acknowledged the Iranians’ pragmatism and visionary attitude in planning for the future.

“I reckon that they are pragmatic, they plan for the long time and know when to pursue their interests,” the former head of Israel’s military intelligence said. “They say if it does not happen in my tenure, it will happen in another.”

Ze’evi-Farkash stressed, “I have no doubt that they (Iranians) act practically. They train, educate and work so that such things will happen and Israel is gradually enfeebled.”

He said a road map has been outlined in light of presidential decrees, face-to-face meetings as well as telephone conversations for the continuation of discussions on settlement of sticking points and final rapprochement between Tehran and Cairo.

“We are optimistic that we will move ahead. We have common areas to hold talks about. Moreover, the issue of Palestine has been discussed by officials from the two countries. Humanitarian institutions, like the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS), are in constant contact with Egypt. We will continue our efforts based on the agreement clinched between the two presidents,” Kanaani said.

Member of the Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs, Rakha Ahmad Hassan, said in an interview with the Arabic service of Russia’s Sputnik news agency on December 29 that an exchange of ambassadors between his Northeast African country and Iran is likely to happen soon.

Earlier that month, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi congratulated his Egyptian counterpart Abdel Fattah el-Sisi on securing a third term in office as leader of the Arab world’s most populous nation, hoping for the resolution of existing issues between Tehran and Cairo and the restoration of diplomatic ties.

In the first telephone conversation between the two heads of state in more than four decades, Raisi warmly felicitated the 69-year-old Egyptian politician on his reelection.

They discussed developments in the Gaza Strip in light of the relentless Israeli strikes, which have killed at least 25,105 people, most of them women and children, and wounded more than 62,000 individuals, and underlined the significance of unity among Muslim countries.

The two presidents also agreed to take tangible steps for the final resolution of issues between Iran and Egypt, and the re-establishment of diplomatic relations.

Egypt severed its diplomatic relations with Iran in 1980 after it welcomed the deposed Pahlavi ruler of Iran and also recognized the apartheid Israeli regime.

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“Iran will not play in the sinister plot devised by the Zionist regime,” he emphasized.

Commenting on Israeli officials’ anti-Iran rhetoric, Kanaani said that the baseless claims show the level of the threat that the regime poses to regional and international security.

“Such claims are empty, but of course we will not leave any action against Iran unanswered,” he said.

South Africa has filed a lawsuit with the International Court of Justice (ICJ) over Israel’s genocidal actions against Palestinians in besieged Gaza.

Kanaani said Iran has supported “the good, responsible, honorable and courageous action” of the South African government and announced its political position in support of South Africa.

Touching on Iran’s relations with Iraq, he said that the ties are strong and that Tehran-Baghdad contacts are continuous and on a daily basis.

He further noted that Iran’s concerns can be eased by the full implementation of a security agreement signed between the two neighboring countries last year.

The spokesman also referred to recent reports about Saudi Arabia’s intermediation between Iran and the United States, saying he did not confirm the news that the Saudis are going to play a role in this regard.

“However, the Americans use paths to send messages. The relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia are good and developing. There is a serious will to expand cooperation,” he pointed out.

Iraq Holds Funeral for Newly-Identified Izadi Daesh Victims

BAGHDAD (AFP) – Iraq on Monday held a state funeral for 41 Izadis killed by the Daesh terrorist group in 2014 and recently identified by authorities after complex and lengthy DNA tests.

After seizing swathes of Iraq in 2014, Daesh terrorists carried out horrific massacres, including in the northern region of Sinjar where the Kurdish-speaking Yazidi minority has long been rooted.

The group targeted the ethno-religious minority, systematically killing thousands of men and forcing women into sexual slavery.

After Iraqi authorities declared victory over the mili-

itants in 2017, scores of mass graves were discovered across the country, setting off a long and painstaking process of identifying the bodies.

In Baghdad, portraits of the victims and their coffins, covered with the Iraqi flag and flower wreaths, were paraded on army pick-up trucks at the Iraqi capital’s iconic Martyrs monument.

Family members and Izadi officials attended the ceremony.

The identification of Monday’s 41 victims brings the total number of Izadis found and returned to their families to 188, health ministry spokesperson Saif al-Badr

told AFP.

Work continues through a “complex and expensive process” of DNA testing to identify the victims, he added.

The bodies were exhumed from a mass grave dating back to “massacres committed in 2014 by the terrorist organization Daesh”, the director of Iraq’s forensic authority Zaid Ali Abbas told AFP.

He highlighted the challenges of collecting samples and setting up a database when “a large number of the victims’ relatives are abroad”.

Izadi MP Vian Dakhil decried “sluggishness regarding government procedures

and DNA testing”, noting the “large number (of victims) who have still not been identified.”

Last May, authorities organized similar funerals for 78 victims of Daesh, namely Shia prisoners captured by the terrorists in northern Iraq’s Badush prison before being executed.

The more than 200 mass graves left behind by the terrorists, which are still being exhumed, could contain up to 12,000 bodies, according to the United Nations.

More than 2,700 Izadis remain missing, according to the International Organization for Migration.

Saudi FM: No Normal Israel Ties Without Path to Palestinian State

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – Saudi Arabia’s foreign minister said there can be no normalization of ties with the Zionist regime without resolving the Palestinian issue, he told CNN in an interview that aired.

Asked if there could be no normal ties without a path to a credible and irreversible Palestinian state, Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud told CNN’s Fareed Zakaria: “That’s the only way we’re going to get the benefit. So, yes, because we need stability and only stability will come through the resolving the

Palestinian issue.”

The foreign minister’s remarks were part of an interview originally taped on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum held last week in Davos, Switzerland, and aired Sunday on CNN.

De-escalation of the conflict in Gaza and halting deaths is a key focus of Saudi Arabia, the minister said.

“What we are seeing is the Israelis are crushing Gaza, the civilian population of Gaza,” he said. “This is completely unnecessary, completely unacceptable and has to

stop.”

The local health ministry in Gaza says more than 25,000 Palestinians have been killed and more than 62,000 wounded in the Zionist regime’s onslaught on the region since an Oct. 7.

The Saudi foreign minister also said the kingdom was “very worried” that tensions in the Red Sea amid attacks by Yemen’s Ansarullah and U.S. strikes on Yemeni targets could spiral out of control and escalate the conflict in the region.

“I mean, of course, we are very worried. I mean, you know, we are

in a very difficult and dangerous time in the region, and that’s why we are calling for de-escalation,” Prince Faisal bin Farhan said.

The Saudi foreign minister said the kingdom believed in freedom of navigation and wanted tensions in the region to be de-escalated.

“We of course, believe very much in the freedom of navigation. And that’s something that needs to be protected. But we also need to protect the security and stability of the region. So we are very focused on de-escalating the situation as much as possible,” he told CNN.

UK School Could Close After Banning Palestinian Badges

LONDON (Dispatches) – A London school has issued a warning that it might need to shift its lessons online following protests due to the head teacher’s decision to prohibit students from wearing Palestinian badges.

Barclay Primary School, based in Leyton, east London, had to conclude the Christmas holiday two days earlier than planned following threats against its staff, which were prompted by what it described as “malicious fabrications.”

A video circulating on social media claimed that an eight-year-old student was being harassed by teachers for wearing a badge of a Palestine flag on his coat after which masked men were observed in the night scaling the school’s fence to hang Pal-

estinian flags.

A letter has now been sent to parents by the Lion Academy Trust, the entity overseeing Barclay Primary School, outlining the steps taken, such as hiring private security, obtaining additional support from London’s Metropolitan Police, closing the main reception and installing CCTV.

The eight-year-old Palestinian student did not attend school for a month before the Christmas holiday, as a result of the school’s policy. The boy’s mother, who is from Gaza, has suffered significant losses among her family members.

His father, Shahid, shared that his son had been deeply affected by the school’s ban on his Palestinian badge, expressing feelings of

“sadness, upset, and anger,” while questioning whether he had somehow “done something wrong.” Additionally, some parents mentioned receiving letters from the school warning them that they might be referred to the government’s Prevent counter-terrorism program.

Parents have recently been told in a letter that if protest following the decision didn’t “de-escalate ... additional measures” will be implemented, potentially leading to “the closure of the school and a transition to online learning for as long as deemed necessary.”

Parents were informed that an unidentified caller, in addition to making racial slurs, issued a threat of an arson attack against the school and individual staff members.