

SPIN BOLDAK (Xinhua) – Trade via Spin Boldak-Chaman border crossing between Afghanistan and Pakistan resumed on Tuesday after five months, the head of customs office in Kandahar Mawlawi Safar Mohammad Sahar said. Without providing more details, the official added that 300 trucks would cross the border point from Afghanistan to Pakistan and vice versa. According to the official, reopening of the crossing point would enable the two countries to increase trade activities. The Spin Boldak-Chaman border crossing, which connects Afghanistan's Kandahar province to Chaman border town of Pakistan's Baluchistan is regarded as the second important transit route after Torkham in east Afghanistan's Nangarhar province between the two neighboring nations.

UN: Israel 'Systematically' Blocking Gaza Aid Access

GENEVA (Dispatches) – **Zionist troops are "systematically" blocking access to people in need in Gaza, complicating the task of delivering aid in what has become a lawless war zone, the UN said Tuesday.**

It has become nearly impossible to carry out medical evacuations and aid deliveries in northern Gaza and increasingly difficult in the south, said Jens Laerke, spokesman for the United Nations humanitarian agency OCHA.

All planned aid convoys into the north have been denied by Israeli authorities in recent weeks, with the last allowed in on January 23, according to the World Health Organization.

Making matters worse, even convoys cleared in advance with Israeli authorities have repeatedly been blocked or come under fire.

Laerke pointed to an incident last Sunday when a convoy, joint-



The UN says Zionist troops are regularly impeding access to those in need in Gaza, making it challenging to deliver necessary aid in a chaotic area at war.

ly organized by the WHO and the Palestinian Red Crescent (PCRS), to evacuate patients from the besieged al-Amal hospital in the southern city of Khan Yunis, was blocked for hours and paramedics detained.

"Despite prior coordination for all staff members and vehicles with the Israeli side, the Zionist troops blocked the WHO-led convoy for many hours the moment it left the hospital," Laerke told journalists in Geneva.

"The Israeli military forced patients and staff out of ambulances and stripped all paramedics of their clothes," he said, adding that the convoy, which was carrying 24 patients, remained blocked for seven hours.

"Three PCRS paramedics were subsequently detained, although their personal details had been shared with the Israeli forces in advance," Laerke said, adding that just one had been released so far.

"This is not an isolated incident," he stressed.

"Aid convoys have come under fire and are systematically denied access to people in need."

Such "inadequate facilitation for the delivery of aid throughout Gaza means that humanitarian workers are subject to unacceptable and preventable risk of being detained, injured or worse," Laerke said.

Report: Israel to Free 400 Palestinians in Return for 40 Gaza Captives



Qatar's Al Jazeera network has reported that the Zionist regime has agreed to release 400 Palestinian prisoners in exchange for 40 Israeli captives held by Palestinian resistance fighters in the Gaza Strip.

GAZA STRIP (Dispatches) – A new report has published details of a prisoner swap deal between the Zionist regime and Hamas, under which the occupying regime will free 400 Palestinian abductees in exchange for the release of 40 held in captivity by the Gaza-based resistance group.

The swap deal, which will be accompanied by a six-week truce, came as part of the recent talks in the French capital Paris between Israeli, American, Egyptian and Qatari representatives, Al Jazeera reported.

Citing unidentified sources involved in the discussions, the report said Israel has agreed to free 400 Palestinians held in the regime's prisons in return for 40 Gaza captives.

The occupying regime has also agreed to the gradual return of displaced Palestinians to northern Gaza – with the exception of young men, who are "of recruitment age," and the entry of further aid and temporary shelters into the besieged territory, including heavy machinery and equipment.

The regime has further agreed to halt its warplanes over the Gaza Strip, including intelligence-gathering ones, for eight hours.

The report came after an Israeli delegation traveled to Doha, where Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani separately met with Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh.

Meanwhile, U.S. President Joe Biden said that he hopes for a ceasefire in Gaza by next Monday, when asked when he thought a truce could begin.

"Well I hope by the beginning of the weekend. The end of the weekend. My national security adviser tells me that we're close. We're close. We're not done yet," Biden said when asked when he thought a truce could begin.

"And my hope is that by next Monday [March 4] we'll have a ceasefire."

Israel waged a genocidal U.S.-backed war on Gaza on October 7 after Hamas carried out Operation Al-Aqsa Storm against the usurping entity in retaliation for its intensified atrocities against the Palestinian people.

However, almost five months into the offensive, the Tel Aviv regime has failed to achieve its objectives of "destroying Hamas" and finding Israeli captives despite killing 29,782 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and injuring 70,043 others.

A week-long humanitarian ceasefire in late November saw an exchange of 240 Palestinian abductees held by Israel with 105 captives, including 81 Israelis and 24 foreigners, in Gaza.

The Zionist regime believes 130 captives still remain in Gaza, while there are thought to be 7,000 Palestinians in Israeli jails, many detained without charge.

Most UNSC Members Demand Taliban Rescind Decrees Oppressing Women

UNITED NATIONS (AP) – **More than two-thirds of the UN Security Council's members have demanded that the Taliban rescind all policies and decrees oppressing and discriminating against women and girls, including banning girls education above the sixth grade and women's right to work and move freely.**

A statement by 11 of the 15 council members condemned the Taliban's repression of women and girls since they took power in August 2021, and again insisted on their equal participation in public, political, economic, cultural and social life -- especially at all decision-making levels seeking to advance international engagement with Afghanistan's de facto rulers.

Guyana's UN Ambassador Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett read the statement, surrounded by ambassadors of the 10 other countries, before a closed council meeting on UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' conference

with more than 25 envoys to Afghanistan on Feb. 18-19 in Qatar's capital, Doha.

Afghan civil society representatives, including women, participated in the Doha meeting, which the council members welcomed. The Taliban refused to attend, its foreign ministry saying in a statement that its participation would be "beneficial" only if it was the sole and official representative for the country at the talks.

While the Taliban did not attend the meetings, UN political chief Rosemary DiCarlo did meet with Taliban officials based in Doha, UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said. DiCarlo also briefed council members at Monday's closed meeting.

The Taliban have not been recognized by any country, and the UN envoy for Afghanistan last year warned the de facto rulers that international recognition as the country's legitimate government will

remain "nearly impossible" unless they lift the restrictions on women.

The 11 council nations supporting the statement -- Ecuador, France, Guyana, Japan, Malta, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, South Korea, Switzerland, United Kingdom and United States -- underscored that there can only be sustainable peace in Afghanistan if its political process is inclusive and the human rights of all Afghans are respected including women and girls.

Four Security Council nations didn't sign on to the statement -- Russia, China, Mozambique and Algeria.

Secretary-General Guterres told reporters in Doha that among participants -- also including representatives of the European Union, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization -- there was "total consensus" on requirements for Afghanistan to be integrated into the interna-

tional community.

To reach this "endgame," he said, Afghanistan must not be "the hotbed of terrorist activities that impact other countries," its institutions must include diverse groups including Uzbeks, Tajiks, Pashtuns and Hazaras, and human rights must be respected especially the rights of women and girls.

Guterres said to a certain extent there is currently "a kind of situation of the chicken and the egg."

"On one hand, Afghanistan remains with a government that is not recognized internationally and, in many aspects, not integrated in the global institutions and in the global economy," he said. "And on the other hand, there is in the international community a perception that inclusivity has not improved; that the situation of women and girls and human rights in general has in fact deteriorated in recent times."

Thousands of Artists Ask Venice Biennale to Exclude Israel

ROME (Dispatches) – **Almost 9,000 people, including artists, curators and museum directors, have signed an online appeal calling for the Zionist regime to be excluded from this year's Venice Biennale art fair and accusing the occupying regime of "genocide" in Gaza.**

The occupying regime has been facing mounting international criticism, including in the arts world, over its onslaught in the Palestinian enclave, which was triggered on Oct. 7.

The Israeli aggression on Gaza has killed nearly 30,000 people and displaced most of

the territory's 2.3 million inhabitants, according to Palestinian health officials.

"Any official representation of Israel on the international cultural stage is an endorsement of its policies and of the genocide in Gaza" said the online statement by the Art Not Genocide Alliance (ANGA) collective.

ANGA noted that the Venice Biennale previously banned South Africa over its apartheid policy of white minority rule, and excluded Russia in the wake of the Kremlin's 2022 attack on Ukraine.

The Venice Biennale press office did not

immediately respond to a request for comment on Tuesday.

Signatories of the appeal include Palestine Museum U.S. director Faisal Saleh, activist U.S. photographer Nan Goldin and British visual artist Jesse Darling, who won last year's Turner Prize.

Dubbed the "Olympics of the art world", the Biennale is one of the key events in the international arts calendar. This year's edition, "Foreigners Everywhere", is due to host pavilions from 90 countries between Apr. 20-Nov. 24.

Canada Provides Egypt With Technology Targeting Activists

WASHINGTON (Middle East Eye) – **The U.S. Department of Commerce has added Canadian networking equipment company Sandvine to an export blacklist over supplying technology used for censorship and targeting human rights actors in Egypt.**

According to a decision by the Bureau of Industry and Security, Sandvine has been added to the "Entity List" for supplying Deep Packet Inspection (DPI) technology to the Egyptian government.

The technology, according to the notice, "is used in mass web-monitoring and censorship to block news as well as target political actors and human rights activists".

DPI technology is used in mass monitoring and management of

online traffic.

An investigation by the University of Toronto's Citizen Lab in 2018 found that Sandvine's DPI devices were being used to block human rights related to online content in Egypt. The websites targeted included Human Rights Watch, Reporters Without Borders, Al Jazeera, and Mada Masr.

Citizen Lab also revealed last year that Sandvine's technology was used to inject spyware in the phone of Egyptian opposition politician Ahmed Tantawi, after he announced his intention to run for president.

Middle East Eye has contacted Sandvine for comment on the allegations, but has not received a response by the time of publication.