

ISTANBUL (AP) – Turkish economist, politician and former head of the United Nations Development Program Kemal Dervis died Monday at the age of 74, Turkish news outlets reported. He was being treated for an unspecified illness in Washington D.C., state-run Anadolu Agency reported, as did BBC Turkish and t24, which first reported the news. Following more than two decades at the World Bank, Dervis became a household name in Turkey in 2001 when he was invited by then-Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit to serve as minister of economic affairs amid the country's worst economic crisis in modern history.

I appreciate an old man's cautious opinion more than the valor of a young man.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

EU Cancels Tel Aviv Event in Protest at Radical Minister Participation

AL-QUDS (Dispatches) – The European Union said Monday that it canceled a diplomatic reception to prevent a radical Zionist minister from attending.

The act of protest by the EU's delegation to the occupied territories against a member of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's cabinet, the most radical in the occupying regime's history, could cause a diplomatic spat between the regime and the EU.

Relations already have been strained over the regime's policies in the occupied West Bank.

Itamar Ben-Gvir, the leader of the Jewish Power faction, serves as the so-called national security minister and was assigned to represent the regime at the EU's Europe Day event on Tuesday.

Foreign Minister Eli Cohen said Sunday in a Kan radio interview that Ben-Gvir had been assigned by the cabinet secretary to attend



Thousands of people march in the UK to protest against Zionist regime and in solidarity with Palestinians.

“not as a representative of the Jewish Power party ... but to represent the cabinet of Israel.”

The EU said that it decided “to cancel the diplomatic reception, as we do not want to offer a platform to someone whose

views contradict the values the European Union stands for.” The remainder of the public event would take place as scheduled.

Ben-Gvir is a former far-right activist and hard-line West Bank settler who has been convicted

of incitement and support for a terror group. As the regime's representative at the Europe Day event, Ben-Gvir would have addressed attendees.

Netanyahu returned to office in December at the head of a coalition that includes ultra-Orthodox parties and radicals, including Ben-Gvir's small Jewish Power faction. The regime has put expansion of West Bank settlements as a top priority. The EU, along with most of the international community, considers settlements in the West Bank and east Al-Quds illegal under international law and obstacles to resolution of problems with the Palestinians.

The occupying regime captured the West Bank, east Al-Quds and Gaza Strip in the 1967 Mideast war. The Palestinians seek all three areas for a future independent state.

UN Set to Suspend Food Aid to Gaza, West Bank



A Palestinian loads a cart with aid food provided by the UN's World Food Programme and its agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, in the Gaza Strip's al-Shati refugee camp on December 23, 2020.

GAZA (Dispatches) – The World Food Programme (WFP) of the United Nations says it will suspend food aid to a large number of impoverished Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip and the occupied West Bank due to funding shortages.

Samer Abdeljaber, the WFP's senior official for Palestinian territories said that the agency was set to suspend food aid to over 200,000 Palestinians from next month due to a “severe” shortage of funds.

“In light of the severe funding shortages, WFP is forced to make painful choices to stretch the limited resources,” Abdeljaber said. “WFP would have to start suspending assistance to over 200,000 people, which is 60 percent of its current caseload, from June.”

“WFP understands the implications of this unavoidable and hard decision on hundreds of thousands of people who also depend on food assistance for their most basic needs,” stated Abdeljaber.

The UN agency will continue its aid to 140,000 people in Gaza and the West Bank, said Abdeljaber, who added the suspension decision was taken to save those who are at the highest risk of not being able to afford food.

Unless funding is received, WFP will be forced to suspend food and cash assistance entirely by August, he said.

Chanting “No to Hunger,” dozens of Palestinians staged a protest outside the WFP offices in the besieged Gaza City to protest the decision.

The United Nations agency offers impoverished Palestinians both monthly vouchers with a value of \$10.30 per person and food baskets. Both programs will be affected.

“The voucher is life, the message they sent us equals death since

there is no other source of income,” said Faraj Al-Masri, a father of two, whose family gets vouchers worth \$41.20 per month.

In Jabalia, in the northern Gaza Strip, Jamal El-Dabour said they will “starve to death” as her husband was sick and unemployed.

The most impacted families are in Gaza, where food insecurity and poverty are the highest, and in the West Bank.

The Gaza Strip has been under blockade by the occupying regime since June 2007. The blockade has caused a decline in the standard of living as well as unprecedented levels of unemployment and unrelenting poverty.

The Zionist regime has launched several military offensives on the besieged territory since 2008, making the situation even worse.

The recent cuts were decided upon after a gradual reduction in donations over the past years.

The UN agencies in the past blamed the funding shortages on cuts by the United States and other countries in aid to Palestinians.

In 2018, the administration of president Donald Trump announced it was cutting all U.S. funding for the main UN program for Palestinian refugees, affecting five million people who relied on its schools, healthcare, and social services.

UNRWA not only serves Palestinians in the occupied territories but also in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. European and Arab countries have pledged to protect the agency and Germany promised a significant increase in financial backing.

The announcement had been anticipated both by senior officials at UNRWA and other Washington insiders, leading to warnings it may further destabilize the Middle East.

Sources: U.S. Continues to Smuggle Crude Oil From Syria

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – The U.S. military has reportedly used dozens of tanker trucks to smuggle crude oil from Syria's northeastern province of Hasakah to areas in northern Iraq, as Washington continues to loot energy resources in the war-torn country.

A convoy of 33 tankers, laden with oil from the energy-rich Jazira and Sharqia regions, left Syria through the illegal Mahmoudiya border crossing on Monday, and headed towards Iraqi territories, Syria's official news agency SANA reported citing local sources.

Back on April 22, SANA reported that American occupation forces had used 33 tankers to plunder the natural resources of the Arab country through the Mahmoudiya crossing.

Another 40 U.S. military tankers, loaded with Syrian crude oil, rumbled through the al-Waleed border crossing of al-Ya'rubiyah region in a separate convoy, and entered the Iraqi territories on the same day.

The U.S. military has for long stationed its forces and equipment in northeastern Syria, with the Pentagon claiming

that the deployment is aimed at preventing the oilfields in the area from falling into the hands of Daesh terrorists.

Damascus, however, maintains the deployment is meant to plunder the country's natural resources. Former U.S. president Donald Trump admitted on several occasions that American forces were in the Arab country for its oil wealth.

Last month, the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates condemned the U.S. occupation forces' continued plundering of Syrian oil and

national resources, stressing that the banditry is in blatant violation of international law and humanitarian principles.

The ministry, in a statement issued on April 22, highlighted that the U.S. military had continued with its looting of Syrian oil and other natural resources over the past weeks, smuggling them onward through northern Iraq to Turkey.

The ministry pointed out that such acts will further aggravate the suffering of the Syrian nation, and will prolong Syria's economic crisis.

Protesters Arrested for Violence at Turkish Rally

ANKARA (Al Jazeera) – More than a dozen people have been arrested over violence against opposition supporters at an election rally in Turkey's eastern city of Erzurum, according to the justice minister.

Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu of the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) was speaking from the top of a campaign bus on Sunday when a large group of roughly 200 protesters began throwing rocks.

Imamoglu was campaigning on behalf of CHP leader and presidential candidate Kemal Kilicdaroglu, the main opponent to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, days before Sunday's presidential and parliamentary elections.

The video later shows Imamoglu being taken inside by his entourage, the bus driving off and police later dispersing the group with water can-

non.

Seven people were injured in the incident, according to Erzurum Governor Okay Memis.

Speaking on the news channel A Haber on Monday, Justice Minister Bekir Bozdog said an investigation was being conducted and 13 people had been arrested so far.

Kilicdaroglu posted a video on social media following Sunday's incident in which he accused the people responsible of being a “militarist coalition” who seeks to “scare people away from the ballot box”.

Speaking on a television program later in the evening, Interior Minister Suleyman Soyulu claimed the incident was “theater”.

“They provoke such incidents. Then they claim, ‘They did this to us. They did that to us,’” he said. “... They had put forward a speech that was

meant to agitate, to provoke the crowd.”

Sunday's elections are seen as among the most consequential in Turkey's modern history. Erdogan is facing the biggest political challenge of his two-decade rule.

If no candidate secures more than half the votes in the first round of voting, a May 28 run-off will be held between the two leading candidates.

Most polls for the parliamentary elections show the main opposition alliance ahead of the People's Alliance, which includes Erdogan's AK Party, the nationalist MHP, the right-wing Great Unity Party and the New Welfare Party.

The opposition Nation Alliance includes Kilicdaroglu's main opposition CHP, the center-right IYI Party, the Islamist Felicity Party, the Democrat Party and two parties founded by former Erdogan allies, the Deva and Future parties.

collapsed — and worsening a humanitarian crisis.

Monday's report on corporal punishment documents Taliban practices both before and after their return to power in August 2021, when they seized the capital of Kabul as U.S. and NATO forces withdrew after two decades of war.

The first public flogging following the Taliban takeover was reported in October 2021 in the

northern Kapisa province, the report said. In that case, a woman and man convicted of adultery were publicly lashed 100 times each in the presence of religious scholars and local Taliban authorities, it said.

In December 2022, Taliban authorities executed an Afghan convicted of murder, the first public execution since they took power the report said.

The execution, carried out with

an assault rifle by the victim's father, took place in the western Farah province before hundreds of spectators and top Taliban officials.

Zabihullah Mujahid, the top government spokesman, said the decision to carry out the punishment was “made very carefully,” following approval by three of the country's highest courts and the Taliban supreme leader, Mullah Hibatullah Akhundzada.

UN Urges Afghanistan's Taliban to End Public Floggings

ISLAMABAD (AP) – A UN report on Monday strongly criticized the Taliban for carrying out public executions, and lashings since seizing power in Afghanistan, and called on the country's rulers to halt such practices.

In the past six months alone, 274 men, 58 women and two boys were publicly flogged in Afghanistan, according to a report by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, or UNAMA.

“Corporal punishment is a violation of the Convention against Torture and must cease,” said Fiona Frazer, the agency's human rights chief. She also called for an immediate moratorium on executions.

The Taliban foreign ministry said in response that an overwhelming majority of Afghans follow those rules.

The Taliban began carrying out such punishments shortly af-

ter coming to power almost two years ago, despite initial promises of a more moderate rule than during their previous stint in power in the 1990s.

At the same time, they have gradually tightened restrictions on women, barring them from public spaces, such as parks and gyms. The restrictions have triggered an international uproar, increasing the country's isolation at a time when its economy has