

# Prisoners in Zionist Jails Remain Top Palestinian Priority

RAMALLAH/GAZA (Dispatches) – Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas says that the issue of Palestinian prisoners in the Zionist regime's jails will remain a Palestinian priority until all of them are released.

Abbas made the remarks during a meeting with the family of Marwan Barghouti, a Fatah movement's central committee member who has been in an Israeli prison for 21 years, Palestinian official news agency Wafa reported.

According to a statement published by Wafa, Abbas told the family members of Barghouti that their efforts continue to free the Fatah leader and all other prisoners and detainees from the occupying regime's jails and prisons.

Barghouti, a prominent Fatah leader who enjoys wide popularity, was imprisoned in 2002



*Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas says that the issue of Palestinian prisoners in the Zionist regime's jails will remain a Palestinian priority until all of them are released.*

and sentenced to life imprisonment.

The occupying regime detains over 7500 Palestinians in more than 20 prisons, including 31 female prisoners and 160 children. Over 400 Palestinian prisoners have remained in prisons for more than 20 years, and more than 1,000 are so-called

administrative detainees, according to official Palestinian statistics.

Meanwhile, an official with the Islamic resistance movement Hamas denied Zionist prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu's statement that a prisoner exchange deal between the two sides would soon be com-

pleted.

Israeli media have reported that Netanyahu had informed his cabinet ministers that there were indirect talks with Hamas about a possible prisoner exchange deal without revealing any details.

In 2016, Hamas announced for the first time that it was keeping four Zionists without specifying their fate, while the occupying regime said that two of the four were soldiers who were actually kept by Hamas.

In 2011, Egypt brokered a prisoners' exchange deal between the occupying regime and Hamas, which included the release of the Zionist soldier Gilad Shalit, who was captured in 2006 for releasing 1,028 Palestinian prisoners from the regime's prisons.

## UN: Female Afghan Employees Harassed, Detained

ISLAMABAD (AP) – Some Afghan women employed by the United Nations have been detained, harassed and had restrictions placed on their movements since being banned by the Taliban from working for the world body, the UN said Tuesday.

Afghanistan's Taliban rulers informed the United Nations early last month that Afghan women employed with the UN mission could no longer report for work.

"This is the most recent in a series of discriminatory – and unlawful – measures implemented by the de facto authorities with the goal of severely restricting women and girls' participation in most areas of public and daily life in Afghanistan," the UN said in a report on

the human rights situation in the south Asian country.

Taliban authorities continued to crack down on dissenting voices this year, in particular those who speak out on issues related to the rights of women and girls, the report said.

The UN report cited the March arrest of four women who were released the following day during a protest demanding access to education and work in the capital of Kabul and the arrest of Matiullah Wesa, head of PenPath, a civil society organization campaigning for the reopening of girls' schools.

It also pointed to the arrest of a women's rights activist Parisa Mobariz and her brother in February in the northern Takhar province.

Several other civil society ac-

tivists have been released – reportedly without being charged – following extended periods of arbitrary detention by the Taliban Intelligence service, the report said.

The measures will have disastrous effects on Afghanistan's prospects for prosperity, stability and peace, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, UNAMA said in the report.

"UNAMA is concerned by increasing restrictions on civic space across Afghanistan," said Fiona Frazer, the agency's human rights chief.

The Taliban previously banned girls from going to school beyond the sixth grade and blocked women from most public life and work. In December, they banned Afghan women

from working at local and non-governmental organizations – a measure that at the time did not extend to UN offices.

The report also pointed to ongoing extrajudicial killings of individuals affiliated with the former government. On March 5 in southern Kandahar, Taliban forces arrested a former police officer from his home, then shot and killed him, according to the report. During the same month in northern Balkh, a former military official was killed by unknown armed men in his house, it said.

"Arbitrary arrests and detention of former government officials and Afghanistan National Security and Defense Force members also occurred throughout February, March and April," added the report.

## Syrian Forces Kill 2 Daesh Commanders in Daraa

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – Two ringleaders of the Daesh terrorist group who had carried out assassinations, planted explosive devices, and launched repeated attacks on civilians and military personnel in Syria's Daraa City were eliminated.

The terrorists who were also responsible for planting a large number explosive devices that

targeted civilians and military personnel, were killed while attempting to monitor military posts, using a stolen agricultural vehicle for camouflage, in the plains between the towns of Tafas and Atman in the countryside of Daraa.

"Through careful follow-up and continuous pursuit of Daesh terrorists, two of the most dan-

gerous leaders of the terrorist organization, Hassan al-Hayek and Nabil al-Abdullah, were ambushed," a security source told Syrian Arab News Agency.

The weapons that were in the possession of the terrorists were confiscated, some of which were Israeli-made, and their weapons included automatic rifles, military pistols, and a "Sonobal" ma-

chine gun, the source said.

The terrorists were identified as Nabil al-Abdullah from the village of al-Suhailiya, and Hassan al-Hayek from Tafas city in Daraa countryside.

The source noted that the Syrian army and the competent authorities are continuing with all efforts to eliminate all forms of terrorism in Daraa Province.

### Islamic...

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Palestinian resistance group Lions' Den said in a statement. "This time the gates of hell will open up to Zionists from Nablus," it warned. Addressing Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip, it said, "We are all at your command and service. There is no voice louder than those of yours and the resistance front. We are calling on all walks of Palestinian society not to get upset and not to have a feeling of despair at all."

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani called for immediate, effective, deterrent and coordinated action by Muslim countries to stop the "killing and crime machine" of the Zionist regime.

He said the silence and inaction of international organizations and Western countries towards Israel's "inhumane acts" have emboldened the occupying regime to continue its crimes.

Kanaani said the Israeli action "is a sign of the weakness of the aggressor regime against the heroic acts of resistance of the Palestinian youth in the West Bank and Al-Quds," adding the airstrikes are aimed at "diverting public opinion" from the internal crisis in Occupied Palestine.

### World...

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Steve Wozniak have called for a six-month pause to consider the risks.

Geoffrey Hinton, a computer scientist known as the "Godfather of AI," and fellow AI pioneer Yoshua Bengio voiced their concerns last week about unchecked AI development.

Tudorache said such warnings show the EU's move to start drawing up AI rules in 2021 was "the right call."

Google, which responded to ChatGPT with its own Bard chatbot and is rolling out AI tools, declined to comment. The company has told the EU that "AI is too important not to regulate."

Microsoft, a backer of OpenAI, did not respond to a request for comment. It has welcomed the EU effort as an important step "toward making trustworthy AI the norm in Europe and around the world."

Mira Murati, chief technology officer at OpenAI, said in an interview last month that she believed governments should be involved in regulating AI technology.

But asked if some of OpenAI's tools should be classified as posing a higher risk, in the context of proposed European rules, she said it's "very nuanced."

"It kind of depends where you apply the technology," she said, citing as an example a "very high-risk medical use case or legal use case" versus an accounting or advertising application.

OpenAI CEO Sam Altman plans stops in Brussels and other European cities this month in a world tour to talk about the technology with users and developers.

Recently added provisions to the EU's AI Act would require "foundation" AI models to disclose copyright material used to train the systems, according to a recent partial draft of the legislation obtained by The Associated Press.

Foundation models, also known as large language models, are a subcategory of general purpose AI that includes systems like ChatGPT. Their algorithms are trained on vast pools of online information, like blog posts, digital books, scientific articles and pop songs.

"You have to make a significant effort to document the copyrighted material that you use in the training of the algorithm," paving the way for artists, writers and other content creators to seek redress, Tudorache said.

Officials drawing up AI regulations have to balance risks that the technology poses with the transformative benefits that it promises.

Big tech companies developing AI systems and European national ministries looking to deploy them "are seeking to limit the reach of regulators," while civil society

groups are pushing for more accountability, said EDRI's Chander.

"We want more information as to how these systems are developed — the levels of environmental and economic resources put into them — but also how and where these systems are used so we can effectively challenge them," she said.

Under the EU's risk-based approach, AI uses that threaten people's safety or rights face strict controls.

Remote facial recognition is expected to be banned. So are government "social scoring" systems that judge people based on their behavior. Indiscriminate "scraping" of photos from the internet used for biometric matching and facial recognition is also a no-no.

Predictive policing and emotion recognition technology, aside from therapeutic or medical uses, are also out.

Violations could result in fines of up to 6% of a company's global annual revenue.

Even after getting final approval, expected by the end of the year or early 2024 at the latest, the AI Act won't take immediate effect. There will be a grace period for companies and organizations to figure out how to adopt the new rules.

It's possible that industry will push for more time by arguing that the AI Act's final version goes farther than the original proposal, said Frederico Oliveira Da Silva, senior legal officer at European consumer group BEUC.

They could argue that "instead of one and a half to two years, we need two to three," he said.

He noted that ChatGPT only launched six months ago, and it has already thrown up a host of problems and benefits in that time.

If the AI Act doesn't fully take effect for years, "what will happen in these four years?" Da Silva said. "That's really our concern, and that's why we're asking authorities to be on top of it, just to really focus on this technology."

### Official...

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Iran's Foreign Minister Hussein Amir-Abdollahian, Borrell said, "We will make efforts to bring all parties back to the agreement."

Borrell welcomed the ongoing cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency, IAEA, and described the continuation of this cooperation as useful and positive.

Borrell further pointed to the normalization process between Iran and Saudi Arabia, describing it as an important step toward regional stability.

Amir-Abdollahian also noted that the principle of dialogue based on mutual respect is an important and decisive step in order to remove obstacles and continue down the path of relations between Europe and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Amir-Abdollahian underlined the Islamic Republic of Iran always welcomes constructive initiatives.

Negotiations kicked off in the Austrian capital city of Vienna in April 2021, with the intention of removing anti-Iran sanctions and examining the United States' seriousness in rejoining the accord.

The talks, however, have been at a standstill since August 2022 due to Washington's insistence on not removing all the sanctions and its failure to offer necessary guarantees that it will not abandon the deal again.

### Chemical...

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According to concealed OPCW documents that were revealed later, the investigators of the Douma incident had found "no evidence" of a chemical weapons attack. However, the organization censored the findings under pressure from the U.S. and its allies to conceal evidence undermining the pretext of the ensuing U.S.-led bombing of Syria.

Syria surrendered its stockpile of chemical weapons in 2014 to a joint mission led by the United States and the OPCW, which oversaw the destruction of the weaponry.

The Arab country has consistently denied the use of chemical weapons despite Western rhetoric.

## Experts: Qatar Can Lead Protections for Workers Against Heat Stress

DOHA (Reuters) – International occupational health experts urge Qatar to establish a heat stress "center of excellence" to influence other Persian Gulf countries to strengthen protections for workers against extreme heat and humidity, two of the experts said.

The experts, in Doha for a conference the International Labour Organisation is convening, call on wealthy gas producer Qatar to build on rules it introduced in 2021, recognized as the most extensive in the Persian Gulf.

Qatar can "disseminate this work, support other countries (and) provide them with a roadmap of how they can address this problem across the Arab region," Andreas Flouris, an associate professor at Greece's University of Thessaly, told Reuters ahead

of the meetings.

Workers in the Persian Gulf are exposed to temperatures in excess of 45 Celsius (113 Fahrenheit), which researchers and NGOs say puts them at risk of heat-related illnesses, traumatic injury and death.

Qatar has said previously it protects workers by prohibiting outdoor work between 10 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. from June 1 until mid-September.

Qatar bans work from more than twice the hours banned in Saudi Arabia, where the majority of the region's construction projects are underway.

Jason Glaser, head of occupational health research organization La Isla Network, said Qatar was "a small use case where

we can get it right" and export solutions to larger Persian Gulf countries like Saudi Arabia.

"Qatar has the resources and the brain trust to improve surveillance, improve design, improve implementation ... to ensure it's actually working in the country."

The government media office did not respond to a request for comment.

James Lynch, director of human rights group FairSquare, who was not at the conference, said Qatar's heat stress protections do not go far enough and called on authorities to guarantee workers adequate rest time and effectively investigate the worker deaths, many of which go unexplained.