

Thousands Protest Against Extremist Zionist Regime for 19th Straight Week

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – Thousands of protesters have held rallies across the occupied territories for the 19th consecutive week to denounce Zionist prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu's extremist and far-right cabinet, including its so-called judicial overhaul plan.

The rallies were held on Saturday in Tel Aviv and other cities throughout the occupied territories. "If life is still going on, it means that we are going to keep the protests and we are going to do whatever we are doing every other week..." a protester was quoted by Reuters as saying.

Through the overhaul plan, Netanyahu seeks to give his extremist cabinet more control over the makeup of the regime's Supreme Court, which would render it almost incapable of overruling Israeli politicians' decisions.

Proponents of the plan say the changes would strike a balance



Thousands of protesters take part in a demonstration against Zionist prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu's extremist cabinet, in Tel Aviv, May 13, 2023.

between the power that is wielded by the Zionist regime's cabinet and the court. Detractors, however, denounce the so-called overhaul as a scheme aimed at handing unchecked power to the extremist ministers.

The demonstrations have been

going on since January, when the Israeli cabinet announced its decision to push ahead with the plan.

The weekly protests have continued unabated even after Netanyahu announced a "pause" on March 27 to allow for more talks on the plan, which was moving through the re-

gime's parliament.

The protests have already spread to all social strata across the occupied territories. Thousands of officers in reserve units of the regime's military have said they will refuse to report for duty, while high-tech business leaders and the security establishment have also come out against the proposed plan.

The Israeli cabinet, a combination struck between Netanyahu's Likud party and extreme-right and ultra-Orthodox political allies, has, however, vowed to press on with the scheme.

Protests against the overhaul plan come against the backdrop of overall public dissatisfaction with the Israeli cabinet's performance.

A poll conducted by Israeli television channel, KAN 11, last week, showed that 74 percent of Israeli settlers have expressed disfavor with the cabinet's political conduct.

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a small leftist party and two marginal Islamic parties.

Kilicdaroglu's six-party Nation Alliance pledged to dismantle an executive presidential system narrowly voted in by a 2017 referendum. The opposition alliance also promised to restore the independence of the judiciary and the central bank.

The alliance includes the nationalist Good Party led by former Interior Minister Meral Aksener, a small Islamic party and two parties that splintered from the AKP, one led by a former prime minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, and the other by a former finance minister, Ali Babacan.

The country's main Kurdish political party, currently Turkey's second-largest opposition grouping, is supporting Kilicdaroglu in the presidential race.

People were seen walking to schools acting as polling stations on a warm spring day in much of the country, and forming long lines outside classrooms. Officials in Ankara said they expected turnout to be even higher than previous years.

The lines were partly due to problems many voters encountered trying to fold bulky ballot papers — they featured 24 political parties competing for seats in parliament — and to fit them into envelopes along with the ballot for the presidency.

"It's important for Turkey. It's important for the people," Necati Aktuna, a voter in Ankara, said. "I've been voting for the last 60 years. I haven't seen a more important election than this one."

Large crowds gathered outside the polling stations where Erdogan and Kilicdaroglu cast their votes.

"From now on, you will see that spring will come to this country," Kilicdaroglu said after voting at a school in Ankara, where his supporters chanted "President Kilicdaroglu!"

Erdogan said voting was underway "without any problems," including in the earthquake-affected region where people were voting "with great enthusiasm and love."

"It is my hope that after the evening's count... there will be a better future for our country, our nation and Turkish democracy," he said.

Also running for president was Sinan Ogan, a former academic who has the backing of an anti-immigrant nationalist party. Another candidate, center-left politician Muharrem Ince, dropped out of the race on Thursday following a significant drop in his ratings, the country's election board said his withdrawal was invalid and votes for him would get counted.

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Zionist forces killed at least 13,000 people and destroyed over 500 villages and towns.

Nineteen years later, Israel occupied the remaining 22 percent of historic Palestinian not captured in 1948, which remains under Israeli military rule in what is known as the longest occupation in modern history.

In the heart of Bay Ridge, Brooklyn in New York, nearly a thousand people dressed in red, green, white, and black commemorated the 75th anniversary of the Nakba.

Many proudly wore keffiyehs draped around their shoulders, wrapped around their heads, and tied around their necks.

They chanted "Free, Free Palestine" and "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" in a celebration of Palestinian resistance, life, culture and the ongoing struggle for Palestinian liberation.

The event was sponsored by over 20 organizations including Samidoun, the Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network; the Palestinian Youth Movement; American Muslims for Palestine; and the Black Alliance for Peace.

Nakba Day in the U.S. didn't come without controversy. Earlier this week, House Speaker Kevin McCarthy cancelled an event at the Capitol building that was supposed to commemorate the Nakba, saying he'd instead "host a bipartisan discussion to honor the 75th anniversary of the U.S.-Israel relationship."

The event was ultimately moved to the Senate hearing room after Senator Bernie Sanders signed on as a sponsor of the event.

On Monday, the United Nations will for the first time commemorate Nakba Day. The UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Pal-

estianian People (CEIRPP) will hold a "high-level special meeting" which will have a keynote address by the president of the State of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas.

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"Egypt is an important country in the region, and what the region needs is synergy between Iran and Egypt, and we believe in taking new steps to improve our relations," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said.

Though lacking Saudi Arabia's vast energy resources, Egypt is nevertheless a regional power. Cairo's 1,000-year-old Al-Azhar Mosque is considered the world's primary seat of Sunni Islamic learning. Egypt is also the most populous Arab state, with a population of more than 100 million people.

Relations between Iran and Egypt have been poor since the Shah of Iran, Muhammad Reza Pahlavi, was overthrown in the 1979 Islamic Revolution and fled to Egypt, where he was granted asylum by then-President Anwar Sadat.

Diplomatic ties between the two countries were severed in 1980, but partially resumed 11 years later under Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak at the charge d'affaires rather than embassy level.

Relations improved following the election of Egyptian President Muhammad Morsi in 2012, which saw mutual visits at the presidential level. However, Morsi, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, was deposed in a Saudi-backed coup by then-General Sisi in 2013, who later became president.

Relations between Iran and Egypt, therefore, remained contingent upon Iran-Saudi relations.

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Counter Sanctions law prompted the Iranian administration to restrict the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)'s inspections and accelerate the development of the country's nuclear program beyond the limits set by the 2015 nuclear agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"We are close to the next IAEA meeting, and we have notified Mr. Grossi very clearly that Iran and the agency can establish a good and reassuring cooperation if certain foreign parties do not get in the way," the foreign minister said.

Amir-Abdollahian said good progress will be made in the course of technical cooperation between Iran and the IAEA as both sides have expressed strong desire to take such a step, noting that the exchange of delegations is taking place away from any media hype.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Iranian foreign minister said exchange of messages with the U.S. is in progress through different channels.

The foreign ministry is continually seeking to neutralize Western sanctions at the same time as it is trying to ensure their removal during talks on the revival of the JCPOA, he added.

U.S. ... (Continued From Page 2)

in a US drone strike near Baghdad International Airport on January 3, 2020. He was highly revered across the Middle East because of his key role in fighting the Daesh terrorist group in the region, particularly in Iraq and Syria.

Gharibabadi said the international community should be encouraged to take a position on the U.S. violation of the nations' rights, which are unprecedented throughout history.

Touching on sanctions, the official said the U.S. bans have affected the rights of all Iranian people and victimized the nation.

Jurists, he added, believe that unilateral sanctions are a crime against humanity.

Back in May 2018, the U.S. began to unilaterally impose the "toughest ever" sanctions against Iran after the former president left the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Although Trump failed to reach his professed goals with his "maximum pressure" campaign, the bans have badly hurt the Iranian population.

Preserved under the Joe Biden administration, the U.S. sanctions have restricted the financial channels necessary to pay for basic goods and medicine.

Syria Delegation Attends Arab League for First Time in 12 Years

DAMASCUS (SANA) – A Syrian delegation participated in a meeting preparatory for the Economic and Social Council of Works of the Arab League on Sunday.

With the participation of the Syrian delegation, activities of the senior officials meeting preparatory for the Economic and Social Council of the works of the Arab League (AL), scheduled to be held on May 19 in Saudi Arabia, kicked off in the Saudi city of Jeddah.

The delegation includes Assistant Minister of Economy and Foreign Trade for International Affairs, Rania Ahmed, Director of Arab Affairs Department, Ambassador Riyadh Abbas, Director of International Relations Anas

Al-Bikai, and Counselor Ihsan Rumman from the Office of Foreign Minister.

In their speech, a number of the participating delegations welcomed resuming Syria's participation in these meetings, including the delegations of Saudi Arabia, Libya, and Iraq and representatives of Morocco, Oman, and the Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Affairs in the General Secretariat of the Arab League.

Head of the Syrian delegation, Assistant Minister of Economy, Rania Ahmed expressed Syria's gratitude to the Arab countries which offered assistance to alleviate the repercussions of the earthquake disaster on the Syrian

people.

"Syria attaches great importance to the return of the displaced people, due to the war, to their homes and cities, which requires activating the economic movement in their areas through encouraging the establishment of small and medium projects in various sectors," Ahmad said, adding that legislations and programs which support that and provide facilitations for the foreign companies wishing to invest in Syria have been issued.

Ahmed called for the work to remove tariff and non-tariff measures on intra-trade, in order to enhance the role of the "Greater Arab Free Trade Area" (GAFTA) in Arab economic development.

Ahmed pointed out the necessity of adopting a decision to increase the number of the states represented in the fields of management of joint companies and Arab financial institutions in a way that contributes to granting the intermediate and small shareholders the opportunity to participate in the formulation and decision-making to encourage these institutions to establish their projects in Syria.

Earlier, foreign ministers from Arab League member states agreed to reinstate Syria's membership after its suspension more than 10 years ago.

The ministers voted for Syria's return into the fold at the Arab League's headquarters in Cairo.

Palestine Demands ICC Arrest Warrant for Ben-Gvir

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – The Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has denounced the Zionist minister Itamar Ben-Gvir for calling on the occupying regime to increase assassinations against Palestinians in the West Bank.

The Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned the statements made by the Zionist minister, "who beats the drums of war and sheds Palestinian blood and is proud of that," Al-Mayadeen re-

ported.

The statement said Ben-Gvir has continuously urged "for more assassinations in the West Bank," and called for "launching a bloody aggression there, as the one that happened in the Gaza Strip."

The ministry considered these positions "a license to kill Palestinian citizens and a call for an unjustified military escalation, which reflects an expansionist colonial mentality to perpetuate the creeping gradual

annexation of the West Bank, and an attempt to break the steadfastness and self-defense of the Palestinian people."

Moreover, the statement added that "the calls of the racist fascist Ben-Gvir are calls for deepening ethnic cleansing and killing the largest number of people in the West Bank, in preparation for replacing them with settlers."

The ministry called on states and the international community

to "declare an explicit position regarding this fascist minister by boycotting and prosecuting him." In that context, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs called on the International Criminal Court (ICC) to issue an arrest warrant against Ben-Gvir.

Following the ceasefire announcement on Saturday evening, Ben-Gvir called for "the next [Zionist] operation to be in the West Bank."

Jordan: Emirati-Turkish Citizen Faces 'Unconstitutional' Deportation

AMMAN (Middle East Eye) – Jordanian authorities have detained a dual Emirati-Turkish citizen who could now face extradition to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), where he has been sentenced in absentia to 15 years in prison.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) named the detainee as Khalaf Abdul Rahman al-Romaithi, 58, and condemned the development as "very concerning". HRW said he could face "arbitrary detention" in the UAE.

Romaithi was detained at Amman's Queen Alia International Airport on 7 May 2023, upon his arrival from Turkey. He was later released on bail but was detained again on 8 May. Romaithi's lawyers lost track of their client's whereabouts on 9 May, HRW said.

In July 2013, at the height of the Arab Spring, the UAE's Federal Supreme Court

sentenced Romaithi following what HRW called "grossly unfair" mass trials of 94 government critics resulting in 69 convictions.

Since his conviction, Romaithi has been sheltering in exile in Turkey.

HRW said that Romaithi was sentenced to prison for exercising his rights of "free expression, association, and assembly".

Jordan's constitution prohibits extradition of "political refugees" based on "their political beliefs or for their defence of liberty".

The deputy director of HRW in the Middle East and North Africa, Michael Page, said that there are "unconfirmed reports that Jordan has already deported him to the UAE".

Emirati authorities "have been violating the rights of Romaithi" and his co-defendants for over a decade, said Joey Shea, UAE researcher at HRW.

"Jordan risks complicity in these abuses if it sends him back to near-certain persecution," said Shea, adding that Jordanian authorities should reveal the Romaithi's whereabouts.

On 7 May, Romaithi attempted to enter Jordan on his Turkish passport. Jordanian authorities, however, stopped him, subjecting him to biometric checks at the airport which revealed that Jordanian police had issued a warrant for his arrest based on a request from the UAE.

Romaithi's lawyers told HRW that after being released on bail he was picked up by a plain-clothes police officer in Amman the next day and all of his belongings were taken from his hotel.

Romaithi sent a text message to his lawyer, writing "they took me", before losing all contact.