

Palestinians Hit Out at EU Leader for 'Racist Trope'



Zionist troops block roads and entrances to Palestinian cities in the occupied West Bank.

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) – The Palestinian Authority (PA) has hit out at European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen after she made a speech for the occupying regime's 75th anniversary of occupation in which she claimed the regime had made "the desert bloom".

In a statement, the PA's foreign ministry described the phrase used by the EU leader as a "racist trope" that amounted to the "erasure" of the Palestinian people.

"The State of Palestine affirms that such pro-

pagandist discourse dehumanizes and erases the Palestinian people and falsifies their rich history and civilization. Likewise, such a narrative perpetuates the continued and racist denial of the Nakba and whitewashes the occupying regime's illegal occupation and apartheid regime," read the statement.

"It is also a betrayal to European citizens who do not endorse such racist erasure of the Palestinian people. President Ursula von der Leyen owes them and the Palestinian people an apol-

ogy."

The reference to the occupying regime having "made the desert bloom" is a common phrase used by Zionists and supporters of the regime.

However, Palestinians have long argued that the phrase amounts to the erasure of their history and misleadingly implies the land was empty or neglected prior to the arrival of settlers.

The occupying regime is this week marking its 75th anniversary of occupation, a date that holds a different significance for Palestinians: known as the Nakba or "catastrophe," it marks the expulsion of more than 700,000 Palestinians from their historic homeland.

In her video message on Wednesday, von der Leyen addressed Zionist president Isaac Herzog and praised Zionist-EU friendship.

"You have literally made the desert bloom as I could see during my visit to the Negev last year."

The occupying regime has been gripped for months by protests over proposed judicial overhaul, which would limit the power of judges and allow rulings to be overruled by the parliament.

Opponents of the reform argue that it will weaken the judiciary and the dictatorial regime further down the abyss.

Violence in the occupied West Bank and East Al-Quds has also been mounting since last year. Around 100 Palestinians, including 16 children, have been shot dead by Zionist troops so far in 2023.

The Leader said the political system allows people to voice their opinion through elections.

Under the constitution, a referendum is possible if two-thirds of parliament votes for it and the guardian council approve it.

Iran held referendums to establish the Islamic Republic system and approve a new constitution shortly after the 1979 Islamic revolution. The country also held another referendum in the late 1980s to amend the constitution.

evade domestic broadcast bans, and influence millions of new viewers in the West," Imran Ahmed, chief executive of the CCHD, said.

Their concern is particularly focused around Press TV's "Palestine Declassified" program, formerly hosted by former UK MP Chris Williamson and former Bristol University professor David Miller.

Williamson was suspended from the Labour Party after dismissing concerns about anti-Semitism in the party as "smears" and "bulls---." And Miller was dismissed from Bristol University after he revealed Jewish students critical of his views were "directed by Israel."

The groups cite an episode of the Press TV program devoted to unpacking the "witch hunt" in Labour and the way the party was "captured by key Israel lobby groups."

In July 2013, Press TV was forced off the air in the UK after the media regulator Ofcom revoked its license for allegedly breaching the Communications Act.

In the same year, it was taken off the air in North America after the U.S. Treasury Department announced sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB).

Press TV was dropped from the Galaxy 19 satellite platform that allowed it to broadcast in the United States and Canada, without saying when it was dropped.

The network has denounced the measures as "media terrorism."

The broadcaster has a large number of viewers across Western countries and a considerable number of followers on social media.

In December 2022, Firas al-Najim, a Canadian human rights advocate, said Press TV is the voice of the oppressed, a news network working to expose the crimes and double standards of the West against free nations.

Weeks after the European Union imposed sanctions on the leading broadcaster, French satellite operator Eutelsat notified Press TV of its plan to take the network off the air. Najim said then that the move unmasked the conspiracy of the Western governments.

SCO...

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The SCO, he said, enjoys diverse and extensive social, cultural, economic and security capacities that are influential in its global and regional roles and functions.

Ashtiani said SCO member states share a responsibility to design a new world order.

"We need a common understanding in the Shanghai Organization to resolve different security challenges in the world."

The minister said Iran's defense doctrine heralds a message of peace and friendship for the region and the world.

Elsewhere in his speech, Ashtiani touched on global terrorism and the dual policies in fighting the heinous phenomenon.

"Terrorism, in its various forms, is spread by different factors such as extremism, discrimination and injustice, ignorance and backwardness, interests and interference of some powers," he said.

"The biggest problem in the world community to overcome this phenomenon is the use of double standards," he said.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran is both a victim of terrorism and a leader in the fight against terrorism, and in this way, it has sacrificed distinguished martyrs and great heroes."

The SCO was founded by China, Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan in 2001, and currently forms the world's biggest regional market with eight official and four observer members.

The organization accounts for 40 percent of the world's population and 28 percent of the global gross domestic product (GDP).

UK...

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activist who has previously served as the media secretary of the Muslim Council of Britain, an umbrella group for British Muslim organizations.

Bunglawala wrote in a post on his blog that it was time for the IPSO to "acknowledge that enough is enough" and that a standards investigation into the outlet must now be opened.

"A failure to open a standards investigation can only embolden the Jewish Chronicle and encourage other bad actors in the press with the notion that they can continue to publish blatantly false information while only risking a mild slap on the wrist from IPSO. A failure to open a standards investigation would also lessen public confidence and trust in both IPSO and our press at a time when it is already dangerously low," he said.

The IPSO has so far resisted such calls, and has instead held a training program for Jewish Chronicle staff.

Facebook, Twitter Under Pressure

Social media groups Facebook and Twitter have come under pressure from pro-Israel lobby groups to remove accounts of Iran's leading broadcaster Press TV from their platforms.

The Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCHD) and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) have demanded that Press TV be blocked for publishing content in Britain, The Telegraph reported Thursday.

ADL chief executive Jonathan Greenblatt said it was "inexcusable" to offer Press TV a platform.

"We urge Meta [the owner of Facebook] and Twitter to immediately launch an investigation and to take action to prevent Press TV and the Iranian other media outlets from misusing these social platforms."

"Facebook and Twitter profit by providing Iranian state propagandists with the reach and amplification they need to

UN: Renewed Attention to Syria Can Unlock Long-Stalled Efforts

UNITED NATIONS (Anadolu) – The UN special envoy for Syria says that they are at a "potentially important juncture" in efforts to move forward a political process on Syria amid recent diplomatic moves.

"This renewed attention to Syria is very important if it can act as a circuit breaker and unlock long-stalled efforts to move the political process forward," Geir Pedersen told the UN Security Council.

He said they have seen renewed diplomatic attention toward Syria in the aftermath of the earthquakes on Feb. 6, referring to the Astana players -- Russia, Turkey and Iran -- and to new openings

of engagement between Arab countries and the Syrian government.

In recent weeks, Saudi Arabia, which once backed militant groups in Syria, sent its Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan to Damascus for the first time since the kingdom cut ties with the Syrian government more than a decade ago.

"With renewed attention on Syria -- particularly from the region -- that could assist our efforts in advancing a political solution to this conflict in line with Resolution 2254," he said.

"But for this renewed attention to help unlock progress, many

actors will need to take concrete steps -- not just one set of actors."

UN aid agency official Lisa Doughten said the current scale of humanitarian need in Syria is "unprecedented" and the Feb. 6 earthquakes added more death and destruction to parts of northern Syria already worn down by more than a decade of foreign-backed war.

"Even before the earthquake, 15.3 million people—more than half of the total population—required humanitarian assistance and protection support. This number, I fear, only stands to grow," she said.

"The protection needs provoked

by the earthquakes are enormous."

Turkish Ambassador to the UN Sedat Onal also pointed out signs of a tendency toward greater engagement in the region in the aftermath of the devastating earthquakes in Turkey and Syria.

"We think that every initiative is important and valuable, as far as it is part and parcel of a holistic and coordinated approach to find viable solutions to the existing problems through a credible political process," he said.

"We hope that this can open a window of opportunity, and it can be seized by all stakeholders," he added.

He touched on the Khuzestan province's significant sacrifices and resistance in the years of the Sacred Defense and called on officials to fulfill their responsibility toward the regional people.

The government, he said, is working in collaboration with the people to advance the country's progress in economic, social, and cultural fields.

Khuzestan, he said, is the front line of defending the Islamic Republic of Iran, stressing the need to address fundamental infrastructure issues, such as improving wastewater and sewage facilities and solving the problem of youth unemployment in the province.

Raisi's Khuzestan visit was part of his provincial tours since he assumed office in August 2021. The tour aims to address issues and resolve problems in different provinces.

The president assured that Iran has a bright future ahead and that foreign attempts to create hopelessness and pessimism will not succeed.

Navy...

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The U.S. Navy initially said Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) seized the vessel, but an American naval aircraft later confirmed that Iran's navy captured the ship, 5th Fleet spokesman Cmdr. Timothy Hawkins told The Associated Press.

President...

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President Raisi stressed that Iran is making progress despite foreign threats and pressures.

He said the Iranian people themselves will resolve existing problems and nullify sanctions against the country.

Iranian...

(Continued From Page One)

Lebanon, in the throes of a crushing economic crisis, has been without a president for almost six months amid deadlock between entrenched political barons.

A caretaker cabinet with limited powers has been at the helm since May last year after legislative polls gave no side a clear majority.

"Lebanese officials and all political parties and sides in the country have the capacity and the competence to reach a consensus on electing the president," said Amir-Abdollahian, on his second visit to Beirut this year.

Countries including France, the United States, and Saudi Arabia hold regular consultations on Lebanon. Their representatives met in February in Paris to discuss the crisis, without achieving any tangible progress.

Nasrallah has warned that the next president cannot be close to Washington, which he has accused of "intervening" in Lebanon.

Iran's top diplomat said he and Lebanese counterpart Abdallah Bou Habib discussed "comprehensive cooperation between Iran and Lebanon" and Iran's readiness "to further strengthen the ties in economy, trade, tourism, science, technology and other fields."

He said a new chapter has opened in