

UNRWA Warns of Service Cuts to Palestinians Without More Funding

BEIRUT (AP) – The head of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees said Tuesday that without a new injection of funding, it is “likely or highly likely” that the agency will not be able to deliver some services or pay salaries by the fall.

UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini said at a press conference in Beirut that the agency responsible for services to Palestinian refugees has been facing a shortfall of \$150 million to \$200 million annually in recent years.

Donors at a pledging conference earlier this month provided only \$107 million in new funds, significantly less than the \$300 million the agency had called for to keep its programs running through the end of the year.

Those programs include health and education services and, in some cases, cash assistance to families in Syria, Lebanon, the Israeli-occupied West Bank and east Al-Quds, the Gaza Strip and Jordan.

While he acknowledged that the



Palestinian refugees hold placards at a school belonging to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) in the town of Sebline, east of the southern Lebanese port of Saida, on March 12, 2018, during a protest against U.S. aid cuts to the organization.

agency’s funding woes have become “almost a broken record,” Lazzarini warned donors not to “take for granted the ability of UNRWA to muddle through.”

In Lebanon, which has been reeling from an unprecedented economic crisis since 2019, some 93% of Palestinian refugees in the

country now live in poverty. Lazzarini said that when the agency recently advertised for 14 sanitation workers in Lebanon’s refugee camps, it got 37,000 applicants, including many holding university degrees.

“This shows how little avenues Palestinian refugees have here

when it comes to job opportunities,” he said.

Lazzarini said the international community needs to have a “proper, honest” discussion about what the agency’s future role should be in the absence of a political solution to the Zionist-Palestinian conflict that would mean the end of its mandate.

“Next year we will be marking the 75th year of an agency, which was supposed to be a temporary agency,” Lazzarini said. “And at the same time, it seems we have never, ever been further away from a lasting and fair political solution.”

UNRWA was founded in the wake of the occupation of Palestinian lands in 1948 to serve hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who fled or were forced from their homes. Today, their numbers have grown to some 5.9 million people, most in the Gaza Strip and occupied West Bank, as well as neighboring countries in the Middle East.

Official: Syria Could Have Better Wheat Harvest Without Obstruction From U.S., Allies

DAMASCUS (Xinhua) – Syria’s annual wheat yield this year seems promising but could have been much better if the U.S. forces and their allied militias weren’t present in agriculture-rich areas in northeastern Syria, an official told Xinhua in an interview.

Abdul Latif al-Amin, director general of the Syrian Grain Foundation, said that the preliminary data have suggested the wheat output this year could be better than last year.

Al-Amin expressed optimism that Syrian wheat production has started to recover, noting that the agriculture ministry is working to utilize desert lands to plant wheat.

The official attributed the estimat-

ed promising wheat harvest to the government’s support for farmers and producers by securing all production requirements for guaranteeing a high wheat yield to meet domestic needs.

However, al-Amin mentioned that the crops could be much better if the northeastern province of al-Hasakah, a pivotal breadbasket of Syria, were well under the control of the government.

He said the presence of the U.S. troops and its allied so-called Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in al-Hasakah is impeding the flow of the province’s gain to the government.

Al-Amin said although the government has established three centers in government-controlled parts of al-Hasakah to buy the harvest from the farmers, “the so-called SDF is preventing the farmers from selling their crops to the state-run centers.”

The official condemned the U.S. forces and the SDF for imposing tough conditions on farmers who want to sell their harvest to the government.

“Syria is an integrated agricultural country and the conducts of the U.S. and the SDF created a crack in the integration or self-sufficiency of agricultural production in Syria,” he said.

In addition to the presence of ground forces in resource-rich areas in Syria, al-Amin also spoke of the negative impact of the economic sanctions imposed by the U.S. on Syria.

He said the sanctions are affecting the production requirements and the imports of spare parts necessary to keep agricultural machinery running.

Calling the sanctions, known as the Caesar Act, “unfair,” al-Amin said the act has deprived Syria of “reaching many of the production requirements and accessing the spare parts for industrial establishments and consequently has damaged Syria’s overall economy.”

Palestine Communicates With Egypt Over Gas Field Off Gaza Coast

RAMALLAH (Dispatches) – The Palestinian leadership has been communicating with Egypt over a gas field off the coast of the Gaza Strip, Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammed Ishtaye has unveiled.

Ishtaye made the announcement at a weekly cabinet meeting in the West Bank city of Ramallah, during which he said the gas field is “a national wealth and a Palestinian natural resource,” according to a statement from the prime minister’s office.

On Sunday, the Zionist regime gave preliminary approval for the development of the Gaza Marine

natural gas field off the coast of the Gaza Strip, following negotiations with the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Egypt.

The Gaza Marine natural gas field is located in the Mediterranean Sea, approximately 36 kilometers offshore of Gaza, a Palestinian enclave subjected to an Israeli and Egyptian blockade.

Ishtaye added that the Palestinian Investment Fund in partnership with an Egyptian developer company have started works concerning the gas field. “There were Israeli obstacles, and now the matter has become available,” he added.

Ishtaye expressed gratitude to Egypt and stressed that “the Gaza gas field is Palestinian, located in the Palestinian territorial waters off the shores of the Gaza Strip, and it is a national wealth.”

“Egypt made efforts to help us work in the field. This effort has political implications for our people, and the work in the field will be based on partnership with the private sector through agreements between Egypt and Palestine,” he said.

Meanwhile, Hazem Qassem, spokesman for the Islamic resistance movement Hamas in Gaza,

said, “The gas off the coast of the Gaza Strip is a natural wealth that belongs to all the poor, youth, and future generations of our Palestinian people.”

“We do not need anyone’s permission to dispose of this gas. We will not allow the occupation to use the Gaza gas issue as material for blackmailing positions or a tool to pass security or political deals with some Palestinian parties,” he said.

Qassem added that “the Palestinian people have the full right to benefit from the natural resources and gas located on the coasts of the Gaza Strip.”

IRGC...

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(Afghans, Pakistanis, Iraqis) and the presence of European nationals to gather information on the riots, which led to the arrest of 40 individuals from one neighboring country, a French-Irish national in Khorasan Razavi Province, and a German national in Ardabil Province.

5. Intensification of activities and support by the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in creating necessary cyberspace platforms for disseminating news of the riots, including efforts to send technical equipment, escape tools, and lifting sanctions on mobile communication devices.

6. A request by the CIA to establish a joint team with the Israeli regime’s Mossad and Britain’s MI6 to reactivate the project of assassinating Iranian scientists, especially in the nuclear, space, and military fields towards the end of the riots.

7. Joint periodic meetings of the intelligence services of the United Arab Emirates and the Zionist regime in an Arab country to support the riots in Iran.

Kazemi also stressed in his interview that the enemy sought to stoke mistrust among Iranian people from various social strata and political inclinations by such ploys as inducing discrimination and violation of women’s rights, as well as the collapse of the Islamic Republic and the end of the Islamic Revolution.

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told that it has enough Western weapons, when some arrive in poor or unusable condition, relegated from combat to be cannibalized for parts.

Problems with arming the military are as old as post-Soviet Ukraine itself, pulled for decades between competing factions with different visions for the country’s arms industry.

The documents obtained by The New York Times, generated by a government audit this year, showed that some of the most valuable sets of undelivered contracts are between the Defense Ministry and state-owned Ukrainian arms companies that function as independent brokers. In recent months, the ministry has sued at least two of those state firms over unfulfilled contracts, and Ukraine recently announced overhauls aimed at making those companies more efficient.

There have been problems with Western-donated equipment as well, which contributed to some of its being delivered so belatedly or unpredictably as to complicate planning for Ukraine’s counteroffensive.

A Pentagon inspector general’s report released in late May illustrates some of the problems.

Last summer, an American Army unit was ordered to ship 29 Humvees to Ukraine from a depot at Camp Arifjan, a base in Kuwait. Although the unit’s leaders had previously said that all but one of the Humvees were “fully mission capable,” an initial inspection after the orders were received revealed that 26 of them were too broken for combat, according to the Pentagon report.

By late August, contractors had repaired transmissions, dead batteries, fluid leaks, broken lights, door latches and seatbelts on the Humvees, and reported that all 29 were ready for Ukraine. The work was verified by the Army unit in Kuwait.

But when the Humvees reached a staging base in Poland, officials found that the tires on 25 of them were rotten. It took nearly a month to find enough replacement tires, which “delayed the shipment of other equipment to Ukraine and required significant labor and time,” the Pentagon report found.

The same Army unit in Kuwait was also supposed to send six M777 howitzers to Ukraine just weeks after the start of Russia’s full-scale operation. As it turned out, however, the howitzers “required extensive maintenance” before they could be shipped, because they had gone without regular service checks for

19 months, the Pentagon report found.

Some weapons systems are either so scarce or so vulnerable to breaking down that Ukraine has welcomed at least some of the faulty Western equipment as a source of parts.

In January, Britain’s defense secretary, Ben Wallace, announced the planned transfer of self-propelled AS-90 howitzers to Ukraine, including some in “varying states of readiness.” Twelve required Ukraine “to either refurbish or exploit for spares,” the British Defense Ministry said in a statement in March.

The senior Ukrainian official confirmed that they were needed to supply spare parts for others.

Raisi ...

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The resistance front, Raisi said, is more powerful than ever while its enemies have reached their nadir, adding that the victories made by the Palestinian resistance prove the Israeli regime’s claim about its deterrence power is false.

The president said any attempt to normalize relations with the Zionist regime is a “betrayal of the Palestinian cause.”

Haniyeh, for his part, thanked Iran for its continued support for the liberation of al-Quds.

He said the resistance front is now becoming stronger not only in the besieged Gaza Strip, but also in the West Bank and in the lands occupied since 1948, and even among supporters of Palestine outside Palestinian territories.

He said Palestinian resistance forces mobilized all their potential in their recent battle, adding that there exist continued meetings and coordination between all resistance groups.

Navy...

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military, educational, and aviation cooperation.

“The meeting between Irani and Baber Sidhu is a testament to the deep-rooted friendship and unwavering commitment of the two nations to work towards a peaceful and stable region,” Pakistan’s Air Force said in a statement.

The Pakistani marshal highlighted that the advancement in space, electronic warfare, cyber and niche technologies coupled with artificial intelligence had profoundly affected the traditional environment of national security.

He briefed the visiting dignitary on various projects which are being conducted by the Pakistan Air Force with a special focus on modernization and development of indigenous capabilities.

“Teheran and Islamabad enjoy longstanding religious, cultural, and historical bonds which are manifested through strong ties between both sides,” the Pakistani air chief said.

The Iranian Navy commander commended the professionalism of Pakistan Air Force personnel and the exceptional progress made by the PAF on its path to modernization Pakistan’s Air Force said.

Irani also appreciated Pakistan’s continuous efforts for regional stability and stressed the importance of further improvement in military-to-military ties, especially in the domains of operations, training, and the aviation industry.

Earlier this month, Irani announced that the Islamic Republic plans to form new regional and extra-regional alliances to enhance security.

He also named Pakistan among other countries, including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, and Iraq that are eager for collective naval cooperation.

Virtually all the countries located in the northern areas of the Indian Ocean have come to the conclusion that they should stand by Iran and jointly establish security through enhanced synergy, he added.

While the Zionist regime and its traditional ally, the U.S., have dreamed of a “NATO-like” anti-Iran alliance in the region, their dream shattered, as a number of Persian Gulf Arab countries, led by Saudi Arabia, realigned their alliance and restored their relations with Iran.

Turkey Hikes Minimum Wage in Bid to Fight Cost of Living Crisis

ANKARA (Middle East Eye) – The Turkish government announced on Tuesday an increase to the monthly minimum wage by another 34 percent starting on 1 July.

The monthly minimum salary will increase to about \$483 and is part of an effort to ease the impact of inflation, which until recently was one of the highest in the world.

In December last year, the government increased the monthly minimum wage by 55 percent. At the time inflation stood at 85 percent.

In May, inflation dropped to just below 40 percent, its lowest level since 2021.

“The minimum wage assessment commission completed its work with an agreement between the workers and employers,”

Labour and Social Security Minister Vedat Isikhan said in a televised address from the capital Ankara.

The increase will help to alleviate the purchasing power among workers, over a third of whom earn the minimum wage.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who won re-election last month, promised to fight inflation and increase the minimum wage as part of his campaign.

Despite the big headline wage boost, the plunge in the lira’s value means that actual wages have increased only fractionally in dollar terms over the past year.

In 2023, the Turkish lira lost around 20 percent of its value against the dollar.

While the entire world has seen price rises, which have been compounded by the

war in Ukraine, many economists say that Turkey’s inflation problem is largely self-inflicted.

Erdogan subscribes to an unorthodox economic theory that high interest rates cause inflation. He has pressured the central bank to cut borrowing costs and increase credit access despite conventional wisdom saying otherwise.

The lira has shed more than 90 percent of its value over the past decade as the country has been hit by soaring inflation which has also driven away foreign investors.

More than \$27bn in foreign currency reserves have been burned through since the end of 2022 as the government sought to prop up its currency and finance its enormous current account deficit.