

KUWAIT (Reuters) – Kuwait has suspended all new visas for Philippine nationals indefinitely, the interior ministry confirmed this week, in an escalation of a row between the oil-rich Persian Gulf state and Manila over worker protections and employer rights. Philippine nationals make up around 6% of Kuwait's 4.7 million population, government data shows. Kuwaitis make up 32%. The visa suspension comes after the Philippines in February stopped the first-time deployment of domestic workers to Kuwait after the body of domestic worker Jullebee Ranara was found in the Kuwaiti desert in January.

If I cut a faithful Muslim into pieces to make him hate me, he will not turn into my enemy and if I give all the wealth of this world to a hypocrite to make him my friend he will not befriend me.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

Zionist Regime Seeks to Stifle Human Rights Groups With Tax Hike

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – A new bill is being proposed which will grant the Zionist regime powers to extend its crackdown on human rights groups.

The Ministerial Committee on Legislation will put forward a plan on Sunday to impose a tax on 65 percent of foreign donations to Israeli and Palestinian humanitarian and human rights groups.

The bill fulfils one of the promises made to the far-right minister Itamar Ben-Gvir's Otzma Yehudit party by prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu as part of their coalition agreement at the end of last year.

Lawyers warned against the plan at the time and said that the move is similar to steps taken against human rights organizations in undemocratic countries. According to the deal, the regime will pass the law 180 days after it is sworn in.

If adopted, as is thought like-



The backers of a proposed bill that would heavily tax foreign-funded NGOs have cited the need to defend Israel's sovereignty.

ly, the new tax will have a serious impact on human rights groups and NGOs. Some of Israel's most prominent and best-known rights organizations, including Breaking the Silence, B'Tselem, Peace Now and Yesh Din, rely on foreign funding from the European Union and U.S. In 2021, B'Tselem joined other major human rights group in branding the Zionist regime

as an apartheid regime.

Michael Sfard, the legal adviser to Yesh Din, an organization that acts to protect the rights of Palestinians in the West Bank, warned against the bill in December: "If this section passes, it will be a fatal blow to the human rights community."

Sfard explained that the bill is intended to paralyze the activities of groups that criticize the

Zionist regime's policies targeting the Palestinians. He added that the move by the extreme far-right Zionist cabinet will not harm right-wing organizations such as Kohelit and Elad because, unlike human rights groups, most of the donations they receive from overseas come from private individuals and bodies whose interests, in general, are not concerned with promoting democracy and human rights.

The U.S. is reported to have conveyed its strong opposition to the legislation.

Germany's ambassador to the occupied territories, Steffen Seibert, said on Twitter that the bill "is a matter of grave concern to us and to many of Israel's international partners."

The Bill has also been denounced by the French Embassy. A spokesperson is reported as saying that the legislation is "deeply concerning."

Settler Kills Palestinian After Alleged Stabbing Attempt



A settler has shot dead a Palestinian youth on suspicion of attempting to carry out an alleged stabbing attack in the south of the occupied West Bank city of Al-Khalil.

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – A Zionist settler has fatally shot a Palestinian youth on suspicion of attempting to carry out an alleged stabbing attack in the south of the occupied West Bank city of Al-Khalil, the latest amid rising violence in the occupied territories.

The young Palestinian man died of his critical wounds early on Friday after he was shot by a Zionist settler in the Tana Omrim settlement, south of Al-Khalil, according to Palestinian media reports.

Palestine's Ma'an news agency cited the settler as claiming that the Palestinian youth was trying to carry out a stabbing attack inside the illegal settlement, without identifying the Palestinian victim.

The fatal shooting came a day after Zionist troops wounded 13 Palestinian youths and arrested 14 others during a raid on a refugee camp in the eastern West Bank city of Ariha.

The regime's forces stormed the Aqabat Jaber refugee camp from several directions, raiding more than 50 homes and firing live rounds at Palestinian youths.

Over the past months, the occupying regime has ramped up attacks on Palestinian towns and cities throughout the occupied territories. As a result of these attacks, dozens of Palestinians have lost their lives and many others have been arrested.

Local and international rights groups have condemned the regime's excessive use of force and "shoot-to-kill policy" against Palestinians.

More than 600,000 Zionist live in over

230 settlements built since the 1967 occupation of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and East Al-Quds. All settlements are illegal under international law as they are built on occupied land. The UN Security Council has condemned Israel's settlement activities in the occupied territories in several resolutions.

A major European trade union organization has boycotted products made in settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, calling on the European Union's member states to ban import and export of such commodities.

The decision was made on Thursday during the 15th session of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)'s congress in Berlin, Palestine's official Wafa news agency reported.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) also affirmed Palestine's right to sovereignty over Al-Quds, home to the al-Aqsa Mosque compound, calling on the international community to force the Zionist regime's to end its violations in the occupied city.

In a communiqué issued after an extraordinary meeting in the Saudi city of Jeddah, the 57-member intergovernmental organization reiterated that the regime has no sovereignty over Al-Quds and its Islamic and Christian holy sites.

The meeting followed a provocative incursion by the regime's far-right security minister Itamar Ben-Gvir into the al-Aqsa Mosque complex and continued attacks by the occupation forces on the Palestinians in Al-Quds.

Ahead of Turkey Election Runoff Erdogan Defies Predictions of Political Demise

ISTANBUL (Reuters) – President Tayyip Erdogan has defied forecasts of his political demise in Turkey's elections, rallying voters with a potent mix of religious conservatism and nationalism that looks set to propel his rule into a third decade on Sunday.

Though he has yet to clinch victory - Erdogan must first beat Kemal Kilicdaroglu in Sunday's runoff - his momentum has only grown since he emerged with a solid lead in the first round on May 14, and analysts fully expect him to win.

Victory would entrench the rule of a leader who has transformed Turkey, reshaping the state founded 100 years ago.

On the global stage, Erdogan has pivoted the NATO member

away from its traditional Western allies, forged ties with Russian President Vladimir Putin, and turned Turkey into an assertive regional power.

Critics say he has increasingly polarized the nation during his 20-year rule, including in this election campaign. But he argued the contrary ahead of Sunday's vote and said his opponents were "poisoning political discourse".

"We will continue to embrace our nation, which is a way of thinking that comes from our culture," he told CNN Turk in an interview on Thursday. "If we win on May 28, with God's permission, every one of our 85 million people will win."

The vote has been seen as one

of the most consequential since the modern Turkish state was founded 100 years ago.

Critics and earthquake survivors had expressed anger over a slow initial quake response by the government and lax enforcement of building rules - failures they said cost lives.

But his AK Party emerged top in 10 of the 11 provinces hit by the earthquakes, helping it secure along with its allies a parliamentary majority in the May 14 vote.

Seeking to tap Turkey's deep-running nationalism, he also seized on Kurdish support for Kilicdaroglu to accuse his rival of siding with terrorism and ties to the militant Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) - a claim

Kilicdaroglu called slanderous.

Erdogan repeatedly drew attention to a doctored video to accuse Kilicdaroglu of ties to the PKK, which has been waging an insurgency in which more than 40,000 people have been killed.

The economy was one of Erdogan's main strengths in the first decade of his rule, when Turkey enjoyed a protracted boom with new roads, hospitals and schools and rising living standards.

But it became a political problem as the government embarked on an unorthodox policy of slashing interest rates in the face of soaring inflation. Aimed at boosting growth, the policy crashed the currency in late 2021 and worsened inflation.

Rights Groups Slam Severe Taliban Restrictions on Afghan Women

ISLAMABAD (AP) – Two top rights groups on Friday slammed the severe restrictions imposed on women and girls by the Taliban in Afghanistan as gender-based persecution, which is a crime against humanity.

In a new report, Amnesty International and the International Commission for Jurists, or ICJ, underscored how the Taliban crackdown on Afghan women's rights, coupled with "imprisonment, enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment," could constitute gender persecution under the International Criminal Court.

The report by Amnesty and ICJ, titled, "The Taliban's war on women: The crime against humanity of gender persecution in Afghanistan," cited the ICC statute, which lists gender-based persecution as a crime against humanity. The Taliban seized power in Afghanistan in

August 2021 as U.S. and NATO troops were in the final weeks of their withdrawal from the country after two decades of occupation.

Despite initial promises of a more moderate rule, the Taliban started to enforce restrictions on women and girls soon after their takeover, barring them from public spaces and most jobs, and banning education for girls beyond the sixth grade. The measures harked back to the previous Taliban rule of Afghanistan in the late 1990s.

The harsh edicts prompted an international outcry against the already ostracized Taliban, whose administration has not been officially recognized by the United Nations and the international community.

In the report, Santiago A. Canton, the ICJ secretary general, said the Taliban's actions are of such "magnitude, gravity and of such a systematic nature," that they qualify "as a crime against humanity of gender persecu-

tion."

Both organizations called on the International Criminal Court to include this crime in their ongoing investigation into what is happening in Afghanistan and take legal action. They also called on countries "to exercise universal jurisdiction" and hold the Taliban accountable under international law.

The report also accused the Taliban of targeting women and girls who have taken part in peaceful protests by detaining, forcibly disappearing them and subjecting them to torture in custody. The Taliban have also forced them to sign "confessions" or "agreements" not to protest again, the report said.

What is happening in Afghanistan is "a war against women," which amounts to "international crimes" that are "organized, widespread, systematic," said Agnès Callamard, Amnesty's secretary general.

World Bank Approves \$300mn Financing to Help Lebanon

BEIRUT (AP) – The World Bank approved a \$300 million additional financing to Lebanon, providing cash payments to help families struggling through the country's historic economic meltdown, institution said in a statement Friday.

The new financing comes two years after the World Bank approved a \$246 million loan to Lebanon to provide emergency cash assistance to hundreds of thousands in the tiny Mediterranean nation of 6 million people.

Lebanon is in the throes of the worst economic and financial crisis in its modern history.

"The additional financing will enable the Government of Lebanon to continue to respond to the growing needs of poor and vulnerable households suffering under the severe economic and financial crisis," said Jean-Christophe Carret, World Bank Middle East Country Director.

The World Bank said the additional financing will provide cash transfers to 160,000 households for 24

months, including current beneficiaries. Eligible households will receive up to \$145 per household, the bank said. The project is jointly handled by Lebanon's Ministry of Social Affairs and the World Food Program.

The Lebanese pound has lost more than 95% of its value at the start of the economic crisis, leaving many of the country's residents, including 1 million Syrian refugees, in need for help.

The World Bank announcement came after a separate announcement by the UN refugee agency and the WFP that they will start making aid payments to refugees in Lebanon in dollars, rather than in Lebanese pounds, with a maximum of \$125 per family per month.

Since the collapse of Lebanon's currency, the UN agencies had been paying assistance to refugees in Lebanese pounds. Before the change announced this week, refugee households received a maximum of 8 million pounds per month, worth about \$80 at the current exchange rate.