

BEIRUT (Xinhua) – Lebanon has launched a national campaign to prevent forest fires. The peak fire season in Lebanon begins in late June and lasts around 17 weeks. With Lebanon’s dry season on the way and global data indicating March as the planet’s second-warmest on record, Lebanon’s forests are at increased fire risk. The country’s environment ministry said it would continue to protect the country’s forests and prevent raging fires, according to Nasser Yassin, Lebanese caretaker environment minister, who addressed a launch event held in the Tannourine Cedar Forest Nature Reserve in northern Lebanon.

Be afraid of a gentleman when he is hungry, and of a mean person when his stomach is full.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

UK Ex-FM: Support for Iraq Invasion ‘One of My Deepest Regrets’

LONDON (Arab News) – Former UK Foreign Minister David Miliband has described his support for the Iraq War as “one of the deepest regrets” of his political career, The Observer reported on Sunday. Speaking at the Hay literature festival in Wales, Miliband said the war had resulted in “real damage” to the West’s moral integrity and claims of promoting international order and justice.

He added that the invasion of Iraq may also undermine anti-Russian stances in the West over allegations of hypocrisy.

“I voted for the war; I supported the government’s position. There’s no question in my mind about quite how serious a mistake that was,” said Miliband, who is now CEO of the International Rescue Committee.

He urged audience members to consider the words of Kenyan President William Ruto, who has encouraged greater attention to be



U.S. soldiers stand at the site of a retaliatory missile strike by Iran at Ain al-Asad Air Base in Anbar, western Iraq, on January 13, 2020.

given to other parts of the world, including Palestine and Afghanistan.

Miliband said: “Yes, Ukraine has enormous poverty and crimes against its own population, but what about Ethiopia, what about

Afghanistan, what about Palestine? “And I think that’s what we have to take very, very seriously if we want to understand what’s the role of the West, never mind the UK, in global politics.”

He described the Iraq War as a

“strategic mistake,” partly due to the “global lesson that it allowed to be taught.”

On March 20, 2003, the U.S. and Britain invaded Iraq in blatant violation of international law and under the pretext of finding WMDs; but no such weapons were ever discovered in Iraq.

More than one million Iraqis were killed as the result of the U.S.-led invasion, and subsequent occupation of the country, according to the California-based investigative organization Project Censored.

The U.S. war in Iraq cost American taxpayers \$1.7 trillion with an additional \$490 billion in benefits owed to war veterans, expenses that could grow to more than \$6 trillion over the next four decades counting interest, according to a study called Costs of War Project by the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University.

Europe Calls on Zionist Regime to Halt Demolition of Palestinian Homes



Ten European countries called on the Zionist regime to halt its policy of home demolitions and confiscation of Palestinian properties in the occupied West Bank.

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – Ten European countries have called on the Zionist regime to halt its policy of home demolitions and confiscation of Palestinian properties in the occupied West Bank, reports Anadolu Agency.

The call came in a joint statement issued by the consulates general of Belgium, France, Italy, Spain, Sweden, the UK, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland and the Office of the European Union Representative to the West Bank and Gaza.

The statement called on “Israel, as the occupying power, to halt all confiscations and demolitions and to give unimpeded access to humanitarian organizations in the occupied West Bank including East Al-Quds.”

It also urged the Zionist regime to “return or compensate for all humanitarian items funded by the consortium of donors,” in reference to the occupying regime’s demolition of buildings funded by the European Union since 2015 estimated at 1,291,000 euros (\$1,385,300). The 10 countries “strongly

condemned the recent demolition of the donor-funded school in Jubbet Adh Dhib” and expressed “their grave concern about the threatened demolition of another 57 schools in the West Bank.”

The occupying regime has stepped up its settlement expansion activities since last December, when Benjamin Netanyahu returned to power as the prime minister of the regime’s most far-right cabinet.

In late March, a report by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk said 700,000 Zionists are living in 279 settlements across the occupied West Bank, including 14 settlements in occupied East Al-Quds.

The UN Security Council has condemned the Zionist regime’s illegal settlement activities in the occupied territories in several resolutions. The Palestinians have historically demanded that the West Bank serves as part of their future state with East Al-Quds, which is located inside the territory, as its capital.

UN: Landmines, UXOs Caused 121 Casualties in Yemen in Q1

SANA’A (Xinhua) – Landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXOs) caused 121 civilian casualties in Yemen during the first quarter of 2023, according to a report released by the Yemen branch of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

The report, which was based on data from the Yemeni Mine Action Center (YMAC), found that the majority of the casualties were caused by landmines and UXOs on the west coast of Yemen, particularly in the governorates of Hudaydah, al-Jawf, and Ma’arib. Heavy rainfall in these areas dislodged explosive devices, making them more likely to be triggered by civilians.

The report also found that the number of civilian casualties from landmines and UXOs decreased from 144 in the fourth quarter of 2022, due to a number of factors, including increased removals of the war remnants by the YMAC, as well as the displacement of civilians from areas that are heavily mined.

Despite the decrease, the OCHA warned that landmines and UXOs continue to pose a serious threat to civilians in Yemen. There are millions of landmines and UXOs scattered across the country, and these weapons will continue to kill and maim civilians for years to come, it added.

The OCHA called on the international community to provide

more funding to support mine clearance efforts in Yemen, stressing that the UN’s efforts to clear landmines and UXOs are essential for millions of Yemenis to return to their home and recover the woes of the country’s conflict.

In addition to clearance operations, the UN is also working to raise awareness among Yemeni civilians about the dangers of landmines and UXOs by conducting risk education campaigns and providing training to local communities, equipping them with knowledge on identifying and avoiding these hazardous remnants, the report added.

Saudi Arabia started a brutal war of aggression against Ye-

men in March 2015, enlisting the assistance of some of its allies, including the United Arab Emirates.

The war, which has enjoyed generous arms, logistical, and political support from the United States and several other Western governments, has been seeking to restore power in Yemen to the country’s former Riyadh- and Washington-friendly government.

The former Yemeni government’s president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi resigned from the presidency in late 2014 and later fled to Riyadh amid a political conflict with Ansarullah. The movement has been running Yemen’s affairs in the absence of a functioning administration.

Iraq Warned to End Oil Addiction to Avoid ‘Intensive Care’

BAGHDAD (AFP) – Oil-dependent Iraq has been warned its economy risks going into “intensive care” unless it diversifies in line with worldwide efforts to tackle the impact of fossil fuels on the climate.

The country’s vast oil reserves are enough to produce crude at current rates for another century, but as the world works to wean itself off hydrocarbons, Baghdad has been slow to adapt.

For years the energy industry has faced calls to help meet the goal of keeping global temperatures to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

In April, the G7 countries -- Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States -- pledged to “accelerate” their “exit” from fossil fuels, aiming

for carbon neutrality by 2050 “at the latest”.

But sales of the commodity make up 90 percent of Iraq’s budget revenue as it recovers from years of devastating conflicts and political upheaval, leaving it overly reliant on the sector.

“Currently, the whole economy depends on oil and the price of oil,” political scientist Ammar al-Azzawi said.

“If oil plunges, our economy will go to intensive care.”

His suggested remedy is to develop Iraq’s industrial, agriculture and tourism sectors before the world shifts to alternative energy sources.

In March, the European Union said that by 2035 it would stop selling combustion engines in new cars, which will no longer be able

to emit any CO2.

A global “energy transition is taking place, but not yet at the speed and scale that scientists and experts tell us is necessary to avert the worst impacts of climate change”, said Ali al-Saffar, climate director at the New York-based Rockefeller Foundation.

Suffering from prolonged droughts punctuated by frequent sandstorms, Iraq’s 42 million people are already witnessing those consequences.

The largely arid country is considered by the United Nations as one of the five most affected in the world by certain impacts of climate change.

In 2020, during the coronavirus pandemic, Iraq saw the downside of its oil dependence when global demand for crude plunged.

200,000 Palestinian Families Lose UN Food Aid

GAZA (Al Jazeera) – The message Aisha Abu Obeid received on her mobile in early May hit her like a thunderbolt. Her monthly food voucher from the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), it said, would be stopped next month.

“I felt like my soul was leaving me,” said the mother of seven whose husband is unemployed. “This voucher used to cover my family’s monthly basic food needs. I look forward to it at the beginning of each month.”

For a year and a half, Aisha’s family had been receiving a food voucher from the WFP worth \$108 per month, which covered their basic needs of food and vegetables.

The WFP announced in a statement that by June 200,000 people – almost 60 percent of the beneficiaries in Palestine – will no longer be receiving food assistance due to a severe funding

shortage.

The funding crunch has already forced WFP to cut cash assistance by about 20 percent this month. And by August, the agency will be forced to suspend operations in the occupied West Bank and Gaza if no funding is received.

“Desperate times call for desperate measures,” Samer Abdeljaber, WFP representative and country director in Palestine, told Al Jazeera. “We have no option but to stretch the limited resources we have to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable families are met. They will go hungry without food assistance.”

He said the WFP urgently needs \$51m to maintain its aid in Palestine until the end of the year. For families like Aisha’s, that help is a lifeline central to their survival amid a storm of never-ending crises linked to

the Zionist regime’s illegal occupation of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

A few days after she received the WFP alert on her phone, Aisha’s house was destroyed in the latest aggression by Zionists in the Gaza Strip.

It is a sentiment echoed by the WFP in its statement, which said, “Vulnerable families in Gaza and the West Bank have been pushed to the limits by the combined effects of growing insecurity, a deteriorating economy, and the rising cost of living that is driving food insecurity up.”

It said 1.84 million Palestinians, or 35 percent of the population, did not have enough food.

“We urge government donors and the private sector to continue their support to WFP during this difficult time,” said Abdeljaber.