

CAIRO (Reuters) – A historic neo-Islamic ministry in central Cairo was engulfed in flames on Saturday, only days after its employees had moved to premises in a new capital city under construction in the desert 45km east of Cairo. The fire appeared mainly confined to the top floor of the Ministry of Religious Endowments, or Awqaf, building, although flames were seen shooting out of a second floor window as well, according to a Reuters reporter. No one was hurt in the blaze, and a committee was being formed to determine its cause and the amount of damage sustained, a ministry spokesman told Reuters. At least seven firetrucks were deployed, and after several hours the fire was largely extinguished. The main part of the building was built in 1898.

Avarice is disgrace; cowardice is a defect; poverty often disables an intelligent man from arguing his case.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

Senior Zionist Regime Officials Discuss Regime Collapse to Draw 'Action Plans'

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – Hundreds of former senior Zionist regime military officials have warned of the collapse of the occupying regime, amid mass protests against prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu's far-right cabinet and its extremist policies.

The ex-officials held an emergency conference on Saturday to discuss ways to protect the Supreme Court, the military, and the police in case of the regime's collapse, the Israeli daily newspaper Yedioth Ahronoth reported.

According to the newspaper, participants discussed action plans to defend the supreme court, the military, and the police 'in crisis situations within the Israeli entity, "particularly if the Supreme Court annuls cabinet decisions, resulting in an unprecedented constitutional crisis in Israel."

The conference was attended by personnel from Israeli intelligence agencies Mossad, Shin Bet, police, and the Israeli military, including major generals, brigadier generals, and senior commanders, it stated.

The latest development comes amid calls for overturning a controversial law that restricts judicial power after



Zionist troops detain a protester during a sit-in blocking the entrance of the Knesset, the regime's parliament, in the Al-Quds on July 24, 2023, amid a months-long wave of protests against the regime.

Israel's parliament approved the first bill of the plan last week.

The new legislation, known as the reasonableness bill, was approved in a tumultuous session on Monday, which resulted in the opposition legislators walking out in protest and shouting "shame".

It removes the ability of the Supreme Court to strike down the far-right cabinet decisions deemed unreasonable.

Monday's bill was passed as part of

a broader plan to overhaul the judiciary.

Additional plans for reform include major changes to the basic laws in an attempt to reshape the balance of power between the Knesset, the regime's parliament, and the High Court of Justice, splitting the Attorney General's role and limiting the ability to petition against ruling cabinet actions.

Netanyahu introduced the plan in January, triggering months of un-

precedented anti-regime protests, with critics describing the plan as a threat to the independence of the courts by the prime minister, who is on trial on graft charges.

Those in favor of the scheme allege that it introduces some balance in the power that is wielded by the different branches of the regime. Its opponents, on the other side of the ledger, say upon ratification, the plan would empower the ruling class to act in a more authoritarian fashion.

Faced with raging protests as well as a wave of mass industrial actions in support of those protests, Netanyahu announced a pause in late March in his drive to get the plan approved by the Knesset.

The judicial overhaul plan originally sought to render the Supreme Court incapable of striking down politicians' decisions.

Pro-Netanyahu lawmakers have indicated that the new bill would be a far softer version of previous proposals that sought to almost totally roll back the supreme court's power to rule against the executive. The opposition, however, says the new bill would still open the door to corruption.

Muslims Demand Broader Action as Denmark Weighs Move Against Qur'an Desecration



Sweden wants to strengthen relations with Muslim countries, the Swedish Foreign Minister Tobias Billstrom said, as the country drew criticism over the repeated desecration of the Qur'an in the country.

COPENHAGEN (Anadolu) – Denmark has been front and center in the ongoing wave of attacks on the Muslim holy book.

In recent months, far-right groups have desecrated and burnt several copies of the Qur'an in Denmark and neighboring Sweden, drawing fierce condemnation from Muslims around the world and calls for measures to stop such acts.

A diplomatic crisis could also be in the offing as the ultranationalist group Danske Patriotet, or Danish Patriots, has been carrying out its acts in front of the Turkish, Iraqi, Egyptian, Saudi and Iranian embassies under Danish police protection.

Faced with that possibility, the Danish government has come out with statements trying to distance itself from the incidents, and also hinting at possible legal changes to prevent them.

The government said it was open to exploring legal means to intervene in special situations where other countries, cultures and religions are demeaned, to prevent consequences that risk Denmark's international standing and threaten its national security.

Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen said the "burnings are deeply offensive and reckless acts committed by few individuals... (who) do not represent the values the Danish society is built on."

He said Denmark was "exploring the possibility of intervening in special situations," but only "within the framework of the constitutionally protected

freedom of expression."

In comments to a local newspaper this week, Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said measures to ban the desecration of holy books such as the Qur'an would not restrict freedom of expression in the country.

Meanwhile, academics known for their work on religion, faith, and society in the UK have said that attacks on the Muslim holy book Qur'an in Scandinavian countries are "extremist acts that must be prevented."

Alison Scott-Baumann, a professor of society and faith at the Center for Islamic Studies at SOAS University, and David Thomas, a professor of theology and religion at the University of Birmingham, spoke to Anadolu Agency about the increasing Islamophobic attacks in Scandinavian countries, especially Sweden and Denmark.

Scott-Baumann stated that the acts of burning the Qur'an in Scandinavian countries are a result of the effect caused by the discourses of politicians and emphasized that these discourses are fed by the idea of "creating enemies in society" by Nazi philosopher Carl Schmidt.

"A democratic government should be able to tell the difference between free speech and deliberate provocation. This is an act of provocation," she said.

She recalled the EU's decision that "acts that incite violence are not freedom of expression but illegal acts."

Despite this, Scott-Baumann emphasized that Scandinavian countries see themselves as "privileged" in terms of freedom of expression.

Mourners Bury Palestinian Martyred by Zionist Settlers

BURQAHA, Palestinian Territories (AFP) – Mourners on Saturday attended the funeral of a Palestinian martyred by Zionist settlers in the occupied West Bank, after the UN warned of a dramatic spike in such cases.

The Palestinian health ministry in a statement late Friday announced the death of Qusai Jamal Maatan, 19, saying he was "shot dead by settlers in the village of Burqa", east of Ramallah.

At the funeral procession, Maatan was wrapped in a black and white keffiyeh head covering and Palestinian flag. Mourners carried his body through the village streets before his burial, said an AFP journalist at the scene.

In a statement Saturday, the Zionist regime's army cited Palestinian reports and witnesses as saying clashes broke out between Palestinians and Zionists.

"As a result of the confrontation, a Palestinian was killed, four others were injured, and a Palestinian vehicle was found burned," it said.

Israel has occupied the West Bank since the 1967 Six-Day War.

Excluding annexed east Al-Quds, the territory is home to nearly three million Palestinians and over 700,000 Zionists who live in settlements considered illegal under international law.

The Palestinian resistance

movements Hamas and Islamic Jihad condemned an earlier killing of a young Palestinian man.

Mahmoud Abu Sa'an was shot in the head at point-blank range at dawn on Friday as Zionist troops clashed with residents of the Nur Shams refugee camp, located to the east of the town of Tulkarm.

According to local media reports, the Israeli military stormed the camp, heavily firing live ammunition, tear gas canisters, and stun grenades at the camp's residents.

The Palestinian teenager was transferred to a hospital in Tulkarm, where he was pronounced dead shortly after.

In a press statement, Hamas

offered its condolences to the family of Sa'an and praised the resistance fighters for their unrelenting struggle against the Zionist regime.

"We condole the family of the martyr... and salute our steadfast people, and the heroic resistance fighters who bravely defended the camp and repelled the aggression," the statement said.

Hamas also underlined that killings, executions, assassinations and plans to desecrate Al-Aqsa Mosque will not bring security to Israel. "Our people's revolution continues until the end of the occupation and the establishment of a Palestinian state with al-Quds as its capital."

Lebanon Seeks to Reassure Countries After Travel Warnings

BEIRUT (Dispatches) – Lebanon's caretaker premier Najib Mikati said on Saturday there was no cause for "concern or panic" about his country's security situation, after Germany and Persian Gulf countries issued new travel warnings following outbreaks of violence.

Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Germany and Britain updated their travel warnings amid clashes between rival armed groups in a camp of Ain el-Hilweh in Lebanon's south.

In a statement, Mikati said he had spoken with his security chiefs and assessed that the situation "does not call for concern or panic". He said there had been "significant progress" in resolving the unrest in Ain el-Hilweh, where at least 13 people have been killed in fighting.

The statement said foreign minister Abdullah Bou Habib had been tasked with reassuring Arab countries that their citizens were safe in Lebanon.

The Saudi embassy on Friday urged its citizens to leave Lebanon quickly and avoid

areas where there have been armed clashes.

The Saudi statement on X, formerly known as Twitter, stressed "the importance of adhering to the Saudi travel ban to Lebanon".

Kuwait on Saturday urged its nationals in Lebanon to stay vigilant and avoid "areas of security disturbances," but stopped short of asking them to leave.

Last week, Germany warned citizens not to travel to Lebanon. Britain advised against "all but essential travel" to parts of Lebanon.

The Palestinian Hamas resistance movement asked Hezbollah Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah to do his best in order to stop deadly clashes between Palestinian factions in the densely populated refugee camp in Lebanon.

In a message, the head of Hamas' political bureau, Ismail Haniyeh, asked Nasrallah to intervene as clashes rage between Palestinian groups in the Palestinian Ain el-Hilweh refugee camp in southern Lebanon, Shehab news agency reported.

Haniyeh said that Hamas wants peace and

stability in Ain al-Hilweh, noting that the weapons of the Palestinian groups must only be directed at the Zionist enemy.

The violence erupted in the refugee camp on Saturday, when an unknown gunman attempted to kill a member of an armed group named Mahmoud Khalil, but fatally shot his companion instead.

In the confrontations that ensued, Abu Ashraf al-Armouchi, a senior commander with the Fatah party who was in charge of security inside Ain el-Hilweh, was killed along with several of his aides.

Reports say many terrorists and extremists have infiltrated the camp, targeting Fatah members and trying to create chaos.

Speaking during a televised address on Tuesday, Nasrallah called for a halt to the clashes, saying, "This fighting must not continue because its repercussions are bad – for the camp's residents, for the dear Palestinian people... for the south, for all of Lebanon."

A ceasefire subsided the fighting, but heavy confrontations resumed on Wednesday.

UN: 21mn Afghans Facing Severe Cuts in Relief Due to Funding Gaps

KABUL (Xinhua) – The UN humanitarianists have warned of critical aid funding gaps for more than 21 million people in Afghanistan, saying that some relief already has been trimmed.

With more than halfway through the year, the \$3.2 billion appeal to aid almost half the population across Afghanistan is less than 25 percent funded, Xinhua news agency quoted the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) as saying in its latest situation update.

"We face critical funding gaps amounting to \$1.3 billion, with many programs already ended or considerably scaled back due to insufficient resources and aid pipelines at risk of imminent rupture, including for food assistance," OCHA said.

The humanitarian office said it only has a short window of opportunity to procure and position vital assistance

and supplies before the lean season and winter begin.

After more than four decades of conflict and instability in Afghanistan, an estimated 28.3 million Afghans -- two-thirds of the population, including women and girls -- are in need of humanitarian and protection assistance.

More than 1.6 million Afghans have fled the country since the Taliban returned to power in 2021, bringing the total number of Afghans in neighboring countries to 8.2 million -- accounting for one of the largest protracted refugee situations in the world.

At least 3.2 million Afghans are displaced within their own country.

Meanwhile, two-thirds of the war-torn country's population is food insecure, including 875,000 children facing acute malnutrition.

Women and girls remain most at risk.