

CAIRO (Middle East Eye) –Zambian authorities have seized a private Egyptian plane carrying \$5.69mn in cash, 602 suspected gold bars and five handguns with 126 rounds of ammunition. Zambian officials said that the chartered plane was flown to Lusaka from Cairo, and 10 people - six Egyptians, a Dutchman, a Spaniard, a Latvian and a Zambian citizen - were arrested pending further investigation. The director general of the Zambia Drug Control Authority, Nason Banda, told reporters that the suspected gold weighed 127.2 kilograms. "Together with officers from various law enforcement agencies we conducted an operation which resulted in the seizure," Banda said.

The mind of a wise man is the safest custody of secrets; cheerfulness is the key to friendship; patience and forbearance will conceal many defects.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

# Dozens Injured as Zionist Troops Raid Nablus, Blow Up Building

NABLUS (Dispatches) – A large contingent of Zionist troops accompanied by a military bulldozer raided the Balata refugee camp, forced families to evacuate a residential building and then blew it up at about 3am on Wednesday.

The incident overnight was among several raids by Zionist troops in the city of Nablus in the occupied West Bank.

The raids left one Palestinian man seriously injured and destroyed the Fatah party's offices in Balata, in addition to the apartment building owned by Raed Shallal, the Palestinian Red Crescent and officials said.

"We were forcibly evicted, and we could not take anything out of the house, even ID cards and school bags," Shallal, a 40-year-old father of seven, said. "We are now homeless, my wife and our children, the oldest is 12 and the youngest, a year and a half old."

Also in Shallal's destroyed building was the family home of a Palestinian man wanted by Zionist troops.

More than 80 Palestinians suffered from tear gas inhalation during the raids, the Red Crescent said.



Scores of Palestinians suffered from tear gas inhalation during a Zionist raid on Nablus's eastern side, the Red Crescent said, on August 16, 2023, in the occupied West Bank.

Earlier, Zionist troops fired tear gas canisters at Palestinians in the eastern part of the city where they were providing cover for Zionist settlers who had stormed Joseph's Tomb, a shrine located within an area controlled by the Palestinian Authority.

Settlers frequently storm Nablus to perform prayers at the shrine under the guard of the Zionist regime's army, believing that it is the tomb of the Prophet Joseph, while

Palestinians say the tomb is only 200 years old and a Muslim man called Yousef Dweikat lived there.

One man, Mohammed Leila, was shot five times in the chest and twice in the legs near the tomb and was seriously wounded. He was transferred to Rafidia Hospital in Nablus, Ahmed Jibril, the director of the Emergency and Ambulance Center at the Red Crescent, said.

In a separate incident, another Palestinian was shot in his car by the Huwara checkpoint after allegedly

firing at soldiers there, but Zionist troops prevented ambulance crews from reaching him and arrested him instead.

"Our medics were attacked and prevented from providing first aid to the injured man in his car," Jibril told Al Jazeera. "He was kidnapped by the soldiers and taken to an unknown destination."

Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh reiterated that the Zionist regime's "terror machine" continues to commit atrocities against Palestinians with impunity.

He made the remarks in a statement released on Tuesday after the killing of two young Palestinian men during a violent raid by Zionist troops at Aqabat Jaber refugee camp, near the West Bank city of Ariha.

"The Israeli terror machine does not stop committing more crimes" as the regime's military and political officials "openly talk about" the killing of the Palestinian people, Shtayyeh said.

The Palestinian resistance movement Hamas vowed revenge against Zionist regime after the martyrdom of the two young Palestinian men.

## UN Envoy Urges ICC to Prosecute Taliban for Crimes Against Humanity



With no sign the ruling Taliban will allow them back to school, some girls and parents are trying to find ways to keep education from stalling for a generation of young women.

UNITED NATIONS (AP) – The International Criminal Court should prosecute Taliban leaders for a crime against humanity for denying education and employment to Afghan girls and women, the UN special envoy for global education said.

Gordon Brown told a virtual UN press conference on the second anniversary of the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan that its rulers are responsible for "the most egregious, vicious and indefensible violation of women's rights and girls' rights in the world today."

The former British prime minister said he has sent a legal opinion to ICC prosecutor Karim Khan that shows the denial of education and employment is "gender discrimination, which should count as a crime against humanity, and it should be prosecuted by the International Criminal Court."

The Taliban took power in August 2021, during the final weeks of the U.S. and NATO forces' pullout after 20 years of war. As they did during their previous rule of Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, the Taliban gradually re-imposed their harsh rule, barring girls from school beyond the sixth grade and women from most jobs, public spaces and gyms and recently closing beauty salons.

Brown urged major Muslim countries to send a delegation of clerics to Afghanistan's southern city of Kandahar, the home of Taliban chief Hibatullah Akhundzada, to make the case that bans on women's education and employment have "no basis in the Qur'an or the Islamic religion" — and to lift them.

He said he believes "there's a split within the regime," with many people in the education ministry and around the government in the capital, Kabul, who want to see the rights of girls to education restored. "And I believe that the clerics in Kandahar have stood firmly against that, and indeed continue to issue instructions."

The Taliban's chief spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, brushed aside questions about restrictions on girls and women in an Associated Press interview late Monday in Kabul, saying the status quo will remain. He also said the Taliban view their rule of Afghanistan as open-ended.

Brown said the Taliban should be told that if girls are allowed to go to secondary school and university again, education aid to Afghanistan, which was cut after the bans were announced, will be restored.

## 23 Rights Groups Call on UAE to Release Unjustly Imprisoned Ahead of COP28

DUBAI (Dispatches) – Over 20 human rights organizations have signed a joint statement calling on the UAE to release all unjustly imprisoned detainees before the start of COP28 scheduled to be held in Dubai at the end of the year.

At least 58 people are detained in the UAE despite completing their prison sentences, including Ahmed Mansoor and Dr. Nasser Bin Ghaith.

Signatories to the open letter, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch (HRW)

and Front Line Defenders, also called on the Persian Gulf state to stop monitoring government critics, using repressive legislation to imprison dissidents and deny peaceful assembly.

Authorities use a vague definition of terrorism to indefinitely detain people beyond the end of their sentences, claiming they are a threat to state security and need rehabilitation.

Most of the people still in prison are part of the UAE94 group – 94 lawyers, academics and activists convicted in

a controversial trial in 2013 of plotting to overthrow the government. The case was widely criticized by the UN and other human rights bodies.

In June, the UAE released a document to show that 12 of these dissidents were being held "on discriminatory grounds, owing to their status as human rights defenders."

Many have been denied visits and phone calls with their families.

There is a growing chorus of voices calling on states attending the climate conference in

Dubai to put pressure on the UAE to clean up its human rights record and its environmental record.

Last year there were similar calls for Egypt to reform its human rights record as the host of COP27.

Rights groups and activists accused Egypt of greenwashing ahead of the climate change conference and called on world leaders attending to call the Egyptian government out over rights abuses, particularly its treatment of political prisoners.

## Minister: Drilling Rig Arrives in Lebanon's Block 9 to Begin Exploration

BEIRUT (Reuters/AP) – Trans-Ocean Barents drilling rig arrived in Lebanon's Block 9 on Wednesday to begin exploration activities, Minister of Public Works and Transport, Ali Hamie, posted on Twitter, following a landmark agreement last year that delineated the contentious maritime border between Lebanon and the Israeli-occupied territories to the south.

Hamie made the announcement on Wednesday on social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter.

"For your information, today, Wednesday 8/16/2023, the oil and gas exploration vessel in Block

No. 9 has now reached its drilling point," he wrote.

Lebanon's energy minister Walid Fayad said in May that he expected to know whether there would be a discovery there by the end of the year. ENI CEO Claudio Descalzi said in January that he was "positive" about a discovery there.

Lebanon is hoping the exploration and discovery of commercial quantities of oil and gas will help it overcome its current economic crisis.

Lebanon's share would range from 54 to 63 percent after the deduction of operational and capital

costs, in any instance of oil and gas discovery.

In February the outlook for Lebanon's Qana gas field project appeared promising when Janus 2 completed an eight-day mission during which it collected images of the seabed, and took samples of water and sediment.

While the delimitation of the maritime dispute removed a significant point of friction that could have led to a new conflict, Lebanon and the Zionist regime do not have direct diplomatic contact.

The occupying regime invaded Lebanon in 1982 and the two sides fought again in 2006.

## Syria Doubles Pay for Civil Servants, Military Personnel

DAMASCUS (AFP/Xinhua) – Syrian President Bashar Assad has decreed a 100-percent pay rise for civil servants and pensioners while fuel subsidies were lifted in a country ravaged by 12 years of foreign-backed war.

The Syrian economy has been battered by the conflict that has killed more than 500,000 people and displaced millions since it began in 2011.

In two decrees issued late Tuesday, Assad doubled the salaries and pensions of those currently and formerly employed in the civil service and military, as well as contract workers.

Prior to the decision, the monthly

salary of civil servants had been between around \$10 and \$25, depending on the Syrian pound's street value.

The presidential decrees also set the minimum monthly wage in the private sector at 185,940 Syrian pounds, or about \$13 on the black market.

In a separate statement late Tuesday, the commerce ministry announced the total lifting of subsidies on petrol and a partial lifting of subsidies on fuel oil.

As a result the price of petrol has risen to 8,000 pounds from 3,000 previously, and fuel oil to 2,000 pounds from 700 previously, according to the ministry.

The Syrian pound was trading at around 14,300 to the U.S. dollar on Wednesday, according to unofficial monitoring websites, compared with the official rate of 8,542.

The currency has lost most of its value since the start of the war, when it was worth 47 against the greenback.

Most of the population has been pushed into poverty, according to the United Nations.

Also on Tuesday night, the Syrian Ministry of Internal Trade and Consumer Protection raised the prices of diesel fuel for transportation and bakeries by about 180 percent, and normal-octane gasoline by about 165 percent.