

Academics: Palestine at Center of Free Speech Battle on U.S. Campuses

WSAHINGTON (Middle East Eye) – As issues of academic freedom and censorship continue to dominate conversations in universities across the U.S., academics say that many of these issues – as well as the methods of censorship – can be linked back to speech over Palestine.

Dima Khalidi, executive director of Palestine Legal, said that academics have for decades been working to put the issue of Palestinian rights at the forefront of their universities, often leading to attempts by pro-Zionist and Zionist groups to censor their voices.

“It is clear that there’s a Palestine exception to our free-speech rights, but it’s not the only one. And I think it’s a sign of our quickly eroding constitutional rights,” Khalidi said during a webinar hosted by the Washington-based think tank, the Arab Center.

Sites like Canary Mission and Campus Watch have been introduced over the past 20 years, acting as blacklists where students, activists, and academics with pro-Palestinian views or those who criticize the Zionist regime are placed and leveled with accusa-



Members of the Palestinian community protest against violence in the Gaza Strip, during a rally in Times Square, on 18 May 2018 in New York City.

tions of anti-Semitism and supporting terrorism.

Middle East Eye previously spoke to several students who have had to brave smear campaigns because of their pro-Palestinian activism. According to The Intercept, blacklists like Canary Mission have become even more frightening because they are used by law enforcement in the Israeli-occupied territories and the U.S.

“While Campus Watch was one of the first groups to create a blacklist against professors who criticize Israel, we’ve seen that inspire, likely, newer right-wing groups like Professor Watchlist, which is a project of Turning Point USA that supposedly exposes professors who discriminate ‘against conservative students and advance leftist propaganda in the classroom,’” Khalidi said.

This year alone, there have been

several attempts to censor academics and other individuals critical of the occupying regime on U.S. campuses.

In January, former Human Rights Watch executive director Kenneth Roth was denied a fellowship position at Harvard University. Roth told Middle East Eye at the time that the reason for his denial likely had to do with his criticism of the Zionist regime.

Roth was eventually given the fellowship at Harvard after a wave of outrage. But Laila El-Haddad, who is originally from Gaza and attended the Harvard Kennedy School in 2002, told MEE at the time that the incident was just one of many showing bias towards the regime and was also a troubling precedent for Palestinian academics who speak out against the regime.

Then this past summer, Zionist groups and the occupying regime called on Princeton University to ban a book discussing the regime’s intentional maiming of Palestinians. The issue also led to outrage, and an open letter against the move has received around 400 signatures so far.

Unexploded Ordnance Left by U.S. Still Claiming Lives of Afghans

FARAH ROD, Afghanistan (Xinhua) – Khudai Rahim, a 54-year-old Afghan, lost two sons in blasts of unexploded ordnance (UXO) in 2021, and his third son was severely injured in a mine blast in 2022 just around their village.

“He (The third son) found a mine. It might be a mortar mine, and he played with it. He was a child and didn’t know what that was, but the object exploded and badly injured his belly,” said Rahim, a resident of Rigaretion village in Farah Rod district, Farah Province.

The last soldier of the U.S.-led forces left Afghanistan in late August 2021 after 20 years of military occupation, but the UXO left over from the U.S. troops have been and are about to be claiming the lives of Afghans for years or even decades.

Sitting beside his dejected son and comforting him, Rahim told

Xinhua that he had spent 375,000 afghanis (about 4,500 U.S. dollars) in a hospital for his injured son to recover.

According to the aged Rahim, the U.S. forces bombed Rigaretion village four years ago.

“The warplanes bombarded the village, they targeted here from the ground and air, and they used any kind of shells,” the bereaved man recalled. He could clearly point out the potential spots of the UXO buried around his home.

Echoing similar concerns, Samiullah, another 17-year-old Rigaretion villager, said that the UXO left by the U.S. forces would continue to threaten the lives of Afghans.

“My 15-year-old brother was killed here about one and half months ago,” Samiullah muttered with grief.

“The Americans bombarded here in the past, but the remaining bombs still claim the lives of chil-

dren and youngsters...If someone steps on them, he or she would be killed,” Samiullah said.

Expressing similar fear, Mohammad Ibrahim, 33, a victim of the UXO, said that the bombs had maimed him forever.

“About four or five years ago, our village was bombarded, and the bombs exploded. But seven days later, another blast (of the UXO) maimed me, and after 20 days, I recovered consciousness in a hospital in Karachi and saw my hand was cut off,” Ibrahim, who lives in Todanak village, said with sorrow.

He said he has not received any forms of compensation so far.

Afghan land is contaminated with unexploded ordnances, which killed and injured tens of thousands of Afghans, especially children, as they travel and go about their daily chores, according to a report from the “Costs of War” project under Brown Uni-

versity.

The International Committee of the Red Cross pointed out that children are the most vulnerable victims of the UXO, noting in its report that 640 children were killed or injured in 541 incidents involving landmine explosions and explosive remnants between January 2022 and June 2023, nearly 60 percent of the total number of civilian casualties of UXO-related explosions.

Children can easily regard these unexploded bombs as toys, which would explode while they take them home. In the past, the mines were used to ensure security in areas around the U.S. military bases, where there are still many residential dwellings in present days.

Despite the withdrawal of the U.S. forces, the left-over mines have been killing people nearly every day, said Sadiq Shinwari, an Afghan military expert.

UN Rights Experts Raise Climate Change Concerns With Saudi Aramco

RIYADH (Reuters) – UN experts sent a letter of concern to Saudi Arabian oil giant, Aramco, saying its expansion of fossil fuel production and ongoing exploration threaten human rights, a document showed.

The company did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment. It has previously said it aims to achieve net zero emissions from its operations by 2050.

Addressing the firm’s CEO, Amin Nasser, the four individual experts and a working group ex-

pressed their “most serious concern regarding the adverse impacts on human rights caused by activities such as the exploitation of fossil fuels which contribute to climate change”, referring specifically to the firm’s activities.

The letter is a rare example of the experts singling out a corporation’s climate change record. It does not detail the human rights effects but says that Saudi Aramco’s activities have negative impacts on the enjoyment of the right to a healthy environment

which UN countries have recognized.

The letter also raises concerns that Saudi Aramco’s actions may contribute to undermining the 2015 Paris Agreement and international cooperation “in the face of the existential threat to human rights posed by climate change”.

It does not explain why Saudi Aramco, which pumps millions of barrels per day, is targeted rather than other oil majors. However, it does say that state-owned companies should have an “increased

responsibility” to act in line with international standards.

So-called UN communications are not binding but are an important political tool for raising awareness about human rights problems. They are more often sent to states, than companies. Saudi Arabia has not yet responded to the letter, the UN website showed.

The letter was also sent to Saudi Arabia’s government and a list of companies and banks involved in funding Saudi Aramco’s operations.

Rights Group: Egypt Delays Release of Detainees

CAIRO (MEMO) – Egypt is refusing to release detainees despite issuing a decision to release them, according to reports in the London-based Al-Quds Al-Arabi newspaper.

The Egyptian Network for Human Rights said that security services are yet to release a number of prisoners.

“Despite a decision being released six days ago to free 40 prisoners of conscience, families are complaining that they have not yet been let go,” the network said in a statement.

A member of Egypt’s Presidential Pardon

Committee, Tariq al-Khouli, published the names of 30 political prisoners on 19 August who are set to be released. They were held in pre-trial detention on charges relating to “issues of publishing and joining a banned group”.

The decision to release them gave hope to many families over the release of their loved ones. However, within hours of the decision to release the prisoners, authorities arrested a group of new people, according to Al-Quds Al-Arabi.

The most prominent of those arrested dur-

ing the past few days is the publisher Hisham Qassem, head of the Board of Trustees of the Free Movement.

Many expressed their solidarity with Qassem, after he was transferred to the Tenth of Ramadan Prison in Cairo, in preparation for his trial on 2 September on charges of “insulting and slandering a former minister”.

Others arrested include journalist Mohamed Saad Khattab, the father of activist Ahmed Gamal Ziada, and Alaa el-Din Saad el-Adly, the father of political activist Fajr el-Adly.

What Iran...

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Membership in BRICS also increases Iran’s regional influence and geopolitical position.

It enables the country to interact with emerging economies and have a say in shaping global economic and political affairs. In addition, Iran can actively participate in regional projects and contribute to the development of convergence in the region.

By becoming a member of BRICS, Iran would access the financial resources of the BRICS Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingent Reserve Arrangements (CRA) to fund the development of infrastructure, energy projects and other potential priority sectors.

This can help to solve part of Iran’s development needs and spur long-term economic growth, even though access to the resources of these institutions under sanctions would be difficult.

Iran is a large producer of oil and gas and its membership in BRICS can strengthen closer cooperation on energy security initiatives.

BRICS countries, especially China and Russia, have significant energy needs. They can potentially cooperate with Iran on energy exploration, production and infrastructure development. This cooperation would improve Iran’s energy sector and provide ways to diversify exports.

Meanwhile, BRICS countries stand out for their advances in technology and innovation in the developing world.

Iran’s membership in BRICS can facilitate the exchange of knowledge, carrying out joint research projects and technology transfer, which could enable the country to increase its technological capabilities and competitiveness in different sectors.

This can help Iran’s economic modernization and reduce technological gaps with other countries.

Iran is facing the most draconian U.S. sanctions, which has limited the country’s access to global markets and financial systems. Joining BRICS can potentially give Iran more leverage in international negotiations and potentially reduce the effects of some sanctions.

Moreover, the collective power and influence of the BRICS countries may provide a platform to defend Iran’s economic interests and reduce trade restrictions.

BRICS countries have forged increasing cooperation on agriculture and food security. Iran, with its diverse agricultural sector, can benefit from the best methods and joint initiatives through knowledge exchange with the aim of increasing agricultural productivity, production and distribution of foodstuff.

This cooperation can help Iran’s food security goals and strengthen its agricultural sector.

Finally, Iran’s membership in BRICS can activate the Russia-Iran-India corridor, facilitating exchanges among the member countries, and provide access to Eurasian resources along the Belt and Road Initiative stretching from China to Russia up to Central Asia and beyond.

Courtesy: Press TV

Iranian...

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the two sports have ever seen – Cristiano Ronaldo and Rafael Nadal.

The two champions got on a tennis court in 2012, where Nadal hit the ball with his racket and Ronaldo returned it with his feet with some flair. But that was an edited video for a Nike commercial – and the Spanish tennis star even got to show off his football skills with a bicycle kick.

Darvish, who said would love to play a tennis match with Ronaldo using feet and has begun reaching out to the Portuguese star’s representatives to make it a reality, wanted to do it differently, and got in touch with sports ministry officials.

They introduced him to Badi, a member of the Iranian national tennis team, which in July made history by finishing top of their Asia/Oceania group in the 2023 Davis Cup, securing a place in the 2024 world group play-offs for the first time.

Before stepping on to the court to complete Thursday’s event, Darvish said he was always searching for new ideas to register interesting records that have not been tried before.

He once got in a cable car at the foot of the Tochal mountain in northern Tehran and juggled a football until he reached the peak, which sits at an elevation of roughly 4,000 meters (about 13,000 feet).

He also gained much attraction locally in 2018 when he walked backwards up the 1,860 steps to the top of the Milad Tower, the highest tower in Iran, while juggling a football on his feet.

He replicated the same feat twice more at the Milad Tower, which is also the sixth-tallest telecommunications tower in the world, but once using a tennis ball and a third time using tiny marbles.

“I had been meaning to register this new record of playing tennis with my feet, since I had played ping-pong with my feet for an hour but had never tried this,” Darvish told Al Jazeera.

“It was another new idea that I really wanted

to try for a long time.”

President...

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a new economic logic and form a new order in the world.

BRICS was formed by and initially consisted of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, which collectively represent around 40% of the global population and a quarter of the world’s gross domestic product (GDP).

Iran was among dozens of countries that sought membership in BRICS and had submitted a formal application to join the body.

Separately, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said the bond between Moscow and Tehran will withstand foreign pressure and their military ties will go ahead regardless of U.S.-led attempts to undermine the relation.

“We are independent states and do not succumb to the dictates of the United States and its satellites,” he said.

Ryabkov said there have been no changes in the two sides’ collaboration within the military sector. “There are no changes, and cooperation with Iran will continue.”

Ryabkov’s statement follows reports earlier this month, in which Washington had requested the Islamic Republic to stop providing Russia with military drones.

However, Iran has criticized attempts to link its military cooperation with Russia to the Ukraine war. Tehran, also, has repeatedly denied supplying Moscow with drones.

A high-ranking Iranian general outlined a new strategy to bolster the country’s naval power and presence in international waters, calling for close maritime cooperation with China and Russia to counter the U.S.

In comments at the meeting of a council making policies for a national conference on maritime threats and opportunities, Major General Yahya Rahim Safavi said it would be impossible to define the position of Iran, the Islamic Revolution and the resistance front in the “geometry of the new world order” without strong presence in high seas and oceans.

“In order to counter the cruel sanctions imposed by the US and its allies, Iran must promote the strategy of sea-oriented economy and boost its maritime power with the presence of its trade and military fleet in the oceans and seas and by using the network of South-North and East to West corridors in cooperation with the Russian Federation and China,” the top military adviser to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said.

He added that a requisite for Iran to become a maritime power is its presence in the Antarctic for research and scientific activities.

“We need to connect the maritime and ground geostrategic domains. This is a new strategy as Iran’s geographical location gives us such a capacity,” the general noted.

In a meeting with a number of commanders and officials of Iran’s navy in November 2022, Ayatollah Khamenei stressed the need for the Navy to bolster and maintain its presence in international waters.

The Leader also emphasized the need for the Navy to boost its combat capabilities and defense equipment and to continue navigation in remote and international waters.

Ministry...

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Hussein Bagheri said the world has acknowledged that Iran has developed its military capabilities not through reverse engineering or reproduction of foreign products, noting that even the world’s major military powers have become interested in Iran’s defense capabilities and are seeking to obtain its achievements.

Tasnim...

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Taliban authorities did not provide any explanation on the circumstances of his arrest.

“Intensive diplomatic and consular efforts are underway to return home Mr. Muhammad Hussein Velayati, the photographer of Tasnim news agency,” Iran’s Foreign Minister Hussein Amir-Abdollahian said on Friday in a post on X.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani had earlier said that Iran’s diplomatic apparatus was pursuing his release in cooperation with the relevant Afghan authorities.

Taliban swept back to power in Afghanistan when U.S.-led foreign forces withdrew after a 20-year conflict.

The Taliban continues to struggle with the rapidly worsening humanitarian situation in the country amid crippling U.S. sanctions and a shortage of funds.

Afghans say Washington has started a dangerous economic war against them.

The administration of U.S. President Joe Biden has frozen over \$7 billion in Afghan assets since its troops withdrew from the country.

The sanctions have pushed Afghanistan’s economy to the brink of collapse, as 97 percent of Afghans live in poverty. Afghan people and international bodies have been calling for the release of frozen funds that has spawned a humanitarian crisis in the landlocked country.