

KABUL (Xinhua) – Afghan caretaker government's spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid has condemned the reported patrolling of U.S.-led drones over Afghanistan's airspace, according to local media Tolonews.

"We consider it a violation, a blatant violation of international law and a violation of airspace. It should be stopped and we condemn it. If further actions are taken, we can decide then," Tolonews quoted Mujahid as saying.

Undoubtedly, the aircraft belong to the United States, flying and crossing from the airspace of some neighboring countries to Afghanistan, said Mujahid, adding that neighboring countries should not allow U.S. drones to use their airspace to violate Afghanistan's airspace.

Sleeping in the state of firm belief is better than praying in the state of doubtfulness.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

Report: Biden Considers \$18bn Arms Transfer to Israel



The Biden administration is authorizing the transfer of billions of dollars in bombs and fighter jets to Israel.

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – U.S. President Joe Biden's administration is weighing whether to go ahead with an \$18bn arms transfer package to the Zionist regime that would include dozens of F-15 aircraft, according to the Reuters news agency.

The sale of 25 F-15s has been under review since the U.S. received the formal request in January 2023, Reuters reported, citing one of five sources familiar with the plans, long before Israel's six-month-old carnage in Gaza. This sale would boost that number to as many as 50 F-15s.

Accelerating delivery of the aircraft was among the top requests from Zionist war minister Yoav Gallant, who visited Washington last week and held talks with U.S. officials includ-

ing National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, a second source said.

Biden faces pressure from foreign partners, human rights groups and some of his fellow Democrats in Congress to impose conditions on arms transfers to rein in the occupying regime's genocide in Gaza where health officials say at least 32,845 Palestinians have been killed, many of them civilians.

Meanwhile, U.S. Department of State spokesperson Matthew Miller on Monday defended recent arms transfers to its ally, which included fighter jets and 900kg bombs.

"I do not agree with that at all," he said when asked whether the weapons transfers damaged the "credibility" and "sincerity" of U.S. state-

ments slamming the killing of too many civilians in Gaza.

"We have been very clear that we want to see Israel do everything it can to minimize civilian casualties. We have made clear that they need to operate at all times in full compliance with international humanitarian law," Miller said.

The official also reaffirmed the U.S.'s "long-term commitment" to what he called "Israel's right to self-defense" despite growing concerns about rights abuses in the Gaza Strip.

Critics say the U.S. policy of arming Israel violates American laws prohibiting military aid and weapon sales to regimes engaged in rights abuses.

Several progressive lawmakers have called on President Joe Biden to end his unconditional support for Israel.

On Sunday, Democratic Senator Jeff Merkley stressed that the U.S. is complicit in the atrocities committed in Gaza.

"We must also recognize that America is complicit in this tragedy by resupplying Israel with bombs and failing to use America's leverage to increase aid delivered into Gaza," he wrote in a series of social media posts.

"Reflecting on the admonition to feed the hungry and assist the stranger, and 'blessed are the peacemakers,' let's push Team Biden to do better. More aid. No bombs."

Israel launched a war on Gaza on October 7 after the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas waged the surprise Operation Al-Aqsa Storm against the occupying entity in response to the Israeli intensified violence against Palestinians.

Tel Aviv has also blocked water, food, and electricity to Gaza, plunging the coastal strip into a humanitarian crisis.

Since the start of the offensive, the Tel Aviv regime has killed at least 32,845 Palestinians and injured nearly 75,392 others.

WHO: Destruction of Gaza's Shifa Hospital Rips Heart Out of Health System



Palestinians are seen in the area around Gaza's al-Shifa Hospital on April 1, 2024.

GENEVA (Dispatches) – The Zionist regime's destruction of Gaza's biggest hospital in a raid over the past two weeks has ripped the heart out of the enclave's healthcare system, the World Health Organization said on Tuesday.

Zionist troops left al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City on Monday after the two-week carnage by regime troops, who detained hundreds of suspected Palestinian fighters and left a wasteland of destroyed buildings. The occupying regime said it killed hundreds of Hamas fighters who had based themselves there; Hamas and medical staff deny fighters were present.

"We've had contact with the staff. The directors told us that al-Shifa Hospital is gone. It's no longer able to function in any shape or form as a hospital," said WHO spokesperson Margaret Harris.

"Destroying al-Shifa means ripping the heart out of the health system."

The WHO is hoping to send a mission to the site to see what it can do to save the lives of the remaining patients. Harris said she did not have information about whether Israel had granted permission to carry out such a mission.

"We've been trying to go for days and days and days," she said. "Most of our missions were rejected."

Al-Shifa, the Gaza Strip's biggest hospital before the war, was one of the few healthcare facilities that had been partially operational in the north of enclave before the raid.

Palestinian officials called the assault on a hospital treating severely wounded patients a war crime.

Meanwhile, Japan on Tuesday said it will lift its suspension of funding to the UN Palestinian refugee agency (UNRWA) as the relief body works to regain trust after an allegation that some of its staff were involved in the Oct. 7 operation by Palestinian resistance movements on Israel.

Japan, the sixth-biggest donor to the agency, and 15 other countries paused about \$450 million in funding following the allegation by Israel in January, throwing the agency's operations in the war-torn Gaza Strip into turmoil.

Countries including Australia and Canada have since restored funding to the UNRWA, the largest relief body operating in Gaza, which has been besieged by Israel since the attack.

Japan's Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa, who met UNRWA head Philippe Lazzarini in Tokyo last week, said the agency's role in addressing the Gaza crisis was "indispensable" even as it works to improve governance and manage risks.

"Japan will lift the moratorium on its financial contributions to UNRWA and provide assistance while ensuring and confirming the appropriateness of Japan's funds," Kamikawa told reporters, adding that about \$35 million of originally planned funding was ready to be released.

Thousands of Israelis Continue Anti-Regime Protests

AL-QUDS (Dispatches) – Thousands of people took to the streets in Al-Quds, continuing a three-day protest against the prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu's regime and demanding new elections.

The protests gathered in intensity as the war in Gaza nears the end of its sixth month and anger at the regime's handling of the 134 Israeli captives still held by the resistance movement Hamas in Gaza has grown.

"We're here to protest. To ask for having elections as soon as possible. We feel like we got

it to the edge. We really need to get rid of Bibi," said Timna Benn, a protester in Al-Quds, using Netanyahu's nickname.

Netanyahu's right-wing coalition faced some of the biggest protests in the occupying regime's history last year, when hundreds of thousands joined weekly demonstrations against plans to overhaul the powers of the supreme court.

Netanyahu has repeatedly ruled out early elections, which opinion polls suggest he would lose, saying that to go to the polls in the middle of a war would only reward Hamas.

He has pledged to bring the captives back. More than 32,000 Palestinians have been killed during Israel's months-long assault, according to health authorities.

But after months when the crisis in Gaza put the normal rules of politics on hold, Netanyahu has faced increasingly vocal opposition.

Surveys indicate that most Israelis blame Netanyahu, Israel's longest-serving prime minister, for the security failures that led to the operation by Hamas fighters on communities in southern parts of the

Israeli-occupied territories on Oct. 7.

"They are not concerned about what happens with the people. They are concerned about maintaining their position. They work for themselves, not for the people. Simple as that," said protester Refael Shakked-Gavish.

Adding an additional complication, Netanyahu also has faced protests by ultra Orthodox demonstrators, angry at the removal of exemptions that have kept young students from religious seminaries from compulsory military service.

Egyptian President Sisi Sworn In for Third Term

CAIRO (AFP) – Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi was sworn in Tuesday for his third term as leader of the Arab world's most populous nation.

In power for the past decade, the 69-year-old former army chief is set to remain president until 2030.

Speaking before parliament, Sisi vowed to "remain faithful to my work, my eyes seeing only your interests and this country's".

As Egypt has battled a deep economic crisis with the help of billions in overseas loans and investments, he pledged "to realize the aspirations of the Egyptian nation to build a modern, democratic state".

He won a December election with 89.6 percent of the vote against three relative unknowns, af-

ter opposition challengers were sidelined or jailed.

The six-year term is set to be his last, unless he again ushers through a constitutional amendment prolonging his tenure.

In his inauguration speech before parliament, Sisi said he "renews his vow to continue on the course to build the nation".

Then-defence minister Sisi rose to power on the back of mass protests against president Mohammed Morsi, who was deposed in 2013.

Sisi was elected president the following year and then again in 2018, both times with around 97 percent of the vote.

Pundits have speculated about an impending cabinet reshuffle, which the government has not yet announced.

Tuesday's oath also marked the inauguration of Egypt's New Administrative Capital, located in the desert east of Cairo, local media reported.

The \$58-billion megaproject is the crowning jewel of Sisi's administration, which has poured billions into Egypt's infrastructure but has been criticized for massive debt-fuelled spending.

Cairo's foreign debt bill has more than tripled over the past decade to a record \$165 billion, according to central bank figures, while foreign currency reserves stand at \$35 billion.

For the past two years, Egypt has struggled to contain the fallout of a punishing economic crisis that has seen the currency lose two-thirds of its value and inflation soar to a record 40 percent last year.

White House's Sullivan Traveling to Riyadh to Push for Israeli Normalization

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan plans to travel to Saudi Arabia this week for talks with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman amid a U.S. push for progress toward normalizing relations between the Zionist regime and Saudi Arabia despite the ongoing Israeli carnage against Palestinians.

Talks on normalization had been put on ice in the immediate aftermath of Israel's assault on Gaza, but conversations have resumed in recent months.

A U.S. official said Sullivan planned talks with the crown prince to check in on the issue but did not expect a major breakthrough.

A second U.S. official said Sullivan would consult broadly on a number of matters.

"He has not been to Saudi Arabia in some time and there's a lot to discuss," the second official said.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on March 21 that the United States and Saudi

Arabia had made "good progress" in talks on normalizing ties between the kingdom and Israel, without providing a timeline for concluding a deal.

As part of a normalization deal, Saudi Arabia wants to clinch a mutual military pact with Washington and get U.S. support for its nuclear program.

Washington's efforts for adding Saudi Arabia to the list of Arab countries that have signed the so-called Abraham Accords come at a critical time when U.S. President Joe Biden is seeking re-election and the U.S. government has been left embarrassed by the kingdom's bolstering of ties with Iran and Syria, and its further gravitation toward China.

The UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco signed U.S.-brokered normalization agreements with Israel in 2020, drawing condemnations from Palestinians who slammed the deals as "a stab in the back of the Palestinian cause and the Palestinian people."