

WHO: Gaza Children in Danger of Polio Outbreak

GAZA (Dispatches) – The World Health Organization (WHO) says mass polio vaccination will resume in Gaza after the virus has been detected again in the war-ravaged territory.

WHO said on Wednesday that mass polio vaccination would resume in Gaza on February 22, targeting nearly 600,000 children, as the virus was circulating the war-torn Palestinian territory.

No more polio cases had been reported since a 10-month-old child was paralyzed in Gaza in August 2024, during the Israeli regime's genocidal war, the first case in the enclave in 25 years.

The virus has been found in wastewater samples taken in Gaza in December and January, "signaling ongoing circulation in the environment, putting children at risk," WHO said.

"The presence of the virus still poses a risk to children with low or



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no immunity, in Gaza and throughout the region."

The organization therefore has aimed to vaccinate more than 591,000 children with oral Polio from February 22 to 26.

Gaza's Health Ministry confirmed that the three-day polio

campaign will start on Saturday, in coordination with WHO, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA).

It is not clear how the Israeli regime's ban on UNRWA and closing of its facilities across the

occupied territories will affect the campaign.

Another problem is Israel's violation of the ceasefire agreement as the regime has allowed a very limited amount of medical supplies to enter the enclave.

Furthermore, during its 15 months of genocidal war against Gaza, the regime destroyed almost all of the enclave's medical facilities, and abducted, injured, or killed medical personnel.

As a result, the enclave's medical capabilities in order to deal with viral or microbial outbreaks are extremely limited, and the WHO's campaign seems to be a temporary solution to a permanent problem.

On January 15, the Zionist regime, failing to achieve any of its war objectives including the "elimination" of Hamas or the release of captives, was forced to agree to a ceasefire deal with the Palestinian resistance movements.

Report: U.S. Piles Pressure on Iraq to Resume Kurdish Oil Exports

DUBAI (Dispatches) – U.S. President Donald Trump's administration is piling pressure on Iraq to allow Kurdish oil exports to restart or face sanctions, eight sources with direct knowledge of the matter told Reuters.

A speedy resumption of exports from Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan region would help to offset a potential fall in Iranian oil exports, which Washington has pledged to cut to zero as part of Trump's "maximum pressure" campaign against Tehran.

Iraq's oil minister made a surprise announcement on Monday that exports from Kurdistan would resume next week. That would mark the end of a near two-year dispute that has cut flows of more than 300,000 barrels per day (bpd) of Kurdish oil via Turkey to global markets.

Reuters spoke to eight sources in Baghdad, Washington and Erbil, the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan, who said that mounting pressure from the new U.S. administration was a key driver behind Monday's an-

ouncement.

All of the sources declined to be named due to the sensitivity of the issue.

Iraq's announcement on export resumption was hurried and lacked detail on how it would address technical issues that need to be resolved before flows can restart, four of the eight sources also.

With the pipeline taking Kurdish crude to the Turkish port of Ceyhan closed since 2023, the smuggling of Kurdish oil by truck

has flourished. The U.S. is urging Baghdad to curb this flow, six of the eight sources said.

Reuters reported in July that an estimated 200,000 barrels per day of cut-price crude was being smuggled from Kurdistan by truck. The sources said the exports remained at around that level.

Two U.S. administration officials confirmed the U.S. had asked the Iraqi government to resume Kurdish exports. One of them said the move would help to dampen upward pressure on oil prices.

President...

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in the world and there are no other countries. Can't we stand on our own two feet?

"We must do something to make it work. If the world threatens us, we should not be terrified and should rather become more resilient," he said.

Pezeshkian said the way to deal with problems is to use the capacity of the country's elite, teachers, and producers.

"If we value those who strive for the progress of the country, we can robustly build Iran," he added.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Pezeshkian pointed to Israeli crimes in Gaza and Lebanon and said, "No awakened conscience will accept the moves taken by the criminal Israel against the defenseless people in Gaza, Lebanon, and Palestine."

He added that the United States and Europe not only supported the Israeli regime's "brutality" but gave bombs and weapons to it.

"If one billion Muslims in the region were united as brothers, the genocidal Zionist regime, with a population of two million, would not be able to create such a situation for Muslims," the president said.

He slammed plots to provoke ethnic and religious division among the regional nations and said no country holds the child-killing Israeli regime accountable for its crimes due to U.S.

Tel...

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assessments and are prepared to expand offensive activities. This comes amid heightened security measures in Israeli cities, with authorities fearing further attacks.

On Wednesday, Israeli forces killed three Palestinians in a refugee camp in the occupied West Bank as troops besieged a house in the Al-Far'a camp, south of Tubas, which they targeted with missiles and gunfire.

The assaults are part of a month-long military invasion across the region, which has forcibly displaced around 40,000 Palestinians and killed dozens of people.

Although the fragile ceasefire agreement has been held, Israel has been accused of breaking the deal with sporadic clashes and military operations.

Israel continues to face accusations of war crimes as the Gaza death rises to at least 61,709 people, with thousands more Palestinians still missing under the rubble.

Iran...

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enrichment, and non-nuclear-weapon states are only obligated not to divert their programs toward weaponization, he said.

Gharibabadi stressed that Grossi's claim that 60 percent enrichment is 'nearly weapons-grade' is legally and technically unfounded, adding that if he is concerned about proliferation risks, he should also address the AUKUS security pact, which involves the deployment of nuclear-powered submarines with weapons-grade fuel.

"The Director-General has complained that Iran is not cooperating with the Agency as it 'wishes' or 'prefers.' Is the level of cooperation determined by the Agency's preferences or inclinations?! Our country has commitments, and it cooperates accordingly—specifically under the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement. Since the suspension of Iran's JCPOA-related obligations, no violations of these commitments have been reported," he said.

"If Mr. Grossi wants Iran to accept additional verification measures beyond its legal obligations, he should also tell other parties that he 'wants' them to lift sanctions against Iran. Has he ever had the courage to make such a request to those imposing these unjust and illegal sanctions?!" Gharibabadi noted.

Iran's deputy foreign minister for legal and international affairs further said that while Grossi acknowledged a constructive visit to Iran in November, it is surprising that he did not address the counterproductive resolution pushed by three countries in the IAEA Board of Governors.

Gharibabadi reiterated that Iran's nuclear program remains peaceful, with no deviation from its legal obligations, stressing that Grossi's remarks about the "need to prevent" and "prove the absence of" nuclear weapon development are speculative and unprofessional, as the IAEA's assessments should be based on objective inspections, not political rhetoric.

Nakhala...

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is a criminal and usurper, America supports oppressors and usurpers, and Europeans' support falls in the same category," he said.

The chief of staff of the Iranian armed forces stated that Israel's main goals were to destroy the resistance front and expel Palestinian people from Gaza.

"The occupying regime did not achieve any of its goals. The ultimate victor of this war is the Palestinian people. This will be recorded in history," Bagheri stated.

Senior...

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in contact with the ruling Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) administration in Syria, more than two months after the militant group captured Damascus.

Takht Ravanchi also expressed Iran's willingness to improve relations with Iraq in all fields, saying, "The Iranian government attaches great significance to ties with the neighboring countries and we enjoy commonalities with these states."

The deputy foreign minister further stressed the importance of making use of great opportunities in the region to elevate relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia "to the best state."

Investigation Reveals Details of Israeli Killing of Elderly Palestinian Couple Used as Human Shields

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – An investigation by Euro-Med Monitor has revealed further details of the killing of an elderly Palestinian couple who were forced to wear explosives and act as human shields by Zionist troops during a military incursion on Gaza City's Zeytoun neighborhood in May 2023.

Israeli news site HaMakom previously reported that Zionist troops strapped explosives around the neck of an elderly Palestinian man and used him as a human shield before killing him and his wife.

According to the report, the man,

who used a walking stick, was forced to scout buildings in the neighborhood to ensure they were safe for around eight hours.

An Israeli soldier told HaMakom that after the explosives were placed around the Palestinian man's neck, he was told "that if he does something wrong or not the way we want, the person behind him will pull the rope and his head will detach from the body".

While the original report did not name the victims, their ages and the date, location, and circumstances of their killing align with the Euro-

Med Monitor investigation.

Euro-Med Monitor identified the couple as Mohammed Fahmi Abu Hussein, 70, and Mazyona Hassan Fares Abu Hussein, 65.

While HaMakom quoted Zionist troops saying that the couple were shot dead by another battalion as they were instructed to flee towards the Mawasi "safe zone," the findings of the Euro-Med Monitor investigation suggest that they were killed by the detonation of the explosives.

According to the investigation, Mayzona's body "was reduced to nothing," while the right side of

Mohammed's body was completely disfigured, with one leg missing.

The couple's son, Ahmed, told Euro-Med Monitor that he found pieces of his father's body at al-Ahil Hospital, and "fragments" of his mother's body on Salah al-Din Road, east of Gaza, "where it seems that she was killed by setting off explosives".

Hussein said that his father was only identifiable by a tattoo on his hand, while his mother's body "was utterly destroyed" and he could only recognize her by the gold teeth remaining on her jaw.

Arab League Arrest Warrants Facilitating Repression, Rights Groups Warn

CAIRO (Dispatches) – More than a dozen civil society organizations have urged an Arab League-led security body to stop facilitating the extradition of dissidents and human rights defenders in the region.

The organizations, led by the Geneva-based MENA Rights Group, wrote in an open letter that the Arab Interior Ministers Council must "undertake urgent reforms, in consultation with civil society, to align its legal framework and systems with international human rights law".

The letter comes as the AIMC concluded its 42nd annual conference in Tunis amid what the organizations said is "a rise in transnational repression".

In the past four months, there appears to have been a significant increase in the use of AIMC-circulated warrants to extradite or attempt to extradite individuals believed to be

sought by Arab states for political reasons.

These recent cases include the extradition of Egyptian-Turkish poet and activist Abdul Rahman Yousef al-Qaradawi from Lebanon to the UAE in January over a three-minute video he posted on X.

That same month, Salman al-Khalidi, a Kuwaiti activist and founder of the UK-based Kuwaiti Refugees Association, was extradited from Iraq to Kuwait after posting videos on social media challenging the legitimacy of Kuwait's current rulers.

Meanwhile, in Saudi Arabia, Egyptian national Ahmed Kamel, who participated in nonviolent anti-government protests in Egypt in 2011 and 2014, has been detained since November and faces imminent extradition to Egypt.

"Nobody knows what's going to happen, or at least they're not telling us what's going to

happen," his wife, Sherryne Grace Badaoui, told Middle East Eye.

"It's just really surreal that people can just pluck somebody you love out of your life this way, for no reason at all."

Extraditions for "crimes of a political nature" are explicitly prohibited under the AIMC's legal framework but are still occurring in practice, according to the 15 signatories of the letter released this week.

"Lacking an oversight body to prevent the abuse of its systems, the AIMC has become the perfect tool for Arab League states to request politically motivated extraditions," they said.

The AIMC did not respond this week to MEE's request to comment over concerns about its lack of oversight and use of circulated warrants to pursue individuals for political reasons.