

# McDonald Misses Quarterly Profits Target Amid Ongoing Global Gaza Boycotts

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) – McDonald's Corporation fell short of quarterly profit estimates for the first time in two years amid demands for a global boycott against the fast food chain because of the war in the Gaza Strip, the company said Tuesday.

Despite global comparable sales growing nearly 2% in the first quarter, marking 13 consecutive quarters of positive growth, the burger company faces headwinds in international markets, particularly in regions affected by the conflict in Gaza.

"Global comparable sales increased 1.9%, reflecting positive comparable sales in the U.S. and International Operated Markets segment. Comparable sales in



A pro-Palestine protest outside a branch of McDonald's in Palu City, Indonesia.

the International Developmental Licensed Markets segment were negative as the segment contin-

ued to be impacted by the war in the Middle East," the company said in a statement.

"The continued impact of the war in the Middle East more than offset positive comparable sales in Japan, Latin America and Europe," it added.

The U.S. fast-food chain faces demands for a boycott since Al-onyal Limited, which operates McDonald's in Israel, gave away thousands of free meals to Israeli forces following attacks by Tel Aviv against Gaza, which have so far killed more than 34,000 people, mostly women and children.

McDonald's CEO Chris Kempczinski said on a conference call earlier this year that the conflict is "weighing on its brand" and hurting sales in Muslim-majority countries.

# Thousands Rally in Tel Aviv Demanding Netanyahu's Resignation

ANKARA (Dispatches) – Thousands of Israelis, including families of captives being held in Gaza, rallied in Tel Aviv on Monday to demand that the regime reach a prisoner swap deal with the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas.

Police were heavily deployed in the area, triggering clashes between protesters and law enforcement officers, the Haaretz daily reported.

Einav Zangauker, whose son Matan is being held in Gaza, addressed the rally, according to the Israeli Ynet news website.

"Netanyahu, you choose. It's either Ben Gvir and Smotrich -- or my son. It's very simple; either an extreme right cabinet

or the captives at home. Now you decide, prime minister. We want to see you make a decision," she said.

Zangauker was referring to hardline minister Itamar Ben-Gvir and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, who oppose reaching a prisoner swap deal that stops the regime's war on Gaza.

The Israeli opposition as well as families of the captives accuse Netanyahu of hindering reaching a prisoner swap deal with Hamas for his own political survival.

Egypt confirmed Monday that there is a new proposal for a truce in the blockaded Gaza Strip.

"There is a proposal on the

table to reach a truce in Gaza," Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry said during a meeting of the World Economic Forum in Saudi Arabia.

Indirect talks between Israel and Hamas are taking place in both Cairo and Doha aimed at reaching a deal that includes a prisoner swap, under which the Israeli captives would be released in exchange for the release of Palestinians from Israeli jails.

Tel Aviv believes that over 130 Israelis are being held in Gaza, while Israel is holding around 9,100 Palestinians in its prisons.

Israel has waged a deadly military carnage on Gaza since an Oct. 7. Over 34,500 Pales-

tinians have since been killed and more than 77,600 others injured amid mass destruction and shortages of necessities.

The Israeli war has pushed 85% of Gaza's population into internal displacement amid acute shortages of food, clean water and medicine, while 60% of the enclave's infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed, according to the UN.

Israel stands accused of genocide at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which in January issued an interim ruling that ordered Tel Aviv to stop genocidal acts and take measures to guarantee that humanitarian assistance is provided to civilians in Gaza.

# Palestinian Groups Fatah, Hamas Meet in China

BEIJING (Dispatches) – Officials from rival Palestinian groups Fatah and Hamas have held a meeting in China for talks on potential reconciliation.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beijing confirmed that the groups' representatives had met recently. The groups have competed for years, but the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip has provoked further talks on Palestinian reconciliation.

The two groups visited China to partake in an in-depth and candid dialogue on the prospect, Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said. He did not

specify when the meeting took place.

"The two sides fully expressed their political will to achieve reconciliation through dialogue and consultation, discussed many specific issues and made positive progress," he added.

"China and Palestine share a traditional friendship. We support Palestinian factions in achieving reconciliation and increasing solidarity through dialogue and consultation. We will continue to work actively towards that end."

Representatives from the two groups, as well as other political

factions, met in Moscow earlier this year to discuss the potential formation of a unified Palestinian government.

After defeating Fatah in 2007, Hamas has been the ruler in Gaza since 2007, when it defeated President Mahmoud Abbas' long-dominant party in parliamentary elections and pushed its rival out of the enclave for its refusal to recognize the result of the vote.

Meanwhile, the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority has limited autonomy in the areas it administers across the occupied West Bank.

China has historically been sympathetic to the Palestinian cause and supportive of a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Beijing has been calling for an immediate ceasefire since the start of the Zionist regime's onslaught in October. Zionist troops have killed at least 34,535 people in the Gaza Strip, mostly women and children, according to the Ministry of Health in the coastal enclave.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has called for an "international peace conference" to end the war.

## Yemen...

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a large-scale military action against Yemen will not cause any change in the country's staunch support for Palestine and its opposition to nearly seven months of Israeli aggression on Gaza that has martyred 34,500 Palestinians.

Yemen has been a key element of a regional campaign targeting Israeli and U.S. interests, which seeks an end to the brutal war on Gaza.

The Yemenis have either seized or launched drone and missile attacks on ships linked to the Zionist regime, the U.S. or Britain that have been sailing in regional waters in recent months. Attacks have also been launched from Yemen on ports controlled by the Israeli regime since October, when Israel started its war on Gaza.

Ansarullah has reiterated that attacks on shipping will continue until Israel completely stops its aggression on Gaza.

The Sunday statement by Yemen came after Lebanon's Al-Akhabar newspaper said in a report that the U.S. was preparing a large-scale aerial offensive against Yemen.

## Paris...

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University officials called in police to clear a protest last week. On Monday, police broke up a student protest demanding an end to Israel's bombardment of Gaza at Sorbonne, another top French university.

French Higher Education Minister Sylvie Retailleau said on Tuesday the French government had no plans to suspend funding for Sciences Po.

Speaking to broadcaster France 2, she estimated the state's funding for the university at 75 million euros (\$80 million). She said there had been "no antisemitic remarks" and no violence had been committed during the demonstrations.

Both Basseres and Retailleau also said there were no plans to suspend Sciences Po's collaboration with universities in Israel.

Critics on the left denounced Pecesse's announcement.

"It's shameful and an absolute scandal," said Mathilde Panot, the head of hard-left France Unbowed (LFI) deputies in parliament, adding the behavior of the students was a "credit to the world and a credit to our country."

Panot and Rima Hassan, a Franco-Palestinian activist who is running on the LFI list for European elections, were on Tuesday questioned in an investigation into suspected justification of "terrorism" over comments on the October 7 attack by Hamas on Israel.

Several hundred people staged a solidarity rally in support of the two women on Tuesday morning.

"In what democracy are counter-terrorism methods used against political activists, community activists and trade unionists?" Panot, 35, told her supporters, who chanted "Resistance" and waved Palestinian flags.

"I want to tell the pro-Israeli lobby organizations behind these complaints that they will not silence us," added 32-year-old Hassan.

## UAE ...

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Saudi embassy in the Islamic Republic by protesters over Riyadh's execution of a prominent Shia cleric.

After years of animosity on different sides of geopolitical rivalries, the UAE started re-engaging with Tehran in 2019.

It resulted in upgraded diplomatic ties last year between Iran and the UAE, which has business and trade ties with Tehran stretching back more than a century, with Dubai emirate long being one of Iran's main links to the outside world.

The ministers are expected to mainly discuss cooperation in international trade corridors while private sector representatives will discuss trade and investment.

Iran imported \$20.8 billion of goods from the UAE in its last fiscal year ending in March 2024, making the latter Iran's top source of imports according to the country's Customs body. In the same period, the UAE was Iran's top third export destination, with \$6.6 billion worth of goods exported.

## Iran...

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York. The anti-Israeli movement has now spread to other U.S. universities.

Last week, U.S. President Joe Biden signed into law a massive foreign funding bill that includes \$17 billion in additional military aid to Israel amid the ongoing aggression in Gaza.

On Tuesday Iranian lawmakers, in a statement, expressed their support for American and European academic communities that have held demonstrations in support of Palestine in defiance of their governments.

Over 150 Iranian parliamentarians voiced support for the university students and professors in the U.S. and Europe who have staged rallies in support of Gaza in recent weeks.

The Iranian lawmakers described the anti-Israeli demonstrations in Western countries as a move emanating from the "justice-seeking, philanthropic and humanitarian nature".

The MPs said the pro-Palestine rallies in the Western states reveal that the mainstream media's attempts to distort and misrepresent the realities by whitewashing the Israeli atrocities in Gaza have been futile.

The solution to the Gaza crisis is a return to justice, the statement said.

More than 900 protesters have been arrested over the last 11 days across the United States as demonstrations against Israel's onslaught on Palestinians and the rallies for a ceasefire in Gaza and divestment from companies linked to the Israeli regime spread across U.S. campuses.

# Zionist Minister Calls for 'Utter Destruction' of Gaza

AL-QUDS (Dispatches) – The Zionist regime's far-right finance minister Bezalel Smotrich called Tuesday for the "utter destruction" of the cities of Rafah, Deir al-Balah, and Khan Younis in the Gaza Strip.

"We read: I pursue my enemies and overtake them, I do not turn back until they are wiped out," Smotrich, the leader of the Religious Zionism Party, said in a circulated video on social media, using phrases from the Torah.

"No half jobs; Rafah, Deir al-Balah, and Khan Younis - utter destruction," he added.

His call comes amid reports of a possible ceasefire deal between Hamas and the Zionist regime in the Gaza Strip, where more than 34,500 Palestinians have been killed and thousands injured in a brutal Is-

raeli carnage since last October.

"It's absurd, we are negotiating with the ones that should not have existed for a long time," Smotrich said.

The far-right minister also called for striking the Hezbollah group in Lebanon.

"Then, with the will of God, to eliminate the evils of Hezbollah in the north, with the will of God, and to deliver a real message that whoever perpetrates against the Jewish people, like these evil ones have perpetrated against us, will be destroyed, they will be annihilated, and it will echo for decades and decades onwards," he said.

He called on prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu not to bow to pressure to end the Gaza war.

"There are arrest warrants in The Hague (ICJ), there is American pressure, there is fear of sanctions, there are protests, and there are all sorts of calculations, and you must say to your prime minister: May your situation not be worse than theirs."

More than six months into the Israeli war, vast swathes of Gaza lay in ruins, pushing 85% of the enclave's population into internal displacement amid a crippling blockade of food, clean water, and medicine, according to the UN.

Israel stands accused of genocide at the International Court of Justice. An interim ruling in January ordered Tel Aviv to stop genocidal acts and take measures to guarantee that humanitarian assistance is provided to civilians in Gaza.