

Iraq Sandstorm Closes Airports, Puts 3,700 People in Hospital

BAGHDAD (AFP) – A sandstorm swept through Iraq, filling the air with choking dust that closed airports and put more than 3,700 people in hospital with breathing difficulties, the health ministry said Tuesday. Visibility fell to less than one kilometer in central and southern cities as the storm cloaked the region in an eerie orange haze, AFP photographers reported. Basra and Najaf airports both closed for the duration of the storm, which began to dissipate on Tuesday morning. Health ministry spokesperson Saif al-Badr said Basra was the worst-hit province, accounting for more than 1,000 of the 3,747 hospital admissions attributed to the sandstorm. Many of those who dared to venture out in Basra wore face masks to protect themselves from the choking dust, an AFP photographer reported.

Thought for Today

O son of Adam, if you have collected anything in excess of your actual need, you will act only as its trustee for someone else to use it.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

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Airstrike on Hospital Leaves Casualties

UN: Situation in Gaza ‘Worst’ Since Start of War

DEIR AL-BALAH (Dispatches) – An Israeli airstrike hit the northern gate of a field hospital in the Gaza Strip on Tuesday, killing a medic and wounding nine other people, a spokesman for the hospital said.

The strike hit the Kuwaiti Field Hospital in the Muwasi area, where hundreds of thousands have sought shelter in sprawling tent camps. The wounded were all patients and medics, and two of the patients were in critical condition after the strike, said Saber Mohammed, a hospital spokesman.

The military has struck hospitals on several occasions during the 18-month war.

On Sunday, Israel struck the last major hospital providing critical care in northern Gaza after ordering an evacuation. A patient died during the evacuation, and the strike severely damaged the emergency room, pharmacy and surrounding buildings, according to al-Ahli Hospital.

The UN relief coordination office (OCHA) has said that the humanitarian situation in Gaza is the worst it has been since the start of the war, amid Israel’s halting of essential supplies into the besieged enclave.

According to OCHA, it has been



A girl stands in rubble in Jabalia, northern Gaza. The Zionist regime has been bombing the besieged enclave for 18 months.

more than a month since the Zionist regime’s authorities allowed the entry of aid into the territory, the longest blockade the Gaza Strip has experienced.

“The humanitarian situation in Gaza is now likely the worst it has been in the 18 months since the outbreak of hostilities,” the UN agency said in an update on Monday.

The Palestinian NGO Network (PNGO) has said that Gaza has entered a full-blown famine as 91% of the population faces extreme food insecurity following the Zionist regime’s long genocidal war against the Palestinians there.

Israel is deliberately starving 2 million people — bombing bakeries, blocking food, and cutting off water. This is not a crisis. It’s genocide, PNGO said.

According to PNGO, 91% of Gaza’s population faces crisis-level food insecurity. 345,000 people are in Phase 5 — the most extreme stage of famine. 60,000 children urgently need treatment for malnutrition.

And 92% of children under 2 and breastfeeding mothers aren’t getting the nutrition they need. This means permanent, irreversible damage to an entire generation, the PNGO said.

This is not a natural disaster. It’s a policy of starvation — by design, it added.

Bakeries have been shut down. Food and medicine warehouses were bombed. Aid blocked at the border. Water desalination plant destroyed, the PNGO said.

Even polio vaccines and nutritional supplements are being prevented from entering, it stated.

“The Israeli apartheid regime is intentionally preventing the entry of food, medicine, and fuel,” PNGO said.

This is the textbook definition of genocide — and it’s being backed, funded and supported by the US, it said.

PNGO has demanded Gaza be declared a famine zone, sanctions on Israel, safe corridors for aid, suspension of all arms transfers — especially from the U.S., and EU, and war crimes prosecutions for Israeli leaders.

The Israeli regime’s genocidal war on Gaza, which began on October 7, 2023, has killed approximately 50,983 Palestinians, injured another 116,274, and displaced almost 2.2 million people.

Israel has also imposed a blockade on free movement, which has led to severe shortages of food, clean water, and medicine.

Maldives Bans Israeli Passport Holders in Response to Gaza War



A sign placed on the beach demanding to ban Israeli Passports from entering the Maldives on June 20, 2024 in Male, Maldives.

MALÉ (Dispatches) – The Maldives will no longer allow entry to Israeli passport holders, President Mohamed Muizzu announced on Tuesday, citing the country’s opposition to the Zionist regime’s brutal military campaign in Gaza.

The decision follows the ratification of the Third Amendment to the Maldives Immigration Act, which was passed by the People’s Majlis on April 15, according to a statement from the President’s Office.

In a Facebook post, Muizzu described the amendment as a “clear reflection of our stand against the ongoing atrocities in Palestine,” adding that the Indian Ocean nation “reaffirms its unwavering solidarity with the Palestinian people.”

The President’s Office also said

the ratification demonstrates the government’s “firm stance in response to the continuing atrocities and ongoing acts of genocide committed by Israel against the Palestinian people.”

“The Maldives continues to advocate for accountability for violations of international law and remains vocal across various international platforms in its condemnation of Israel’s actions,” the statement said.

The government also reaffirmed its long-standing support for the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian state based on pre-1967 borders, with East Al-Quds as its capital, in line with UN resolutions and international legal norms.

Eying F-35s, Turkey Puts Brakes on F-16 Deal

ANKARA (Middle East Eye) – Turkey has slowed down a multi-billion-dollar F-16 fighter jet deal with the United States as Ankara shifts its focus towards rejoining the next generation F-35 program, two sources familiar with the matter told Middle East Eye.

According to a readout released by the Turkish presidency, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan asked his U.S. counterpart, Donald Trump, to reconsider Ankara’s request to purchase F-35 fighter jets during a phone call in March.

Following the call, both governments began negotiations to resolve the key obstacle that led to Turkey’s exclusion from

the program in 2019: Ankara’s acquisition of Russian-made S-400 air defense systems.

Turkey had been one of the main partners in the F-35 consortium and was responsible for producing certain components. The U.S. currently holds six F-35s in storage that were built for Turkey and fully paid for, but have been in limbo since 2019.

Earlier this month, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said legal experts from both sides were examining viable options that could enable the Trump administration to lift the S-400-related sanctions.

This could pave the way for broader defense engagements,

including the purchase of \$20 billion worth of spare parts and ammunition.

Last year, Turkey scaled down its F-16 procurement plan, opting out of 79 modernization kits and instead committing to purchase 40 F-16 Vipers along with associated ammunition, reducing the total value of the deal from \$23 billion to \$7 billion.

“Turkey has put the brakes on the F-16 deal,” one source told MEE. “The down payment Ankara made could potentially be rerouted toward the F-35 program, if Washington agrees to readmit Turkey.”

The source added that Ankara

does not plan to cancel the F-16 deal altogether but wants to prioritize the F-35s.

Turkish Defense Minister Yasar Guler said in November that Ankara had made a \$1.4bn initial payment for the F-16s.

A second source noted that since both the F-16s and F-35s are manufactured by the U.S. defense contractor Lockheed Martin, redirecting the payment would be feasible.

“There’s a long production queue for F-16s. Ankara might have to wait years before receiving its first jets,” the source said, pointing to Bulgaria, which waited three years for the first delivery of its F-16s.

Settlers Storm Al-Aqsa Again

Zionists Attack Palestinian Cars, Homes in Ariha

AL-QUDS (Dispatches) – Extremist Zionist settlers attacked Palestinian cars and homes in Ariha in the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian Information Centre reported.

According to local sources, settlers hurled stones at Palestinian cars travelling on a road near the Wadi Auja area in northern Ariha. One car reportedly sustained damage in the settler attack.

A group of settlers also attacked Bedouin citizens and shepherds and threw stones at their homes near ad-Duyuk at-Tahta village in western Ariha. There were no reports of any injuries.

Hundreds of illegal Zionist settlers forced their way into the Al-Aqsa Mosque complex in occupied East Al-Quds on Tuesday, marking

the third day of the Jewish religious holiday of Passover, a Palestinian official said.

The official with the Islamic Endowments Department in Al-Quds said that at least 1,220 illegal settlers entered the flashpoint site under the protection of Israeli police since morning.

Witnesses said the settlers entered through the al-Mugharbah Gate area, west of the holy mosque.

Around 1,149 illegal settlers broke into the complex on Monday, and 494 others on Sunday to mark the week-long holiday.

Passover, which commemorates the Israelites’ exodus from Egypt during the time of Prophet Moses, is considered one of the most important holidays on the Jewish religious calendar.

According to the Palestinian Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, illegal settlers raided the mosque 21 times last month, when Muslims celebrated the holy month of Ramadan.

Figures released by the Al-Quds governor showed that 13,064 illegal settlers stormed the mosque in the first quarter of 2025.

Since 2003, the Zionist regime has allowed illegal settlers into the flashpoint compound almost on a daily basis, with the exception of Fridays and Saturdays.

Al-Aqsa Mosque is the world’s third-holiest site for Muslims. Israel occupied East Al-Quds, where Al-Aqsa is located, during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. It annexed the entire city in 1980 in a move never recognized by the international community.

UN: Pakistan Accelerates Deportation of Afghans

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) – Pakistan has ramped up the forced mass deportation of Afghan refugees and migrants, with nearly 60,000 having crossed the border since the start of April, the United Nations International Organization for Migration (IOM) said.

Nearly three million Afghans in Pakistan are facing deportation after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced in October a three-phase plan to send them back to their home country. The IOM said in a statement on Tuesday that it has assisted more than one million people returning from Pakistan and Iran.

Amid the second phase of the plan, the IOM said it had registered a sharp rise in forced returns. Between April 1 and April 13, nearly 60,000 individuals crossed into Afghanistan through the Torkham and Spin Boldak border points, it noted.

“With a new wave of large-scale returns now underway from Pakistan, needs on the ground are rising rapidly – both at the border and in areas of return that are struggling to absorb large numbers of returnees,” said Mihyung Park, head of the agency’s Afghanistan mission.

In March, Islamabad set an early April deadline for some 800,000 people carrying Afghan Citizen Cards (ACC) issued by Pakistani authorities to leave the country.

Families with their belongings in tow have crowded key border crossings of Torkham in the north and Spin Boldak in the south, recalling scenes in 2023 when tens of thousands of Afghans fled deportation threats in Pakistan.

Many of the Afghans have been living in Pakistan for decades after fleeing successive conflicts in their country and following the Taliban’s return to power in 2021.

The deportation order came amid a dramatic increase in armed attacks across Pakistan, with the government blaming groups and nationals based in Afghanistan, an allegation the Taliban government in Kabul has rejected.

Among those facing deportation is Afghan journalist Freshta Sadid, who holds a valid exit permit, according to the Joint Action Committee for Refugees.

The group is calling for “urgent action” to protect Sadid, warning that she is on the Taliban “hit list”.

Pakistan is not a signatory to the UN’s 1951 Refugee Convention that protects the rights of refugees.

The country also lacks domestic laws to protect refugees, as well as procedures to determine the status of individuals seeking international protection within its borders.