

Israel Allocates Additional \$274mn for Illegal West Bank Settlements

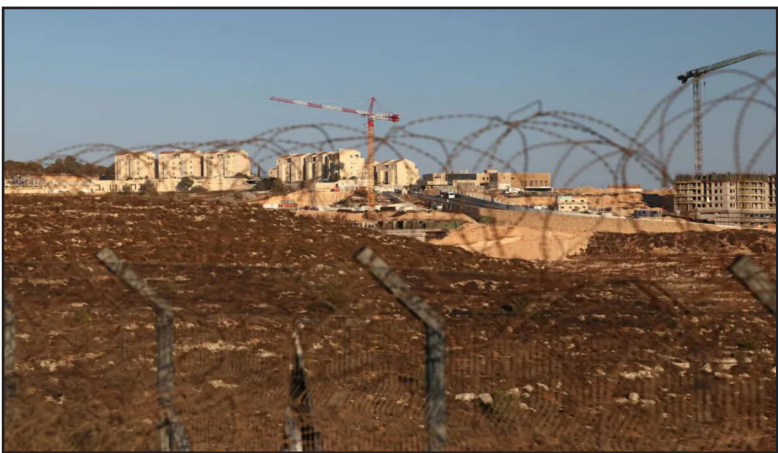
West Bank (Dispatches) – The Zionist regime allocated an additional \$274 million for illegal settlement projects in the West Bank, hours after the Knesset approved a motion to annex the occupied territory, local media said on Thursday, Anadolu reports.

According to the Israel Hayom newspaper, transport minister Miri Regev and finance minister Bezalel Smotrich approved the additional budget of 918 million shekels (\$274.6 million) Wednesday night for infrastructure projects and road rehabilitation to connect West Bank settlements with each other and occupied cities.

The decision came hours after the Knesset approved a non-binding motion calling for the annexation of the occupied West Bank.

Regev said that the budget expansion came in line with “the clear policy of applying sovereignty” on the West Bank, as “billions of dollars were spent for the infrastructure of the settlements” so far.

Smotrich also claimed that the infrastructure projects enabled



Newly-constructed buildings in the Israeli settlement of Givat Zeev west of the Palestinian city of Ramallah in the occupied West Bank

“actual sovereignty” over the occupied territory and integration of one million illegal settlers into the Israeli population.

The Zionist regime has occupied the West Bank since the 1967 Middle East War.

In a landmark opinion last July, the International Court of Justice declared the regime’s occupation of Palestinian territory illegal and demanded the evacuation of all

settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Since the start of Israel’s genocidal war on the Gaza Strip in October 2023, nearly 1,000 Palestinians have been killed and more than 7,000 injured in the West Bank by Zionist troops and illegal settlers, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry.

In recent weeks, Israeli settlers have repeatedly attacked Ein

Samia, a key spring that supplies dozens of villages. They have destroyed pipes, pumps and access roads, cutting off clean water to entire communities.

On Monday, the Al-Quds Governorate Water Utility announced a complete shutdown of water pumping from Ein Samia.

The Water Authority said it has lost all technical and administrative control over the system.

Water, once a lifeline, has become a tool of displacement, Palestinians say.

“I have a family of nine, and I own crops and livestock,” said Malki. “Our economic situation is dire. We’re exhausted by the seizure of pastures.”

Water supply cuts, sometimes lasting more than 10 days, have forced farmers to buy water from expensive tanks, and most of it is unfit for drinking.

“We fear the settlers’ permanent control over Ein Samia,” Montaser al-Malki told Middle East Eye. “If I rely on tanked water, I won’t last a month. I’ll go bankrupt.”

Oxfam: Waterborne Diseases Up Nearly 150% in Gaza Amid Israeli Blockade

LONDON (Dispatches) – The UK-based charity warned about the crippling health care situation posed by the deliberate blockade of aid by the Zionist regime, with waterborne diseases increasing nearly 150 per cent inside the Gaza Strip.

Oxfam said the Palestinian enclave has become a “petri dish of disease” due to the blockade of aid, while millions of dollars of humanitarian aid pile up in warehouses across the region.

“Water-borne diseases that

are both preventable and readily treatable have increased by almost 150 percent inside Gaza over the past three months as Israel continues to deliberately block aid,” it noted.

The charity said the number of Palestinians presenting at health facilities with acute watery diarrhoea has increased 150 percent, bloody diarrhoea is up 302 per cent, and acute jaundice cases have climbed 101 percent, citing multi-agency health data.

Oxfam warned that the surge

of disease can “quickly turn deadly,” especially as Palestinians have been deprived of food, water, shelter, and adequate healthcare for more than 21 months.

The charity said the amount of aid that sits in limbo inside warehouses across the regions covers an area of around 75 hectares (185 acres), or enough to cover 101 football fields.

“This aid includes shelters, food and supplements to combat malnutrition, and water equipment, sanitation items

and medicines, vital to tackle the spread of disease,” it said.

“The conditions that Palestinians in Gaza are being forced to endure have created a petri dish for disease,” said Bushra Khalidi, policy lead of Oxfam in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

“It is shameful Israel has been allowed to besiege Gaza and create this catastrophe. Nothing other than complete access to Gaza to deliver aid at scale can alleviate the conditions that people have been forced to live in,” she added.

‘Handala’ Resumes Gaza Aid Mission After Brief Communication Blackout

GAZA (Dispatches) – Communications were restored early Friday with the “Handala,” a humanitarian aid vessel heading to the Gaza Strip, after a two-hour interruption during which drones were spotted nearby, the Freedom Flotilla Coalition said.

The coalition announced on Telegram that the ship is continuing its mission and is now less than 349 nautical miles (646 kilometers) from Gaza.

“For about two hours, our Freedom Flotilla boat’s communica-

tions were interrupted and drones were observed near the boat, raising serious concerns of a potential attack,” it said.

The group called on supporters to “keep your eyes on the ‘Handala’ and on Palestine and continue pressuring your governments and media to break the illegal siege on Gaza.”

In an accompanying video, activist Tan Safi said the crew was unaware of a global outage affecting Elon Musk’s Starlink satellite internet service.

“Some experts are investigating it and said this was unusual,” Safi noted. “It’s not the first time Elon has worked with Israel, but this was most likely a global disruption.”

Safi added that drones were still present near the vessel, prompting the activists to maintain a watch.

Starlink earlier confirmed a global connectivity outage, which was largely resolved within hours.

The Freedom Flotilla Coalition earlier said it had lost contact with the ‘Handala’ amid fears of an at-

tack after drones were spotted near the aid ship.

The incident followed similar confrontations, including a drone attack on the MV Conscience near Malta in May and the interception of the Madlene in June, when Zionist troops detained 12 activists.

Israel’s war on Gaza has killed over 59,500 people, mostly women and children, and led to international legal proceedings at both the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

Egypt Presidency Forced Al-Azhar to Delete Statement Condemning Israel’s Starvation of Gaza

CAIRO (Dispatches) – Egypt’s presidency pressured Ahmed al-Tayeb, the grand imam of Al-Azhar, one of the world’s foremost Islamic institutions, to withdraw a statement condemning the Zionist regime’s “genocidal starvation” of Gaza, sources told Middle East Eye.

The Cairo-based Al-Azhar said that it had deleted a strongly worded call to action over the starvation of Palestinians in Gaza, citing its potential impact on ceasefire negotiations.

In a statement, the institution said it “took the initiative to withdraw its statement with courage and responsibility before God when it realized that this statement could impact the ongoing negotiations regarding a humanitarian truce in Gaza to save innocent lives”.

“Al-Azhar has prioritized the interests of preventing the daily bloodshed in Gaza, hoping that the negotiations will lead to an immediate

halt to the bloodshed and provide the most basic necessities of life, of which the oppressed Palestinian people have been deprived,” the statement said.

But two sources close to Al-Azhar and the Egyptian presidency confirmed to Middle East Eye that the statement was removed shortly after it was published on Tuesday following a request from President Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi’s office. The sources spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the press.

The reason for the withdrawal was that the statement referred to the complicity of third states in the “fully fledged genocide” in Gaza.

“Al-Azhar strongly affirms that the deliberate and lethal starvation imposed by this abhorrent occupation upon the peaceful people of Gaza, people desperately seeking mere crumbs of

bread or a cup of water, while simultaneously targeting shelters for displaced persons and humanitarian aid distribution centers with live ammunition, constitutes a fully fledged crime of genocide,” the deleted statement read.

“Moreover, anyone who supplies this entity with weapons, or who emboldens it through complicit resolutions or hypocritical words, is a partner in this act of genocide.

“They shall be held to account by the Just Judge, the Almighty Avenger, on the Day when neither wealth nor children shall be of benefit.

“Al-Azhar declares before God its absolute disavowal of the world’s shameful and suspicious silence, of the international community’s disgraceful failure to stand by this defenseless people, and of any call for the displacement of the people of Gaza from their land,” the statement added.

Nahid...

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to low Earth orbit, and its use has enabled Iran to efficiently place multiple satellites into orbit during a single mission. This approach helps optimize resources and accelerate the expansion of Iran’s satellite fleet.

While Iran pursues the development of its own launch vehicles and satellite technologies, cooperation with Russia remains central to its current space strategy. The Soyuz launcher not only provides technical assurance but also enables Iran to participate in multi-satellite launches, which reduce costs and increase operational flexibility.

Iran’s space achievements are a source of national pride and a testament to the country’s scientific progress. The successful launch of Nahid-2 highlights the maturity of Iran’s satellite design and manufacturing capabilities, as well as its growing expertise in satellite operations.

The country’s space program also emphasizes the development of skilled human capital, with universities and research centers nurturing future generations of aerospace engineers and scientists. These efforts contribute to Iran’s goal of becoming a regional leader in space technology.

Looking ahead, Iran plans to continue expanding its space program by launching additional satellites with increasingly advanced capabilities. The country is also investing in the development of new satellite carriers, aiming to achieve greater independence in space launch technologies.

Iran’s aerospace program remains focused on peaceful scientific and commercial applications, with a commitment to innovation and sustainable growth. The experience gained from successful satellite missions like Nahid-2 provides a strong foundation for future achievements.

Earlier this week, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) conducted a suborbital test of the Qased satellite carrier, highlighting efforts to enhance domestic launch capabilities.

Iran...

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purposes” and that the country has “no intention of pursuing nuclear weapons.”

Since the strikes, Iran suspended cooperation with the IAEA, accusing the watchdog of bias and failure to condemn Israel’s attacks.

Baghaei noted that Iran’s decision was a response to “unlawful military aggression that violated the UN Charter and damaged the non-proliferation regime.”

Nonetheless, he indicated that future cooperation with the IAEA will continue “in a new form” under the supervision of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council.

IAEA Director-General Rafael Grossi expressed cautious optimism about the possibility of resuming inspection visits later this year, emphasizing the urgency of agreeing on technical arrangements. However, Iranian officials have signaled that any return of inspectors will be contingent on respect for Iran’s sovereignty and security concerns.

European diplomats have threatened that they may trigger snapback sanctions by the end of August unless Iran takes “concrete steps” such as resuming full cooperation with the IAEA and addressing its enriched uranium stockpile.

At the Istanbul meeting, Takht-Ravanchi said, “we clearly expressed our views and objections to some remarks from certain countries regarding the reimposition of sanctions and the snapback mechanism”.

“We also discussed our rights under the NPT framework, including uranium enrichment, emphasizing that enrichment is one of our legitimate rights and must continue within Iran.

“The issue of lifting sanctions — specifically the need for the prompt removal of unjust sanctions — was another key topic raised during today’s meeting,” he added.

Gharibabadi warned earlier this week that snapback sanctions would be “completely illegal” and called for “common ground” to manage the situation.

“The Islamic Republic is still seeking constructive engagement and is committed to its obligations under the NPT and international law,” Gharibabadi said. “But the European parties must first restore trust by ending their double standards and halting support for military aggression against Iran.”

Friday’s talks ended after four hours with agreement to continue consultations. Both sides presented “specific ideas” on sanctions relief and the nuclear issue, but fundamental disagreements remain.

Israeli...

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of Islam,” and attributed Iran’s victory in the 12-day war to “the wise guidelines of the Leader, the national cohesion and unity, and the steadfastness of the armed forces, including the army and IRGC.”

Shekarchi issued a stern warning to hostile powers, saying, “The enemies must know that any aggression on this land will be met with decisive and regrettable response.”

He warned that although the enemy suffered strategic and military defeats during the war, it has now turned its attention to other forms of warfare.

He said the enemy is “focusing on psychological and media warfare” to destabilize the nation and “sow discord among the Iranian people,” urging vigilance against such plots.