

Palestinians welcome opposition to Israel's West Bank annexation plan

Author:

Sat, 2020-06-13 00:55

AMMAN: Palestinian officials have welcomed the international community's opposition to Israel's West Bank annexation plans, but want the pressure to be permanent.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has announced that he will annex parts of the West Bank, including the strategic Jordan Valley and dozens of Jewish settlements, in line with President Donald Trump's Middle East peace plan. Netanyahu has signaled he will begin moving forward with annexation next month.

The Trump plan envisions the creation of a Palestinian state, but on reduced territory and without meeting the key Palestinian demand of having its capital in east Jerusalem.

Hanan Ashrawi, a member of the PLO's executive committee, said there needed to be a complete stop to the annexation policy.

"What we need is nullifying the policy of annexation and undoing earlier annexation both de facto and de jure," he told Arab News.

Ashrawi said that Palestinians accepted the compromise of the two-state solution, but that the international community had yet to apply any serious pressure in that direction.

"Recognizing the Palestinian state is neither punishment for Israel or reward for Palestinians. They should have recognized Palestinians on the '67 borders long ago because that is the fulfillment of international law, the right of self-determination and their own people's decisions in their respective parliaments."

The PLO official argued that it had taken Palestinians a lot of effort and persuasion to reach this position, and warned that Israel might expect rewards if it walked back on its actions.

The question is not the size or location of the annexation but the very concept of annexation of someone else's land, which is contrary to international law and an affront to the will of the international community which Israel so far has treated with utter contempt.

Hanan Ashrawi, Member of PLO executive committee

"There is another problem looming now, that Israel might reduce its

annexation to settlement clusters or decide to postpone its actions and will want the world to reward them. The question is not the size or location of the annexation but the very concept of annexation of someone else's land, which is contrary to international law and an affront to the will of the international community which Israel so far has treated with utter contempt."

The escalation of opposition to Israel's annexation plans have come from different quarters.

Germany, which sent its foreign minister to meet with leaders of Israel, Jordan and Palestine, has talked about the possibility of sanctions if the Israelis act unilaterally against international law.

The ambassador of the UAE to Washington, Yousef Al-Outaibi, wrote to the Israeli people in the Yediot Aharonot newspaper and recorded a video calling on them not to support annexation.

"For years, the UAE has been an unfailing supporter of Middle East peace," he said. "We have consistently and actively opposed violence on all sides: We designated Hezbollah a terrorist organization, condemned Hamas incitement and denounced Israeli provocations. I was one of three Arab ambassadors in the East Room of the White House when President Trump unveiled his Middle East peace proposal in January."

More recently Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan, said the annexation plans were a "dangerous escalation" that threatened the peace process, while the World Council of Churches called on the EU to impose sanctions if Israel violated international law and annexed Palestinian territory.

Senior Fatah leader Jibril Rajoub said that Palestinians would fight annexation on all fronts, but that their opposition would be done in a principled way.

"We are approaching a turning point and we need to put aside all our differences and work on all fronts," he told Arab News. "This must be a priority for all. We need to focus attention on stopping this grave violation of our rights. With all humility, we are ready to lead in a principled way. We want to apply the techniques of the popular struggle, to begin with protests and end with civil disobedience. We need to be unified, we want to change the reality and we want to live in our own state and we want the world to be with us."

Rajoub, a leader of the Palestinian intifada, said there would be no rush to any action that could affect the global consensus that was forming in support of an independent Palestinian state. "We lived both intifadas and we have been struggling to end the Israeli occupation," he added.

Some have said that it is possible that Netanyahu might opt to annex one or more of the settlements near the greenline that once separated Israel from the occupied West Bank.

Lawyer and human rights specialists Dalia Qumsieh told Arab News that Israel

was expanding Highway Number 60, which connects West Jerusalem to the Gush Etzion settlement. It could be one of three settlements, in addition to Maaleh Adumim and Ariel, that Israel might annex as a first step starting July 1.



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Saudi foreign minister declares Israel's plans to annex West Bank a 'dangerous escalation'
German FM warns Israel against West Bank annexation plans

[Qatar's bad-boy Sheikh told to maintain low profile because of lawsuits](#)

Fri, 2020-06-12 22:07

CHICAGO: Playboy race-car driver – and accused killer and bully – Sheikh

Khaled bin Hamad bin Abdullah Al-Thani has been told to keep a low profile and is restricted to the royal family's beach house in Qatar, sources say.

Several witnesses in a lawsuit filed last year accuse Sheikh Khaled, the brother of Qatari Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, of personally killing an Indian employee assigned to help his wife, and ordering the killing of other individuals, including motor-racing industry rivals and employees the Sheikh believes betrayed his trust. That lawsuit is being expanded to include five witnesses who will testify to the Sheikh's violent and abusive behavior.

The order for Sheikh Khaled to maintain a low profile follows another major lawsuit filed in New York June 10 on behalf of 10 American victims of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorism. This lawsuit names the Al-Thani royal family's Qatar Charity, which is funded by the Qatar Foundation and gave more than \$1.5 billion in grants to US journalism schools and think tanks.

Also named are two banks controlled by the Al-Thani family, Masraf Al-Rayan and Qatar National Bank, which are accused of funding terrorism. Sheikh Khaled is a board member of Qatar National Bank but sources say he was recently removed.

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Although the two lawsuits involve allegations of unrelated acts of violence, they are linked by the alleged involvement of the Al-Thani family. Sources associated with the first lawsuit said the publicity over the past year has fueled a dispute between the emir and his unruly, violent brother.

"Sheikh Khaled has been kept out of sight at the royal family beach house due to the new news. They want him away from Doha and out of sight," said a source familiar with the royal family.

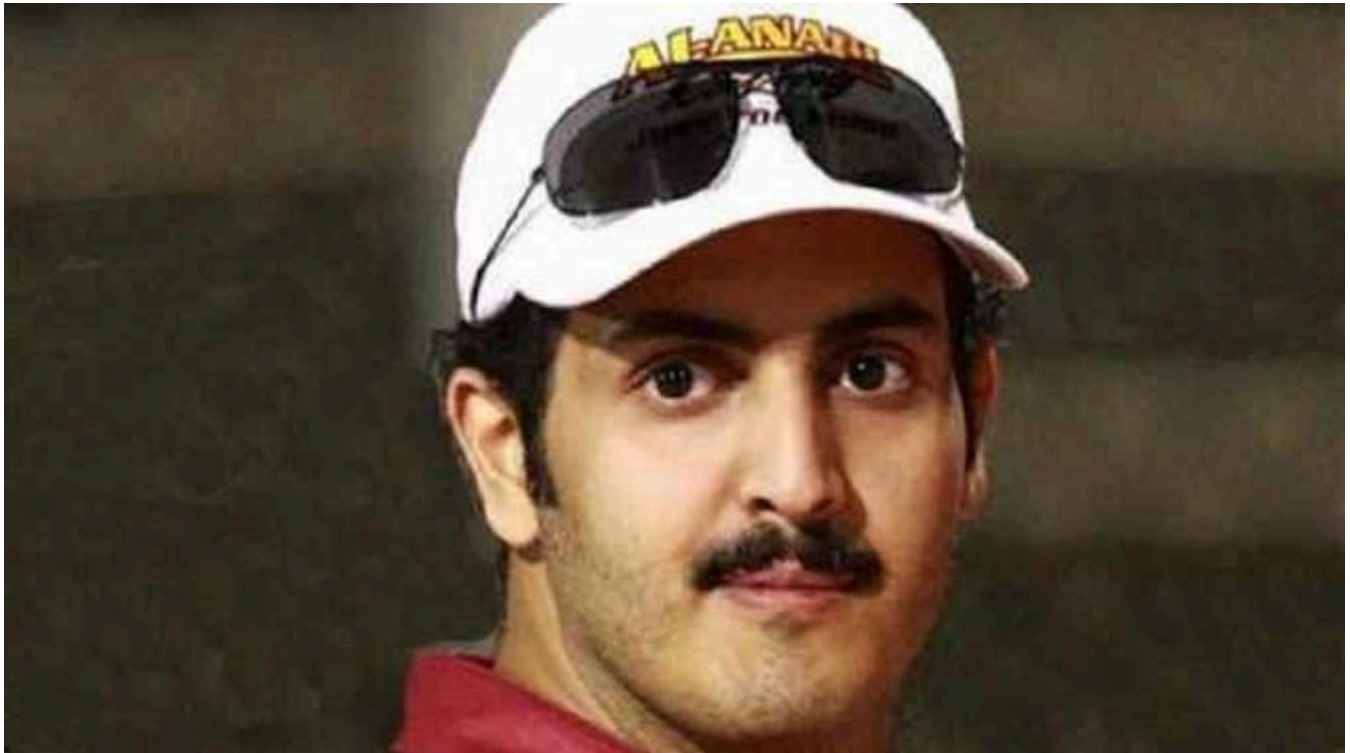
"I have been told that Sheikh Khaled has told his family, 'If you turn on me I will rat you all out.' This, I believe, has to do with the family's other activities."

The lawsuit alleging Qatar's royal family was the source of funding for much of the violence perpetrated by Hamas and PIJ, which has resulted in the deaths or maiming of at least 10 American citizens, raises questions about Qatar's investment activities in US journalism schools, universities and think tanks through the Qatar Foundation, while also allegedly funding terrorism through Qatar Charity. Both the Qatar Foundation and Qatar Charity are owned by the Al-Thani family.

The royal family has fought to prevent disclosures about its funding; for example, it has given more than \$225 million to Texas A&M University since 2011. Critics have also raised concerns about Georgetown University's Qatar

campus and its head, Ahmad Dallal, who US think tank the Middle East Forum describes as a long-time and enthusiastic supporter of “US State Department-designated terrorist group, Hezbollah.”

The Qatar Foundation also funded the creation in 1997 of “Education City” in Al-Rayyan, Qatar. Hundreds of millions of dollars have gone to a number of international universities with campuses there, including Texas A&M, Virginia Commonwealth University, Weill Cornell Medicine, Carnegie Mellon University, Georgetown University, Northwestern University, HEC Paris and Hamid Bin Khalifa University.



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Case against deposed Qatari emir’s grandson Sheikh Talal Al-Thani
'fabricated'

[Palestinians stranded by virus seek way home](#)

Author:

Fri, 2020-06-12 02:30

JERUSALEM: Thousands of Palestinians stranded around the world by the

coronavirus are still seeking a way home, months after countries closed their borders and grounded flights in the face of the pandemic.

Aseel Bader touched down in Tuscany in January, after winning a scholarship for a master's program at the University of Florence.

Just weeks later Italy imposed a nationwide lockdown as the coronavirus spread rapidly, prompting Bader to look for a way back to Hebron in the occupied West Bank.

"I tried to book to come to Palestine, but the response was to stay where you are because it's safer," the 26-year-old said. Bader said staff at the Palestinian Embassy in Rome had been very responsive, "but their response isn't helpful" as they have no information on when she can travel.

The Palestinian Authority says 6,000 people want to come home, but the logistics are incredibly complicated. "Maybe we are the only government in the world that can't bring back its own students" and others stranded, Prime Minister Mohammed Shtayyeh said.

"Why? Because we don't have an airport, we don't have planes, we don't control our borders. This has been a real pain for us," he said.

West Bank residents usually travel via Jordan, an easier route than getting the Israeli permit needed to pass through Tel Aviv airport. But the frontier with Jordan remains closed and the PA has no say in when it will open, as Israel controls the border.



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Innovative Palestinian couple turn van into mobile art gallery
Palestinian public workers go unpaid as PA hit by 'economic earthquake'

[Iran virus cases top 180,000 in four months](#)

Author:

Fri, 2020-06-12 02:22

TEHRAN: More than 180,000 people have been infected in Iran's coronavirus outbreak since it first emerged nearly four months ago, an official said on Thursday.

As the figures were announced, President Hassan Rouhani called on Iranians to stick to guidelines aimed at stopping the spread of COVID-19.

"If everyone follows the health instructions exactly, then all jobs can be reopened," he said in remarks broadcast on state television.

"We are progressing slowly and step by step (because we don't want) our people to think that the coronavirus era has passed.

"This would pose a major health problem for us," Rouhani said.

Health Ministry spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari said 2,238 new infections in the past 24 hours took the total to 180,156.

She said 78 new deaths brought the overall toll to 8,584.

Iran reported its first COVID-19 cases on Feb. 19 – two deaths in the city of Qom.

The government has struggled to contain what quickly became the Middle East's deadliest coronavirus outbreak. Since April, however, it has gradually lifted health protocols in order to reopen its sanctions-hit economy.

That has coincided with a fresh surge in cases, which the government denies amounts to a second wave, saying they are due to increased testing.

Meanwhile, Iran insists it is ready to resolve any issues with the UN nuclear watchdog, expressing "disappointment" in a note circulated over the IAEA's latest report complaining of blocked access.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said in a report that Iran has for months blocked inspections at two sites where nuclear activity may have occurred in the past.

The Vienna-based agency noted “with serious concern that, for over four months, Iran has denied access to the agency ... to two locations.”

In a note to the IAEA dated June 8, Iran said it had held meetings with agency representatives in Tehran on April 29 and May 16 to discuss the access issues, followed by written correspondence and a fresh proposal to meet with IAEA representatives.

In the note circulated by Tehran’s mission to the UN in Vienna on Thursday, Iran insisted it “continued its constructive engagement with the agency during the past two months, with a view to reach a common understanding ... which would pave the way for the resolution of concerned issues.”

Iran argues that the requests for access are based on “fabricated information,” accusing the US and Israel of trying to “exert pressure on the agency.”

The IAEA has said previously that its access requests were based on “concrete information” that had been validated.

In its note, Iran expressed “deep regret and disappointment” at the IAEA’s latest report.

The report is expected to be discussed at a meeting of the agency’s board of governors starting next Monday.

In a separate report, also to be discussed during the board meeting, the IAEA warned that Iran’s enriched uranium stockpile is now almost eight times the limit set in the nuclear deal the country signed with world powers in 2015.

Iran has been progressively breaking restrictions laid down in the 2015 deal in retaliation for US withdrawal from the accord in 2018 and its subsequent re-imposition of sanctions.



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Health official says 15mln Iranians may have had coronavirus
One in five
Iranians may have had virus, says health official

[Egypt and Facebook unite for blood donation campaign to boost supplies](#)

Author:

Fri, 2020-06-12 01:55

CAIRO: The Egyptian Ministry of Health said on Thursday it is working with Facebook to encourage blood donations in the country.

Health Minister Dr. Hala Zayed confirmed that national blood transfusion centers would represent the ministry in the Facebook project.

She said that the campaign would help to encourage those who have recovered from coronavirus to donate their blood plasma to help in the treatment of

critical condition patients.

Egypt has had successful trials in which coronavirus patients were injected with the blood of those who have recovered.

Anyone above the age of 18 and below the age of 65 can register on Facebook as a donor and they will receive a message from the closest blood transfusion center stating they are now a donor. The donor can also invite friends to donate their blood.

People can use the “donate blood” feature on their personal accounts or by clicking on the following link: <http://www.facebook.com/donateblood>.

BACKGROUND

Health Minister Dr. Hala Zayed said that the campaign would help to encourage those who have recovered from coronavirus to donate their blood plasma to help in the treatment of critical condition patients.

Those who register will receive messages on their mobiles from the 28 branches of Egypt’s blood transfusion centers regarding requests and donation opportunities. Five of the centers are allocated for blood plasma donations from those who have recovered from coronavirus. Details about the centers can be found on the official website of the Egyptian Ministry of Health and Population.

Facebook posted that the COVID-19 pandemic had affected the number of blood donors leading to an acute shortage of blood. People did not know where or how to donate blood, while the precautionary measures of self-isolation and social distancing were also having an impact.

Dr. Ehab Serag El-Din, director of the ministry’s National Blood Transfusion Banks, said that Facebook had activated the donation feature and that the update had come out on Wednesday.

He emphasized the importance of blood donations during this critical period and reiterated that all preventive and precautionary measures were being taken to guarantee the safety of donors. He said that such a partnership was a major step toward trying to reach the level of donations needed and the sufficient amount of blood needed to support the Egyptian health system.

He added that Luxor was the second governorate to assist those who have recovered from coronavirus to donate plasma.

“By the end of next week most of the five regional blood banks which were specifically allocated for this purpose will be receiving those who have recovered from the coronavirus,” he told Arab News. “We will not force those who have recovered to donate. However, it is their national and moral duty.”

Facebook’s public policy manager in Egypt, Nashwa Gad, said she was proud of

the collaboration with the ministry. She also talked about the importance of the partnership, which comes as part of the platform's efforts to support health authorities during the health crisis, and hailed a previous project between the ministry and Facebook to raise awareness about the virus.

She said that the donation campaign would help those who wanted to donate blood to receive all the correct health information and guidelines about the process.

Earlier this week a World Health Organization (WHO) expert said there was the possibility of a second wave of coronavirus in a number of countries.

Maha Talat, the regional antimicrobial adviser for the WHO's Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office, cited Iran as an example, where infections have surged again. She said that Egypt was still in the middle of the first wave, which had not yet subsided, and that another wave might hit the country after this one.



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Egypt to allow foreigners to return to some resorts from July Expert warns of second wave of coronavirus in Egypt