

Israeli troops kill two Palestinians at Gaza border protest

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ID:

1567791520509071500

Fri, 2019-09-06 16:50

GAZA CITY: Israeli forces shot and killed two Palestinians and wounded dozens during protests along the Gaza-Israel border on Friday, Palestinian health officials said.

They named one of the dead as Ali Al-Ashqar, 17, but the second man remained unidentified. Seventy others were wounded, 38 of them by live fire, medical officials said.

An Israeli military spokesman said that troops guarding the border were faced with more than 6,000 demonstrators at several points along the fence, some hurling explosive devices and firebombs.

He said that some briefly managed to cross the fence, before returning to Gaza, and that Israeli forces responded with riot dispersal measures. The spokesman did not comment on the deaths.

Protesters have staged 18 months of weekly demonstrations called the "Great March of Return", calling for an end to a security blockade imposed on Gaza by Israel and Egypt, and for Palestinians to have the right to return to land from which their families fled or were forced to flee during Israel's founding in 1948.

Israel rejects any such return, saying that would eliminate its Jewish majority.

Egypt, Qatar and United Nations officials have been working to keep the border calm in recent months.

Around 210 Palestinians have been killed since the protests began in March 2018, Gaza medical officials say.

In that period, an Israeli soldier was shot dead by a Palestinian sniper along the frontier, and another was killed during an Israeli undercover raid into Gaza.

Israel seized Gaza in a 1967 war and pulled out its settlers and troops in 2005. It says the security blockade is necessary to stop weapons reaching Hamas, which has fought three wars with Israel and fired thousands of rockets at it in the past decade.



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[Pompeo thinks US to unveil Middle East peace plan in coming weeks](#)

Fri, 2019-09-06 19:16

WASHINGTON: Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Friday that the United States will present its long-awaited Middle East peace plan within weeks as he acknowledged a difficult task.

President Donald Trump's administration pushed back the plan after Israel unexpectedly headed back to new elections to be held September 17 and fresh questions arose Thursday when Jason Greenblatt, Trump's adviser on the Middle East, resigned.

But Pompeo, responding to a question at Kansas State University, dismissed speculation of a substantial new delay.

"We've been consulting broadly throughout the region for two and a half years now and I think in the coming weeks we'll announce our vision," Pompeo said. "And hopefully the world... will see that as a building block, a basis on which to move forward," he said.

He called Middle East peace "a difficult problem, one that ultimately those two peoples will have to resolve for themselves, but we've worked hard on that."

The Palestinian Authority has cut off formal contact with the Trump administration, saying it is not an honest broker after taking a series of unabashedly pro-Israel decisions such as recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of the Jewish state.

The administration has started to describe its upcoming proposal as a "vision" rather than a plan, leading observers to wonder if Washington will offer more of a statement of principles rather than seek to broker a major agreement.

Trump's adviser and son-in-law Jared Kushner launched the administration's peace initiative in June with a conference in Bahrain in which he dangled \$50 billion in investment for the region if the Palestinians agree on a political deal.

The Palestinian leadership boycotted the conference, accusing the administration of ignoring key political issues and trying to buy its acceptance of Israeli rule.

Kushner has repeatedly said that a political component of the peace plan was in the pipeline.

Greenblatt cited personal reasons in leaving, with the father of six saying he wanted to spend more time with his family.



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Palestinian refugees in Lebanon want asylum in Canada

Author:

Thu, 2019-09-05 21:15

BEIRUT: Waving Palestinian and Canadian flags, hundreds of Palestinian refugees gathered outside the Canadian Embassy in Beirut on Thursday requesting asylum in the North American country.

Many among the group lamented the deteriorating economic and living conditions in Lebanon, which is going through a severe economic crisis, and said they wanted a more dignified life.

There are tens of thousands of Palestinian refugees and their descendants in Lebanon. Most of them live in squalid camps with no access to public services, limited employment opportunities and no rights to ownership.

"We want to immigrate, we want to go to Canada for a better life. There is no work or money or anything here. I got a stroke and did open heart surgery, no one helped me," said Haneya Mohammed, one of the protesters.

The periodic protests outside the embassy on the coastal highway north of Beirut began a few weeks ago, after a crackdown on undocumented foreign labor by Lebanese authorities, triggering protests inside some of the 12 camps spread across the country and in Beirut.

The protesters gathered Thursday also decried what they say is widespread corruption at the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees, or UNRWA. They held banners that read: "We want to live with dignity" and "We demand humanitarian asylum" in Arabic and English.

The UN Relief and Works Agency, known as UNRWA, is dealing with a budget crunch after an unprecedented loss of all funding from the United States, its largest donor.



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[Sudan announces first Cabinet since Al-Bashir ousting](#)

Thu, 2019-09-05 21:19

KHARTOUM: Sudan's new prime minister announced on Thursday the formation of the first government since the overthrow of Omar Hassan Al-Bashir in April.

The government was formed as part of a three-year power-sharing deal signed last month between the military and civilian parties and protest groups.

Abdalla Hamdok announced the names of 18 ministers in the new cabinet and said he would name two more later.

"(The new government) will start its work immediately in a harmonious and collective way," Hamdok told a press conference in Khartoum on Thursday evening.

“Today, we start a new phase in our history,” he said.

The new government is an important step in transition away from nearly 30 years under Al-Bashir, when Sudan was afflicted by internal conflicts, international isolation and deep economic problems.

However, the months since Al-Bashir’s fall have been marked by tension between the powerful security forces and civilian groups that are pushing for democracy, reform and justice for those killed during crackdowns on protests.

The announcement of the cabinet had been held up by haggling over positions.

Most of the 18 ministers announced on Thursday were approved earlier in the week. They include Asmaa Abdallah, who becomes the country’s first female foreign minister, and Ibrahim Elbadawi, a former World Bank economist who will serve as finance minister.

Madani Abbas Madani, a leader of the civilian coalition that negotiated the transition deal with the military, will be minister of industry and trade.

General Jamal Omar, a member of the Transitional Military Council that took over from Al-Bashir, was appointed as defense minister.



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