

EU should recognize Palestinian state, says Luxembourg

Author:

Fri, 2019-11-22 03:16

BERLIN: The EU should recognize a Palestinian state after the US expressed support for Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, Luxembourg Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn said.

Monday's announcement by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo abandoned the position that settlements in Israeli-occupied territory were "inconsistent with international law," reversing a stand taken under President Jimmy Carter in 1978.

Palestinians say the settlements jeopardize their goal of a state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and that the US move will make an Israeli-Palestinian peace deal even more elusive.

"Recognizing Palestine as a state would be neither a favor nor a carte blanche but rather a mere recognition of the right of the Palestinian people to its own state," Asselborn said.

"It would not be meant against Israel," he added, but a measure intended to pave the way for a two-state solution.

The US decision was a victory for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is struggling to remain in power after two inconclusive Israeli elections this year, and a defeat for the Palestinians.

It could deliver a new blow to President Donald Trump's efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through a peace plan that has been in the works for more than two years but has drawn widespread skepticism even before its release.

The EU said after the US announcement that it continued to believe that Israeli settlement building in occupied Palestinian territory was illegal under international law.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Israeli forces detained Adnan Ghaith, Palestinian governor of Jerusalem, taking him from his home in the city's east for interrogation, police said.
- Israeli authorities earlier closed the offices of two Palestinian Authority-affiliated organizations in Jerusalem.

The European Parliament adopted a resolution in 2014 supporting Palestinian

statehood in principle. The motion was a compromise reached after lawmakers on the left sought to urge the EU's 28 member states to recognize Palestine unconditionally.

Since the collapse of US-sponsored peace talks in 2014, Israel has pressed on with building settlements in territory the Palestinians want for their future state.

More than 135 countries already recognize a Palestinian state, including several East European countries that did so before they joined the EU.

Netanyahu's chief rival announced that he had failed to form a new government, dashing his hopes of toppling the long-time Israeli prime minister and pushing the country closer toward an unprecedented third election in less than a year.

The announcement by Benny Gantz, leader of the centrist Blue and White party, prolongs the political paralysis that has gripped the nation for the past year. It also provides a new lifeline for the embattled Netanyahu, who is desperate to remain in office as he prepares for an expected indictment on corruption charges, possibly as early as Thursday.

Gantz, a former military chief, was tapped to form a government last month after Netanyahu failed to cobble together a coalition in the wake of inconclusive September elections.

But during four weeks of intense negotiations, Gantz was unable to muster the support of a required 61-member majority in the 120-seat parliament by Wednesday's midnight deadline.

Addressing reporters, Gantz accused Netanyahu of scuttling attempts to form a broad-based unity government between their parties.

"He should have come to terms with the fact that the outcome of the elections required him to negotiate directly, with no blocks or barriers," Gantz said angrily.

"Most of the people chose a liberal unity government headed by Blue and White," he added.

"Most of the people voted to weaken the power of extremists, and most of the people voted to go on a different path from that of Netanyahu in recent years."



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US support for Israel's West Bank settlements draws criticisms

[Trump, Pence back Iran protests as IAEA seeks answers on uranium traces](#)

Author:

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Thu, 2019-11-21 18:21

JEDDAH: US President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence on Thursday expressed support for anti-government protesters in Iran.

Trump said Iran is so "unstable" that the government has shut down the Internet so Iranians cannot disclose what he says is the "tremendous violence" occurring in the country.

Trump tweeted Thursday that the Iranian government wants "ZERO transparency" and believes that by shutting down the Internet the rest of the world will

not find out about the “death and tragedy that the Iranian Regime is causing!”

Pence, also in a tweet, he said: “As Iranians take to the streets ... the Ayatollahs in Tehran continue to use violence and imprisonment to oppress their people. The United States’ message is clear: The American people stand with the people of Iran.”

More than 100 protesters have been killed by security forces, according to Amnesty International. The EU, France, Germany and human-rights organizations have condemned the use of lethal force against the protesters.

The unrest erupted on Nov. 15 after the government announced gasoline price hikes of at least 50 percent. Protests began in several provincial areas before spreading to about 100 cities and towns across the country. They soon turned political, with protesters demanding top officials step down.

On Thursday, the regime began restoring Internet access in Tehran and a number of provinces, following a nationwide shutdown designed to stifle the unrest.

The blockage made it difficult for protesters to post videos on social media to generate support, and to obtain reliable reports on the extent of the unrest.

Internet blockage observatory NetBlocks said the restoration of connectivity in Iran was only partial, covering about 10 percent of the country.

Meanwhile, the UN nuclear watchdog’s top inspector will travel to Tehran next week to demand an explanation of the origin of uranium traces found at an undeclared site, the agency’s acting chief said on Thursday.

It was first reported in September that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had found uranium traces at the site. Tehran said the site is a carpet-cleaning facility.

Two weeks ago, the IAEA confirmed that environmental samples taken at an unspecified site had shown traces of uranium that was processed but not enriched.

“We have continued our interactions with Iran since then, but have not received any additional information and the matter remains unresolved,” acting IAEA Director General Cornel Feruta told a quarterly meeting of his agency’s 35-nation board of governors in Vienna.

Feruta told Iran in September that “time is of the essence” in clearing up the origin of the traces.

The IAEA has not been convinced by Tehran’s explanations.

“A meeting between the agency and Iran is scheduled next week in Tehran to discuss it further,” Feruta said. “It is essential that Iran works with the agency to resolve this matter promptly.”



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Iran Guards praise protests crackdown that killed dozens as international condemnation continues
Iran conservationists get prison time amid unrest

[Britain urges Israel to halt settlement expansion, in contrast to US](#)

Author:

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Thu, 2019-11-21 17:19

LONDON: Britain urged Israel to halt its “counterproductive” settlement expansion on Thursday, saying it was illegal under international law. The Foreign Office reiterated its position on the settlements after the United States on Monday effectively backed Israel’s right to build Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank.

“The position of the UK on settlements is clear,” it said in a statement. “They are illegal under international law, present an obstacle to peace, and threaten the viability of a two-state solution. We urge Israel to halt its counterproductive settlement expansion.” (Reporting by Kate Holton Editing by William Schomberg)



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US support for Israel’s West Bank settlements draws criticisms

[Turkey to repatriate most of 287 Daesh detainees by the year-end](#)

Thu, 2019-11-21 02:34

ANKARA: Turkey will have repatriated most of its Daesh detainees to their

home countries by the end of the year, Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu said on Tuesday, a week after Turkish authorities began the repatriation program.

Ankara says it has captured 287 militants in northeast Syria, where Turkish troops launched an offensive against the Kurdish YPG militia last month, and has hundreds more terror suspects in detention.

Speaking in Ankara, Soylu said Turkey was aiming to send six or seven more Daesh suspects this week to their home countries, including Ireland and the Netherlands. Turkish officials were in touch with counterparts there.

“The number of detainees to be repatriated by the year-end depends on how long the processes take, but especially for Europe, the process is under way,” Soylu said.

“I think we will have sent a large part of them to their countries by the end of the year,” he said, adding that certain countries that revoked the citizenships of their nationals were violating international law.

“They do not have the right to leave their citizens without a nationality. They have no such right,” he said. “This is why we held evaluations with certain countries on this, and they are taking them back.”

Turkey has repatriation and extradition agreements with the countries concerned but informs them before sending detainees back.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Turkey has accused its European allies of being too slow to take back their citizens who had traveled to the Mideast to join Daesh.
- So far Turkey has repatriated 10 German nationals, one US citizen, and one British suspected fighter.
- European countries are trying to speed up a plan to move thousands of terrorists out of Syrian prisons and into Iraq.
- NATO allies have been worried Turkey’s offensive into northeastern Syria could lead to Daesh suspects escaping from YPG prisons and camps.

Two Daesh mothers, aged 23 and 25, were detained at Amsterdam Schiphol Airport on Tuesday evening after being deported from Turkey, Dutch prosecutors said. They are suspected of membership in a terrorist organization.

The women, who were traveling with two children aged 3 and 4, will be brought before a judge on Friday.

Turkey has accused its European allies of being too slow to take back their citizens who had traveled to the Middle East to join Daesh.

Meanwhile, European countries are trying to speed up a plan to move thousands of terrorists out of Syrian prisons and into Iraq.

Turkey's European NATO allies have been worried that last month's offensive into northeastern Syria could lead to Daesh suspects and their families escaping from the prisons and camps run by the YPG.

Ankara, which views the YPG as a terrorist group linked to Kurdish insurgents on its own soil, has dismissed the concerns, saying the militia had vacated some of the prisons and allowed around 800 radical terrorists to escape.

So far Turkey has repatriated 10 German nationals, one US citizen, and one British suspected fighter.

Ankara has said that suspects will still be deported to Ireland, France and other mostly European nations in the coming days.



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US warns of 'persistent' Daesh attacks in East Asia
France takes in 27 more Yazidi women victims of Daesh

'This is my sacrifice': Thousands maimed in Iraq demonstrations

Author:

Thu, 2019-11-21 02:24

BAGHDAD: A fractured spine, paralyzed leg, hole in the back: Hamza took to the streets of Iraq's capital to demand a better life but now he has even less than ever.

"This is my sacrifice for Iraq," said the 16-year-old, his strained voice barely audible over the phone in Baghdad.

"If I could walk, I would be back in the protests now."

Hamza is one of at least 3,000 people who have been maimed in Baghdad and southern Iraq since anti-government protests erupted on Oct. 1, according to the NGO Iraqi Alliance for Disabilities Organization (IADO).

The staggering number is the latest burden for a country already struggling with one of the highest disability rates in the world, according to the UN.

After decades of back-to-back conflicts, Iraq is in the thick of its largest and deadliest grassroots protest movement, with more than 300 people dead and 15,000 wounded.

To disperse protesters, security forces have used tear gas, rubber bullets, flash bangs, live rounds and even machine-gun fire – all of which can seriously maim or even kill, as Hamza learned.

On Nov. 4, the teenager was among around 20 protesters wounded by live fire in Baghdad.

A bullet pierced Hamza's stomach and exited through his back, leaving a gaping hole.

Two others hit his legs.

By the time he arrived at a nearby hospital, he had lost liters of blood and his heart was failing, said his father, Abu Layth.

Doctors revived the boy with a defibrillator, injected him with four units of blood and rushed him into surgery.

"He was basically dead. The doctors brought him back to life," he said.

CT scans and medical reports shared by Hamza's family revealed multiple fractures to his lower spine, leading to paralysis in his right leg.

After more than a week in hospital, the teenager has gone back home and is on steady doses of analgesics.

"Sometimes he screams from pain at night," his father said.

Iraq has a long history of bloody conflict, from the 1980-1988 war with its neighbor Iran to the 2003 US-led invasion that toppled dictator Saddam Hussein and the fight against Daesh.

Each war has killed tens of thousands and left even more Iraqis impaired for life.

The government's Central Statistical Organization says that in the wake of decades of conflict, more than 2 million of Iraq's 40-million population are disabled people entitled to state support.

But IADO and other rights groups say the real number sits at more than 3 million – and counting.

"The number of disabled people continues to grow ... We exit one crisis and enter another," said IADO head Muwafaq Al-Khafaji.

He told AFP his group's estimate of 3,000 maimed since Oct. 1 is an approximation, as the government is either not documenting or not releasing precise figures.

To fill the gap, IADO members have been contacting hospitals and reaching out to families in Baghdad and southern cities.

Although Iraq is party to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, disabled people suffer from poor health services, lack of job opportunities and social exclusion.

They have organized their own rallies in Baghdad as part of the larger protest movement, demanding more support from the government.

"Infrastructure in Iraq is not even equipped to meet the needs of the non-disabled," said Khafaji. "We need more than just ink on paper."

Iraq suffers from an extremely dilapidated health care system, with hospitals severely under-equipped and doctors threatened on the basis of political or tribal disputes.

In the protests, rights groups have documented the abduction of volunteer medics as well as arrests of protesters from medical facilities.

The additional strain on both patients and doctors means wounded demonstrators do not get quality care quickly enough, leading to severe wound infections.

Medics have even had to sever limbs to save protesters' lives, said Farah, a 19-year-old medical student volunteering in Baghdad's main protest camp of Tahrir (Liberation) Square.

Tahrir is full of makeshift clinics treating protesters, including 30-year-old Ali, who wears a bandage where his right eye should be.

On the night of Oct. 24, the father of four was on a nearby bridge when he heard shots ring out and saw hundreds of protesters scrambling away in panic.

Before he could do the same, a flash bang exploded at his feet and he collapsed, regaining consciousness an hour later in a nearby hospital.

But Ali could only open his left eye, as his other had been lost to a piece of shrapnel.

“They want to deter protesters, but we’re becoming even more determined,” he said, as crowds of bandaged men walked around him.

“The Iraqi people have endured everything. We were born to die.”



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Iraqi protesters shut roads to ports, oil fields Iraq political deal hands Abdul Mahdi a reprieve in face of mass protests