

Gaza artists call on Eurovision singers to boycott Israel

Author:

Wed, 2019-05-08 21:51

GAZA, GENEVA: Palestinian artists are calling on Eurovision singers to boycott the international music competition that Israel is hosting next week.

The Gaza Strip-based Palestinian Artists Association said on Wednesday that Israel was using the event to “perpetuate oppression, promote injustice or whitewash a brutal apartheid regime.”

The artists cited the killing of over 60 Palestinians during Gaza border protests on May 14 last year, the same day Israel won the Eurovision. The association held a sit-in outside the EU’s Gaza office and wrote a letter of protest.

At least 25 Palestinians, including 10 militants and four Israeli civilians, were killed after hundreds of rockets were fired at Israel over the weekend. Israel retaliated with airstrikes.

Food crisis

Separately, the UN warned on Wednesday that its agencies providing food assistance to Gaza must raise tens of millions of dollars within weeks to avoid significant aid cuts.

The United Nation’s World Food Program (WFP) and its agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, currently provide food assistance to more than one million people in Gaza.

But the UN humanitarian coordinator for the Palestinian territories, Jamie McGoldrick, warned that the agencies were facing “a serious funding crisis.”

They needed to raise money fast to be able to make a looming order for the food needed for the remainder of the year, he told journalists in Geneva.

“We envisage that if WFP and UNRWA don’t get around 40 million dollars by the end of May – beginning of June, they will not be able to order the pipeline,” he said.

UNRWA is planning to host a donor’s conference next month and another one in September, as it struggles to fill the void after Washington, traditionally its largest donor, withdrew its support.

Last year, a number of countries stepped up to generously compensate for the lacking US funding, but McGoldrick said that this year a huge shortfall remained.

“If they don’t get the funding, clearly they can’t order the food,” he said,

adding that this would mean that in the second half of the year, either the number of people receiving aid will be cut or rations will be slashed, or both.

In Gaza, where unemployment stands at 54 percent and is much higher for young people, people do not have the purchasing power to fill in the gaps, McGoldrick said.

“There is no alternative,” he said, describing the situation as “very, very serious.”

It is not only the UN agencies providing food aid who are facing a shortfall.

McGoldrick said that the \$350 million requested for UN’s overall humanitarian response plan for the West Bank and Gaza so far this year was so far only 14-percent funded.

“There is something happening in terms of donor support to the Palestinian situation, which we have to better understand,” he said.



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Israel’s Eurovision champ heads to Europe with empowerment message
Israel’s Netta, the voice of #MeToo at Eurovision

US accuses Iran of 'nuclear blackmail' as Trump places new sanctions on metal sector

Wed, 2019-05-08 21:40

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump on Wednesday ordered new sanctions on Iran, this time targeting export revenues from its industrial metals sector, and vowed to keep squeezing Tehran unless it "fundamentally alters" its policies.

The announcement was made on the anniversary of Trump's unilateral withdrawal of the United States from a 2015 landmark deal between Tehran and world powers to curb its nuclear program in exchange for easing some sanctions and hours after Tehran said it would no longer fully comply with the accord. Tensions were already high between Washington and Tehran when the Trump administration said last weekend that it was deploying a carrier strike group and bombers to the Middle East, in response to what it said were "troubling indications and warnings" from Iran.

Before Trump's executive order for the sanctions, a senior White House official said Washington would impose more economic curbs on Tehran 'very soon' and had warned Europe to stop doing business with Iran.

"Today's action targets Iran's revenue from the export of industrial metals – 10 percent of its export economy – and puts other nations on notice that allowing Iranian steel and other metals into your ports will no longer be tolerated," Trump said in a statement.

"Tehran can expect further actions unless it fundamentally alters its conduct," Trump said.

The Trump administration says the nuclear deal, negotiated by his predecessor Barack Obama, was flawed as it is not permanent, does not address Iran's ballistic missile program and does not punish it for waging proxy wars in other Middle East countries.

Leading Democratic lawmakers such as Chris Murphy, the top Democrat on the Senate's Middle East subcommittee, said Iran's halting compliance to some parts of the deal was "disastrous news" and accused Republican Trump's administration of making America much less safe through its policies. House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi requested a briefing on Iran for members.

Hours before the fresh US sanctions, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani announced Tehran was reducing curbs to its nuclear program with steps that for now stopped short of violating the 2015 accord. But it threatened more action if countries did not shield it from sanctions.

Tehran halting compliance with some elements of the nuclear deal was "nothing less than nuclear blackmail of Europe," Tim Morrison, special assistant to the US president and senior director for weapons of mass destruction, told a conference.

"Now is the time for the community of nations to strongly condemn Iran's

nuclear misconduct and increase pressure on the regime to comply with US demands," Morrison said, adding that Washington was not 'done' with sanctions on Iran.

Morrison said the United States would move quickly against any attempt by European countries to undermine Washington's sanctions pressure on Iran. He advised them against using the so-called Special Purpose Vehicle to facilitate non-dollar trade to circumvent US sanctions.

"If you are a bank, an investor, an insurer or other business in Europe you should know that getting involved in the ... Special Purpose Vehicle is a very poor business decision," Morrison said.

Spearheaded by national security adviser John Bolton, the Trump administration has taken several unprecedented steps to squeeze Iran such as demanding the world halt all Iranian oil imports and designating Iran's elite Revolutionary Guard Corps as a foreign terrorist organization, which Iran has cast as an American provocation.

"We have made our focus diplomatic isolation and economic pressure and that policy is working," Brian Hook, Special Envoy for Iran, said in a briefing. Hook said that more nations now, compared with a year ago, were in agreement with the United States on Iran.

Washington's European allies opposed Trump's decision to withdraw from the nuclear deal and have failed so far to find ways to blunt the economic impact of new US sanctions.



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Iran threatens uranium enrichment, suspend 'some' nuclear deal commitments
Europe warns of 'consequences' to Iran's nuclear deal threats

[Health funding gap means 1,700 in Gaza may face amputations](#)

Author:

Reuters

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Wed, 2019-05-08 16:52

GENEVA: A lack of health funding in Gaza means 1,700 people shot by Israeli security forces may have to have amputations in the next two years, Jamie McGoldrick, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for occupied Palestinian territory, said Wednesday.

McGoldrick said 29,000 Palestinians had been wounded in protests in the past year, and 7,000 of them had gunshot wounds, mostly in the lower legs.

"You've got 1,700 people who are in need of serious, complicated surgeries for them to be able to walk again," McGoldrick said.

"These are people who have been shot during the demonstrations and who are in need of rehabilitation, and very, very serious and complex bone reconstruction surgery over a two year period before they start to rehabilitate themselves."

Without those procedures, all these people are at risk of needing an amputation, he said.

The UN is seeking \$20 million to fill the gap in health spending.

A lack of funding to the World Food Programme and UNRWA, the UN humanitarian agency that supports Palestinians displaced by the 1948 war of Israel's founding, also meant there could be an interruption of food supplies for 1 million people.

"If that stops, there is no alternative for people to bring food in from any other sources, because they don't have purchasing power," McGoldrick said.

WFP spokesman Herve Verhoosel said a severe lack of funds meant WFP had cut aid for 193,000 people this year in the West Bank and Gaza, with 27,000 getting nothing and the rest getting only \$8 per month instead of the usual \$10.

Some 2 million Palestinians live in Gaza, the economy of which has suffered years of Israeli and Egyptian blockades as well as recent foreign aid cuts and sanctions by the Palestinian Authority, Hamas' West Bank-based rival.

People's prospects were "precarious," McGoldrick said. Gaza families averaged \$4,000 of debt, while salaries averaged \$400 per month, but 54 percent of the population was unemployed.

The health system was impoverished, with unpaid salaries and dilapidated equipment, and many medical professionals had left if they could find opportunities elsewhere.

One teaching hospital was now only teaching trauma medicine, McGoldrick said, but the doctors on the ground did not have the technical ability to carry out the treatment required for the people at risk of amputation. There have already been 120 amputations, 20 of them in children, in the past year, he said.



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[Two Israelis arrested in global 'dark' internet probe](#)

Author:
Tue, 2019-05-07 23:00

JERUSALEM: Two Israelis have been arrested on suspicion of setting up a "dark" internet site that was used to buy weapons, drugs and stolen credit cards, Israeli police said on Tuesday.

The suspects, in their mid-30s, were arrested during a joint investigation with the FBI and Israel's cybercrime unit. Further arrests were made in France, Germany, the Netherlands and Brazil.

"The suspects were arrested after setting up an Internet site that was in the 'dark'," the police said in a statement. "The dark Internet site was used for

illegal activities and crimes.

“The site had been active for a long period of time and millions of dollars of transactions had been made on the site.”

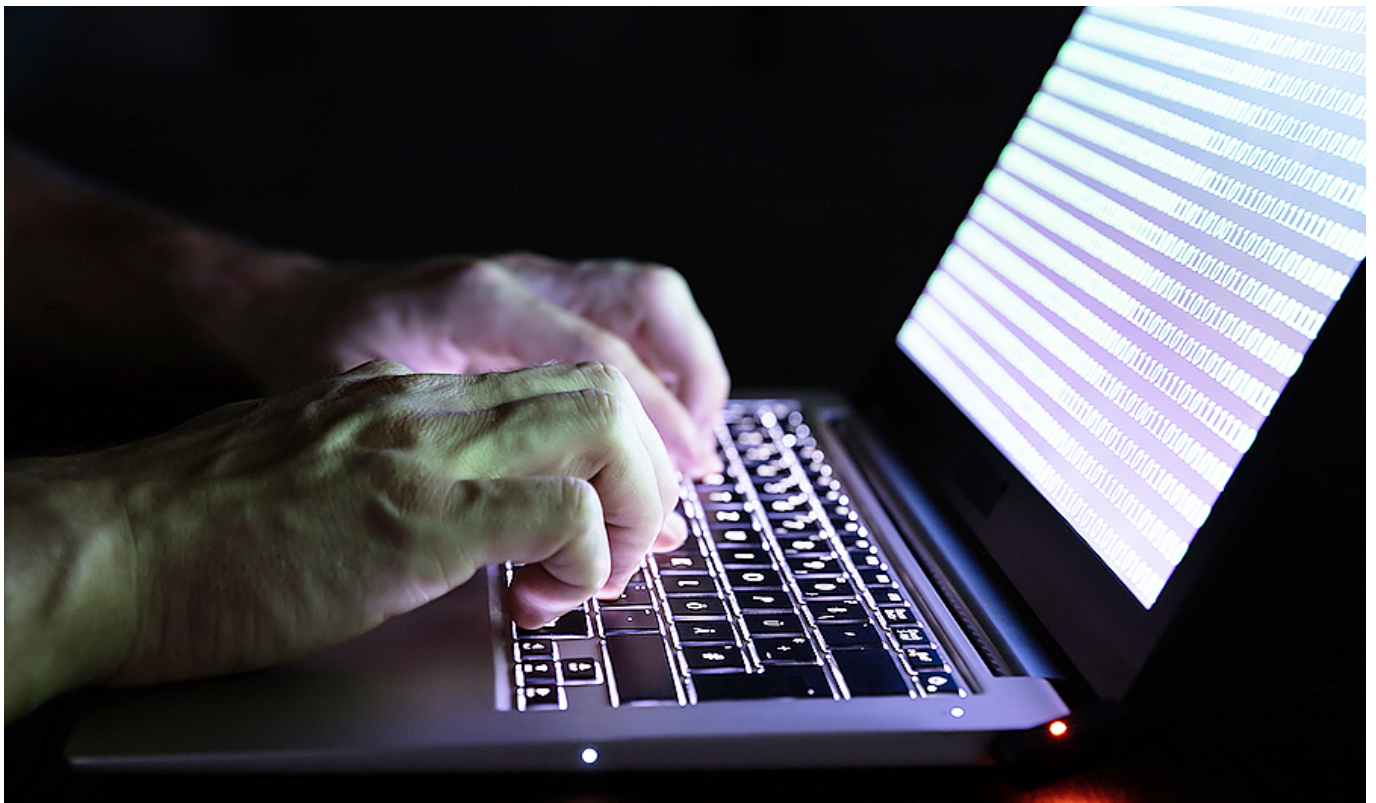
The police said the site guided users to other sites used for illegal activities and crimes which were being investigated.

“The sites worked together covering each other and marketing illegal actions and transactions,” police said, adding that the transactions were made using Bitcoin.

The two Israeli suspects are due to appear before a Tel Aviv court. No further details were given.

Three German nationals accused of running one of the world’s largest dark websites for selling drugs and other contraband were arrested last week and charged in two countries following a two-year investigation.

A fourth man who allegedly acted as a moderator and promoter for the site was taken into custody in Brazil.



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EU urges Internet firms to intensify fake news fight
Three Israelis wounded in West Bank shooting

Sudan's military council says wants to keep Sharia law as the basis of legislation

Tue, 2019-05-07 22:57

KHARTOUM: Sudan's military council said on Tuesday it wants to keep Islamic Sharia law as the basis of legislation.

The council said it agrees with the opposition's view of the general transitional governing structure

However, speaking during a press conference in Khartoum, Shams Al-Deen Al-Kabashi, the spokesman for the military council, said the power to declare a state of emergency should go to the sovereign authority not the cabinet, as the opposition has suggested.

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Sudan mediators propose two transition councils to break deadlock in power transfer talks
Sudan's military council says it will present vision for country's transition on Monday