

# Palestinians strike against social security law

Author:

Tue, 2019-01-15 22:43

RAMALLAH: Thousands of Palestinians in the occupied West Bank joined a strike on Tuesday against their government's proposed new social security law, fearing the fund will be mismanaged.

Much of Ramallah, Hebron and other Palestinian cities remained closed.

A few thousand people protested outside the Social Security Corporation in Ramallah, where Abbas' government is based.

Under the proposed system both private employers and their employees would pay monthly into a government-managed fund, with employees receiving a pension when they retire.

The government says it will provide new security for employees, arguing similar systems exist in countries across the globe.

Protesters say they do not trust the Palestinian government to manage the fund and point out there are no guarantees.

They also say Israel's occupation of the West Bank means that the long-term existence of the Palestinian Authority government is far from secure.

Israeli soldiers have carried out repeated raids inside Ramallah in recent weeks, including near Abbas' headquarters, following two deadly shootings.

Amer Farah, who works at Bank of Palestine in Ramallah, said that in functioning states the social security laws were important to protect citizens' futures.

"But we are still under occupation, and there is no contact between parts of the country," he told AFP, alluding to the decade-long split between the West Bank and Gaza, where Abbas' rivals Hamas are in control.

"The country is not stable, neither economically nor politically. How will they implement the law?"



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Palestinians, Israeli police scuffle at Jerusalem holy site  
Palestinians protest in Ramallah over Gaza sanctions

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## [Palestinians take over as chair of UN developing countries](#)

Author:

By EDITH M. LEDERER | AP

ID:

1547579014260538600

Tue, 2019-01-15 (All day)

UNITED NATIONS: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas took over as head of the key group of developing countries at the United Nations Tuesday with a promise to confront “assaults” on multilateralism and a pledge to seek a peaceful two-state solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Abbas accepted the chairmanship of the Group of 77, a coalition of 134 mainly developing nations and China, on behalf of Palestine, which is a non-member observer state of the United Nations. He was handed the gavel by Egypt’s

Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry, the outgoing chairman, with a handshake and kisses on both cheeks.

Before the ceremony, Abbas reiterated to reporters in Arabic that the Palestinians will seek full UN membership but gave no timetable.

The 193-member General Assembly had to approve a resolution enabling the Palestinians to chair the G77 because Palestine is a non-member state. It did so in October over objections from Israel and its closest ally, the United States.

During the annual gathering of world leaders at the General Assembly in September, ministers of the G77 formalized their decision to give Palestinians the chair, in a boost to Abbas' push for statehood and full UN membership.

In his acceptance speech, Abbas said the G77 will strive to ensure the rights and development of all people living under foreign and colonial occupation. "Palestine cannot be an exception," he said. "We also suffer under the yoke of foreign occupation."

Abbas said "Israel's continued colonization and occupation of the state of Palestine undermines our development ... and obstructs cohesive future development for all peoples of the region."

When the G77 was established in 1964, Abbas said its founding principles were connected with the principles and goals of the United Nations "and constitute the strongest pillar for upholding the multilateral system and its institutions as well as the rule of international law and mutual cooperation."

He warned "of the assaults under way against this system" and said the Palestinians will strive during their chairmanship of the G77 "to confront such challenges through the preservation of the multilateral international order."



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## [Houthi militants involved in Al-Anad drone attack captured: Yemen Ministry of Interior](#)

Tue, 2019-01-15 15:09

DUBAI: Yemen's interior ministry on Tuesday said they had captured members of a Houthi cell involved in last Thursday's attack on Al-Anad air base.

The drone attack on a Yemeni government military parade, the latest and deadliest since a cease-fire agreement for Hodeidah was signed in Sweden last month, killed six people and injured scores of others.

A seventh person died days later.

A ministry statement added the cell worked for the Houthi militia in Aden, Lahij and other liberated areas, Al-Arabiya news website reported.

Ahmed Al-Misri, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, said the militants were arrested in the past few days in the Lahij province, north of Aden, where Al-Anad airbase was located.

Al-Misri added that those arrested admitted during interrogation they carried out the assassinations and bombings in Aden, which targeted security and military officials.

The militants likewise said they received training from Houthi experts in Sanaa and Dhamar, the areas controlled by the militia.



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Six killed in Houthi drone attack on Yemen military parade Top Yemen intelligence official injured in Houthi drone strike dies

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# Libya to boycott Arab summit in Beirut

Author:

Mon, 2019-01-14 23:31

BEIRUT: Libya's Government of National Accord (GNA) has said it will boycott this Sunday's Arab Economic and Social Development Summit in Beirut.

The boycott is in response to "negative acts carried out by the host country, Lebanon," said Libyan Prime Minister Fayez Al-Sarraj.

The GNA "decided to boycott the summit after it was revealed that the host country did not provide the appropriate climate in accordance with the obligations, customs and traditions of such summits," he added.

Supporters of the Lebanese Amal Movement tore down the Libyan flag from between the other flags raised on poles on the road to the airport to welcome the delegations participating in the summit.

They replaced it with the Amal flag to protest the kidnapping in Libya of Imam Musa Al-Sadr, a Lebanese-Iranian philosopher and Shiite religious leader, and two companions in 1987.

Photos of Amal members tearing down and replacing the Libyan flag went viral on social media.

This prompted Libyan protesters to remove the sign of the Lebanese Embassy in the Libyan capital and raise their country's flag at the embassy's main iron gate, said Lebanon's ambassador to Libya, Mohammad Sukaina.

"Lebanon is convinced that what happened in Beirut and Tripoli is neither directed against the people of Libya nor against the Lebanese people," he told the Lebanese National News Agency (NNA).

"We believe that the right, fair, and perhaps the only approach to establishing a good relationship between the Lebanese and Libyan people is that the competent authorities in Libya help free Imam Musa Al-Sadr and his companions."

Lebanon's caretaker Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil sent a letter to his Libyan counterpart Mohamed Siala, expressing his regret that Libya will not participate in the summit.

Bassil also expressed his rejection of "the actions taken in Lebanon against Libya and its participation in the Beirut summit," saying they do not reflect his position or his country's.

Meanwhile, a debate in Lebanon over inviting Syria was settled by the supreme committee organizing the summit, which said: "Syria's invitation is related to the decision of the Council of the Arab League and is not a Lebanese decision."

In the halls of the summit's venue, the flags of all Arab League member states were raised, including those of Syria and Libya, on Monday.

"The countdown to the summit has started," said the summit's media spokesman Rafic Chlala.

"The reconstruction of Syria is not on the summit's agenda, but at the meeting of Arab leaders there may be decisions in this regard," he added. "So far, this topic will not be discussed."

The head of the committee, Antoine Choucair, said 24 items are on the agenda, and Lebanon wants to hold the event under the title "Prosperity for Peace."

He added that Lebanese President Michel Aoun is considering an initiative inspired by the title, and will launch it during the summit.

The commander of the Lebanese Republican Guard, Brig. Gen. Salim Feghali, said it will be in charge of the summit's security in cooperation with the rest of the security services.

He added that "500 officers and 7,000 soldiers will participate in securing the summit's location as well as the road to the airport and the delegations' accommodations."

Feghali told Arab News: "The security forces will address the protests scheduled for Sunday... in a manner that ensures the safety of the summit."

Brig. Gen. Joseph Al-Nahhas said: "The secure area will be closed starting Thursday midnight."

He added: "The supreme committee has proposed to the caretaker prime minister, Saad Hariri, to make Friday a day off." Al-Nahhas said Hariri had no objection to the proposal.

Meanwhile, the Civil Society Organizations Forum, hosted by the UN headquarters in Beirut, produced recommendations that will be submitted to the summit.

The forum's organizers said the recommendations aim to "strengthen cooperation between governments and civil society, and provide an independent platform for civil society to allow experts to participate in and contribute to the development process."

Manal Warde, Oxfam's policy and campaigns manager for the Middle East and North Africa, said the forum aimed to influence the summit at a time when many Arab countries face public demands for democracy and economic reforms.

The UN Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA) said it expects the summit to "provide an opportunity to develop mechanisms for achieving the (UN) Sustainable Development Goals."



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Arab states snub Syria over summit Lebanon resumes efforts to form government

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## [Sudan protests will not change government: Bashir](#)

Author:

Mon, 2019-01-14 22:51

KHARTOUM: Defiant Sudanese President Omar Bashir said on Monday that ongoing protests will not lead to a change in government, as he addressed a rally of cheering supporters in war-torn Darfur.

“Demonstrations will not change the government,” Bashir told crowds of supporters gathered in Niyala, the capital of South Darfur state, where just a day ago police had broken up an anti-government demonstration, state television reported.



"There's only one road to power and that is through the ballot box. The Sudanese people will decide in 2020 who will govern them," said Bashir, who is planning to run for the presidency for the third time in elections to be held next year.

Deadly protests have rocked Sudan since Dec. 19 when angry crowds took to the streets in towns and villages against a government decision to raise the price of bread.

At least 24 people have died in the protests, which swiftly turned into nationwide anti-government rallies, with protesters calling on Bashir to step down.

"Sudan has many enemies and those enemies have few people among us who don't want stability and security," said Bashir, with state television broadcasting footage showing him waving his trademark cane as supporters chanted "stay, stay."

"We will not allow anyone to destroy our homeland by looting and burning our properties," said Bashir.

In the initial days of protests, several buildings and offices of Bashir's ruling National Congress Party were set on fire in towns and villages. On Sunday, the first anti-government demonstrations were held in Niyala and El-Fasher, the capital of North Darfur.

Darfur, a region the size of France, has been torn by violence since 2003 when ethnic minority rebels took up arms against the government in Khartoum, accusing it of economic and political marginalization.

About 300,000 people have been killed in the conflict and another 2.5 million displaced, according to the UN. Most of those displaced still live in sprawling camps.

On Monday, he reiterated that Sudan faced "economic problems," but they could not be solved by looting and burning of properties.

Sudanese security agents, meanwhile, stopped a group of journalists in Khartoum from holding a sit in to protest the banning of a newspaper this week, witnesses said.

The journalists were planning a sit in after authorities banned Al-Jadida newspaper from publishing for several days this week, a witness told AFP without offering details.

Organizers of anti-government protests have so far staged hundreds of rallies across the country, including in Khartoum.

The Sudanese Professionals' Association that is spearheading the rallies have urged protesters to continue with their demonstrations this week, calling it as the "Week of Uprising."

On Sunday, protesters had taken to the streets in the capital's Bahari

district chanting “peace, peace” and “revolution is the people’s choice,” but they were quickly confronted by riot police with tear gas.

Rights groups say more than 1,000 people have been arrested since the protests began, including opposition leaders, activists and journalists as well as demonstrators.

Although the unrest was triggered by the rise in the price of bread, Sudan has faced a mounting economic crisis over the past year, led by an acute shortage of foreign currency.

Repeated shortages of food and fuel have been reported across cities, while the cost of food and medicine has more than doubled.



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Key powers stick with Bashir despite mounting protests in Sudan