

# PLO official calls for joint Arab security plan

Author:

Sun, 2020-09-13 22:30

AMMAN: The secretary-general of the Palestine Liberation Organisation's (PLO) executive committee, Saeb Erekat, on Sunday said that Palestinians would remain committed to the two-state solution even if 193 countries moved their embassies to Tel Aviv.

He said that no other option could ensure peace and security – nor bring an end to the conflict. “There are 51 percent Muslims and Christian Palestinian Arabs living between the sea and the Jordan River. What will you do with this Palestinian population?”

Addressing a virtual press conference attended by Arab and foreign journalists, he called on the Arab world to forge its own national security plans without relying on foreign powers.

Criticizing what he described as a “peace for protection” policy, Erekat said that Arabs must find their own system for protecting each other.

He said that Israel sought military superiority in the region. “The last war that took place between an Arab and a non-Arab country was the Iraq-Iran war, and Israel supported Iran,” he said.

Erekat said that Israel “will never be part” of such a national security matrix and that “Arab protection needs an Arab strategic plan.”

He said that the Palestinian leadership wanted security and prosperity for all Arab countries but it would not compromise on its principles.

The chief Palestinian negotiator said that the continuing smear campaign against the Palestinian leadership was unfair. “We heard the same broken record when the late martyr Yasser Arafat was besieged by Sharon.”

Erekat said that if the world's top democrats were Palestinian and demanded an independent Palestinian state, some would still want the leadership to be changed. “If Mother Teresa were to be the president of Palestine, Thomas Jefferson the prime minister of Palestine, Voltaire the speaker of the Palestinian parliament, and they all demanded two states, Netanyahu and others would call for a new Palestinian leadership,” Saeb Erekat said. He said, however, that new elections would take place soon.

The senior Palestinian official criticized US President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for their military doctrine, which he said was based on control. “Trump divides the world into strong countries and countries that need the protection of strong countries. This is the law of the jungle.”



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## [Lebanon's overcrowded prison may be courting health disaster](#)

Author:

Sun, 2020-09-13 22:27

BEIRUT: Reports about the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Roumieh Prison, the largest in Lebanon, have caused panic among the families of inmates who fear disaster if quick measures are not taken.

Several guards and inmates are reported to have contracted the virus. Lebanon's prisons already suffer from severe overcrowding, running at 160 percent of capacity at the end of 2019.

Roumieh, located east of Beirut, houses more than 5,500 prisoners and has a separate juvenile section.

The prison was opened in 1970 with a capacity of about 1,500 prisoners, but

the number has grown over the years, making social distancing impossible. The possibility of granting a general amnesty to all inmates is currently under discussion.

Lawyer Ghida Franjeh said: "The judiciary ordered the release of many detainees since the announcement of the general mobilization to avoid crowding in detention facilities."

She added that parliamentary intervention would be required to ensure the release of those convicted of minor crimes.

"There are many questions that need answers: Were the infections discovered in the early stages?" she added. "Were the infected people isolated immediately?"

"The increase of overcrowding could lead to a health disaster in Roumieh Prison that may cross prison boundaries if the internal security forces and the judiciary do not take all necessary measures to protect infected prisoners and those in contact with them, especially since many prisoners suffer from weak immunity due to poor living conditions and health."

Many prisoners have complained of fatigue, high temperatures, coughing, shortness of breath, sore throats, loss of smell, and other symptoms. The prison pharmacy has run out of painkillers and fever remedies, according to reports.

Health Minister Hamad Hassan confirmed that there had been COVID-19 cases in Roumieh, but said infections were chiefly "among the security forces in the prison" and that "a very limited number of infections were reported among the prisoners."

"We are working to secure a hospital in Bekaa and another in Beirut to treat the detainees," he added.

The General Directorate of the Internal Security Forces stated: "Thirteen prisoners and nine security personnel tested positive for the virus on Sept. 11, and a place for quarantine has been prepared in the central prison, in cooperation with the International Red Cross and the World Health Organization (WHO), and sections have been allocated in government hospitals for necessary treatment."

Families of many detainees in Roumieh organized a protest in Tripoli, calling for necessary measures for the protection of prisoners and to prevent the spread of the virus among them.

The total number of people infected with COVID-19 in Lebanon has reached 24,000, as the daily number of infections has exceeded 500 since mid-August. The total number of deaths as of Sunday was 239.

Lebanese Foreign Minister Charbel Wehbe has also been infected with the virus. His ministry's employees were subjected to PCR tests last week, and it was found that three people who had contact with the minister were also infected.

Tripoli MP Faisal Karami expressed his concern over the spread of the virus, with only 26 beds to treat COVID-19 patients in his home city, with people having to wait for six days to take tests.

Karami revealed that the residents of Tripoli and its municipality “do not yet believe in the existence of the virus, and people do not adhere to the preventive measures.”

Meanwhile, a spokesman for the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), Andrea Tenente, said 90 peacekeepers had contracted the virus.

“Eighty-eight of them belong to the same unit. They have been kept in quarantine and all precautions are being taken to prevent the spread of the virus among the peacekeepers,” he said.

“UNIFIL is taking very strict precautionary measures with all its military and civilian elements inside and outside their centers, by following all approved protocols, including quarantine and isolation, in line with the guidelines of the WHO and the Lebanese government. With regard to our employees, we have reviewed the roles of all.”

He said all UNIFIL activities related to implementing its mandate in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1701 remain unaffected.



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## [UAE FM arrives in US for Israeli peace signing ceremony](#)

Sun, 2020-09-13 22:03

DUBAI: UAE Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Abdullah bin Zayed, arrived in Washington on Sunday heading an official delegation attending the signing ceremony of the UAE-Israeli peace deal. The White House announced that the UAE and Israel would sign a historic peace treaty at a ceremony in Washington on Sept. 15, in the presence of the UAE foreign minister and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The delegation included several senior Emirati officials and ministers, as well as UAE's permanent representative to the United Nations Lana Nusseibeh. The UAE announced last month it would establish full relations with Israel in a deal brokered by Donald Trump, but the deal included an Israeli promise not to annex occupied Palestinian land in the West Bank.



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# Thousands of Israelis protest outside Netanyahu's residence

Author:

Associated Press

ID:

1599942989220326100

Sat, 2020-09-12 20:31

JERUSALEM: Thousands of Israelis demonstrated outside Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's official residence in central Jerusalem late Saturday, demanding he resign over his trial on corruption charges and what is widely seen as his mishandling of the coronavirus pandemic.

With Israel reporting record levels of new coronavirus cases each day, the country appears to be headed toward a nationwide lockdown this week ahead of the Jewish New Year.

Saturday's demonstration came a day after Israel announced an agreement to establish diplomatic relations with Bahrain, the second Arab country to normalize ties with Israel in under a month and just the fourth overall. But the surprise announcement had little effect on the thousands of demonstrators, who have been gathering outside Netanyahu's residence every Saturday throughout the summer. Protests against Netanyahu over his corruption trial have expanded to include demonstrations against his handling of the health crisis and the resulting economic pain.

Late Saturday, police detained several protesters.

Israel earned praise last spring for its early handling of the virus crisis, moving quickly to seal the country's borders and appearing to bring an outbreak under control.

But Netanyahu has come under criticism for reopening the economy too quickly in May. Since then, new cases have soared, the government has been blamed for mismanaging the resurgence and unemployment has soared to double digit levels. Many struggling workers and business owners fear another closure will be devastating. Many of the demonstrators are unemployed.

Last week Netanyahu announced overnight curfews on some 40 cities and towns hit hard by the coronavirus, but backed away from reported recommendations for full lockdowns after an uproar by politically powerful religious politicians.

Netanyahu has been charged with fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes for his role in a series of scandals involving gifts and alleged favors exchanged with wealthy associates.

He denies any wrongdoing and accuses police, prosecutors and the media of conspiring to oust him. He has dismissed the protesters as "leftists" and "anarchists."



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## [UN steps up COVID-19 measures at Syrian refugee camps in Jordan](#)

Author:

Reuters

ID:

1599941535610198500

Sat, 2020-09-12 20:09

AMMAN: The UN refugee agency is stepping up efforts to curb the spread of COVID-19 among tens of thousands of Syrians in camps in Jordan after the first cases were confirmed last week, the head of the agency in the country said on Saturday.

The UNHCR confirmed three cases in the country's largest camp for Syrian refugees, Zaatari, near the border with Syria, and two cases in a smaller camp, Azraq.

The infections in the two camps that house a total of around 120,000 refugees were the first confirmed cases since the pandemic was first reported in the kingdom last March.

"The developments this week have obviously been a worrying situation for all, but especially for refugees living in the camps. Crowded spaces and cramped living conditions make social distancing difficult," said Dominik Bartsch, the UNHCR representative in Jordan.

The refugees who tested positive for COVID-19 have been sent to an isolation area set up by the Jordanian government near the Dead Sea while families of those in contact with them have been quarantined inside the camp, the UN agency added.

Jordan's health ministry is, meanwhile, conducting thousands of tests, restricting movement in and out of the camps and training medical staff, Bartsch said.

The infections in the camps come at a time when COVID-19 cases been rising sharply in the country as a whole, since the start of the month.

Jordan is a major host country for Syrian refugees who have fled an almost decade-long civil war in their homeland. There are about 655,000 UN-registered Syrian refugees in the kingdom.



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