

Thousands join Gaza protests against peace plan

Author:

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GAZA CITY: Thousands of Palestinians have taken to the streets of Gaza to protest against US President Donald Trump's newly unveiled peace plan for the Middle East.

Youths set fire to tires and burned pictures of Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during demonstrations on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Social media was also awash with angry backlashes to the deal which many posters claimed would only exert further pressure on the Palestinian people.

As part of the long-awaited plan, Trump has proposed a Palestinian state double the size of existing Palestinian territories, with East Jerusalem as its capital and a US Embassy there.

But Hamas official Raafat Morra said: "National unity and Palestinian popular steadfastness at home and abroad, adhering to the resistance project by all means, and cooperating with the living forces in the nation, are the best ways to confront the new American-Israeli plan."

Reiterating Hamas' comprehensive rejection of the plan, he added that it would lead to the "liquidation of the Palestinian cause, the confirmation of the Israeli occupation, and the cancelation of all Palestinian rights."

Secretary-general of the Islamic Jihad, Ziyad Al-Nakhalah, said on Wednesday that the US president's "deal of the century" threw up great challenges.

"This plan poses a major challenge that requires us to change our approach to dealing with everything. This challenge must make us leave the norm and push us to create new facts with our sacrifices and to have the willingness and motivation to confront and address this bullying without hesitation," he added.

Shops closed and students stayed away from schools on Wednesday in Gaza after Palestinian factions called for a general strike.

Sama Ayoub, 45, said: "My children did not go to school today. We reject the deal of the century, which I believe to be the slap of the century. As (Palestinian) President Abu Mazen (Mahmoud Abbas) said, there will be no peace without obtaining the minimum of our rights.

"What do they want us to accept – that we give up Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa and all our rights, that our lands be confiscated without being refused, that we accept it for money?" she added.

But Raed Dabban, 35, said: "There are exciting aspects of the deal. Our

current situation in Palestine is bad, especially in the Gaza Strip.

“Palestinian leaders must search for solutions to reality in the Gaza Strip in particular and strengthen the resilience of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Jerusalem, so that everyone can reject with all power the concessions that compromise our rights.

“We are on the threshold of a critical stage in our political life and our future, and our living conditions are bad. People cannot stand up without the ingredients for resilience. This is the role of leaders,” he added.

Following a phone conversation with Ismail Haniyeh, Hamas’ political bureau chief, Abbas announced on Tuesday that a delegation from Ramallah would be sent to Gaza for reconciliation talks. Palestinian diplomat Saeb Erekat also said that a delegation from the Fatah party would go to Gaza next week to meet with Hamas.



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Palestinians consider next step in opposition to US plan ‘Palestinians have to work and fight together,’ Middle East’s elder statesman Lakhdar Brahimi tells Arab News

Palestinians consider next step in opposition to US plan

Thu, 2020-01-30 01:39

AMMAN: As the details of Washington's peace plan becomes clear, Palestinian leaders are searching for a way forward that avoids acquiescing to US and Israeli demands.

Veteran Jordanian-Palestinian writer Lamas Andon told Arab News that while Palestinian leaders have a right to reject the plan, they must look inward to find a way forward.

"Palestinians have an opportunity to lead and set the tone of their own future because they are in charge now and can't wait on anyone else to help."

Palestinians believe that the huge US document demonstrates America's bias. The terms "Jews" and "Jewish" are mentioned 1,806 times, compared to just 303 and 473 for "Muslim" and "Christian" respectively.

Israel is mentioned nearly five times more than Palestine. Palestine will have its borders, its airspace and its international waters controlled by Israel, which will, at certain times, "have the right to enter the areas earmarked for the state of Palestine."

Andoni told Arab News that the other option available to Palestinians is international law: "The International criminal court and the court of criminal justice have shown interest in supporting Palestinian rights. Therefore, all legal battles must be waged against Israel."

Nabil Shaath, an adviser to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, told the US-based Al-Monitor news site that Abbas has approved a possible major confrontation with Israel.

"The president has re-emphasized the need for national unity, and has agreed to a request to go to Gaza to attend a unity meeting, he has supported the need for popular struggle and has called for the revisit of the functions of the Palestinian Authority.

"The move to implement the decisions of the Palestine National and Central Councils will obviously include the decision to suspend security coordination."

But Israeli media reported that the security coordination has not been suspended, despite suggestions from Abbas's office.

In addition to the legal front, Andoni believes that supporters of Palestinians must step up their efforts with the Boycott, Divestment and

Sanctions movement.

He added that he hoped that an intifada would erupt.

Andoni's call was also echoed by Abbas, who has agreed to a call for a national unity conference in Gaza with the participation of all factions including Hamas, Fatah and Islamic Jihad as well as independents.

Mufid Abed Rabo, a Fatah activist and one of the leaders of the first intifada, told Arab News that the unity efforts that were seen in the Tuesday night meeting in Ramallah must be followed up with serious and strategic steps.

Palestinian supporters have responded angrily to the US plans with demonstrations and public strikes throughout the occupied Palestinian territories.

In his speech carried live on Palestine TV, Abbas also spoke about the popular struggle, but it was not clear how serious the Palestinian leadership is willing to commit to an escalation of unarmed attacks against Israel.

The nonviolent struggle has long been discussed and debated among Palestinians without a clear guideline. In Gaza, unarmed attacks in the form of the Great March of Return were often politically manipulated and failed to stay totally nonviolent.

The new frontier for the coming months will be the Jordan Valley, where about 50,000 Palestinians live, as opposition grows to the possibility of an Israeli annexation of these lands.



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Mandela rights group slams Palestine plan
Jared Kushner: Middle East peace plan guarantees Muslims access to Al-Aqsa

[Mandela rights group slams Palestine plan](#)

Author:

Thu, 2020-01-30 01:32

LONDON: The Elders, an international human rights NGO founded by the late Nelson Mandela, has slammed US President Donald Trump's "peace plan" to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The plan "cannot provide a workable solution" to the conflict, said the NGO, which is led by former Irish President Mary Robinson.

The Elders added that implementing the plan "would make the two-state solution impossible, entrenching deep inequality along ethnic lines and moving the decades-old conflict into a new phase."

In a statement, the group – previously chaired by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Archbishop Desmond Tutu – urged the international community to "emphasize – urgently – that the acquisition of territory through force is illegal, and would result in countermeasures beyond rhetorical condemnation."

The Elders said: "The proposed annexation of further occupied Palestinian territory in the West Bank ... creates a dangerous precedent for the acquisition of territory by force, with implications well beyond the region."

It added: "The unilateral effort to redefine the status of Jerusalem in favor of one side is provocative and dangerous. Moreover, the absence of any credible plan for Gaza means a major element of the conflict is simply unaddressed."

Ban Ki-moon, deputy chair of The Elders and former UN secretary-general, said: "The best, most logical and just solution is to provide two states for the two peoples, based on the internationally recognized 1967 borders."

He added: "Unilateral declarations that exclude and humiliate one party to the conflict are counter-productive."

Another Elder, Lakhdar Brahimi – former UN and Arab League special envoy to

Syria, former Algerian foreign minister and a veteran of his country's liberation struggle – said: "This is a conflict rooted in injustice, dispossession and disdain for rights and law. Abandoning negotiations and imposing annexation will only entrench these problems. The international community knows this is a unilateral act of folly."

Trump's plan has faced heavy international scrutiny, with no Palestinian leaders supporting it.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas called it a "conspiracy" that "will not pass." Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhr said: "Palestine will prevail, and Trump and the deal will go to the dustbin of history."



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[Thousands flee as fighting rages](#)

between Yemen government and Houthis

Author:

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AL-MUKALLA: Thousands of Yemenis in Marib province and Nehim district, near Sanaa, have been displaced as fighting rages between government forces and the Iran-backed Houthis, a local human rights organization and aid workers said on Wednesday.

As many as 1,484 families have fled their homes in Majazer district in northern Marib, and 1,870 families have deserted Al-Khaneq camp in Nehim, according to Yemen's National Organization for Defending Rights and Freedoms (HOOD).

The displacement began on Jan. 19; all those who fled headed to the city of Marib, and only 60 families managed to find shelter, the organization said in a statement seen by Arab News.

HOOD urged local and international organizations, and authorities in Marib and Sanaa, to provide the displaced with food, shelter, drinking water and medication.

Aid workers who visited displaced people in Marib said they are enduring miserable conditions and are sleeping out in the open amid a harsh winter.

Locals said people carrying belongings in pickup trucks and on foot are still heading to the city.

Abdul Khaliq bin Mousalem, director of Etilaf Al-Khair's office in Marib, said the aid organization has set up 50 camps and provided blankets to the displaced. It will set up 250 camps when local authorities allocate the necessary land, he added.

Etilaf Al-Khair is an umbrella group of local charities that provides aid on behalf of the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSRelief).

"People are in desperate need of humanitarian aid. The priority should be building shelters," Bin Mousalem told Arab News, adding that Al-Khaneq camp was deserted after it was shelled.

"People escaped to Marib with clothes and valuables, leaving behind less important things. The number of displaced people is big, and all aid organizations should quickly support them."

Due to its stability and location, the city of Marib has been hosting tens of thousands of displaced people since late 2014, when the Houthi militia seized Sanaa.

The displacement from Nehim and Marib province comes as government forces press their offensive, under air cover from Saudi-led coalition warplanes, in an attempt to recapture territories seized by the Houthis in recent days.

Yemen's Defense Ministry said the army traded mortar fire with the Houthis, and coalition warplanes pounded their locations in the mountainous Nehim district.

Defense Minister Mohammed Al-Maqdadi and Abdul Hamid Al-Muzayni, commander of the Saudi-led coalition in Marib, visited the frontlines in Nehim, the ministry's official news site reported.

They met the newly appointed commander of the 7th Military Region, Ahmad Hassan Jebran, and soldiers.

Al-Maqdadi said the army's military operations in Nehim and elsewhere will continue until the Houthis are defeated.

In the southern city of Taiz, government troops recaptured a number of hilly locations on its western edges.



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Yemen president dismisses army commander after battlefield setbacks
UN food agency says aid looted in Yemen's Houthi-held area

'Palestinians have to work and fight together,' Middle East's elder statesman Lakhdar Brahimi tells Arab News

Thu, 2020-01-30 00:42

PARIS: Former Algerian Foreign Minister Lakhdar Brahimi is a member of The Elders, an independent group of global leaders working for peace, justice and human rights. He has also served as UN special envoy to Syria and Lebanon.

A day after US President Donald Trump unveiled the political component of his long-awaited vision for Israeli-Palestinian peace, Brahimi told Arab News that the proposals amount to an “annexation, domination and apartheid plan.”

Calling for unity among Palestinians, he said they need to be “supported to the best of everyone’s ability.”

Q: What do you think of the US peace plan?

A: The manner in which the plan has been presented was really a stage for (Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin) Netanyahu, who’s facing an election very soon ... It has to do with the election in the US, the impeachment (of Trump), with the election in Israel. It’s part of the campaign of both President Trump and Netanyahu. It’s also part of trying to solve their personal problems with justice: Impeachment in one case, a threat of going to jail in the other. It has very little to do with peace in the Middle East.

Q: What does the future hold for the Palestinians if they reject the plan and this US administration is re-elected?

A: The Palestinians are facing extremely serious problems. They’ve been occupied for 70 years now. They’ve been dispossessed. They will continue to be humiliated and dispossessed in all sorts of ways. This condition is very familiar to people who have lived the colonial experience, whether it’s in Algeria or South Africa. This is a situation we’re familiar with, that people don’t listen to you, don’t care about you.

This “deal of the century” considers the Palestinians as sub-humans, or that they don’t exist at all. Netanyahu is going to start implementing decisions he thinks the US president has taken, in particular the annexation of all the settlements, the bank of the Jordan River on the west side.

What Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said yesterday is correct – 22 percent of historic Palestine is what’s called the West Bank and Gaza. The Israelis are immediately going to take of that about two-thirds, and perhaps they’ll negotiate with the Palestinians on the one-third left. This isn’t a plan of peace but one of annexation and domination. It’s a colonial plan –

apartheid at its worst.

Q: What about Jordan in this plan?

A: Both President Trump and Netanyahu spoke with some respect about Jordan. But to people who have had the chance to read the full text ... it seems that even the holy sites, and in particular Al-Aqsa Mosque, aren't treated with the respect that they said they will be.

Q: Do you think the Trump plan will trigger another Palestinian uprising?

A: I think the Palestinians will have to weigh their options, and how they're going to resist this brutal additional attack on their aspirations, rights and needs. I don't know how they'll do it, but I think we have to understand their position and their difficulties.

Q: Do you think the right of return for Palestinian refugees in other countries is doomed?

A: Let us see what the Arab governments will say in their Arab League meeting. As an Arab, a retired diplomat, I'll say that the Palestinians are going through extremely difficult times. They have rights that are inalienable, no matter what Mr. Netanyahu does or President Trump says. These rights won't go away. It's a long struggle. They (Palestinians) will have to choose the methods of this struggle.

I think the boycott is one of the good things the Palestinians are doing, but they have to make it smart. There are a lot of Israelis who shouldn't be boycotted; there are a lot of Jews supporting them (Palestinians) in the world. They have to take that into consideration. I think they should look at what the South Africans did and do the same.

Perhaps one thing we have the right to tell our Palestinian friends and brothers (is) to have unity. (Palestinians) have to work together and fight together.

Q: The Palestinian leadership is criticized by the Palestinian diaspora. Is this not because of the leadership's divisions and corruption? Does it not bear responsibility for the future of the Palestinian people?

A: This isn't perhaps the time to speak of the failings of some of the leaders of the Palestinian liberation movement. The liberation movement in Palestine has always been divided. It has never been one movement like it was with the Algerians. At times, they (Palestinians) have been able to work together; at other times not so much. Lately, their divisions have been a little too much.

There is a lot of unhappiness among the people about the manner in which the leadership has behaved. There is a lot of talk about corruption. Definitely this has to change. The Arab Spring has been a reality. If it has failed here or there, this doesn't mean it was a mistake or it wasn't needed. I don't think it's really over. There are legitimate aspirations, and people won't give up on their aspirations.

Q: What do you think of the European reaction to Trump's plan?

A: I think an important part of public opinion in Europe is very much aware of what's happening, and it isn't happy with what's happening to the Palestinians. But I'm sure my Palestinian friends won't mind me saying it's the level of the struggle in Palestine that will decide how much support they'll have outside, both in the Arab world and in the West.

If they raise the level of their struggle, organize themselves better, if there's unity again in their liberation movement, they'll have much more support (not only) in the Muslim world and in Europe, but also in the US. In university campuses in the US, and among young Jews in particular, there's more and more sympathy for the Palestinian struggle.

Q: Do you think we will ever see two states – one Palestine, another Israel?

A: I don't know. What I know is that Palestinians have rights that can be achieved in a two-state solution, or indeed a one-state solution, but not (under) apartheid. The Palestinians are being pushed, funnily enough by the Israelis and President Trump, to a struggle for their rights within one state.



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