

Palestinian Authority appeals to EU for resumption of financial support

Author:

Mon, 2022-05-16 22:26

RAMALLAH: The Palestinian Authority has reiterated its appeal to the EU to provide its pledged aid without conditions.

The authority is concerned about the continuing uncertainty over the EU's annual financial support for its budget despite holding several meetings with senior EU officials in recent months.

Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammed Shtayyieh, who met EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell Fontelles in Brussels last week, urged the bloc to expedite the transfer of its financial support, which has been suspended for two years.

Shtayyieh pointed to a growing financial crisis caused by the drop in external support and the continuation of Israel's deductions from the tax it collects on behalf of the PA.

"We have called on the European Union to provide its pledged aid without conditions. We hope to accomplish this very soon," Shtayyieh said at the start of the Palestinian Authority's weekly Cabinet session on Monday in Ramallah.

The EU postponed the transfer of \$223 million in annual aid to the PA after EU members supported Hungary's condition to change the curriculum in West Bank schools because it "contains incitement against Israel and anti-Semitic content."

The EU contributed about \$156 million annually to the PA budget of which \$93 million went to pay the salaries of its civilian employees. Those workers have received between 70 and 80 percent of their salaries for five consecutive months.

The PA suffered a sharp decline in international aid to its budget from \$1.3 billion in 2013 to \$129 million in 2021.

Samir Hulileh, a Palestinian economist, told Arab News that the policy of European countries has recently been to provide direct support to the Palestinian private sector, marginalizing the PA.

"European countries continue to expand their support for the Palestinian private sector economy, but the official support provided to the Palestinian government is completely halted," he said.

"This leads to the weak performance of the Palestinian Authority in its functional role and tasks – especially with the halt to US and Arab support for it."

The value of the budget deficit had reached \$1.3 billion, Hulileh said.

At the beginning of this month, the Palestinian Authority presented a broad reform program to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee to encourage donor countries – especially EU states – to resume their financial support for the PA, a Palestinian source told Arab News.

A senior European source told Arab News: “The EU continued to support UNRWA. What remains pending is the funding to the PA, which is still stuck in Brussels.”

Nevertheless, news reports said that the EU reduced its aid to the UNRWA by 40 percent for the 2022-24 period, from \$135 million to \$82 million.

The EU said that aid could return to normal levels by changing school curricula and removing what it termed incitement materials against Israel while it continues to delay the \$156 million annual financial support to the PA.

The reduction in the EU budget comes amid intense pressure and incitement campaigns against UNRWA last year by Israeli institutions. That led the EU to condemn UNRWA’s use of educational materials, which it claimed incited hatred and violence against Israel and Jews in schools in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This was the first time the EU had condemned the UN relief agency for its curricula.

The EU demanded the UNRWA “immediately” remove the so-called inflammatory material, stating that its funding “should be conditioned” on the adaptation of educational materials to match the values of the UN that promote peace and tolerance.



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Family: Palestinian Authority covering up critic's death
Activist fears Palestinian Authority's bid to 'silence' dissent

[Iran bus drivers stage strike to protest low salaries](#)

Author:

AFP

ID:

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Mon, 2022-05-16 16:02

TEHRAN: Dozens of bus drivers went on strike in the Iranian capital Monday to protest over their living conditions following demonstrations in other cities

in past days, local media reported.

The drivers and workers of the Tehran Bus Company decried the failure to implement a decision by the Supreme Labour Council to introduce a 10 percent salary increase, reformist Shargh newspaper wrote on Twitter.

The strike comes days after Iranian media reported that a demonstrator had been killed in the southwestern Iranian city of Dezful during protests over rising food prices.

Demonstrators on Monday chanted slogans describing Tehran's mayor as "incompetent" and calling on him to resign, as seen in a video of the protest tweeted by Shargh.

Tehran mayor Alireza Zakani attended a meeting with the striking workers and spoke with their representative, Mehr news agency reported.

The authorities announced last week a series of measures to tackle mounting economic challenges, such as changing a subsidy system and raising the prices of staple goods, including cooking oil and dairy products.

Hundreds took to the streets in a number of Iranian cities to protest the government's decision, including in Tehran province, state news agency IRNA reported.

MP Ahmed Avai confirmed Saturday that one person had been killed during the demonstrations, according to the Iran Labour News Agency (ILNA).

IRNA had reported Friday that more than 20 people were arrested during the demonstrations in the cities of Dezful and Yasuj, but made no mention of any casualties.

Iran has been reeling under the effect of sanctions reimposed by the US in 2018 – exacerbated by rising prices worldwide since the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February.

The Islamic republic has witnessed several waves of protests over living conditions in recent years, most notably in 2019 after a fuel price hike. In recent months, teachers have held successive demonstrations demanding the speeding up of reforms that would see their salaries better reflect their experience and performance.



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Price protests turn political in Iran as rallies spreadIran protests 'won't end until regime falls'

[Three ports in Kuwait suspend operations due to bad weather](#)

Mon, 2022-05-16 19:27

LONDON: All maritime operations at three Kuwaiti ports have been suspended after bad weather struck the Gulf country.

Shuwaikh port, Shuaiba port, and Doha port are temporarily suspended, Kuwait News Agency reported.

Earlier, the news agency reported that navigation to and from Kuwait International Airport had been halted due to a dust storm reducing visibility across the country.

Flights later resumed operating normally at 6 p.m. after a 1.5 hour period of inactivity.

The final of the Amiri Cup has also been rescheduled due to the adverse weather conditions.

Kazma and Salmiya football clubs were due to play on Monday but will play on May 23 instead.





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Flights resume at Baghdad International Airport after dust storm halts flights
One dead, 5,000 others suffer from respiratory ailments as sandstorm hits Iraq

Britain's Prince William meets with Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed in Abu Dhabi

Mon, 2022-05-16 18:10

ABU DHABI: Britain's Prince William met newly-appointed UAE president Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Abu Dhabi on Monday to offer condolences on the death of Sheikh Khalifa.

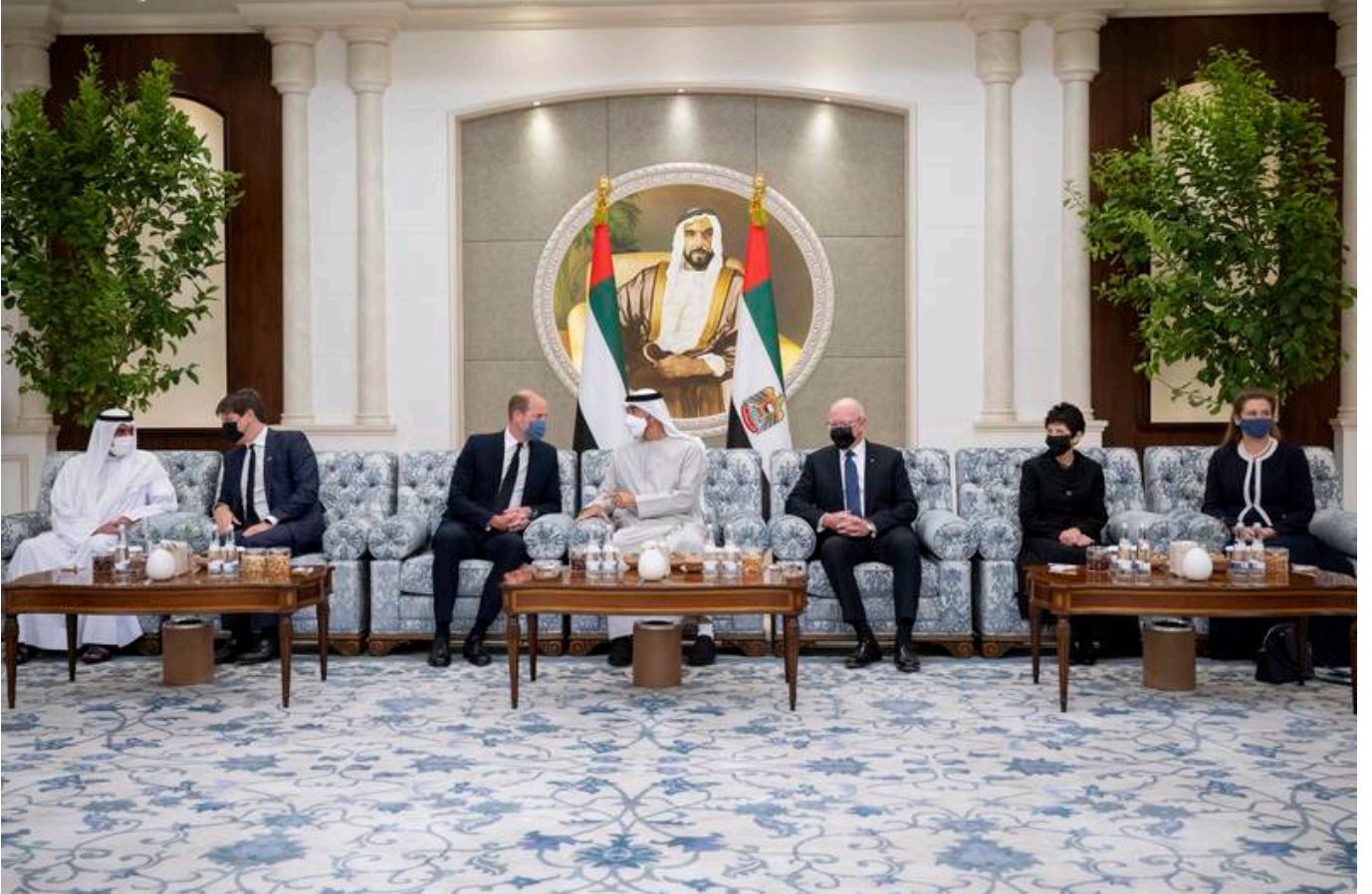
Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the former president and ruler of Abu Dhabi, died on Friday aged 73.

The Duke of Cambridge, who made the trip on behalf of Queen Elizabeth II, also offered congratulations to Sheikh Mohammed on his appointment as UAE president and ruler of Abu Dhabi.

The prince is the latest global figure to travel to the UAE capital to pay respects, following visits from other leaders including French president Emmanuel Macron and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

William's trip to the UAE capital followed a phone call to Sheikh Mohammed on Sunday from Prince Charles, Prince of Wales, who also offered condolences on the passing of Sheikh Khalifa and good wishes to Sheikh Mohammed on his appointment.

Queen Elizabeth also sent a message to Sheikh Mohamed, sharing her sadness over Sheikh Khalifa's death, adding: "He will be long remembered by all who work for regional stability, understanding between nations and between faiths, and for the conservation cause."





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New UAE president meets Macron as world leaders pay respects Saudi crown prince offers his condolences on the death of Sheikh Khalifa

[Palestinians commemorate 74th anniversary of Nakba amid outcry over funeral attack](#)

Sun, 2022-05-15 21:48

GAZA CITY: Palestinians rallied on Sunday to mark the Nakba 74 years after Israel's creation, with condemnation widespread over a police raid at the funeral of slain Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh.

Social media sites were flooded with stories from the time of the displacement in 1948 and posts commemorating the Nakba and calling for the right to return.

The annual demonstrations across all Palestinian cities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip came amid high tensions over the killing of Akleh, 51, and a series of military confrontations last month during Ramadan, which saw subsequent Israeli military incursions into Palestinian cities.

Despite the exchange of threats with Hamas, Israel reopened on Sunday its only crossing with the Gaza Strip to Palestinian workers nearly two weeks after closing it over the unrest.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas made a speech on the commemoration of the Nakba Saturday evening from the city of Ramallah.

"Staying on [the land], regardless of the difficulties, complications and brutal crimes of the occupation, is the best response to the Nakba, and to the mentality of ethnic cleansing, settlement and Judaization," he said.

Abbas added: "The great Palestinian people cannot be defeated, nor can their will be broken, simply because they have a right and a just cause that cannot be obliterated by false narratives."

The anniversary of the Nakba comes amid Palestinian condemnation of the Israeli announcement to build new units in Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

Palestinian factions and the Popular Committee for Refugees in the cities of Gaza and Ramallah organized two central marches to commemorate the Nakba.

Palestinian flags were raised at the events under the slogan "Enough of 74 years of injustice and double standards."

The march in Ramallah, in which thousands of people participated, started from the tomb of former Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and proceeded toward the city center.

The march in Gaza started from Al-Katiba Square and proceeded toward the UN headquarters in Gaza City.

Hamas issued a statement to mark the anniversary.

"There is no legitimacy for the occupation over an inch of our land, our sanctuaries, and we are on the path of comprehensive resistance until liberation and return."

The statement added: "Seventy-four years after the occupation of our land and the displacement of our people, and despite all the massacres and crimes committed by the enemy throughout its dark history, in the longest continuous occupation in the world, the Palestinian people are still steadfast on their land, adhering to their rights and... [serving as] the finest examples of heroism, sacrifice, patience and jihad."

The Palestinian News Agency Wafa issued statistics showing that the number of Palestinians has reached more than 5 million in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Jerusalem following the displacement of about 800,000 Palestinians in 1948, while the Israeli army has killed about 100,000 Palestinians since then.



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Palestinian gunman dies days after clash with Israeli troops
Israel reopens Gaza crossing after nearly two weeks