

# Palestinian parties condemn PA over UN vote withdrawal

The Palestinian Authority (PA) has been condemned by opposition political parties, including Gaza-based Hamas, over its decision to withdraw a draft resolution at the United Nations (UN) Security Council against illegal Israeli settlement activity.

A vote on the resolution was meant to take place on Monday but the item was scrapped, apparently under United States pressure, and replaced with a watered-down, symbolic statement, Al Jazeera wrote.

Reports emerged that the PA had backtracked under a deal with US officials that included promises of a financial aid package as well as the temporary suspension of announcements on new Israeli settlement units and Palestinian home demolitions.

Israel has continued to expand settlements in vi-

olation of the 1993 Oslo Accords signed by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Settlements in occupied territories are considered illegal under international laws.

"The deal that the Palestinian Authority made in return for retracting its position only means that it is continuing in the series of selling illusions to our people and being dependent on the American administration, which has been complicit with the occupation against our people and their rights for decades," said a joint statement released on Tuesday night by all major political parties.

It was signed by Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad political parties, as well as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Democratic

Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), and the Palestinian National Initiative, among others, not including the ruling Fatah party that dominates the PA.

The PA, which governs the occupied West Bank since the Oslo Accords, has not released any official statement about the reports, but local media quoted a Fatah official as saying on Monday that "the steps that will be taken by the Palestinian Authority will serve only the interests of the Palestinian people".

"This popularly, nationally, and politically rejected deal came during the escalation of the Palestinian struggle against the occupation, Israel's right-wing fascist cabinet, and its brutal behavior aimed at completely eliminating the Palestinian individual wherever he may be," the statement continues,



adding that the "approach taken by the official leadership" is having a "devastating impact on the rights and sacrifices of our people."



Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations Riyad H. Mansour addresses the United Nations Security Council meeting on the situation in the Middle East, at the UN headquarters in New York City on February 20, 2023.

● AFP

## 10 Palestinians killed, scores hurt in Israel West Bank raid



Palestinian civilians take cover during an Israeli raid in Nablus in the Israeli-occupied West bank on February 22, 2023.

● RANEEN SAWAF/REUTERS

Israeli troops on Wednesday entered a major Palestinian city in the occupied West Bank in a rare, daytime arrest operation, triggering fighting that killed at least 10 Palestinians and wounded more than a hundred people. The raid, which reduced a building to rubble and left a series of shops riddled with bullets, was one of the bloodiest battles in nearly a year of fighting in the West Bank and east Jerusalem, AP reported.

A 72-year-old man was among the 10 killed, and 102 people were wounded, Palestinian officials said. The brazen raid, coupled with the high death toll, raised the prospect of further bloodshed.

The Israeli military said it entered Nablus on Wednesday to arrest three wanted resistance fighters suspected in previous shooting attacks in the West Bank.

It said that during the raid, armed suspects "shot heavily toward the forces," which responded with live fire.

It said others hurled rocks and explosives at the troops, but there were no Israeli casualties.

An amateur video posted online appeared to show security camera footage of two young men running down a street. Gunshots are heard, and both fall to the ground, with one's hat flying off his head.

In a move that could further raise tensions, Israel's West Bank settler organization said that Israeli officials had approved the construction of nearly 2,000 new homes in West Bank settlements.

The Israeli cabinet did not immediately confirm the decision, which came just two days after the UN Security Council approved a watered-down statement opposing settlement construction. The Palestinians and most of the international community say settlements built on occupied lands are illegal and obstacles to peace.

Over 700,000 settlers now live in the West Bank and east Jerusalem, territories captured by Israel in 1967 and sought by the Palestinians for a future state.

## Putin revokes decree recognizing Moldova's sovereignty in separatist conflict

President Vladimir Putin revoked on Tuesday a 2012 decree that in part underpinned Moldova's sovereignty in resolving the future of the Transnistria region — a Moscow-backed separatist region that borders Ukraine and where Russia keeps troops.

The decree, which included a Moldova component, outlined Russia's foreign policy 11 years ago which assumed Moscow's closer relations with the European Union and the United States, according to Reuters.

The order revoking the 2012 document was published on the Kremlin's website and states that the decision was taken to "ensure the national interests of Russia in connection with the profound changes taking place in international relations".

It is part of a series of anti-Western moves announced by Putin on Tuesday. Alexandru Flechea, Moldovan chairman of the joint control commission in the security zone around Transnistria, said the cancellation did not mean that Putin was abandoning the notion of Moldovan sovereignty.

"Moldova and Russia have a basic political agreement that provides for mutual respect for the territorial integrity of our countries."

The Kremlin has said that Russia's relations with Moldova, which last week approved a new pro-Western prime minister that vowed to pursue a drive to join the EU, were very tense. It accused Moldova of pursuing an anti-Russian agenda. Wedged between Romania and Ukraine, Moldova, one of Europe's poorest nations, has been led since 2020 by President Maia Sandu with strong US and European Union backing. US President Joe Biden met her in Poland on Tuesday affirming his support. The 2012 decree committed Russia to seek ways to resolve the separatist issue "based on respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and neutral status of the Republic of Moldova in determining the special status of Transnistria". Moldova's foreign ministry said it would "carefully study" the document.



Russian President Vladimir Putin delivers his annual address to the Federal Assembly in Moscow, Russia on February 21, 2023.

● RAMIL SITDIKOV/REUTERS

## 'Equality of injustice for all': Saudi Arabia expands crackdown

A Saudi-American dual citizen living in Florida, **Almadi** had little

reason to believe his post would attract attention. He was a retired project manager, not an activist, and his words were largely factual — Prince Mohammed had taken control of many of the levers of power since his father became king that year.

By 2017, he would push aside a cousin to become heir to the throne. Yet the tweet resurfaced as

evidence seven years later when Mr. Almadi, 72, was arrested during a visit to Saudi Arabia.

Along with other Twitter posts he wrote that were critical of the Saudi government — and an "insulting picture" of Prince Mohammed saved on his phone — the tweet was cited as proof that he had "adopted a terrorist agenda by defaming symbols of the state" and "supported terrorist ideology," according to court documents. His prosecutor requested

a severe punishment, "to rebuke him and deter others."

In October, Almadi was sentenced to 16 years in prison, lengthened on February 8 to 19 years after he appealed.

Saudi Arabia has always been an authoritarian monarchy with limited freedom of speech, but 10 years ago, Almadi's Twitter account, which has fewer than 2,000 followers, might have prompted a warning or an interrogation.

Under Prince Mohammed, now prime minister, harsher punishments are being meted out to citizens who criticize their government, while the defendants on trial have become increasingly less prominent.

"The scope of oppression really is unprecedented," said Hala Aldosari, a women's rights activist who left Saudi Arabia in 2014 for a postdoctoral fellowship in the United States and said she never felt safe enough to return.



Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman speaks in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on October 24, 2018.

● BANDAR ALGALOOD/REUTERS

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Russian warship arrives for drills with S. Africa, China



REUTERS — Russia's flagship frigate equipped with new generation hypersonic cruise missiles has arrived in the South African port of Richards Bay for exercises that will include China, Russia's RIA state news agency reported on Wednesday.

South Africa was due to launch the joint exercises on Friday.

It calls the drills routine, but the drills have fuelled domestic criticism and fears they could endanger relations with Western partners.

#### US judge: 9/11 families not entitled to Afghan bank funds

AL JAZEERA — A United States judge has ruled that family members of victims of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks are not entitled to funds from Afghanistan's central bank. In the ruling on Tuesday, US District Judge George Daniels said that awarding the families money seized from the Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB) would require an assessment that the Taliban is the legitimate government of Afghanistan, a decision he was "constitutionally restrained" from making.

#### Malcolm X's daughter to sue CIA, FBI



AP — The family of slain civil rights leader Malcolm X marked on Tuesday the anniversary of his 1965 assassination by announcing plans to sue agencies including the CIA, FBI, the New York Police Department, and others for \$100 million, accusing them of playing a role in his death.

Ilyasah Shabazz, the co-administrator of her father's estate, filed notices of claim, which is the first step in the process, saying that the agencies "conspired with each other and with other individuals and acted, and failed to act, in such a way as to bring about the wrongful death of Malcolm X."