

# Thousands demonstrate against extremist Israeli cabinet



● JACK GUEZ/AFP

Tens of thousands of protesters have rallied in cities and towns across Israel for the 23rd week, protesting controversial plans by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's extremist cabinet to overhaul the judiciary as well as deadly violence

hitting Palestinian communities. The mass demonstrations, which drew some 100,000 people on Saturday, began in January shortly after Netanyahu's far-right cabinet was sworn in, *aljazeera.com* reported.

Gaining momentum and seeing large turnouts of more than 200,000 demonstrators at times, protest organisers have said they will not give up until the cabinet cancels the proposed legal changes rather than delaying them.

In central Tel Aviv, protester Michal Gat told AFP: "We're being held hostage".

## Palestinian crime deaths

Some people at the protest also held signs criticising cabinet inaction over a soaring crime wave that has affected Palestinian citizens of Israel.

Since the start of the year, some 102 Palestinian-Israelis have been killed in crime-related violence, according to Israeli media. On Thursday, five Palestinian-Israelis were shot dead at a car wash in Yafia, a town near the city of Nazareth, police said.

The protesters turned out in the coastal city of Tel Aviv on Saturday and also in other cities, including Haifa and Rehovot, respectively in the northern and central parts of the occupied territories, Press TV reported.

Israel's extremist and far-right cabinet, which is made up of Netanyahu's Likud party and its ultra-Orthodox allies, says the changes are necessary to reverse what it describes as decades-long overreach by the judiciary. Several Israeli officials have

warned that the entity is facing a "real danger" as back-to-back protests have hit cities amid bitter rifts over the extremist direction of the regime. They include Israeli president, Isaac Herzog, who has warned of "collapse" and "implosion." "We have been here... with our kids, in the rain or hot weather" for 23 weeks, a protester told AFP.

"...We need to stand and safeguard our rights and make sure that doesn't happen at all again and they don't pick up their heads and pass legislations that will change things for good," another was quoted by Reuters as saying.

Protesters also carried a poster with half the face of Netanyahu and half the face of deceased Colombian drug kingpin Pablo Escobar, reading, 'Bibi Escobar'.

Faced with overwhelming public pressure, Netanyahu announced a "pause" in his bid to enact the plan back in late March.

Last month, however, he vowed to "continue our efforts to reach understandings as broad as possible" on the judicial overhaul plan.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### EU offers aid to Tunisia to reduce migrant flows



AFP - The European Union on Sunday offered major financial support to crisis-hit Tunisia, to boost its economy and reduce the flow of irregular migrants across the Mediterranean Sea.

The North African country, highly indebted and in talks for an IMF bailout loan, is a gateway for migrants and asylum-seekers attempting the dangerous voyages to Europe.

The EU is ready to offer Tunisia a 900-million-euro package plus 150m euros in immediate support, European Commission head Ursula von der Leyen said on a joint visit with the Italian and Dutch prime ministers.

### Montenegro holds parliamentary vote



REUTERS - Polls opened in Montenegro on Sunday for a snap election many hope will bring in a new government to implement economic reforms, improve infrastructure and take the NATO member state closer to European Union membership.

The vote is the first in the former Yugoslav republic since Milo Djukanovic, former leader of the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS), lost the presidential election in April and stepped down after 30 years in power.

## Fighting rages in Sudan's capital after 24-hour truce expires

Heavy clashes and artillery fire erupted across Sudan's capital Khartoum on Sunday and residents reported air strikes soon after the end of a 24-hour ceasefire that had brought a brief lull to eight weeks of fighting between rival military factions.

Witnesses said the fighting between the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) was some of the heaviest for weeks, and included ground battles in the densely populated neighborhood of Haj Youssef in Bahri, one of three adjoining cities, along with Khartoum and Omdurman, that make up the capital around the confluence of the River Nile, Reuters reported.

Just after the ceasefire expired at 6 a.m. (0400 GMT) witnesses said clashes and artillery fire resumed in the north of Omdurman. They also reported clashes in southern and central Khar-

toum, and in Shambat along the Nile in Bahri up to the strategic Halfiya bridge, which crosses to Omdurman.

War between Sudan's army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) broke out on April 15 over tensions linked to an internationally backed plan for a transition towards civilian rule.

The conflict has displaced more than 1.9 million people, triggering a major humanitarian crisis that threatens to spill across a volatile region. Fighting has been concentrated in the capital, much of which has become a war zone plagued by looting and clashes. But unrest has also flared elsewhere including the western region of Darfur, already suffering from a conflict that peaked in the early 2000s.

Residents and activists have reported a further deterioration in recent days in El Geneina, near the border with Chad,

and new waves of attacks by Arab nomadic tribes with ties to the RSF.

Among those killed were a number of human rights activists, lawyers and doctors, according to the Darfur Bar Association, which monitors the conflict in the region.

Another affected city is El Obeid, capital of North Kordofan State southwest of Khartoum and on a major route to Darfur. Residents say it is effectively under a state of siege due to the conflict, with supplies of food and medicine cut off.

Some 400,000 of those who have fled their homes have crossed into neighbouring countries, about half of them heading north to Egypt.

The 24-hour ceasefire that began on Saturday morning was negotiated at talks led by Saudi Arabia and the United States in Jeddah. A previous, 12-day ceasefire agreed by the two sides in Jeddah had been repeatedly violated.

## Riyadh seeks cooperation ...



Saudi Arabia's Minister of Energy Prince Abdulaziz Salman Al-Saud speaks as event moderator Dan Murphy listens during 10th Arab-China business conference in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on June 11, 2023.  
● AHMED YOSRI/REUTERS

Chinese entrepreneurs and investors have flocked to Riyadh for the conference, which came days after a visit by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

In March, state oil giant Saudi Aramco announced two major deals to raise its multi-billion dollar investment in China and bolster its rank as China's top provider of crude.

They were the biggest announced since Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Saudi Arabia in December where he called for oil trade in yuan, a move that would weaken the dollar's dominance. "Oil demand in China is still growing so of course we have to capture some of that demand," Prince Abdulaziz said.

"Instead of competing with China, collaborate

with China."

The two nations' momentum has also raised prospects for a successful conclusion to negotiations for a free trade deal between China and the Saudi Arabia-dominated Persian Gulf Cooperation Council, ongoing since 2004.

Saudi Investment Minister Khalid Al Falih said any agreement would have to protect emerging Persian Gulf industries as the region starts to diversify towards non-oil economic sectors.

"We need to enable and empower our industries to export, so we hope all countries that negotiate with us for free trade deals know we need to protect our new, emerging industries," Falih said, adding he hoped a deal would soon be struck. Saudi Arabia's Foreign

Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan also lauded on Sunday the Arab world's trade and economic partnership with China, while underscoring the importance of this relation and the mutual desire to boost it.

"China is the Arab world's largest trade partner where the total volume of trade exchange between both sides reached \$430b in 2022," Prince Faisal said. "The Kingdom accounts for 25% of the total trade exchange between China and Arab countries," the minister told attendees at the 10th Arab-China Business Conference. Prince Faisal added that the volume of trade exchange between Saudi Arabia and China reached \$106b in 2022, with 30% increase compared to 2021.



A man walks while smoke rises above buildings after aerial bombardment, during clashes between the paramilitary RSF and the army in Khartoum North, Sudan, on May 1, 2023.  
● MOHAMED NURELDIN ABDALLAH/REUTERS