

# 1000 Palestinian prisoners on hunger strike to protest Israeli abuse

One thousand Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails entered a collective hunger strike late on Thursday in protest of the "Israeli prison service's aggression against prisoners", according to a statement by the Palestinian Prisoners' Club.

The Palestinian prisoners' 'National Unified Leadership' announced the surprising move hours after Israeli forces raided Palestinian inmates' cells in the Negev prison, newarab.com reported.

The strike began at 7:00 pm local time, according to the statement signed by the 'National Emergency Committee', the united leadership body of Palestinian prisoners. The statement called on Palestinians to support the strike through protests and demonstrations.

The surprising move came hours after Israeli prison service forces raided Palestinian inmates' cells in sev-

eral sections at the Negev prison. The Prisoners' Club said the raids used "excessive force" and "brutal repressive measures" against Palestinian prisoners.

The raids occurred a day after Israel's far-right security minister Itamar Ben-Gvir visited the Negev prison, in which he said that Palestinian prisoners enjoy "too much courtyard time". Ben-Gvir added that the inmates' daily one-hour courtyard time, their only chance of exposure to sunlight, "needs a way to be cut shorter", as quoted by Israeli media.

"This hunger strike announcement bypassed all accustomed stages and came surprisingly without any preparation or warning, which indicated the urgency of the situation in the occupation jails," Abdel Naser Farawneh, head of the research unit at the Palestinian Prisoners' affairs commission, told The

New Arab.

"The Israeli occupation's current offensive on Palestinian prisoners has reached a dangerous level of aggression with the increasing practice of medical neglect, solitary confinement, continuous transfer of prisoners, reduction of life conditions and the spike of administrative detention orders," Farawneh said.

"Previous attempts to pressure the occupation authorities into halting its escalation against prisoners have failed, and the latest occupation's raid of prisoners cells in the Negev prison was the final straw," he noted. "This is a well-connected escalation against prisoners' rights, serving internal Israeli political games, and our prisoners had to stand up against it."

Palestinian human rights groups also announced Thursday that Israeli forces



● X (TWITTER)

placed 75 Palestinian prisoners under solitary confinement following the hunger strike announcement. No-charge detentions. Meanwhile, nine Palestinians detained without charges under the Israeli "administrative detention" system continued their hunger strikes to protest their indefinite detention renewal.

The longest-running among them is 34-year-old Kayed Fasfus, who has been refusing food for 15 days. Fasfus was detained in May and given a six-month detention order without charges by an Israeli military court.

In 2021, Fasfus was released from a months-long administrative detention following a 131-day-long

individual hunger strike.

Earlier this year, Palestinian detainee Khader Adnan died at an Israeli hospital on the 87th day of his sixth hunger strike since 2011, protesting his repeated administrative detention. A quarter of all 5,100 Palestinian prisoners are administrative detainees held without charges under renewable detention orders.

## Trump's lawyers propose 2026 trial date in federal election case



Former US President and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump speaks during a campaign rally in Erie, Pennsylvania, US, on July 29, 2023.

● LINDSAY DEDARIO/REUTERS

Lawyers for former President Donald J. Trump asked a judge on Thursday to reject the government's proposal to take Trump to trial in early January on charges of seeking to overturn the 2020 election and to instead push back the proceeding until April 2026 - nearly a year and a half after the 2024 election, nytimes.com reported.

The lawyers said the extraordinary delay was needed because of the historic nature of the case and the extraordinary volume of discovery evidence they will have to sort through - as much as 8.5 terabytes of materials, totaling over 11.5 million pages, they wrote in a filing to Judge Tanya S. Chutkan, who is overseeing the case, nytimes.com reported. In a bit of legal showmanship, Gregory M. Singer, the lawyer who wrote the brief, included a graph that showed how 11.5 million pages of documents stacked atop one another would result in a "tower of paper stretching nearly 5,000 feet into the sky."

"Even assuming we could begin reviewing the documents today, we would need to proceed at a pace of 99,762 pages per day to finish the government's initial production by its proposed date for jury selection," Singer wrote.

Trump's aggressive request to postpone the trial in Federal District Court in Washington - a strategy he has pursued in all of the criminal cases he is facing - followed an equally ambitious proposal made last week by prosecutors in the office of the special counsel, Jack Smith, to get the case in front of a jury by the first week of 2024.

That requested date would place the trial after the November 2024 US election, in which Trump is the front-runner for the Republican nomination.

"The public interest lies in justice and fair trial, not a rush to judgment," Trump's attorneys wrote on Thursday.

## Ukrainian drone damages building in Moscow: Russia

A Ukrainian drone smashed into a building in central Moscow on Friday after Russian air defences shot it down, disrupting air traffic at all the civilian airports of the Russian capital, Russian officials said.

A Reuters witness who was in the area described hearing "a powerful explosion". Reuters images showed workers and emergency workers inspecting a damaged roof of a non-residential building which the drone hit, Reuters reported.

The Russian Defence Ministry and Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin said there were no casualties after air defences destroyed a drone which then fell on a non-residential building of Moscow's Expo Center complex in the early hours of Friday.

The Expo Center is a large spread of exhibition pavilions and multi-purpose halls, fewer than 5 kilometers away from the Kremlin.

"At about 4 a.m. Moscow time, the Kyiv regime launched another terrorist attack using an unmanned aerial vehicle on objects located in Moscow and the Moscow region," the Russian ministry said.

Air-traffic was briefly suspended at four major airports around the capital - Vnukovo, Domodedovo, Sheremetyevo and Zhukovsky - though later they reopened. Drone air strikes deep inside Russia have increased since a drone was destroyed over the Kremlin in early May.

Civilian areas of the capital were hit later in May. The New York Times reported in May that United States intelligence agencies believed Ukrainian spies or military intelligence were behind the drone strike on the Kremlin.



Investigators work near a damaged roof following a reported Ukrainian drone shot down in Moscow, Russia, on August 18, 2023.

● SHAMIL ZHUMATOV/REUTERS

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Russia bans entry to Moldovan officials



REUTERS - Russia banned entry to several Moldovan officials following Moldova's "unfriendly" decision to expel 22 Russian diplomats, the Russian Foreign Ministry said on Friday, marking a further worsening of already strained bilateral ties.

Twenty-two Russian diplomats flew out of the Moldovan capital Chisinau on Aug. 14, leaving behind a skeleton staff.

"... this unfriendly step leads to the further destruction of Russian-Moldovan relations, which are already in a deep crisis due to the actions of the Moldovan side," Russia's Foreign Ministry said in a statement after summoning Chisinau's ambassador to Moscow to express its disapproval.

#### W African militaries meet on Niger crisis



REUTERS - West African army chiefs held a second and final day of talks on Friday in Ghana's capital Accra, where they have been hashing out the details of a possible military intervention in Niger if diplomacy fails to reverse a military coup.

Military officers deposed Nigerien President Mohamed Bazoum on July 26 and have defied calls from the United Nations, the West African bloc ECOWAS and others to reinstate him, prompting regional powers to order a standby force to be assembled.

## 'Iranophobia' no longer ...

The meeting between the Iranian FM and bin Salman stands as a strong testament to both nations' steadfast commitment to strengthening their ties.

Iran and Saudi Arabia underwent an eight-year-long period of diplomatic estrangement. In the initial stages of normalizing relations, the primary focus remains on repairing and reinforcing bilateral rapport. Despite significant regional developments that warrant attention from Tehran and Riyadh, the main objective is to solidify their relations.

The Saudi foreign minister's emphasis on anticipating a visit from Iran's president to Saudi Arabia resonates as an indicator of the strides the two regional powers are taking to build confidence. The upcoming visit of President Ebrahim Raeisi to Saudi Arabia is expected to further bolster this growing trust.

Once the process of restoring relations is complete, or even simultaneously, it becomes imperative for Iran and Saudi Arabia to engage in face-to-face dialogue over the regional dynamics. Such talks should encompass

an open exchange of perspectives, a genuine effort to identify the underlying causes that led to the escalation of regional tensions in recent years, and a collaborative endeavor to resolve these issues.

As a result, the imminent prospect of Raeisi's forthcoming visit to Saudi Arabia is expected to be a pivotal moment in the relations between these two nations, and by extension, for the broader West Asian region. Many regional states have embraced the recent de-escalation efforts that have unfolded over the past months.

In the interim, the United States does not shy away from the prospect of achieving peace and security in the region. However, Americans seek a form of peace and security that aligns with their interests; otherwise, their reception might not be favorable.

In a similar vein, the US aims to synchronize the normalization of Saudi-Iran relations with its ongoing efforts to establish diplomatic ties between Saudi Arabia and Israel. This perspective forms the backdrop for the actions it set in motion during Amir-Abdollahian's

visit to Saudi Arabia. In tandem, the US secretary of state promptly engaged with their Saudi counterpart, pressuring him to elicit information about their talks with the Iranian diplomat and simultaneously pushing for Saudi-Israeli rapprochement.

Against this backdrop, a series of visits from US security officials to Saudi Arabia over recent months takes on added significance. These meetings were orchestrated to pave the way for future diplomatic ties between Saudi Arabia and Israel. Hence, the unfolding

narrative raises anticipation regarding Saudi Arabia's response to these American overtures - whether they will comply with US demands or firmly uphold their sovereignty and national interests in the face of such pressure.

Nevertheless, it's clear that the ongoing changes within the region are moving in a positive direction. Both the United States and Israel find themselves in a situation where they can no longer stoke fear in the region by highlighting Iran's capabilities, as Saudi Arabia and other Arab nations have

done in the past. Effectively, the era characterized by "Iranophobia" has come to an end, creating room for building confidence between the Islamic Republic and its southern neighbors. Amir-Abdollahian's recent visit to Saudi Arabia, involving extensive talks with the Saudi foreign minister and crown prince, serves as a powerful illustration of this evolving landscape. These negotiations signify a joint effort on both sides to lay the groundwork for more enduring and stable relations in the chapters ahead.