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www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

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Note to Editors: This is a selection of news wire reports that have been edited to be relevant for audiences for the next two weeks. You are welcome to select and publish individual items or the whole stack.

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[NEWS ITEM TEXT]

Peace in Yemen One Step Closer After Historic Prisoner Exchange

[249 words]

The Saudi-backed government forces in Yemen and the rebel Houthis completed a three-day prisoner exchange on April 16. Close to [900 prisoners](#) have been exchanged between the two warring sides through mid-April. The exchange is the result of an agreement reached in [Switzerland in March](#) as part of a round of ongoing [peace and reconciliation talks](#) between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia—the primary supporter of the Yemeni government.

The historic peace talks are seen as a result of the rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia brokered by China. A resolution toward ending the years-long war in Yemen was reportedly one of the key issues in the Saudi-Iran rapprochement.

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The prisoner exchange has been widely recognized as an important step towards peace in a war that has already claimed [over 1.5 million lives](#), according to the Houthi-backed administration in Sana'a, and displaced millions. As a consequence of the Saudi-imposed blockade, millions of people, including [at least 2.2 million children](#), have also suffered from acute malnutrition and hunger.

UN Special Envoy for Yemen, Hans Grundberg, who helped broker the prisoner exchange agreement in Switzerland, [commented](#), “This release operation comes at a time of hope for Yemen as a reminder that constructive dialogue and mutual compromises are powerful tools capable of achieving great outcomes. Today, hundreds of Yemeni families get to celebrate Eid with their loved ones because the parties negotiated and reached an agreement. I hope this spirit is reflected in ongoing efforts to advance a comprehensive political solution.”

On Prisoners' Day, Palestinians Stand in Solidarity With Their 5,000 Comrades in Israeli Occupation Jails

[230 words]

On April 16, the eve of Prisoners' Day, the Palestinian Prisoners' Society (PPS) stated that a jailed Palestinian, Khader Adnan, is in a critical state and needs immediate hospitalization. Adnan is currently on an indefinite hunger strike against his unlawful detention by the Israeli occupation forces.

Adnan, aged 45, has completed over 70 days of his hunger strike and is currently inside Israel's notorious Ramla prison clinic, despite repeated appeals to shift him to a proper hospital. The PPS [claimed](#) that Adnan is already suffering from serious health issues and “Israel's refusal to move him to a hospital aims at causing him chronic diseases that are difficult to treat later.”

Adnan has been arrested 12 times in the last 20 years and has spent over eight years altogether in Israeli administrative detention. He has been on hunger strike since the beginning of his present incarceration, in the first week of February. This is his sixth hunger strike and his longest so far.

Palestinians mark Prisoners' Day every year on April 17 to express solidarity with their freedom fighters inside Israeli prisons. According to a [joint report](#) published on the occasion, there are around 4,900 Palestinians inside different Israeli prisons, including 31 women and 160 children.

Most Palestinian prisoners face widespread atrocities from the Israeli prison authorities, including denial of family meetings, restrictions on interactions with other prisoners, and torture.

As Army and Rapid Support Forces Battle It Out, Sudanese Left Calls For Restoring the Revolution

[289 words]

As many as 60 people have been killed since fighting broke out between the Sudanese Army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on April 15. Since the fighting started, the two forces have released differing accounts of who fired the first shot.

The RSF claims that the Army carried out a series of surprise attacks against their troops and bases in locations across the country. The Army maintains that fighting began after the RSF allegedly took control of the Presidential Palace, the seat of the junta's chairman and army chief, General Abdel-Fattah Burhan.

Since then, there has been heavy gunfire in several cities, including near the Presidential Palace and the airport in Khartoum city. The violence has spilled over into residential areas, as the two are vying for control of strategic areas and facilities such as airports and bases. Civilians have been advised to stay inside, but civilian casualties have already been registered.

The violence between the two groups was sparked over disagreements regarding the timeline for the integration of the autonomous RSF into the army's command chain. The issue of integration was a key aspect of a deal that Sudan's ruling junta was to sign with right-wing civilian forces to share power with the latter.

Pro-democracy groups opposed the deal, fearing it would lead to the army retaining control with civilian faces, the same situation as before the October 2021 coup.

Speaking to Peoples Dispatch a few hours before the fighting broke out, the Sudanese Communist Party's Foreign Relations Secretary, Saleh Mahmoud, said "Both the forces, the army, and the RSF, have a mutual interest in escalating armed conflict so that it can be used as a reason to not hand over power to the civilian forces."

Philippines and U.S. Conduct Largest Ever Drills Near South China Sea

[298 words]

The largest ever U.S.-Filipino military exercise began April 11 in the South China Sea, despite massive international protests. The Balikatan (shoulder-to-shoulder) 2023 has the

participation of over 17,700 troops from the United States, the Philippines, and Australia and is set to last until April 28.

The annual military exercises have expanded tremendously, nearly doubling in size since the last series of drills, as the administration of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has sought to clear the way for an increased U.S. military presence in the country. The drills come at a time when tensions between China and the U.S., along with its allies in East Asia, are at their highest.

Meanwhile, Filipinos and peace advocates in the U.S. and the Philippines greeted the joint exercises on April 11 with protests. In Quezon City, progressive groups like Bayan, GABRIELA, and League of Filipino Students, among a dozen others rallied hundreds outside Camp Aguinaldo, the headquarters of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, just hours before the exercises began.

Diaspora Filipinos and anti-war organizations in the U.S. also organized demonstrations against the exercises under the slogan of “Hands Off Philippines.” In New York City and San Francisco, activists gathered in protest and demanded the complete withdrawal of the U.S. military from the Philippines.

Speaking to Democracy Now!, Renato Reyes, Jr., the general secretary of Bayan, stated that Filipinos do not want tensions in the region to increase. “It is not in our interest to see the conflict escalate,” said Reyes. “We want peace in the region. We want respect for our sovereignty, for our sovereign rights. We don’t want incursions from China, but we don’t want to be used as a staging ground for U.S. military intervention and hegemony in the region.”