

Turkish Kung Fu Fighter Under Fire for Displaying Palestinian Flag

ANKARA (Dispatches) – The Wushu Kungfu Federation of Europe (WKFE) has announced an investigation into a Turkish martial artist, who raised the Palestinian flag during a European championship contest in solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza amid the bloody Israeli onslaught.

The championship, organized by the continental Europe's federation for wushu kung fu, was held in December 2023 in Istanbul.

Necmettin Erbakan Akyuz, who holds six championships in the martial art, displayed a Palestinian flag after being presented with the European Championship gold medal during the award ceremony.

“Political displays were reported during the prize-giving ceremonies, reportedly initiated by individual members associated with the TWF (Turkish Wushu Kung Fu Federation). Immediate measures were taken on-site, including personal



Turkish kung fu fighter Necmettin Erbakan Akyuz holds the Palestinian flag at the European Wushu Kungfu Champion, Istanbul, Turkey, December 16, 2023.

meetings and official protests, to contest these occurrences strongly. Such actions do not align with our values and standards within the WKFE community,” read a statement by the WKFE.

It added that an internal investigation was launched to “examine these incidents, seeking clarity and understanding thor-

oughly. This inquiry aims to identify any shortcomings and enable the implementation of necessary measures. The findings will be consolidated into a comprehensive report.”

Responding to the European Kung Fu Federation's threat to strip him of his title, the 22-year-old said “I am proud of myself for the inconvenience I

caused, I do not regret it, and if I have the opportunity, I will do it again.”

“You can punish me, you can take away my championships. I don't care, I did it by risking the end of my sports career,” he noted.

Israel launched the war on Gaza on October 7 after Palestinian resistance groups carried out a surprise retaliatory operation into the occupied territories.

Concomitantly with the war, the regime has been enforcing a near-total siege on the coastal territory, which has reduced the flow of foodstuffs, medicine, electricity, and water into the Palestinian territory into a trickle.

So far during the military onslaught, the regime has killed at least 34,568 Gazans, most of them women, children, and adolescents. Another 77,765 Palestinians have sustained injuries as well.

Pressure... (Continued From Page One)

of students against the crimes of Israel is further evidence of Iran's righteousness.

“Look at what the Americans and their related organizations are doing with the oral opposition to Israel! The students of American universities did not destroy, did not shout slogans of destruction, did not kill anyone, did not set fire to any place, did not break a glass, but this is how they are being treated.

“This behavior of the Americans also showed the correctness of the position of the Islamic Republic in cynicism towards America, that is to say it backed up the “death to America” chant that you express.

“It showed everyone that America is an accomplice. They may say a word once in a while, such as compassion and the like, but it is a lie, it is contrary to reality. What one observes in practice shows America's complicity in this great crime, in this unforgivable sin with the Zionist regime.

“They are accomplices. How can one be optimistic about such a system, such a regime and trust its words? How is it possible?” Ayatollah Khamenei said.

The Leader said, “Palestine must return to its people and after the formation of the Palestinian system of governance, they should be the ones to decide whether to expel the Zionists or allow them to stay.”

Ayatollah Khamenei touched on efforts being made to normalize relations between the Zionist regime and the countries in the region.

He said even if relations are normalized between the Zionist regime and the surrounding Arab countries, the underlying problem will not be solved.

“Instead, the focus will shift towards governments that have ignored the regime's crimes by befriending it, leading to opposition from the nations against those governments,” the Leader said.

Zionists... (Continued From Page One)

most of them children and women. Student activists are demanding their institutions commit to divestment from Israeli companies and that the U.S. stops bankrolling Israel's bloody campaign.

The occupying regime of Israel is currently facing genocide charges at the International Court of Justice for its conduct in Gaza, which includes mass bombardment of civilian areas, summary executions and the withdrawal of food and other aid into the territory. Earlier on Tuesday evening, New York City police arrested dozens of pro-Palestinian demonstrators holed up in an academic building at Columbia University and removed a protest encampment the Ivy League school had sought to dismantle for nearly two weeks.

Columbia University's president, Minouche Shafik, had requested police help to remove the protesters who had occupied the institution's Hamilton Hall, renaming it after Hind Rajab, a six-year-old girl killed by Israel in January.

“With the utmost regret, we request the NYPD's help to clear all individuals from Hamilton Hall and all campus encampments,” Shafik wrote in a letter to the New York Police Department.

According to the letter, Shafik requested that police officers remain on site until May 17 to prevent a resumption of protests.

The university's decision triggered widespread condemnation with New York City Congressman Jamaal Bowman, a Democrat, condemning the police's actions.

“These are students. In no world should our kids be met with guns when using their constitutional right to peacefully assemble,” he wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter.

Likewise, Lea Salim, a student at Columbia, described the heavily armed police raid as a stain on Columbia.

“Tonight, my university called in a militarized police force - armed in riot gear, with guns drawn, deploying weapons banned under international law - to attack teenagers,” she told Middle East Eye.

“All because Columbia refuses to divest from the Israeli military and its genocidal campaign on the people of Gaza.”

UK...

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Lukas Sloothus, an academic at Sussex University, said many workers had come to show their support for the civil servants who had objected to continuing arms sales.

“We are at a unique point in our history where we can choose to stand and support genocide, or protect the people of Gaza, and the civil servants did just that,” said Sloothus.

“These civil servants chose humanity, and that is why we are here today, to support them and show that their solidarity has not gone unnoticed. Serious concerns are being raised about war crimes, and our government is not taking it seriously.”

The protest is part of a wider blockade to mark May Day, or International Workers Day, also targeting companies producing weapons and components in weapons for export to the occupying regime of Israel.

Activists were reported to have blockaded arms factories owned by BAE Systems in England, Wales and Scotland.

Last week, a UK court allowed a legal challenge over the British government's role in allowing weapons to be sent to Israel.

Palestinian human rights organization Al-Haq and the UK-based Global Legal Action Network filed the challenge in December, calling for the UK to stop granting licenses for arms exports to Israel.

The court was initially dismissed in February, but a High Court judge granted a judicial review, though the case will not be heard until October.

Last month, more than 600 British lawyers and judges, including three retired judges from the UK Supreme Court, also joined calls for an end to British arms sales to Israel.

Shiraz...

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“Today, Gaza is the scene of confrontation between an oppressed, afflicted and resistant nation and a ruthless and usurping entity. In this battle, sympathizing with the oppressed and protesting against the oppressors is the least of human duties,” they said.

Stressing that the Zionist regime's record of aggression and usurpation amounts to seven decades, the statement said what is nowadays coming to pass in the form of bravery and resistance by Palestinians in Gaza is the “volcano of pent-up anger and pain” of a nation.

“The expression of solidarity with Palestine by academics of the world, especially in Western countries, is a movement that stems from a justice-seeking, altruistic and humane nature.”

Playing victim and distorting the facts in the West's mainstream media have not been able to completely cover up the bloody scenes in Gaza, the lawmakers stated.

Expressing their gratitude to the American and European university students for supporting Palestinians in Gaza, the statement said, “Irrational violence against this rights-seeking call will not cure the pain of oppressors.”

In a post on his X social media account, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kan'ani censured the apprehension of pro-Palestine university students in the United States.

Exiled Leader: Resurgent Terror Groups in Afghanistan Will Strike West

LONDON (Arab News) – Terrorist groups in Afghanistan are regrouping in the wake of the Western evacuation from the country and will strike on U.S. and European soil, the leader of an anti-Taliban movement has warned.

The exiled leader of Afghanistan's National Resistance Front, Ahmad Massoud, said a terror attack in the U.S. or Europe is “not about a matter of if, it's a matter of when.” The Independent reported.

Massoud said circumstances in the country and the wider region resemble the pre-9/11

landscape, with terror training camps opening across Afghanistan.

Ali Maisam Naziry, the NRF's head of foreign relations, said of the resurgent groups: “The attacks in Russia, Iran and Brussels, and the neutralized attack in Germany, are examples of how fast they are moving to threaten global security.”

He added that since the Taliban's return to power in 2021, Afghanistan has witnessed a “massive influx” of foreign terrorists who belong to the more than 20 militant networks oper-

ating in the country, including Al-Qaeda, Daesh-Khorasan and the Haqqani Network.

Massoud warned that the West's commitment to Ukraine and Israel is serving as a distraction, emboldening the Taliban in the process.

Afghanistan is “no longer a priority” for the Biden administration in the U.S., he told The Independent last year.

Nathan Sales, a former U.S. ambassador-at-large and coordinator for counterterrorism, said last year: “The continued partnership between the Tali-

ban and Al-Qaeda is perhaps best seen in the fact that after the U.S. withdrawal, Al-Qaeda leader Ayman Al-Zawahiri resurfaced in Afghanistan, living in a safe house associated with the Haqqani Network, a Taliban faction that maintains close ties to Al-Qaeda and is itself a U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization.

“The key takeaway is that the Taliban felt emboldened to welcome Al-Qaeda's leader back to Kabul, and Al-Qaeda's leader felt it was safe enough there to accept the offer.”

U.S. Surgeon in Gaza: Nothing Prepared Me for Scale of Injuries

CAIRO (Dispatches) – A U.S. vascular surgeon who left Gaza after a stint as a volunteer said on Wednesday nothing had prepared him for the scale of injuries he had faced there.

Dozens of patients a day. Most of them young. Most facing complicated injuries caused by shrapnel. Most ending up with amputations.

“Vascular surgery is really a disease for older patients and I would say I had never operated on anybody less than 16, and that was the majority of patients that we did this time around,” Shariq Sayeed, from Atlanta, Georgia, told Reuters in Cairo.

“Most were patients 13, 14, 15, 16

and 17 years of age. Mostly shrapnel wounds, and that was something I have never dealt with, that was something new.”

In his stint at the European Hospital in Gaza, Sayeed said his team would deal with 40-60 patients a day. The vast majority were amputation cases.

“And unfortunately there is a very high incidence of infection as well so once you have an amputation that doesn't heal, you end up getting a higher amputation,” he said.

Around 70 percent of the surgeries he performed were on injuries caused by shrapnel, the rest mostly from blast injuries and collapsing

buildings.

Ismail Mehr, an anaesthesiologist from New York State, who led the Gaza mission, said the volunteer medics were “speechless at what we saw” when they arrived this month in southern Gaza.

Mehr is chairman of IMANA Medical Relief, a program that focuses on disaster medical relief and health care support and has provided treatment to over 2.5 million patients in 34 countries and counting.

He has been to Gaza several times in the past, but could not imagine what he saw this time: “Truly everywhere I saw was destruction in Khan Younis, not a single building

standing.”

Out of 36 hospitals that used to serve more than 2 million residents, just 10 were somewhat functional by early April, according to the World Health Organization.

Health facilities lacked medical supplies, equipment, staff, and power supplies, Mehr said. His biggest fear now is an expected Israeli assault into the southern city of Rafah, where half of Gaza's 2.3 million people have sought shelter.

“I hope and I pray that Rafah is not attacked,” he said. “The health system will not be able to take care of that. It will be a complete catastrophe.”

UK Foreign Secretary: Israeli Settlements Hinder Palestinian Statehood

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – British Foreign Secretary David Cameron says that the Israeli occupying regime's settlement expansion activities have negatively impacted the viability of a Palestinian state.

Speaking at a session of House of Lords' International Relations and Defense Committee, Cameron said the illegal settlements constructed by Israel in the West Bank were exacerbating the challenges in establishing a Palestinian state.

“It was getting harder because of the settlement-building by Israel in the West Bank, so technically creating the Palestinian state has got harder and we have to think about that,” he said, noting that the so-called two-state solution could become an “impossibility” and “consid-

ered no longer viable by either side.”

“... It's got harder, but it's not impossible ... recognition is an important part of helping to give the Palestinians a perspective towards statehood, but it doesn't create a state just by everybody recognizing it. You've got to set out the things that actually create a state: a government, its ability to govern ...,” Cameron pointed out.

The occupying regime has stepped up settlement expansion since December 2022, when Benjamin Netanyahu staged a comeback as prime minister at the head of a cabinet of hard-right and ultra-Orthodox parties.

More than 600,000 Zionists live in over 230 settlements built since the 1967 Israeli occupation of the West Bank and East Al-Quds.

The international community views the set-

tlements – hundreds of which have been built across the West Bank since Tel Aviv's occupation of the territory in 1967 – as illegal under international law and the Geneva Conventions due to their construction on the occupied territories.

Palestinians want the West Bank as part of a future independent state with East Al-Quds as its capital.

The British foreign secretary further noted that West Asia will never enjoy “long-term peace or security” without “a solution to the Palestinian question.”

On the situation in Gaza, where the Israeli military onslaught has killed at least 34,535 Palestinians, Cameron expressed deep concern and sadness over the loss of lives.