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Heart of Asia

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Afghanistan Receives 468,000 Vaccine Doses from COVAX

Afghanistan on Monday received a shipment of COVID-19 vaccine facilitated by COVAX (Covid-19 Vaccine Global Access), a partnership between CEPI, Gavi, UNICEF and the WHO.

This is the second shipment of the COVID-19 vaccine, following India's shipment of 500,000 doses.

COVAX shipped 468,000 doses of the COVISHIELD vaccine, from the Astra Zeneca Serum Institute of India, in Mumbai. It arrived at the Kabul international airport on Monday, via an Emirates flight, said a statement by UNICEF.

"Afghanistan is the first country in Central Asia to receive the vaccine via the COVAX – the facility that is set to deliver at least 2 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines by the end of 2021," according to the statement. In addition to 468,000 doses of vaccines, 470,000 syringes and 4,700 safety boxes were also part of the shipment. ... **P2**



Khalilzad Heads for Pakistan in Bid to Speed up Peace Process

US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad is expected to visit Pakistan on Monday for talks about his proposed plan to accelerate the Afghan peace process.

According to Pakistan's Daily Times, Khalilzad will meet with both civilian and military leaders during his visit to Islamabad.

This comes after his meetings with Afghan leaders and politicians in Kabul last week, and at least one meeting with the Doha leadership of the Taliban in Qatar.

Khalilzad, who is currently on a regional trip to help push for a peace deal between the two warring parties has handed over Washington's plan for the formation of a transitional government in Afghanistan to various stakeholders including ... **P3**

Blinken's Letter Will Not Change Govt Stance on Peace: Saleh



US Secretary Antony Blinken's letter to President Ashraf Ghani, in which he seeks to kick-start the stalled peace process, "may have surprised many," however, for the Afghan government, it was "not a concern" and the government will not change its stance on reconciliation efforts, said First Vice President Amrullah Saleh at an event on Monday.

In this blunt letter, Blinken proposed a

United Nations-led peace conference in Turkey aimed at forming an inclusive Afghan government with the Taliban and establishing a three-month reduction in violence that will lead to a ceasefire.

But Saleh warned that there will never be any compromise on Afghanistan's Constitution and on the people's right to vote.

The first vice president, who

addressed an event marking the 7th anniversary of the death of Marshal Mohammad Qasim Fahim, said Afghanistan will not accept "illegitimate demands" that negate the people's right to vote.

"Our relations with the West and the Americans are fundamental, but whenever our interests are violated, we inform our nation."

"We will not ignore our Constitution,"

Saleh said, adding that "we can discuss the election and the date but will never let anyone take the people's right to vote."

He said the United States can hold a conference and decide on the presence of its troops in Afghanistan or negotiate with the Taliban but added that it is the legitimate right of the Afghan government to not compromise based on others' calendar over the fate of 35 million people in Afghanistan.

"We need peace," Saleh said. "We understand that peace is a need for us. No one will stand against peace. We will make peace with dignity."

He added: "We will never accept a coerced and imposed peace."

Echoing President Ashraf Ghani's recent remarks, Saleh said the republic's side is ready to agree on the date of the election "if the Taliban agree on the principle of elections with us."

"We will never bow to a deal by some individuals that endangers the system, our achievements and the people's right to vote," Saleh said.

At the same event, Abdullah Abdullah, the chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation, said he received the letter two days ahead of US special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad's trip to Kabul.

Abdullah cautiously supported ... **P3**

UN Seeks Leading Role for Afghan Women in Peace

The United Nations seeks a leading role for women in decision making at all levels in Afghanistan's peace process that is expected to enter a new phase in the coming weeks or months. UN in its statement on International Women's Day, says that to give Afghan women a leading role in peace, there they need support from all sectors of society as well as from the government and the international community.

This is also an opportunity to showcase the strengths of Afghanistan's women leaders in all their diversity, UN says, adding that when today's women leaders are respected and ... **P3**



President Ghani Calls on Pakistan to End Undeclared War in Afghanistan

Following Afghan officials' criticism of Pakistan, President Ghani says Islamabad must end this undeclared war and accept a free, independent and democratic Afghanistan.

President Ghani on Monday addressed the closing ceremony of the "Safe and Stability" regional conference, which was attended by a number of elders and women from the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement and the Awami National Party from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, at the presidential palace.

"The Government of Afghanistan is committed to ending the current crisis fundamentally," Ghani said. President Ghani also stressed the need to increase trade due to fundamental changes in the lives of residents on both sides of the Durand Line, adding that it is the will of both sides.

He noted that a joint transport company would be set up for



residents on both sides of the Durand Line, and that he was working closely with them.

The president also instructed the Ministry of Borders and Tribal Affairs to begin work on a major reconstruction of the tomb of Pashtun poet Ghani Khan.

President Ghani's remarks comes as

Afghan government officials have repeatedly accused Pakistan of supporting the Taliban.

On Sunday, Hamdullah Mohib, the National Security Adviser, said that talks with the Taliban would not lead to a permanent end to the war in the country, so talks should be held with the group's foreign supporters.

Afghanistan...

"The arrival of the first COVAX doses today is a major milestone. Gavi looks forward to continuing our collaboration with the people of Afghanistan and partners to ensure the smooth and equitable distribution of vaccines to those most in need. It is going to be challenging, but if we all maintain momentum and keep working together, we will defeat this pandemic," said Ricard Lacort, senior country manager Afghanistan and Djibouti for Gavi.

Sheema Sen Gupta, the UNICEF Afghanistan representative, said: "The imminent roll-out of the COVAX facilitated COVID-19 vaccine means that around 234,000 people, including teachers, will be better protected from the ravages of the COVID-19 virus."

"The Ministry of Public Health has been further enabled to fight the COVID-19 pandemic by rolling out the vaccine," said Waheed Majroh, acting Minister of Public Health. "The MoPH appreciates the COVAX facility and the international donors for their continued support. We must accelerate our efforts to ensure that all eligible Afghans are vaccinated and protected from COVID-19, as it is the most important step to put an end to this pandemic." For several months, COVAX partners have been supporting governments and partners in readiness efforts. "COVAX has built a diverse portfolio of vaccines suitable for a range of settings and populations and is on track to meet its goal of delivering at least 2 billion doses of vaccine to participating countries around the globe in 2021, including at least 1.3 billion donor-funded doses to the 92 lower-income COVAX Facility participants supported by the Gavi COVAX AMC," according to COVAX or the UNICEF.

Civil Society...

continuation of structural and systemic Islamophobia by the French government within the meanings established by European case law," said these NGOs, while explaining the reason of approaching the European Commission.

By Joseph Stepansky

Will Biden's Return to Multilateralism Extend to The ICC?

US President Joe Biden's election victory has raised the prospect of increased United States support and engagement with the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Many observers cited Biden's emphasis on multilateralism and his support for the international tribunal as ranking Democrat on the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations as positive signs.

But the Biden administration has not revoked former President Donald Trump's September 2020 executive order that imposed sanctions on ICC personnel, including prosecutor Fatou Bensouda, raising fresh questions about what policy Biden plans to pursue.

"I think there was an expectation that [the lifting of sanctions] would be automatic, and not only would the removal of the existing sanctions be fait accompli, but the actual executive order would be rescinded," said William Schabas, a professor of international law at Middlesex University in London.

The Trump-era sanctions were imposed after the two-decade-old tribunal launched an investigation into abuses committed by various actors in Afghanistan, including those by US military and CIA personnel that had been documented in previous domestic and international probes. That ongoing investigation, and the court's announcement on Wednesday that it was opening an investigation into alleged crimes in the occupied Palestinian territories, could complicate Biden's approach, observers told Al Jazeera.

Still, "there's a distinction between disagreeing with the decision of the ICC and unfairly punishing ICC officials in ugly, thuggish ways", Sari Bashi, a human rights lawyer and research director at Democracy for the Arab

World Now (DAWN), told Al Jazeera.

"Biden doesn't have to agree with every decision the prosecutor makes in order to say that the US should not be sanctioning human rights defenders."

Sanctions 'abuse'

In early February, the Biden administration had praised the ICC for convicting Dominic Ongwen, a commander of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), for war crimes committed in Uganda in the early 2000s.

Shortly after, the administration said it had "serious concerns" over the tribunal's determination that the occupied Palestinian territories fall under its jurisdiction, paving the way for its recently announced war crimes investigation that will look into the actions of Palestinians and Israelis.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the US "firmly opposes and is deeply disappointed" by the court's probe, adding the US "remains deeply committed to ensuring justice and accountability for international atrocity crimes" and recognises "the role that international tribunals such as the ICC can play".

Prior to the court's announcement, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had reportedly urged Biden during their first phone call on February 17 to maintain US sanctions on the ICC officials.

Bashi said Biden will likely be under "tremendous pressure, not only from Israel, but from Israel's allies" to maintain pressure on the ICC in light of the investigation.

In February, 80 non-governmental, faith-based, and academic organisations across the globe called on the Biden administration to remove the sanctions, which were also imposed on a senior member of Bensouda's office, Phakiso Mochochoko, and anyone who



"materially assists" the officials.

"These actions were an unprecedented attack on the court's mandate to deliver justice and the rule of law globally, an abuse of the US government's financial powers, and a betrayal of the US legacy in establishing institutions of international justice," the groups said in an open letter.

"Keeping in place the executive order authorising sanctions would be inconsistent with the new administration's laudable commitments to respecting the rule of law and pursuing multilateral cooperation in support of US interests," it said.

Prospects of change

Biden's victory in November of last year had sparked hope for a change in policy towards the ICC compared with Trump, who took an antagonistic approach to the tribunal, as he did with most international organisations. But the US historically has been largely wary of The Hague-based court, which is the only permanent court with jurisdiction to prosecute cases of genocide, international crimes, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. In 2000, former President Bill Clinton signed the Rome Statute, the governing and foundational treaty of

the court, a preliminary step in joining the treaty, which was never ratified by the US Senate. President George W Bush later "unsigned" the treaty, signifying he would not support ratification.

Joining the court, which would require a two-thirds majority in the Senate, remains an unlikely prospect. Still, relations between the US and the ICC reached a high during Barack Obama's presidency.

Brianne McGonigle Leyh, a professor at the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights at Utrecht University, said the Obama administration supported some aspects of the court's work while maintaining "an underlying belief in the superiority of the US justice system and in the pre-eminent position of the US globally". Under what it dubbed "positive engagement", the US helped turn over to the court two fugitives; supported the UN Security Council's referral of Libya to the tribunal, and collaborated with ICC members on some aspects of investigations.

"I still maintain hope that the Biden administration will return to the engaged exceptionalism that we saw under the Obama administration," McGonigle Leyh told Al Jazeera, adding however that delays ... **P3**

By XiMeng

Let's Climb over the Mountain of Poverty Together!

Before, there was a village in the mountains of Sichuan Province, China, which was called the "cliff village". It was located in a mountain col with an altitude of 1400-1600 meters. The altitude difference from the primary school at the bottom of the mountain to the village on the top is nearly 1,000 meters. The villagers had to climb a cliff with a drop of 800 meters to the outside. For hundreds of years, the villagers had been climbing this mountain. Until May 12-14, 2020, 84 poor households in "cliff Village" moved into their new homes in the county's centralized resettlement sites. They have walked out of the "cliff village" and headed towards a new world! If we say poverty is a big mountain, the Chinese people have been climbing this "big mountain" for thousands of years. Until February 25, 2021, Chinese President Xi Jinping solemnly announced at the National Poverty Alleviation Summary and Commendation Conference, China's poverty alleviation battle has been fully victorious. According to the current standards, 98.99 million rural poor people have all been lifted out of

poverty, 832 poor counties and 128,000 poor villages have been removed from poverty list, regional overall poverty has been resolved, and the arduous task of eliminating absolute poverty has been completed. The Chinese people have created a historic miracle. Eliminating poverty is a systematic project and a relay race. We are racing against time. During the two national sessions in 2017, when Chinese leader Xi Jinping talked about news report about the "cliff village", he said, "I feel very distressed watching the travel status of the villagers." Now, the villagers have finally climbed over the "mountain of poverty" and moved into their new houses in the county. There are so many villages like this. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, more than 10 million people have been lifted out of poverty every year. Recently, China's two national sessions have been successfully held as scheduled. As in previous years, representatives and members of the NPC and CPPCC have gathered together to discuss the country's future. This year also

coincides with the beginning of the 14th five-year plan. Five years by five years, the original aspiration of the Chinese party and government to strive for the happiness of the people and the rejuvenation of the nation has never changed. It should be noted that poverty still plagues many countries in the world. Even in the United States and western developed countries, there are also problems such as unbalanced ethnic development and increasing gap between the rich and the poor. China is willing to share its experience with other countries in the world and provide assistance to developing countries and regions within its capacity. The mountains that lie in front of human beings are not fearful. No matter how high the mountains are, there are roads towards the top. What is really terrible is the arrogance and prejudice that blinds people's eyes. Split or unite, retrogression or development, cooperation or confrontation, facing such problems, for the benefit of ourselves and others, I hope everyone could make the most correct choice

Afghan Businesswomen Carry on Amid Challenges



Many Afghan women are self-employed in villages across the country to support themselves and their families, but they lack sufficient income to meet their needs, say Afghan women who participated in a conference titled 'Afghan Women's Role in the Economy and Investment' on Saturday in Kabul. Participants complained that limited pay and a lack of support by the government are the major challenges they face.

"Attention is never paid to those women who are working in their homes, but their products sell well at the market," said Fatema, a member of the Afghanistan Youth Leaders Assembly. Women in the conference say they

unofficially play a vital role in the country's economy with hand-made crafts, but they make only a small profit. "Those women who make handicrafts, hand-made rugs and other crafts in rural areas of the country play a key role in the country's economy but, unfortunately, they are ignored," said Mursal Ebadi, Kabul resident. Zahra Kainat, another resident in Kabul said: "Those women who work behind the scenes like those working beside their husbands on farms or involved in other work, are not deemed important in the society."

Afghan businesswomen, despite investing great effort in their work, still enduring severe challenges as they move forward.

\$1 Billion Worth of Precious Stones Smuggled out of the Country Annually

The Afghanistan Precious Stones Association says that after 20 years, government has still not been able to stop the smuggling of precious stones out of the country.

Officials from the association say on average about \$1 billion worth of precious stones is smuggled out of Afghanistan every year.

According to them, these stones are sold on foreign markets under the name of neighboring countries.

The association has in turn accused government, especially the Ministry of Mines, of being negligent.

"If I tell you a billion dollars' worth is smuggled abroad but the government has no plans and it is very easy to take it out and no one has been introduced to any [judicial] body to be prosecuted," said Mirza Mohammad, deputy head of the association.

Officials say that if the process

of extracting precious stones is legalized and regulated, government will generate billions of dollars in revenue.

The Ministry of Mines and Petroleum says that serious measures have been taken to prevent the smuggling of precious stones.

According to the ministry new gemstone processing plants will be established in the new solar year – 1400.

"We have discussed the issue of illegal mining and smuggling with the National Security Council, and will set up two processing centers, one in Kunar and the other in Kabul," said Mohammad Aziz Gharwal, spokesman for the ministry.

Economists say that if government does not stop the looting of national assets, Afghanistan will face serious economic problems.

UN Seeks...

supported, more girls will be encouraged to follow their path.

"The peace process has brought to the fore strong Afghan women leaders, who have negotiated on behalf of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and rallied support in their communities for a peaceful solution to the conflict," said Deborah Lyons, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan. "Empowering these women and expanding women's participation will be critical to ensure a just and sustainable peace that protects the rights of all Afghans."

"Women must be at the front and center of decision-making, to achieve a peace that lasts, for a bright future for all Afghans," said Aleta Miller, UN Women Representative in Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, the Friends of Afghan Women Ambassadors' Group, a group of representatives from different countries, says that the gains made by women are preserved in a negotiated political settlement.

Khalilzad Heads...

Afghan government leaders and the Taliban.

In an interview with Ariana News on Sunday, Taliban spokesman Mohammad Naeem confirmed this and said the plan was being considered by the Taliban's leadership in Doha and that "a final decision has yet to be made in this regard."

The Afghan government also received US President Joe Biden's proposed plan for the formation of a transitional government which would include the Taliban and the convening of an international summit – similar to the 2001 Bonn conference.

In a series of tweets last week, after his visit to Kabul, Khalilzad stated that Afghanistan and the Taliban "must find a path to a political settlement and a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire."

"With all parties, I outlined our focus on Afghanistan, diplomacy, and garnering wider international support in order to help Afghans make more rapid progress on the peace process."

"In Kabul, I discussed various options/alternatives to propel the process forward."

"I was encouraged by what I heard. There is widespread support for the need to move more quickly and deliver a just and durable peace that Afghans demand and deserve," he said.

Blinken's Letter...

the US remarks in the letter and said that "although I don't want to defend the letter, there are important issues that have been brought up in it."

"No one can impose anything on the people of Afghanistan," Abdullah said. "Division, discrimination and disunity allow anything to be imposed on us."

Abdullah reiterated that the right to vote is one of the biggest achievements of Afghans that should not be compromised.

Another Afghan politician and senior advisor to Ghani, Mohammad Mohaqiq, meanwhile echoed Saleh's remarks, saying the country's achievements of the last two decades will not be ignored.

Mohaqiq said that "coercive" language and a "coerced" peace are not possible in Afghanistan.

"The weakness in the message of the US State Department is that they have not recognized Afghanistan's structure and it has coercive language and a coerced and tailored peace will not lead anywhere," he said.

He added that countries should consider Afghanistan's dignity. "When we say that the Taliban must join it is because we have a system, an army, human rights and Constitution. Why should we join the Taliban? We do not want to fight against any party to join them in mountains," Mohaqiq said.

Meanwhile, EU special envoy for Afghanistan, Roland Kobia, indirectly referred to the letter, saying in a tweet that "Afghanistan has a Constitution, had elections, held Loya Jirgas, has Joint Declaration with the US, is engaged in Doha process." He said the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has the support of the "vast majority" of the international community, and "the world in United Nations

Security Council and Geneva has committed to protect achievements and Republic."

Blinken's Letter to Ghani

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in a letter to President Ashraf Ghani seen by TOLONews put forth suggestions to the Afghan government to accelerate the peace process, including convening a UN-facilitated conference with international stakeholders, proposals to facilitate discussion between the two sides to form a negotiated settlement and ceasefire, a meeting in Turkey between both sides to finalize a peace agreement, and a revised proposal for a 90-day reduction in violence. However, along with these proposals, Blinken made clear that the United States is considering all options regarding Afghanistan, including the May 1st deadline for full withdrawal.

This letter is reportedly similar to one shared with the chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation, Abdullah Abdullah.

First, Blinken suggests that the UN should convene a meeting of foreign ministers and envoys from Russia, China, Pakistan, Iran, India and the US to discuss a unified approach to supporting peace in Afghanistan.

Second, US envoy Zalmay Khalilzad should share with President Ghani and the Taliban leaders written proposals "aimed at accelerating discussions on a negotiated settlement and ceasefire." "These proposals reflect some of the ideas included in the roadmap for the peace process," Blinken wrote. On this point, Blinken elaborated: "In sharing these documents, we do not intend to dictate terms to the parties.... Rather the documents will enable the Islamic Republic and the Taliban to move urgently to

the tasks of developing a) the foundational principles that will guide Afghanistan's future constitutional and governing arrangements b) a roadmap to a new, inclusive government and c) the terms of a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire."

Third, Blinken says Turkey will be asked to host a senior-level meeting of both sides in the coming weeks to finalize a peace agreement. Blinken urges Ghani or his "authoritative designees" to attend the meeting.

Blinken, in his fourth point, says the US has prepared a revised proposal for a 90-day reduction in violence, "which is intended to prevent a spring offensive by the Taliban and to coincide with our diplomatic efforts to support a political settlement between the two parties." He asked President Ghani to "positively consider" the proposal for the reduction in violence.

Following his outline of these suggested steps, President Ghani said in the letter that the United States has not ruled out any option regarding Afghanistan:

"I must also make clear to you Mr. President, that as our policy process continues in Washington, The United States has not ruled out any option. We are considering the full withdrawal of our forces by May 1st, as we consider other options," he writes.

Further, Blinken writes that even with the continuation of the US financial assistance to Afghan forces after an American withdrawal, he is "concerned that the security situation will worsen and that the Taliban could make rapid territorial gains" and that he shares this so that President Ghani "understands the urgency of my tone regarding the collective work outlined in this letter."

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Over 300 Million People Vaccinated Against Coronavirus Globally

More than 300 mln people worldwide have already been vaccinated against the novel coronavirus, according to TASS estimates based on government, expert and mass media reports.

Approximately 301.4 mln people have been vaccinated by now, which is 2.5 times above the number of COVID-19 infection case. Therefore, about 3.8% of the planet population was vaccinated.

About 70% of the global population should be vaccinated to achieve the herd immunity, the World Health Organization (WHO) said earlier.

The vaccination rate increased to 7.4 mln vaccinations per day during this week, compared to 4.4 mln daily vaccinations in

late February.

The top five countries account for 50% of the total figure of vaccinated individuals. Over 90 mln people have already been vaccinated in the United States, 52.5 mln in China, about 23 mln in the United Kingdom, 20.7 mln in India and 10.6 mln in Brazil.

Israel tops the list in terms of the share of vaccinated population (over 97%). Seychelles hold the second place (84.5%) and the UAE is third (65%).

Over 5 mln people (3.4% of the country populations) passed the first stage of coronavirus vaccination, Deputy Prime Minister Tatiana Golikova said on March 5. Russia ranks 12th in terms of the total number of vaccinated people.



A look at the world

20 Dead, 600 Wounded in Explosions in Equatorial Guinea's Largest City

Explosions in the Equatorial Guinean city of Bata on Sunday were caused by accident, and the latest casualty count showed at least 20 people were killed and 600 others injured, according to the country's authorities.

Sunday afternoon, at the Nkoatama military camp in Bata, explosives warehouses caught fire following the



fire at nearby farms, causing successive explosions, according to a statement from the presidency of Equatorial Guinea.

According to the country's defense ministry, the provisional toll included 20 deaths and 600 injuries, while many buildings were destroyed.

Search and rescue operations are going on. Health authorities have called on people to donate blood and encouraged volunteer health workers to help.

Located on the mainland part of Equatorial Guinea, Bata is the most populous city in the country.

However, two separate attacks at police on Sunday in Pakistani capital Islamabad and its adjacent city Rawalpindi left at least two police personnel, including an officer, killed and two others injured, police and local media said.

Deputy Inspector General of Islamabad police Afzaal Kausar said in a statement that some unknown gunmen riding on a motorcycle opened fire with automatic weapons at a police party in the Sector G-13 area of the capital on Sunday night.

A sub-inspector of police and two constables sustained injuries in the attack, said the officer.

Most Japanese Don't Want Foreign Fans to Attend Olympics: Poll



Most Japanese do not want international spectators to attend the Tokyo Games this summer amid fears a large influx of visitors could spark a resurgence in new coronavirus infections, a Yomiuri newspaper poll showed.

With organizers planning to decide on the matter by the end of the month, the survey showed 77 per cent of respondents were against allowing foreign fans to attend, versus just 18 per cent in favor.

Tokyo 2020 President Seiko Hashimoto has said she wants a decision on whether to let in overseas spectators before the start of the torch relay on March 25.

Organizers have also said they would decide on maximum capacity for spectators in general in April.

In the Yomiuri poll, 48 per cent said they were against allowing any spectators into venues and 45 per cent were in favor.

The Olympics, postponed by a year because of the pandemic, are scheduled for July 23 to Aug 8 and the Paralympics from Aug 24 to Sept 5.

Civil Society Groups Urge EU to Probe France on Islamophobia

A global coalition of 25 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) has asked the European Commission to investigate France for its state-sponsored support to Islamophobia.

In a petition to Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, these NGOs representing 11 countries have asked her to try the French government at the European Court of Justice for imposing discriminatory practices.

"France has implemented numerous laws designed to limit freedom of belief and punish the manifestation of religion," said the petition.

Speaking to Anadolu Agency, Samira Sabir from Sabir's Legal Services who submitted



the petition to the European Commission on behalf of the alliance said Islamophobia has become ingrained and mainstreamed in the European societies.

"Islamophobia is not only a widespread and serious phenomenon in right-wing circles, but it is also ingrained in the mainstream of European societies," she said.

The legal activist said that France provided an example of how state actors have institutionalized and legitimized Islamophobia through hate speech targeting Muslims.

Among the organizations who have signed the petition included Representative Council of France's Black Associations, Muslim Rights Watch Netherlands, the Islamic Central Council Switzerland, and Muslim Association for Human Rights from Spain.

"There is a widespread failure to implement EU legislation and in particular human rights related to religious integrity and the freedom to express political beliefs in France," the petition said.

It has also highlighted that French President Emmanuel Macron's plan "against separatism", which according to these NGOs merely focuses on tightening "political, ideological, theological and financial control on Muslim communities".

"There is no real or effective remedy within the French legal system to stop the ... **P2**



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