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Protests renew in Ramallah despite Palestinian PM's measures to ease economic crisis

Xinhua

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RAMALLAH, Sept. 11 (Xinhua) -- Despite Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad's declaration to introduce easing measures against the high cost of living, a new demonstration was organized in the city of Ramallah Tuesday night calling for the immediate end of the economic crisis.

In Ramallah, hundreds of angry protesters marched towards the headquarters of President Mahmoud Abbas. They held banners calling for a final resolution to the economic crisis.

Witnesses in the West Bank city of Bethlehem also said protesters set fire to symbolic copies of the Oslo peace accords and Paris economy accord, which were signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1993 and 1995, respectively.

Earlier on Tuesday, Fayyad, who held an emergent cabinet meeting to find solutions to the crisis, told reporters his cabinet decided to take practical measures to ease people's outrage.

He said the cabinet decided to bring the prices of fuel products back to its normal prices, and to reduce the VAT taxes to 15 percent.

"The cabinet decided to strengthen the observation on the prices of basic products and punish those who try to rise it, and also to resume the dialogue with employees unions to decide the limit of average monthly income," said Fayyad.

Meanwhile, Abbas, who is currently visiting India, said in a press statement published by the state-run Wafa news agency that he backs Fayyad's decisions.

Abbas called on all factions to back Fayyad's measures and pay attention to the Palestinian bid for the United Nations recognition for Palestine as a non-member state.

However, the youths groups rejected Fayyad's declaration, considering that the measures "are not enough and doesn't give the minimum needs of the populations."

Ali Ebidat, one leader of the youths groups, told Xinhua that " the measures that Fayyad declared to ease the hard living conditions are not enough and aim at ending the popular protests that have been going on for more than ten days."

Mo'tasem Eshteyeh, another young activist, said that Fayyad's declaration "was only made to keep people silent."

Various factions in the PLO announced in a joint press release that they support the popular protests against the high cost of living, stressing that the protests must be peaceful.

They called on the protestors not to vandalize the public properties and be united, adding that "the Palestinians should get freed from the ill and weak treaties signed with Israel which gave Israel a control of 60 percent of the West Bank."

After his declaration, Fayyad met with leaders of various unions and briefed them on the easing measures. However, the Palestinian unions leaders expressed dissatisfaction, saying that his measures are not enough and a real change has to be done to end the crisis.

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