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"Let us be alert to the season in which we are living. It is the season of the Blessed Hope, calling for us to cut our ties with the world and build ourselves on this One who will soon appear. He is our hope—a Blessed Hope enabling us to rise above our times and fix our gaze upon Him." Tozer

The Rise Of Gog? Putin Positions Himself To Influence Russia For Life

By Aaron Kesel/Activist Post January 17, 2020

The entire Russian government led by former Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev resigned after Russian President Vladimir Putin gave a speech on constitutional reform, Reuters reported. Medvedev said, this was "to give President Vladimir Putin room to carry out the changes he wants to make to the constitution."

Medvedev stated the constitutional reforms presented by Putin would make significant changes to the country's balance of power and so "the government in its current form has resigned".

"All further decisions will be taken by the president," Medvedev added.

The announcement came during Putin's annual state of the nation address during which he proposed changes to the Russian constitution that would give Parliament a more powerful role.

The changes Putin proposed to the Russian constitution will give more authority to parliament, including the power to choose the prime minister and senior cabinet members, instead of the president as under the current system.

Further changes include enhancing the role of regional governors, tightening the residency requirements for presidential candidates and other top officials, and giving the Federation Council, Russia's upper chamber, powers over the appointment of security officials.

"Today in our society there is a clear demand for change," Putin said during his address. "People want development, they are striving to move forward in their careers, in their education, in becoming prosperous."

The package of reforms will be presented as a national vote, Putin added, without specifying when that vote will occur.

"I consider it necessary to conduct a vote by the country's citizens on an entire package of proposed amendments to the country's constitution," Putin said.

"We will be able to build a strong prosperous Russia only on the basis of respect for public opinion," Putin added.

The move is intended according to many for Putin to retain power after the end of his presidency in 2024.

"It's not clear what role he will play, what will his status be. The only thing which is clear is that he will keep his role as the No. 1 person," Alexey Chesnakov, a political analyst who previously served as a Kremlin aide, told The Wall Street Journal.

There has been long speculation about potential changes to Russia's political system that would allow Putin to stay on after 2024, when he is currently required to step down.

However, that might not be the case anymore with reform leading many to believe this is a way for Putin to continue ruling Russia after his fourth Kremlin term, perhaps as a behind-the-scenes role.

This could make Putin Russia's President or shadow leader for life (or at least until he dies).

The former KGB operative has been in power for more than 20 years, longer than any other Russian or Soviet leader since Josef Stalin, who led from 1924 until his death in 1953.

Isolated Iran leader lashes out at Europe as nations join US in ramping up pressure

By Adam Shaw | Fox News

Iran calls the attack that injured 11 U.S. service members a blow to America's image and 'clown' President Trump.

Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei on Friday lashed out at Germany, the U.K. and France, calling them the "footmen of the U.S.," days after the European countries moved to sanction the Islamic Republic for violating the controversial 2015 nuclear deal.

"The threat of the French & German governments & the vicious British govt to send Iran's case to the Security Council proved once again that they are the footmen of the US," Khamenei said on Twitter. "These 3 countries are the ones who helped [former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein] as much as they could in his war against us."

The three countries, which are members of the coalition that penned the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015, on Tuesday had formally accused Iran of breaching the Obama-era nuclear deal, beginning a process that could result in the U.N. restoring sanctions on the rogue regime.

"We do this in good faith with the overarching objective of preserving the JCPOA and in the sincere hope of finding a way forward to resolve the impasse through constructive diplomatic dialogue while preserving the agreement and remaining within its framework," the three countries' foreign ministers said in a statement.

The ministers accused Iran of breaking "key restrictions," including most recently a limit on the number of centrifuges and enrichment. Iran has been vocal in threatening to break the deal since the U.S. departure in 2018, leading to fears in Europe that the time needed by Iran to produce a nuke is getting shorter. The countries, therefore, referred the matter to the Joint Commission under the Dispute Resolution Mechanism.

"In doing so, our three countries are not joining a campaign to implement maximum pressure against Iran. Our hope is to bring Iran back into full compliance with its commitments under the JCPOA," they said in the statement.

But Khamenei showed no sign of softening his stance. In response, he rehashed claims about how those governments helped Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq and accused them of being terrorists in different

clothes.

“Even when these governments negotiate, their negotiations are mixed with deception. The same people who appear at the negotiating table – the same so called 'gentlemen' behind the table – are the same terrorists of the Baghdad airport. They just change clothes,” he said.

The European decision to trigger the dispute mechanism comes amid growing pressure from the U.S. on Iran. The Trump administration killed Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the head of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Forces, in a strike in Baghdad, days after Iranian-backed militia supporters stormed the U.S. embassy. Iran followed up with a strike on bases on Iraq housing U.S. troops, but it resulted in no deaths or injuries.

The U.S. subsequently responded with a fresh wave of economic and diplomatic sanctions against Tehran’s already faltering economy. Those are on top of the series of sanctions imposed by the U.S. since it pulled out of the JCPoA in 2018.

European countries objected to the U.S. decision to pull out of the compact, and have tried to keep the accord alive. But with Iran’s violations, that support has been wavering. U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson said last week that the deal should be replaced by a new deal negotiated by President Trump.

The Ayatollah’s rant came hours after he conducted Friday prayers in Tehran for the first time since 2012, and used the platform to rip into the U.S. for its aggressive stance on Iran.

“These contemptible governments are waiting to bring the Iranian nation to its knees,” Khamenei said. “America, who is your elder, your leader, and your master, was not able to bring the Iranian nation to its knees. You are too small to bring the Iranian nation to its knees.”

He appeared to mock Trump and others who had backed the protesters marching in the streets against Khamenei, dismissing “these American clowns who falsely and despicably say that they are standing with the Iranian people.”

Rare, 2,000-year-old Jerusalem measuring table reveals Temple Mount market

By Christopher Carbone | Fox News



After discovering a highly rare, 2,000-year-old measuring table that was once used to assess wine or olive oil containers in Jerusalem, experts believe they've pinpointed the location of a crucial ancient market near the Temple Mount. Archaeologists with the Israeli Antiquities Authority (IAA) showed off the discovery, which was made in the City of David National Park, on Monday. It is only the third artifact of its kind to be found so far in Jerusalem.

The measuring table was found along the road leading to Temple Mount, which had led them to believe ancient Jerusalem's "main agora" has been discovered.

The top part of the measuring table found at the excavation site of the 'ancient Jerusalem market'. (Ari Levi / Israel Antiquities Authority)

"When shopkeepers wanted to make sure they were working with the same standard, they used to see... the manager of the market" who owned the table, archaeologist Ari Levy told Phys.org. The finding also points to the likelihood of trade in the area, which is south of Jerusalem's Old City, according to the IAA.

The excavations are not without controversy, however, as they are seen by some Palestinians as an attempt by Israel to keep control over the area.

Levy explained in Ancient Origins that when ancient shopkeepers needed to create a vessel to hold a certain volume of liquid, they would have worked with the "manager of the Jerusalem market who owned the measuring table."

The First 2 Weeks of 2020:

- Puerto Rico-Earthquake 🇵🇷
- Australia-fire 🇦🇺
- South Korea-Bush Fire 🇰🇷
- Mexico- Volcano erupting 🇲🇽
- Alaska-Volcano is about to erupt 🇺🇸
- Guatemala-Volcano is still erupting 🇬🇹
- Indonesia- Floods 🇮🇩
- Iran and the USA- war 🇮🇷 🇺🇸
- China- Unknown respiratory disease 🇨🇳
- Saudi-Snow 🇸🇦
- Dubai-Floods 🇦🇪
- Japan-Volcano erupting 🇯🇵
- Philippines- Taal volcano erupting 🇵🇭
- Multiple Earthquakes around the globe 🌍

China's Overreaching Social Credit System Makes Room for Bitcoin to Shine

by Jimmy Aki Jan 15, 2020 in (BTC) Bitcoin News, News, Regulation News



The Chinese government of today is known for several things, but perhaps one of the most prominent will be its consistent efforts to keep control of its people. By launching several initiatives, Beijing has gone well out of its way to ensure that it has its eyes all over the country.

One of the most ambitious means through which it has achieved this level of control is with a social credit system. Essentially, the

government has classified its eligible population based on their social behavior and public records, allotting them social scores that will determine their ability to access loans and other financial benefits.

China's Social Credit System Becomes Even Less Liberal

The credit system has been implemented in phases since 2009. However, a new update is expected to be rolled out this year, and according to a recent report from XinhuaNet, controls are set to be even tighter going forward.

As XinhuaNet reported at the time, the updated credit system will take factors such as 'fake' divorces, defaults on paying bank loans, acquiring multiple loans from several banks at the same time, and much more under consideration when allotting the scores.

However, one of the most important inclusions in this report is the enforcement of penalties on civil rulings. Primitive Ventures founder Dovey Wan explained in a recent tweet that the government conveniently made the definition of civil rulings ambiguous, thus creating a loophole that will enable the administration to restrict people's access to credit as they please.

This is the latest move by the Chinese government in recent months to use its authority to increase surveillance and censorship. Last October, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) announced that it had successfully deployed artificial intelligence in its bid to monitor all Internet users in the country.

As the watchdog explained, its new AI system will cross-reference the faces of users with the government database, thus helping them to ensure an absence of any nefarious online activity. Among other things, all online transactions will now be required to pass through facial recognition.

In its defense, the government claims it has its reasons for enforcing these measures. From racial profiling and human rights violations to potential threat control and Internet security, the regime has never run out of reasons to keep prying into the lives of its citizens to keep control of them.

Controlling Credit and Monitoring Transactions

However, the level of control that the government is reaching for is getting alarming, and thus comes the need for Bitcoin. The Chinese economy is strong, so cryptocurrency isn't particularly being used as a store of value. However, the ability of the digital asset to function as a medium of exchange is much needed in the country much more now, than ever.

By controlling access to credit and monitoring online transactions, the Chinese government has gained control of an important part of daily life — money. Bitcoin can provide an avenue for Chinese consumers to reduce their reliance on fiat and rid themselves of the prying eyes of the government. Bitcoin offers a level of anonymity that China can't get to it, despite its best efforts.

Cryptocurrencies offer cheaper transfers, while also providing the same level of security that users expect from traditional transaction networks. In a world where most of the online space in the country is being surveyed by the government, cryptocurrency could help citizens maintain their freedom.

The Palestinians and Europe's Secret Agenda

gatestoneinstitute.org

For many years, the Palestinian Authority (PA) and other Palestinian parties have been reporting on a daily basis about Palestinians who are arrested by the Israeli authorities in the West Bank and east Jerusalem. These Palestinians are arrested on suspicion of involvement in anti-Israel security offences. There is nothing unusual about these arrests, which have been taking place for decades and are even publicly announced by the Israeli authorities.

While Israel apprehends Palestinians suspected of involvement in various anti-Israel activities, including terrorism, many other Palestinians are being arrested on almost a daily basis by the PA security forces in the West Bank and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. These arrests, however, are infrequently publicized by the PA and Hamas. Palestinians learn about the arrests by the PA and Hamas from social media postings or non-Palestinian news websites.

The PA and Hamas do not like to talk about the Palestinians targeted by their security forces in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Why? Most of these Palestinians are arrested for their political affiliation and opinions, and not for violating the law or involvement in violence and terrorism.

Palestinian human rights organization and activists describe the detention of these Palestinians as "political arrests." That means that the Palestinians are being arrested by the PA and Hamas only for "politically motivated" reasons.

A recent report by the Human Rights Institutions Association (HRIA) revealed that in the past three months, the PA security forces have stepped up politically motivated arrests in the West Bank. The group noted that the arrests came despite PA President Mahmoud Abbas's initiative to hold new Palestinian general elections.

"Most of the political arrests that took place in the last three months of 2019 targeted political activists who participated in public political activities, including demonstrations," HRIA said in its report.

"Many arrests took place without a judicial warrant, which constitutes a blatant violation of constitutional and legal rights. According to information gathered by the researchers of HRIA, the Palestinian Authority security services arrested and summoned for interrogation 297 Palestinians during the last three months of 2019 because of their political affiliation and political activities. Forty-six political detainees are still being held without charge in Palestinian Authority prisons."

HRIA also revealed that many Palestinians detained by the PA security services have been subjected to violations of their rights. The group found that some of the detainees have been brought before Palestinian military courts although they are civilians. In addition, many Palestinian university students have been arrested by the PA security forces because of their activities on campus, including expressing their opinion on social media and organizing political events. A number of detainees have been subjected to torture, physical violence and other forms of humiliation by their interrogators, HRIA said.

"HRIA calls on the Palestinian government and security forces in the West Bank to halt political arrests and immediately release all political detainees," the group added. "We also call for ending all restrictions on public freedoms and allow political activities and freedom of expression."

Palestinian human rights activists revealed that during 2019, three detainees died in PA prisons. Two of the detainees died just in December 2019. The last detainee who died was serving a 10-year sentence on charges of selling land to Israeli Jews. His identity was not revealed by the PA security forces. A

spokesman for the PA Police only said that the deceased man was arrested in 2012 and he died two weeks after being transferred from prison to a hospital in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

In early December, the PA announced that a 60-year-old detainee died after being transferred to hospital from a Palestinian prison in the West Bank city of Jericho. The man's identity was not revealed, and it remains unclear why he was being held by the PA security forces in the first place.

In April 2019, another Palestinian man, Mahmoud Al-Hamalawi, died in a PA prison in Ramallah. His family said that he was abducted from his home by gunmen who handed him over to the PA security forces. The PA later called the family and informed them that the 32-year-old Al-Hamalawi who had been severely tortured by his kidnappers, was pronounced dead after being taken to hospital.

On January 11, the families of political detainees arrested by the PA staged a protest in Ramallah to demand the release of their sons. The families urged human rights organizations to pressure the PA to halt its security crackdown on political activists in the West Bank and said that some of the detainees were being subjected to torture in PA prisons.

This protest, like the daily arrests by the PA security forces, continue to be ignored by the foreign media and international human rights organizations. So have the deaths of three Palestinian detainees held by the PA security forces. The foreign media and human rights organizations seem quite uninterested in Palestinians who are arrested or tortured to death by PA security forces. After all, they have not been arrested by Israel for security-related offenses.

Similarly, the international community seems unmoved by the continued Hamas crackdown on political activists in the Gaza Strip. On January 12, Hamas security forces arrested Eyad Nasr, a senior official with PA President Mahmoud Abbas's ruling Fatah faction. No reason was even given for his arrest.

Like the PA, Hamas has always displayed intolerance towards political rivals or anyone who dares to voice criticism of Palestinian leaders in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Recently, Hamas arrested one of its own policemen, Hussein Qatoush, after he posted a video on Facebook complaining about the economic crisis in the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip. Hamas has also gained notoriety for arresting Palestinian comedians who poke fun at leaders or Arab states that support Hamas, including Qatar. Two of the comedians arrested by Hamas in 2019 are Ali Nissman and Hussam Khalaf.

The European Union is said to be pressuring the Palestinians to hold long overdue presidential and parliamentary elections. It is not clear, however, how the Palestinians would hold new elections at a time when the PA and Hamas are busy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip locking up their political opponents. The "political arrests" are yet another indication of human rights violations perpetrated by Palestinian leaders against their own people. Inexplicably, though, the EU appears unfazed by them. Instead of pressuring the PA and Hamas to hold elections -- that in any case neither side seeks, as it would almost certainly hand a further victory to the terrorist group Hamas -- it would be better for the EU to encourage Palestinian leaders, as a first step towards holding free elections, at least to cease and desist making political arrests. Failing to hold Palestinian leaders accountable for their human rights violations casts serious doubt on the EU's desire to hold new elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and their deeper, seemingly malign intentions for the region as a whole.

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