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PUTIN PROPOSES WORKING WITH LEAGUE ON REGIONAL SECURITY

Leaders condemn Iran interference

Opinion

War neither revived 'Kulaib' nor restored peace in Syria

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

IT was called "Arab Spring", but it later turned out to be a winter of blood, the trembles and storms that almost took down all Arab nations without exception.

Through it, extremist groups, starting from the "Muslim Brotherhood Group" and not ending with "Hezbollah", "Popular Mobilization", "al-Qaeda" and "DAESH", gained appetite to increase their spoils through bloodshed and destruction of countries.

These groups destroyed Libya, Iraq and Yemen. Regarding Somalia, the story is different. The destruction went on to settle in Syria, which has been living in incomparable hell for the past seven years.

There is no horizon left in Syria for mercenaries to enter under the pretext of liberating the nation from repression and oppression. Due to this, poverty, oppression and massacres increased to such a level that displacement, migration and death became the only way out of this miserable situation for millions of Syrians.

Despite all this, there is one person who is still striving to impose his will and portray himself to be the right one. In fact, some claim they sympathize with Syrians more than the Syrians themselves. They do not want a political solution but are instead seeking to topple the regime.

This regime is the one whose president said, "Syria is different from other countries" from the very first moment of the conflict when the country contracted the winter plague of killing and destruction.

All of those who interfered in this Arab country regarded the incident that occurred in the Syrian city of "Daraa" as their motive. They repeated what Jassas Ibn Murrah said, "Bring back Kulaib alive in order for the war to end". It however is what rendered the war to continue.

No blood brought Kulaib back to life; in fact, the war only came to an end after the parties involved were locked in a perpetual cycle of vengeance.

The war was between two cousin-tribes in the pre-Islamic Arabia. It began with the killing of a camel owned by a man named "Saad Bin Shams" who was a refugee under the protection of a woman named "Al-Basus".

These two tribes, Taghlib and Bakr, fought for roughly forty years (from 494 CE - 534 CE), which took a toll on thousands of members on both sides. We cannot help but wonder if Syria will be of the same case, given that everyone is stubborn and ignoring the obvious solution.

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A handout picture provided by the Saudi Royal Palace on April 16, shows Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz (center right), Kuwait's Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (center left), Egyptian President Abdelattah el-Sisi (right), followed by Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa (third right, behind), arriving to attend the closing ceremony of the 'Gulf Shield 1' military drills in the eastern Saudi Arabian region of Dhahran, on the sidelines of the 29th Arab League summit. (AFP)

Probe gas attack

DHAHRAN, April 16, (RTRS): An Arab League summit called on Sunday for an international probe into the "criminal" use of chemical weapons in Syria and condemned what it saw as Iran's interference in the affairs of other countries.

Saudi Arabia and Iran have for decades been locked in a struggle for regional supremacy that is now being played out in proxy wars in several countries, including Yemen and Syria.

"We stress our absolute condemnation of the use of chemical weapons against the Syrian people and we demand an independent international investigation to guarantee the application of international law against anyone proven to have used chemical weapons," said a statement distributed to journalists.

It emphasized the need for a political solution to the multi-sided Syrian war.

Support

Saudi Arabia and its allies have expressed support for Saturday's missile strikes by the United States, Britain and France against alleged chemical weapons facilities in Syria, while Iraq and Lebanon condemned the strikes.

Damascus denies using or possessing chemical weapons and called the strikes an act of aggression.

Military help over the past three years from Russia and Iran, which also backs Lebanon's Hezbollah and Shi'ite Muslim militias in Iraq, has allowed Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to crush the rebel threat to topple him.

The communique called for more international sanctions on Iran and urged it to withdraw "its militias" from Syria and Yemen.

"The summit condemned Iranian interference in the internal affairs of Arab countries, either through igniting sectarian strife or planting militias in Arab countries such as Lebanon, Iraq and Yemen, and harboring al-Qaeda terrorists," Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir told a news conference.

Iran, which denies the accusations, rejected the condemnation as the result of Saudi pressure. Russian President Vladimir Putin proposed cooperating with the Arab League on regional security, specifically in Iraq and Syria following the defeat of Islamic State militants there, according to Russian news agencies.

"The heavy shadow of destructive Saudi policies is evident in ... the final statement of the summit," Iranian state media quoted Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qasemi as saying in Tehran.

Saudi Arabia, which takes over the rotating chair of the Arab summit from Jordan, announced that this gathering would be named the "Quds (Jerusalem) Summit", a reference to US President Donald Trump's decision last year to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, which Arab states condemned.

Pledged

Delegates pledged to support the Palestinians, who want East Jerusalem to be the capital of a future Palestinian state. King Salman said Saudi Arabia was donating \$200 million to help them, including \$50 million for the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

Qatar did not send a senior official, a sign that its 10-month-old dispute with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt is still a long way from being resolved.

The four countries severed diplomatic and transport ties with Qatar last June, accusing it of supporting terrorism. Doha denies the charges and says the boycott is an attempt to impinge on its sovereignty.

MPs submit grilling request on oil

By Abubakar A. Ibrahim

Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: The Finance and Economic Committee of the National Assembly, has given nod for voluntary retirement for men who have served the nation in government service for 30 years and women 25 years without age condition.

After the meeting Rapporteur of the Committee Saleh Ashour said the committee has also permitted early retirement with at least 25 years of service if the retiree agrees to 5 percent deduction of salary for each year.

He disclosed the Committee also refused to distinguish women when it comes to their social standing during retirement whether they are divorced, married or widowed.

In another development, MPs Omar Al-Tabtabaei and Abdulwahab Al-Babtain Monday submitted an interpellation request consisting of 10 major issues.

After presenting the request, MP Omar Al-Tabtabaei said "a mafia is running the oil sector which the current minister cannot control and this is what we will reveal in our interpellation."

He added, "We will surely hold the oil leadership responsible because after the minister we will be after the head of the Supreme Petroleum Council, if these two people are not held accountable."

He pointed out their interpellation motion contains very serious nine issues including waste of public money, organizing strikes and injustice on the part of the senior officials in the oil sector. This is in addition to the Dow Chemical complete with evidence.

MP Abdulwahab Al-Babtain responded to those said why Al-Tabtabaei did not present his grilling request alone. He said: "I remind those who do not know what I said last August and sent a message to the government to read the messages of Omar Al-Tabtabaei."

He added: "Our interpellation will be called the 'interpellation of waste of billions and

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GCC seeks unified policy on domestics

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Representatives from five of the six Gulf Co-operation Council member states - the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman - met in Cairo, Egypt, on the sidelines of the 45th session of the Arab Labor Conference (ALC) and agreed to establish standard regulations on transfer of employment, contracts and minimum wage, according to thenational.ae.

The five members, which host millions of domestic workers, mostly from Southeast Asia and the Indian subcontinent - a sizeable component of the expatriate workforce - will begin work to chalk out a common policy on employment of foreign domestic workers.

Kuwait's Minister of Social Affairs and Labor, Hind Al-Sabeeh, said there was agreement on taking immediate steps to ease friction in the domestic labor market throughout the GCC.

The minister, who was elected to the board of the ALC last week, spoke of an "automated system between labor-exporting countries and GCC member states."

Although she did not go into details, the system will prevent recruiters from charging exorbitant fees.

Recruiters in the domestic workers' home countries often charge more than \$3,000 (Dh 11,000) to provide jobs in the GCC countries. Despite the high fees, the job-seekers are willing to pay since a domestic worker's salary in a GCC state compares favorably to what even of skilled workers in their home country.

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Iraqis check the damage at the site of an attack involving a moped laden with explosives against a convoy carrying an Iraqi election candidate in the city of Kirkuk, a multi-ethnic flashpoint some 250 kms (155 miles) north of Baghdad, on April 15. (AFP)

Focus on 'comfort care'

Barbara Bush in failing health



In this March 29, 2015 file photo, former US president George H.W. Bush and his wife Barbara Bush (left), speak before a college basketball regional final game between Gonzaga and Duke, in the NCAA basketball tournament in Houston. (AP)

NewsWatch

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, along with the official delegation, returned to Kuwait on Monday from Saudi Arabia where he headed the State of Kuwait delegation at the 29th Arab Summit.

His Highness the Amir before returning also attended a military exercise, the "Joint Arab Shield 1." His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received His Highness the Amir upon his comeback. (KUNA)

BAGHDAD: Iraq has executed 13 people including 11 convicted on charges relating to "terrorism", the justice ministry said on Monday.

They included individuals responsible for car bombings, "killings of security forces personnel" and kidnappings, it said in a statement, without specifying dates, locations or other details of the attacks.

The executions are the first since the beginning of the year in Iraq, which according to rights group Amnesty International put to death at least 111 people in 2017. (AFP)

BAGHDAD, Iraq: A car bomb attack targeted an election candidate in Iraq's contested Kirkuk city on Sunday, killing one person and wounding 11, a security official said.

The blast in the multi-ethnic city, some 250 kms (155 miles) north of Baghdad, Continued on Page 31

HOUSTON, April 16, (AP): Former US first lady Barbara Bush, who was reported in "failing health" over the weekend, is in "great spirits" and the family is grateful for "everybody's prayers and thoughts," her granddaughter said Monday.

Bush family spokesman Jim McGrath said in a news release Sunday that "Mrs. Bush, now age 92, has decided not to seek additional medical treatment and will instead focus on comfort care" at home in Houston following consultations with her doctors and family.

McGrath did not elaborate on the nature of Bush's health problems but on Monday said she's suffered in recent years from congestive heart failure and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. She also has been treated for decades for Graves' disease, which is a thyroid condition, had heart surgery in 2009 for a severe narrowing of her main heart valve and was hospitalized a year before that for surgery on a perforated ulcer.

Jenna Bush Hager, an anchor on NBC's "Today" show, told the program Monday morning that Bush is resting comfortably with family.

"She's a fighter. She's an enforcer," Hager said, using the family's nickname for her grandmother. "We're grateful for her, for everybody's prayers and thoughts, and just know the world is better because she is in it."

"We are grateful for her. She's the best grandma anybody could have ever had ... or have," she said.

Bush is one of only two first ladies who was also the mother of a president. The other was Abigail Adams, wife of John Adams, the nation's second president, and mother of John Quincy Adams, the sixth president.

Bush married George H.W. Bush on Jan 6, 1945. They had six children and have been married longer than any presidential couple in American history. Continued on Page 31

US\$/KD 0.29975/85
Euro/KD 0.3721
Yen/KD 0.0028
British £/KD 0.4306

KSE +11.73 pts at closing April 16
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DOW +263.95 pts at 21:50 April 16
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Nasdaq +61.09 pts at 21:50 April 16

FTSE -66.36 pts at closing April 16

Nikkei +56.79 pts at closing April 16

Gold \$1,345.90 per oz (London)

NYMEX crude \$66.20 per barrel
Brent crude \$71.38 per barrel
3-month \$ LIBOR rate 2.35281%