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Kuwait: Peace only in N-free world



Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi speaking during the conference.

KUNA photo

Opinion

Will Al-Ghanim implement Madrid speech in Kuwait?

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah
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UNDOUBTEDLY, the call made by the National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanim at the General Assembly of the 143rd Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference (IPU) is the right path to take.

He stressed the need to "be bold in dealing with the challenges that could affect the essence of the democratic system away from the sensitivity of the slogan and symbol". However, doesn't this need the one who is convinced of it to look at the reality of his country and the imbalances it suffers from that would require such boldness, and work towards fixing them?

The majority of the countries participating in this conference amended their constitutions in accordance with the requirements of the social and political development and changes, and worked on filling several gaps that appeared during the practices for decades.

However, Kuwait alone reached the point of defying the constitution, and considering it sacred and untouchable, which caused all the imbalances it continues to endure since the 1964 crisis until today. This will undoubtedly increase in the coming days as long as the root of the problem still exists.

In those countries, there is no such thing as immunization of a minister or prime minister. No interpellations, for example, get postponed until further notice. In fact, in Britain there is almost weekly grilling of the prime minister and members of the Cabinet. There are no under-the-table deals to undermine this important reform tool.

Perhaps Speaker Al-Ghanim forgot that he is one of the senior officials in the state and is directly concerned with democratic reform, by virtue of his position, which requires him to seek more liberties, revitalize the economy, and amend laws that made the country an isolated peninsula that repelled all kinds of investments.

According to Al-Ghanim, "The apotheosis of any regime, even if it bears a democratic form, is the first obstacle to revitalizing democracy and addressing its imbalances". Definitely, this needs to be interpreted into internal reform, as we cannot diagnose the disease while refraining from administering the cure for it which is in our hands.

The Speaker said, "Democracy is a means, not an end. It must be used in a correct manner to fix the defect that Kuwait suffers from".

There is an Italian proverb - "Where there is a will, there is a way". However, it seems that the will does not exist to get out of the tunnel in which we have been floundering for nearly 60 years, because there are beneficiaries of this anomaly.

These beneficiaries are the same ones who stood against the suspension of some articles of the Constitution in 1986, when the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad had succeeded in forming the National Council and dissolving the National Assembly in preparation for the renewal of the constitutional text. Had it not been for the Iraqi invasion, Kuwait might have been dozen times better now, and even preceded the neighboring countries in terms of development and openness.

Currently, Kuwait not only needs to amend and develop the Constitution, but it is in dire need of amending dozens of laws that have caused many obstacles especially to development, and made its blood scatter between the beneficiaries and the reformers.

This reality opened the ground for the consolidation of tribalism, sectarianism and regionalism in its worst forms. We saw its result in disrupting the National Assembly for more than a year due to the parliamentary overreach of the powers of the government, which was very weak in the face of the parliament.

All this can be avoided if there is pure will to liberate the country from restrictions through amending the constitution. This depends on the Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanim, if he seeks to secure a parliamentary majority for this matter.

Will Al-Ghanim implement in Kuwait what he said in Madrid?

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News watch

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait Airways declared Tuesday resumption of its commercial flights to Bangkok, Thailand, with four flights per week.

In a press statement, Kuwait Airways Director of the Public Relations, Fayed Al-Enezi, said the first flight yesterday was perfectly smooth and easy, with no delay.

Considering that Bangkok is one of the most desired tourist destinations, the KAC has decided to resume its flights to it in order to serve more passengers. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: Several prominent Kuwaiti opposition figures have returned home from a decade of self-exile after getting amnesty from the ruling Amir, a long-awaited move celebrated Tuesday that's aimed at ending the political paralysis that has burned a hole in public finances.

Faisal Al-Muslim was the latest to be greeted early Tuesday by screams of joy from relatives and supporters who had gathered at the open-air diwaniya, the all-male customary Kuwaiti gathering. Attendees in traditional white robes and checkered head-dresses crowded around al-Muslim, jostling to shake his hand.

Al-Muslim is among several opposition Islamist lawmakers who had been sentenced to prison for storming the Kuwaiti Parliament amid the Arab Spring uprisings of 2011 as the government moved to grind out dissent. (AP)

BAGHDAD: Iraq's ministries of foreign and defense affairs renewed a call upon citizens on Tuesday to report any information regarding remains of missing Kuwaitis or Kuwaiti properties.

The two ministries, in a written humanitarian appeal distributed today, urged Iraqis or any person who may possess information about burial locations of Iraqis or Kuwaitis, lost in the beginning of the Iraqi invasion (of Kuwait in 1990) or any information about the Kuwaiti properties, namely documents, the Amiri archive, and report back rapidly. (KUNA)

ANKARA: Kuwaiti MP Osama Al-Shaheen on Tuesday said he was deeply proud of Kuwait's huge role in supporting the Palestinian cause.

Speaking to KUNA on sidelines of the fourth conference of "The League of Parliamentarians for Al-Quds," MP Al-Shaheen stated that Kuwait has shown support, at the development and charitable levels, for the Palestinian cause.

He revealed that the Turkish city of Istanbul will host a meeting for the Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States on Dec. 9, adding that Palestine would be on top of the planned meeting agenda. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: The Foreign Ministry announced on Monday Kuwait's condemnation and denunciation, in the strongest terms, of Israeli President Isaac Herzog's incursion into Al-Ibrahimi Mosque in the Palestinian city of Al-Khalil (Hebron) in the occupied West Bank.

This storming act constitutes provocation to the feelings of Muslims, violation of international legitimacy's resolutions, and an attempt of Judaize the Mosque, as well as shows Israeli continued attacks on Palestinians' rights and sanctities, the Ministry said in a statement. (KUNA)

'Israel thwarts efforts'

NEW YORK, Nov 30, (KUNA): There will be no peace, security, or stability unless the world is rid of nuclear arsenal and Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), said a senior Kuwaiti diplomat.

Speaking at the Second Session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN Headquarters in New York Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi said that his country would continue to adopt measures to lessen the usage of such weapons against humanity.

He affirmed that Kuwait, as President of the current session, urged countries with influence in the region to take responsibility and join the Treaty of Non-Proliferation Treaty of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) signed in 1955.

Ambassador Al-Otaibi added that Kuwait was against the spread of all kinds of conventional and nuclear weapons of destruction, partaking in all global efforts by the UN and other organizations to halt their spread regionally and internationally.

He reiterated calls for Israel to join the NPT, underlining that the Israelis were the only group in the Middle East who refused to contribute to the region's stability due to the presence of their nuclear arsenal and stockpile.

Arab countries had contributed to the decision in 1995 to have a Middle East clear of WMDs and nuclear arsenal, indicated Ambassador Al-Otaibi, adding that 2010 review conference had ratified a work plan to implement resolutions concerning clearing Middle East from such weapons.

The Kuwaiti diplomat expressed sorrow of the lack determination in regards to clearing the region from Nuclear weapons, saying that sides like Israel specifically continue to thwart any efforts in this regard preventing reviews of the NPT in 2015 to implement the tenets of the agreement.

Tehran demands sanction guarantees

Iran strikes hard line

TEHRAN, Nov 30, (AP): Iran struck a hard line Tuesday after just one day of restarted talks in Vienna over its tattered nuclear deal, suggesting everything discussed in previous rounds of diplomacy could be renegotiated.

Speaking to Iranian state television, Ali Bagheri, Iran's top nuclear negotiator, referred to everything discussed thus far as merely a "draft." It remained unclear whether that represented an opening gambit by Iran's new president or signaled serious trouble for those hoping to restore the 2015 deal that saw Tehran strictly limit its enrichment of uranium in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions.

The United States left the deal under then-President Donald Trump's "maximum pressure" campaign against Tehran in 2018. Since the deal's collapse, Iran now enriches small amounts of uranium up to 60% purity - a short step from weapons-grade levels of 90%. Iran also spins advanced centrifuges barred by the accord, and its uranium stockpile now far exceeds the accord's limits.

President Joe Biden has said America's willingness to re-enter the deal, though the negotiations continue with U.S. officials not in the room as in previous rounds of talks since Washington's withdrawal.

"Drafts are subject to negotiation. Therefore nothing is agreed on unless everything has been agreed on," Bagheri said. "On that

basis, all discussions that took place in the six rounds are summarized and are subject to negotiations. This was admitted by all parties in today's meeting as well."

That directly contradicted comments Monday by the European Union diplomat leading the talks.

"The Iranian delegation represents a new administration in Tehran with new understandable political sensibilities, but they have accepted that the work done over the six first rounds is a good basis to build our work ahead, so no point in going back," Enrique Mora said.

Another state TV segment saw Bagheri in Vienna saying Iran demanded a "guarantee by America not to impose new sanctions" or not re-impose previously lifted sanctions.

Mohammed Eslami, the country's civilian nuclear chief, reiterated that demand in comments to Iran's state-run IRNA news agency.

"The talks (in Vienna) are about return of the U.S. to the deal and they have to lift all sanctions and this should be in practice and verifiable," he said. He did not elaborate.

The U.S. has imposed a slew of sanctions on Iran since the 1979 takeover of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran. Some eventually directly dealt with the country's nuclear program, while others targeted Tehran for what Washington describes as destabilizing actions in the Mideast.



Flight cancellations are seen on the information board at Haneda Airport in Tokyo, Japan, Nov. 30, 2021. Japan confirmed on Tuesday its first case of the new omicron coronavirus variant, a visitor who recently arrived from Namibia, an official said. Japan announced Monday it will suspend entry of all foreign visitors from around the world as the new variant spreads. Inset: A commuter in an underground tube station wears a face mask to curb the spread of COVID-19, now mandatory on public transport in Britain after the emergence of the new omicron variant, in London, Nov. 30. (AP)

EMA chief says EU ready to deal with omicron

Variant spread earlier, wider than thought

BRUSSELS, Nov 30, (AP): New findings about the coronavirus's omicron variant made it clear Tuesday that the emerging threat slipped into countries well before their defenses were up, as two distant nations announced their first cases and a third reported its presence before South African officials sounded the alarm.

The Netherlands' RIVM health institute found omicron in samples dating from Nov. 19 and 23. The World Health Organization said South Africa first reported the variant to the U.N. health agency on Nov. 24. Meanwhile, Japan and France reported their first cases of the new variant that has forced the world once again to pinball between hopes of returning to normal and fears that the worst is yet to come.

Much remains unknown about the new variant, including how contagious it might be, but a WHO official said Tuesday that there could soon be a steep rise in infections in parts of southern Africa.

It is unclear where or when the variant first emerged, and the Dutch announcement further muddies the timeline. Previously, the Netherlands had said it found the variant among passengers who came from South Africa on Friday - but the new cases predate that.

That hasn't stopped wary nations from rushing to impose travel restrictions, especially on visitors coming from southern Africa. Those moves have been criticized by South Africa and the WHO has urged against them, noting their limited effect.

The latest news though made it increasingly clear that travel bans would struggle to stop the spread of the variant. The Netherlands, Belgium and France have now all reported cases in people who were in their countries before the European Union imposed flight restrictions.

Japan announced that it would ban all foreign visitors beginning Tuesday - but that turned out to be too late. It confirmed its first case that day, a Namibian diplomat who recently arrived from his country.

German authorities, meanwhile, said they had an omicron infection in a man who had never been abroad nor had contact with anyone who was.

Day by Day

ALL countries in the Gulf exempt their citizens from housing debts, especially those who have retired from service as well as the heirs of the deceased because such debt cannot be inherited.

In Kuwait, citizens with limited income live on subsistence, and despite that, the state is pursuing them to pay housing loans.

Why doesn't the government, every year, check the list of names of the needy and exempt them from debt as is the case with the rest of the Gulf countries.

Isn't this solution better than inheriting the debt, especially since Kuwait is a country of giving and the number of these people is not big? However, when it comes to this our government acts stingy.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

China, Russia, Iran top UK threats

LONDON, Nov 30, (AP): China, which is increasingly flexing its muscles around the world, is one of the biggest threats to Britain and its allies, and a "miscalculation" by Beijing could lead to war, the head of the U.K.'s foreign intelligence agency said Tuesday.

M16 chief Richard Moore said that China, Russia, Iran and international terrorism make up the "big four" security issues facing Britain's spies in an unstable world where both countries and illicit organizations are racing to exploit fast-changing information technology.

In his first public speech since becoming head of the Secret Intelligence Service, also known as MI6, in October 2020, Moore said China is the intelligence agency's "single greatest priority" as the Beijing leadership increasingly backs "bold and decisive action" to further its interests.

Calling China "an authoritarian state with different values than ours," he said Beijing conducts "large-scale espionage operations" against the U.K. and its allies, tries to "distort

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