

# Britons Protest Delay in UK Iraq-War Report

LONDON (Press TV) — **People have gathered outside the Westminster in London to protest against a delay in the publication of a long-awaited inquiry into their country’s role in the 2003 war on Iraq, Press TV reports.**

Protesters say the report’s postponement is widely due to its criticism of former Prime Minister Tony Blair and his government over their involvement in the deadly US-led invasion of Iraq.

“It’s obvious that Tony Blair will be criticized... So, they want

to delay this as long as possible and obviously with an election... and the conservative party voted for the war... and they do really have something to hide here,” said Lindsey German with Stop the War Coalition.

Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg, who is also the leader of the Liberal Democrats party, said earlier this month that the report was being “watered down,” as Blair and other former officials were given the chance to respond to the inquiry’s findings.

However, the inquiry’s chair-

man, John Chilcot, says the wait has been caused by delays in responses from individuals.

On January 21, the British government announced that the inquiry would be published after the 2015 general elections in May.

The Chilcot report had previously been delayed by rows over its criticism of leading figures in Blair’s government and diplomatic negotiations between the US and the UK about what can be revealed from correspondence between Blair and former US

President George W. Bush.

The inquiry first started its submissions back in 2009 and concluded its gathering in 2011. It is four years overdue.

The US and Britain invaded Iraq in blatant violation of international law in 2003 over the allegation that the regime of then Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMD). No WMDs, however, were ever found in Iraq.

The war left hundreds of thousands of Iraqis dead and millions displaced.

## Saudi King Dismisses Prince Bandar

RIYADH (Dispatches) — **Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud has dismissed Prince Bandar bin Sultan from the National Security Council.**

King Salman on Thursday issued a number of royal decrees that removed or changed a number of top Saudi officials.

The new king, who succeeded the late King Abdullah last week, also removed Intelligence Chief Prince Khaled bin Bandar from his post and appointed him as his advisor.

He also sacked two of the late king’s sons from big jobs.

King Salman replaced Riyadh Governor Turki bin Abdullah with Faisal bin Bandar, and reinstated Khaled al-Faisal as Mecca governor less than two years after he was replaced by Mishaal bin Abdullah.

The new king, however, kept in place Abdullah’s other son Miteb as the Minister of the National Guard.

King Salman also reshuffled a number of posts in the cabinet, while keeping unchanged the oil, foreign, finance, defense, interior, labor, transport and economy, and planning ministers.

The 79-year-old king also eliminated a dozen councils and specialized committees while creating two main bodies for security and economy affairs.

The former king died on January 23 at



Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud (R) and Prince Bandar bin Sultan

the age of 90 after weeks of being hospitalized with a lung infection. He had suffered frequent periods of ill health in recent years.

The new monarch, who has suffered at least one stroke that has left him with limited movement on his left arm and is

believed to be suffering from Alzheimer’s, is taking over at a time when King Abdullah’s demise is expected to fuel a power struggle within the ruling family.

His succeeding to the throne also coincides with the kingdom’s grappling with dissent in the east and the region’s at-

tempting to deal with the repercussions of the terrorism funded and the extremism exported by Riyadh.

Riyadh has also turned into a butt of criticism for sending shockwaves throughout the international economy by allegedly fixing oil prices.

## London Rejects Qatari Palace Construction Plans

LONDON (AP) — **The Westminster Council has rejected plans by Qatar’s royal family to build a lavish palace in London, said to be worth £200 million.**

Matthew Rees, planning officer at Westminster city council, said on Thursday that the Qatari family’s plans to build a 17-bedroom British palace had been turned down.

Rees said the plans had been rejected due to a shortage of homes.

“Your development would lead to the loss of a housing unit which would not meet S14 of Westminster’s City Plan: Strategic Policies adopted November 2013,” Rees said in an official memo written to the Qatari family’s agents. “Negotiation could not overcome the reasons for refusal.”

Under the plan, the palace would have been built in the city of Westminster’s Cornwall Ter-

race.

It would have included 17 bedrooms, 14 lounges, four dining rooms, a swimming pool, a cigar lounge, a cinema, and a juice bar.

This comes shortly after the family purchased London’s major business district, the Canary Wharf, for £2.6 billion.

The leader of the Labour group at the Conservative-controlled authority, Paul Dimoldenberg, slammed the recent trend of

Persian Gulf billionaires buying property in the United Kingdom.

“There is no need for more multimillion-pound houses. The issue isn’t finding homes for the Qatar royal family or any other monarchy. We need to find homes for people on medium and low incomes,” Dimoldenberg said.

The Qatari royal family also has shares in the Harrods upmarket department store and the Shard skyscraper in London.

## Taliban Claims Deadly Shooting Attack at Kabul Airport



Taliban militants in Afghanistan are seen in this file photo.

KABUL (Dispatches) — **The Taliban militant group has claimed re-**

sponsibility for a deadly attack at the Kabul airport, in which a gunman shot and killed three American security contractors and one Afghan man.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid claimed the assault on Friday and said the attacker had infiltrated the ranks of Afghan forces and wore an Afghan police uniform.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, a US defense official has said that an “insider attack” was carried out at the Kabul airport on Thursday.

The official added that the victims were working for the US Defense Department, without giving further information about the attack.

Scores of US-led foreign troops have died in the so-called green-on-blue or insider attacks, where Afghan soldiers turn their guns on foreign forces in Afghanistan, since the US invasion of the Asian country in 2001.

The term green-on-blue comes from a color coding system used by the US army to refer to Afghan and foreign forces.

The US and its allies invaded Afghanistan in 2001 as part of Washington’s so-called war on terror. The offensive removed the Taliban from power, but insecurity continues across the country despite the presence of thousands of US-led troops.

## Fusion... (Continued From Page One)

military convoy was planned to resemble the occupying regime’s attack on a Hezbollah convoy 10 days earlier.

“They killed us in broad daylight, we killed them in broad daylight... They hit two of our vehicles, we hit two of their vehicles,” he noted.

“As for the casualties, we’ll have to wait and see,” he added. Six Hezbollah members and an Iranian commander were martyred in the Israeli strike. The Zionist regime has acknowledged that at least two of its soldiers were killed in Hezbollah’s retaliation, but many speculate the casualty toll to be higher.

The main difference between the two attacks was that Tel Aviv did not immediately acknowledge that its soldiers were targeted, while Hezbollah announced the occupying regime’s attack in Qunaitra moments after the strike, he said.

Nasrallah said that threats by Zionist PM Benjamin Netanyahu against the individuals who carried out the attack in the Shebaa Farms indicates that he is evading military confrontation and is seeking to track them down to assassinate them.

But if any of Hezbollah’s cadre or youth are killed, Hezbollah will respond at any place and during any time it sees fit, he added.

Zionists have discovered over the past few days that their political and military leaders are amateurs, Nasrallah added, pointing to the occupying regime’s upcoming elections. The “foolishness” of this leadership has risked great dangers for Israel, he added.

He began his speech by noting that the attack on the Hezbollah convoy revealed the unity between Beirut, Damascus and Tehran.

Nasrallah said that the martyrs of the attack reflect a “fusion of Lebanese-Iranian blood on Syrian territory, and reflects the unity of the cause and the unity of the fate of these countries”.

“When blood unites Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and Iran, then we will move towards an era of victory,” he added.

The martyrdom of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Brig. Gen. Muhammad Ali Allahdadi and Hezbollah field commander Muhammad Issa shows how commanders are present on the ground along with the fighters, he added.

And the martyrdom of Jihad Mughniyeh, son of late-Hezbollah commander Imad Mughniyeh, shows how entire families have given themselves to the resistance, he added.

Nasrallah extended his condolences to the families of the victims and blessed the fallen fighters for their martyrdom.

The party leader also expressed his respect for the eight Lebanese soldiers killed during fierce clashes with militants near Ras Baalbek last week, likening the Takfiri threat to the Israeli one.

Nasrallah called the Zionist regime a “cancerous growth” in the region which is cooperating with the militants in Syria, including the Al-Qaeda affiliate Al-Nusra Front.

“In Syria, Israel has been backing the extremist groups and shelling regime positions under various excuses,” he said, adding that the Zionist regime is “taking advantage of the divisions in the region and the complete absence of the united stances of the Arab countries”.

“Thousands of members of Al-Nusra Front are present along the border with Israel in the occupied Golan Heights. Netanyahu is not at all concerned by the presence of Al-Nusra on Israel’s border. Israel however felt threatened by Hezbollah members and an Iranian general passing through Quneitra,” he mocked.

The motive behind the attack was clear, Nasrallah said.

The occupying regime of Israel had “planned, calculated and took a premeditated decision to assassinate” the men, he added, denying claims that they were planning an attack on the Zionist regime.

Nasrallah also denounced the Arab League for its lack of support to Palestine during periods of conflict, saying it has benefited the occupying regime of Israel more than the Palestinians.

The 22-member league “is not absent”, Nasrallah contended, “but does not exist at all”.

The 50-day Israeli assault on Gaza during July and August, he added, points to the failure of Arab states to react to the assault which killed around 2,200 Palestinians, including more than 400 children.

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face of veto threats by President Barack Obama. “It looks as though the West’s stance is inconsistent and the talks are unlikely to be finalized,” Reuters quoted an unnamed oil industry analyst as saying.

The United States named nine new sanctions targets in Iran at the end of December, a move that Iran’s foreign ministry said “raises doubts about America’s intentions and violates the good will principles” of the nuclear negotiations.

Under the interim agreement of November 2013, Iran is allowed to keep exports at about 1 million bpd versus a total of 2.2 million bpd before toughened sanctions were put in place in early 2012.

## Government... (Continued From Page One)

Baqer Nobakht indicated that the government might be ultimately forced to implement the plan. The government, he said, pays out about \$15 billion (420 trillion rials) per month in subsidies.

But the buck does not stop there and government’s policies are also to blame. President Rouhani called for monetary discipline, including liquidity regulation, when he took up office.

However, new figures show government’s debt to banks grew 26.7% in the first nine months to \$35 billion (960 trillion rials).

Experts say the ballooning debt to the Central Bank and the government’s debt to banks is seriously threatening the banking system.

One strong point, however, is related to the foreign exchange reserves of the Iranian banks which rose 19% year-to-year to more than \$79 billion (2,150 trillion rials) in December.

Latest figures by the Central Bank of Iran also showed liquidity rising by nearly 15% to about \$250 billion within a period of nine months.

Muhammad Qoli Yusefi, professor of economics at University of Allameh Tabatabai, said the government’s policies are inflationary.

“Due to Iran’s reliance on oil revenues and failure to properly manage earnings and expenditures, the Rouhani administration has not succeeded yet to implement monetary discipline,” he told the Jahan-e-Sanat daily.

## Official... (Continued From Page 2)

Boroujerdi arrived in Lebanon Thursday to attend a Hezbollah ceremony later Friday in honor of six fighters martyred in a Jan. 18 strike by the occupying regime of Israel in Qunaitra in Syria’s Golan Heights.

Hezbollah Secretary General Sayyed Hasan Nasrallah was to give a speech at the 3 p.m. ceremony outlining his views on the Qunaitra attack and the Israeli shelling of south Lebanon in response to a Hezbollah revenge ambush in the Israeli-occupied Shebaa Farms.

Meanwhile, Major General Qasem Suleimani, the commander of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, visited the gravesite of Hezbollah member Jihad Mughniyeh who was buried in the Dahiya section of Beirut.

Mughniyeh was martyred in the Quneitra attack along with an Iranian general.