

UN Backtracks on ‘Political Transition’ in Syria Talks

NEW YORK (Dispatches) – The United Nations has reversed its position on the issue of “political transition” in the upcoming round of talks on Syria.

The term “political transition” is interpreted by the foreign-backed opposition as the ouster of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad or at least erosion of his powers.

Yara Sharif, the spokeswoman for UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura, initially said at a regular UN briefing in Geneva that the negotiations, due to be held in the city on February 23, would address the transition.

“I think, yes, you can use the word ‘political transition’. It is going to be a focus I guess as it has been in the past,” she answered a reporter’s question.

However, she later clarified her statement in an email.

“This morning at the briefing I was asked about the intra-Syrian negotiations and whether the issue of political transition would be discussed.”

“For clarification purposes, please note that the negotiations will be entirely guided by (UN) Security Council Resolution 2254, which talks specifically about governance, a new constitution and elections in Syria,” she added.

Since March 2011, Syria has been gripped by terrorism it blames on some Western states and their regional allies.

President Bashar al-Assad says



Syrians wave the national flag during a gathering in Aleppo’s Saadallah al-Jabiri Square on January 19, 2017, to express support for President Bashar al-Assad.

France’s support for terrorist groups operating against the Syrian government and people is a direct cause of bloodshed in the Arab country.

“The policy of France, that started from day one, has been to support terrorists in Syria, and is responsible directly for the killings in our country,” Assad told TF1 and Europe 1, respectively a French channel and a French radio network.

Assad further said his remarks were

not a mere accusation as French officials have on numerous occasions admitted that they are supporting terrorists in Syria.

“They said many times they supported the war,” said the Syrian leader. “They said that they send armaments to whom they call moderate groups, which are terrorists. They said that; I didn’t say it. The Americans said the same, the French said the same.”

The Syrian head of state further cast

doubt on the sincerity of Western states in their approach towards the crisis in Syria.

“We have to be cautious with every Western leader because they can say something and do the opposite... do something in the morning and do the opposite in the evening... They don’t have values in their policies,” he added.

Assad said the fate of the Syrian people is not for the West to determine.

Afghan Soldiers Killed in Daesh Attack in Nangarhar



Members of Afghan security forces patrol during an operation against Daesh terrorists in Kot district of Nangarhar province, February 16, 2017.

KABUL (Dispatches) – An attack by the Daesh terrorist group on army security posts in eastern Afghanistan have left seventeen Afghan soldiers dead.

The attack was carried out in

Dih Bala district of Nangarhar province, Ahmad Ali Hazrat, the chief of the provincial council, said.

Hazrat said the Daesh terrorists attacked the posts from three

directions and after several hours of fierce battles, 17 soldiers were killed.

General Doulat Waziri, the spokesman for the Afghan Defense Ministry, said army troops killed 21 terrorists in the battle.

Taliban militants assaulted several government security posts in the eastern province of Kunar in a separate attack, killing five police officers.

Police forces, aided by other security personnel, managed to repel the attackers, forcing them to flee. Provincial Governor Waheedullah Kalimzai said a sixth police officer was missing after the attack.

Kunar borders Pakistan and Taliban militants are active in the province.

The latest attacks in Afghanistan came as Pakistani security

forces shelled Daesh positions in Nangarhar following a terrorist bombing claimed by the Takfiri group that killed at least 80 people, including 20 children, in the city of Sehwan in Sindh province.

Gul Agha Roohani, the provincial police chief of Nangarhar, said Pakistan had fired several artillery rounds early on Friday into Lalpur district, near the Afghan-Pakistan border.

Pakistani officials say the Thursday attack on Lal Shahbaz Qalandar sufi shrine, as well as other recent bombings in Pakistan have been masterminded by terrorists who hide across the border in Afghanistan.

Islamabad shut down Pakistan’s border with Afghanistan following the attack, with Pakistani officials saying security operations would continue in the coming days.

Bomb Blast Kills Child, Wounds 17 in Southeastern Turkey

ANKARA (Press TV) – At least one child has been killed and over a dozen people sustained injuries after a car bomb exploded in Turkey’s southeastern province of Sanliurfa, officials say.

The bombing took place in the garden of a housing complex for judges and prosecutors in the market town of Viranşehir, about 50 kilometers north of the Syrian border, on Friday night.

The official Anadolu Agency quoted Viranşehir Governor Gungor Azim Tuna as saying that the huge explosion

killed a three-year-old child of a court clerk and injured at least 17 others. He further said that the car used in the bombing was reportedly parked near the housing complex by an approximately 20-year-old person.

“The terrorist attack was carried out by detonating the bomb-laden car via remote control. The housing complex was severely damaged,” Tuna said, adding that the wounded were not in critical condition and had been taken to a nearby hospital for treatment.

Turkish Justice Minister Bekir Bozdogan denounced the “terrorist” attack in a tweet, saying it “was carried out against not only the judiciary but also our law, our justice, our nation, and our unity.”

No individual or group has claimed responsibility for the blast yet, but Ankara usually blames militants of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) for similar bombings in the country’s southeastern regions.

Turkey has declared the PKK a terrorist organization and has banned it.

The militant group has been calling for an autonomous Kurdish region since 1984.

Over the past few months, Turkish ground and air forces have been carrying out operations against the PKK positions in the country’s troubled southeastern border region as well as in northern Iraq and neighboring Syria.

In recent years, Turkey has been the scene of many terror attacks blamed on the Daesh terrorist group and PKK militants.

accidents and six died from illness or other medical reasons.

Another 43 soldiers were seriously hurt during the course of 2016.

Most of the soldiers injured or killed were conscripted troops. A smaller portion were career soldiers, and a handful were reservists who were in service at the time of their deaths, the Israeli army said.

U.S. ...

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“Our aim is the spiritual, mental, social and economic-political, if you will - resurrection of our people, black people in America, who have been the most degraded,” he told MEE.

Muhmmad added that the broader goal of the group is to promote freedom, justice and equality of all people regardless of ethnicity.

He rejected the notion that the Nation is an exclusive organization, saying that the group enjoys good relations with Muslims in the U.S. and around the world.

“The Nation of Islam has spoken boldly on behalf of all Muslims, while at the same time understanding the unique situation where American society has placed those of us who are the descendants of former slaves,” he said.

Muhammad said enemies of change who fear the equality sought by the Nation often paint the group as hostile.

“Those who benefit from injustice certainly don’t like us and certainly don’t tell the truth about us,” he said.

Farrakhan has been quoted as saying that Jews have control over U.S. politics. He has also said that Jewish bankers financed the Holocaust by funding Nazi Germany’s Adolf Hitler.

The NOI leader, however, denied charges of anti-Semitism and said that white politicians and media personalities have also bemoaned the strength of pro-Israeli lobbies in Washington.

Muhammad told MEE that such accusations stem from Farrakhan’s defense of Jesse Jackson, an African American civil rights leader who made “unfortunate remarks” about New York City’s Jewish residents while running for president in 1984.

“These are the same lies that are told about Muslims, Arab Americans as well. We are not the only ones to be called anti-Semitic by those who are Zionist, or by those who oppose a balanced policy in the Middle East,” he said.

Muhammad added that Farrakhan has called for dialogue with Jewish organizations and asked to be shown where he was wrong, offering to apologize if proven at fault.

“These false accusations against the minister are part and parcel of Islamophobia,” he said.

The Nation of Islam advocates for black separatism. Since its inception, the group has believed that African Americans are a people without a state.

According to Muhammad, the idea of separatism stems from the yearning for full citizenship. He said African Americans largely live in their own neighborhoods already because of segregated nature of the U.S. urban and suburban terrains.

The editor said if black Americans were treated as equal citizens, there would not be a need for the Black Lives Matter movement or a struggle for the right to vote.

“We are already separate,” he told MEE. “The question is under what terms will we be separate.”

After Trump proposed his infamous Muslim ban in November 2015, Farrakhan has said that Trump would be “wise to vet” anyone coming into the U.S. from the Muslim world because U.S. policies in the Middle East have caused destruction and hatred.

Muhammad, however, said the Nation does not support Trump’s travel ban or any discriminatory policies in any way.

“No one should be deprived of their human or god-given rights. We see any unreasonable restrictions on the rights of people as being wrong,” he said.

He added that Farrakhan said the U.S. should be careful because of what it has done in the world, “lest her own evil comes back home”.

Farrakhan was due to deliver a speech to followers in Detroit on Sunday.

Several NOI members approached by MEE refused to speak on the record. One man said the group’s leadership warned attendees against talking to the media.

“A soldier always follows instructions,” he said.

EU ...

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In their joint statement, the EU and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) “reaffirmed support for the JCPOA based on their respective mandates,” the joint release read, detailing the outcome of the EU-IAEA summit.

EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini “will remain in close contact with the IAEA regarding continued implementation of the agreement” in her capacity as coordinator of the Joint Commission established under the JCPOA, the statement added.

The commission, which brings together representatives of the parties to the agreement, is tasked with monitoring its implementation.

“The EU will provide technical support to the IAEA such as equipment and training,” the statement further read.

“The EU also informed about its bilateral cooperation with Iran in implementation of Annex III of the JCPOA, particularly in the area of nuclear safety including research,” the statement concluded. Annex III addresses the issue of civil nuclear cooperation.

Mogherini on Friday separately stressed the importance of the nuclear deal, saying it was “delivering on its objectives” and underlined the need for “a full and effective implementation by all sides throughout the lifetime of the agreement.”

Such assertions by the EU and the IAEA are in contrast with the bellicose rhetoric of the administration of US President Donald Trump toward the accord. Trump has called the deal “the worst accord ever” and “one of the dumbest” ones he has come across.

Zionist Trooper Takes Own Life Near Gaza Border

GAZA CITY (Dispatches) – A Zionist trooper stationed at the border between the occupied territories and the besieged Gaza Strip has committed suicide by shooting himself, Israeli media outlets say.

Israeli news website reported that the soldier was found critically injured after shooting himself in the head late on Thursday.

The Zionist regime’s medical teams attempted to save his life but to no avail. He was pronounced dead shortly afterward.

News reports added that the occupying regime’s army has launched an investigation to uncover the reasons behind the soldier’s suicide. The identity of the trooper remains unknown.

The Israeli military announced on January 8 that suicide was the main cause of death among Zionist troops, and that 15 troopers - all of them male - had taken their own lives last year.

The army added that four soldiers were killed in the course of military operations, nine in on-base accidents, seven in off-duty car