

Iraqi Volunteer Forces Discover ISIL Bomb-Making Workshop

BAGHDAD (FNA) – The Iraqi volunteer forces (Hashd al-Shaabi) discovered another ISIL workshop used for making bombs and road mines near the city of city of Fallujah in Anbar province in Western Iraq.

Knowledge is power and it can command obedience. A man of knowledge during his lifetime can make people obey and follow him and he is praised and venerated after his death. Remember that knowledge is a ruler and wealth is its subject.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

Iraq's Ayatollah Sistani Calls for Protection of Civilians in Fallujah

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – Iraq's most respected Shia cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani has called on the military and volunteer fighters battling ISIL in the west of the country to take maximum care of civilians trapped in the city of Fallujah.

"Saving innocent people from harm's way is the most important thing," Sistani's representative Ahmed al-Safi quoted the ayatollah as saying during a Friday Prayers sermon in the city of Karbala, adding that the cleric has described protection for the residents of Fallujah even more important "than targeting the enemy."

Iraqi forces are continuing to battle Takfiri ISIL terrorists in Fallujah, a city about 60 kilometers west of Baghdad. The high-profile battle started at the order of Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi and



File photo shows Iraqi security forces standing next to a poster of Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani in the capital Baghdad.

aims to recapture the key town in the desert province of Anbar more than two years after it fell into the hands of terrorists.

Reports by the United Nations and domestic sources suggest that tens

of thousands of civilians are estimated to be still in Fallujah, prompting major concerns among rights campaigners about their safety.

Abadi said Tuesday at the onset of the offensive into Fallujah that the

Iraqi military has instructed citizens and civilians in the city and other areas to go to safe corridors.

"We hope that they would be able to reach these corridors, but if they could not they can stay in their houses and stick to their houses," Abadi said, saying his government delayed the start of operation several times to ensure the security of citizens.

Recapturing Fallujah would nearly complete Iraq's anti-ISIL offensive in the Anbar as the military and allies prepare massive operations to push terrorists out of Mosul, Iraq's second largest city in the northern province of Nineveh.

Observers say Abadi's focus on Fallujah's recapture is more of an attempt to win support amid a current political turmoil in Iraq as military commanders had recommended focusing efforts on liberating Mosul first.

'Hezbollah Won't Let Others Push Lebanon Into Chaos'



Sheikh Naim Qassem, deputy secretary general of the Lebanese resistance movement Hezbollah

BEIRUT (Dispatches) – A senior Hezbollah official said the resistance movement will never abandon Lebanon for others to push it into chaos, stressing that "the country and the resistance walk together."

"We say no to those who believe we will focus on resistance and leave domestic matters to them," Hezbollah Deputy Secretary General Sheikh Naeem Qassem said on Thursday.

"The country and the resistance walk together, and we will not leave this country for others to mess with it, rather we want to be partners in building this country," the official added.

On Wednesday, Hezbollah chief Sayyed Hasan Nasrallah said certain groups were seeking to monopolize power in Lebanon.

Hezbollah is currently helping the Syrian government drive out foreign-backed Takfiri terrorists from the country.

In doing so, the movement says it is trying to prevent the Syrian conflict from spilling over to Lebanon and keep Takfiri terrorists at bay.

Daesh and al-Nusra Front terrorists have been active on the outskirts of the Lebanese town of Arsal, located on the border with Syria.

The militants briefly overran Arsal in August 2014, taking sev-

eral Lebanese army and police forces hostage, some of whom were executed. Nine soldiers are still being held after being captured almost two years ago.

Hezbollah swept to remarkable gains in municipal elections in south Lebanon and Nabatieh on Sunday.

Sheikh Qassem expressed relief over the polls, saying they "complete the resistance project."

The official hailed the alliance between Hezbollah and Amal movement "which enabled [the two parties] to be sponsors to families, different political forces, and to the parties in the region... easing tension and producing a capable council that works in harmony."

Meanwhile, a senior cleric in southern Lebanon on Friday called for calm following the death of a suspected militant in the Roumieh prison.

Sheikh Hussam al-Ilani, the imam at Ghufuran Mosque in Sidon, said Fadi Akkoush's death should not be exploited for those who speak of "defending the rights of the Sunni people."

According to security sources, Akkoush suffered from heart disease and died Wednesday night. He had been detained in connection with the 2014 Bhanine battles in the northern district of Minyeh.

Yemen's Houthis, Ex-Gov't to Exchange Prisoners Before Ramadan

SANAA (Dispatches) – Yemen's Houthi Ansarullah movement and the former Yemeni government have agreed to carry out a major prisoner swap prior to the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan that will begin in June.

Sources from the Houthi delegation said on Thursday that 1,000 prisoners captured during the Saudi-led war on Yemen would be exchanged.

However, a source close to the government of former Yemeni President Abd Rabbuh Mansur

Hadi said the agreement entailed the release of "all detainees," who number more than 4,000.

The two warring parties are expected to hand in a list of prisoner requests to the United Nations mediators within two days, the Houthi sources further said.

They added that "local committees" will be formed to speed up the process of the exchange before the start of Ramadan, which falls on June 7 this year.

Earlier in the day, UN Special Envoy to Yemen Ismail Ould

Cheikh Ahmed said officials from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) had recently held talks with the two sides' delegations in Kuwait to explain its possible role in a potential release process.

The decision comes as UN-brokered peace talks in Kuwait aimed at ending a year-long Saudi aggression against the impoverished country dragged into a second month.

The deal between the Houthis and representatives of the former

government is being seen as a breakthrough in weeks of peace talks that have achieved little until now.

A ceasefire has been in place since last month to give the peace talks a chance, but it has been repeatedly violated by Saudi airstrikes on the Arab country.

On Wednesday, Saudi warplanes carried out fresh airstrikes on residential areas in the northern province of al-Jawf, killing six people and wounding eight others.

Israeli Academics Promoting Campaign to Boycott Zionist Regime



Palestinians walk past a sign painted on a wall calling to boycott Zionist products, in the West Bank town of Bethlehem.

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – A new report has revealed the leading role played by top Israeli academics in promoting a growing international campaign that calls for boycotting the Zionist regime.

According to a report released Thursday by the Zionist group Im Tirtzu, prominent Israeli professors encourage, legitimize and often promote anti-Israel boycott efforts.

The report said dozens of Israeli academic figures, through petitions and letters, have encour-

aged the American Anthropological Association (AAA) to boycott Israeli higher academic institutions. They have urged the association to continue pressing for an academic boycott against Israel.

A vote on boycotting Israeli institutions will be held by the AAA's 10,000 members on May 31. Should the resolution pass, it would mark the largest association to date boycott Israel.

The report said that some of the Israeli signatories to the petitions are directly connected to the Boy-

cott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) campaign.

Meanwhile, Im Tirtzu's CEO, Matan Peleg has expressed concern about the growing trend among Israeli academics and professors to lead the academic boycott of Israel.

"Decision-makers and presidents of Israeli universities look to combat the international BDS movement, but completely ignore the boycott phenomenon from within Israel that is being led by Israeli academics," Peleg said.

"It is sad to see that those leading the boycott are cutting off the branch on which they are sitting and are working behind the scenes to mortally wound the future of Israeli academia," he added.

The developments come as more than 300 groups in Europe have recently urged the EU to hold Israel accountable for its human rights violations and join the BDS.

The BDS movement was initiated in 2005 by over 170 Palestinian organizations that were pushing for "various forms of boycott against Israel until it meets its obligations under international law."

Thousands of volunteers worldwide have joined the BDS ever since to help promote the Pales-

Amnesty Slams Saudi Arbitrary Use of Death Penalty

LONDON (Press TV) – Amnesty International has lashed out at Saudi Arabia for its "surging" and "arbitrary" use of the death penalty, calling on the Arab kingdom to stop flouting international human rights standards by routinely putting to death people.

Amnesty's Middle East and North Africa deputy director James Lynch slammed Friday what he called "pervasive flaws" in Saudi Arabia's justice system "which mean that it is entirely routine for people to be sentenced to death after grossly unfair trials."

Lynch cited the death sentence handed down to Ali al-Nimr, a member of Saudi Arabia's Shia community who was arrested with two others while they were still minors.

He said putting to death the trio should be viewed as "a glaring example of the arbitrary use of the death penalty" and a result of

"proceedings that blatantly flout international human rights standards."

Nimr is the brother of Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, a respected Shia cleric and an outspoken government critic who was put to death along with 47 people on a single day in January for involvement in "terrorism" activities. The executions sparked massive international condemnations and shed fresh light on the rampant use of the death penalty by Saudi courts.

Lynch said the younger Nimr's death sentence was based on confessions that he says were extracted under duress, calling on Saudi authorities to "quash his conviction and order a re-trial immediately in proceedings that meet international fair trial standards without recourse to the death penalty."

He also urged Riyadh to put a general halt to its rising number of executions.

"The Saudi Arabian authorities should end their reliance on this cruel and inhuman form of punishment and establish an official moratorium on executions immediately," he said.

Amnesty warned Friday that Saudi Arabia is to outpace this year its record of executions in previous years, saying a surge in executions carried out by Riyadh authorities could see more than 100 people put to death in the first six months of 2016.

It said at least 94 people have been executed so far this year in Saudi Arabia, "higher than at the same point last year."

The kingdom carried out at least 158 death sentences in 2015 with most of them beheaded with a sword.

"Executions in Saudi Arabia have been surging dramatically for two years now and this appalling trend shows no sign of slowing," Lynch said.