

## Protesters, White Nationalists Clash in Virginia

WASHINGTON (AFP) -- Tensions ran high and some violence erupted on Saturday as hundreds of counter-protesters faced off with white nationalists and white supremacists ahead of a far-right rally named "Unite the Right" in Virginia scheduled for later in the day.

Thousands of white nationalists, including supporters of the Ku Klux Klan white supremacist group turned out in Charlottesville, a quiet university town planning to remove a statue of General Robert E. Lee, who led Confederate forces in the US Civil War.

# Kayhan International



## Kuwait Makes New Accusations Against Iran

KUWAIT CITY (Dispatches) — Kuwait's Interior Ministry made fresh accusations against Iran on Saturday, claiming that it had arrested 12 men with links to a terrorist group associated with Hezbollah and Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corp (IRGC).

The ministry said in a statement late Friday that the men were among a group of 26 who had received prison sentences from Kuwait's Supreme Court in June but they refused to turn themselves in. They were accused of weapons possession and planning "hostile actions" inside Kuwait.

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### Viewpoint

By Kayhan Int'l Staff Writer

## Genocide of Muslims by Organizers of the Hajj Pilgrimage

## Saudis Tried to Host Taliban Office: Ex-Militant

LONDON (Dispatches) -- Saudi Arabia tried to host a liaison office for the Taliban, a former militant who was key to creating the peace process in Afghanistan has told Middle East Eye.

Abdullah Anas also said he is bewildered by claims from the UAE and its allies in Riyadh that Qatar supports extremism by hosting the Taliban in Doha.

On July 26, Yousef al-Otaiba, the UAE's ambassador to the U.S., said: "I don't think it is a coincidence that inside Doha you have the Hamas leadership, you have the Taliban embassy, you have the Muslim Brotherhood leadership."

The comments come as part of the long-standing criticism of Qatar, which has been led by Persian Gulf capitals including Riyadh.

But Abdullah Anas told MEE: "If Qatar is hosting the Taliban for talks aimed at reconciling the warring factions in Afghanistan, this initiative was established in Saudi Arabia before."

"There were also some rounds in the Emirates. So if Qatar is accused of hosting terrorists, someone hosted the same 'terrorists' before this."

Anas should know. It was his idea to start the process with a series of visits he made to Afghanistan and then to Saudi Arabia from 2006 to 2008.

During that time he engaged the active support and cooperation not only of Hamid Karzai, then president of Afghanistan, but also Prince Muqrin, then head of Saudi intelligence and, eventually, the late King Abdullah.

The former militant turned Afghan mediator had more than one meeting with the head of Saudi intelligence.

Anas said: "I found myself face to face with the head of intelligence of Saudi, Prince Muqrin (director general of al Mukhabarat al a'amah). He said to me: 'I heard something of your opinion that Afghanistan is going nowhere, suffering from a meaningless war. Can you update me? I want to hear from you.'"

"For me it was a golden opportunity to explain to a decision-maker. So we had more than one meeting in May, June, July 2007."

Anas's peace mission started in 2006. An Algerian, he left Afghanistan in 1993, having spent 10 years fighting the Soviet army.

His father-in-law, Sheikh Abdullah Azzam, co-founded the Afghan Services Bureau (the Maktab al-Khidamat or MAK) along with Osama bin Laden. The MAK raised funds for, and recruited, foreign fighters for the war against the Soviets.

Anas revealed that 15 hours before his assassination years earlier in November 1989, Azzam was

trying to persuade the leaders of Afghanistan, Burhanuddin Rabbani, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, to sign a unity agreement.

"That is how I found myself knocking on the doors of the Saudis," he said of his first visit in May 2007.

Anas started with Saudi veterans from the Afghan war who he knew. One of them recommended a lawyer, Mansour Saleh Khnaizan, to whom Anas began to explain his mission.

Anas then took Khnaizan to Afghanistan and introduced him to his contacts. Khnaizan became convinced that a peace deal was possible and reported back to the royal palace in Riyadh.

Months later Anas got a call to return to Riyadh. Khnaizan told him, Anas said, that he had good news: "The king has approved these peace talks to be launched. You have full authority to invite the list of people you have in your mind from Afghanistan."

But there was one condition: the Afghan leaders were to be invited to Mecca for Hajj, after Ramadan in 2008.

The so-called Mecca talks leaked to the media but went ahead anyway. After that, Anas went to the Emirates and "met with some levels of the Taliban there".

Around 2011, Anas sensed he was being cut out of the process. The Arab Spring had broken out and Rabbani, the first head of the newly established High Peace Council in Kabul, had been assassinated. The Taliban had been split by the death of Mullah Omar. By the time the office of the Taliban was set up in Doha, Anas was disconnected.

Anas's account has been verified by a second source, who said that Qatar opened the liaison office for the Taliban in June 2013, after Saudi failed to establish an effective mechanism for liaison and communication.

The source said that Riyadh was assigned the task during the terms of the British prime minister Gordon Brown and U.S. President George W Bush. Khnaizan, the source said, helped Karzai's brother Qayyum make a trip to Dubai where he opened bank accounts.

Britain and the U.S. only turned to Qatar to liaise with the Taliban because of the failure of the Saudis, the source claimed.

The New York Times published leaked emails from the Emirati ambassador to Washington Yousef al-Otaiba which revealed that the UAE had originally sought to host the Taliban liaison office.

Otaiba sought to rebut the article in a letter to the New York Times. He confirmed that the UAE had

## Mirzakhani Math Course to Be Granted to Iranian Mathematicians



## Bolt Leads Jamaica Into Final, U.S. Run Year's Fastest Time



## Syria Liberates Last Daesh Stronghold in Homs



# UN Envoy Discusses Yemen Solution in Tehran



Iranian Foreign Minister Muhammad Javad Zarif, left, receives UN Envoy for Yemen Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed in Tehran Aug. 12, 2017.

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- Iran's foreign minister and UN envoy for Yemen here on Saturday stressed the importance of finding comprehensive political solutions to end the humanitarian crisis in the impoverished war-torn Arab country.

Muhammad Javad Zarif met the United Nations Special Envoy for Yemen Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed here and discussed the latest developments in the war-torn country that is reeling from a deadly Saudi aggression.

Earlier in the day, Cheikh Ahmed held talks with Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Arab and African

Affairs Hussein Jaber Ansari.

The senior Iranian diplomat said the success of efforts to end the Yemen war is subject to the UN's neutrality in the crisis.

Following the meeting, the Iranian official described his negotiations with the UN representative as good and constructive. He said the UN envoy seeks to actively pursue a political settlement in Yemen, according to Fars news agency.

He added Cheikh Ahmed's visit to Iran was within the framework of his trips to countries in order to win support for the responsibility he is tasked with at the moment.

Jaber Ansari reiterated that Tehran backs the UN's efforts to resolve the Yemen crisis and get out of the current situation as soon as possible.

He said Iran believes efforts will bear fruit only if the UN remains fully neutral in line with its international mission and try to build confidence between the warring sides.

He expressed hope with the initiative and practical plans that the UN will pursue, efforts will be made to lift the blockade on Yemeni people as soon as possible and end the aggression against the Arab country.

He also hoped that attempts will lead to direct talks between the war-

ring sides, the crisis will be settled politically and the Yemeni people's votes will be used as a yardstick in a bid to get out of the current situation.

He added that the Yemeni envoy has asked Iran to contribute to the current efforts in Yemen.

During the meeting, the Iranian diplomat said the Islamic Republic supports all efforts by the UN aimed at putting an end to the war in crisis-hit Yemen.

The Iranian diplomat expressed deep concern about the severe humanitarian crisis in Yemen.

The UN envoy, for his part, informed Jaber Ansari about the latest developments concerning the humanitarian situation in Yemen as well as his recent talks to revive efforts aimed at finding a political solution to the Yemeni crisis and called on Iran to support such bids.

The two officials also exchanged views about new initiatives for a solution to the political stalemate in Yemen.

Yemen has been facing war by a Saudi-led coalition since March 2015. Leading a number of its vassal states, Saudi Arabia launched the military aggression on Yemen to eliminate the Houthi Ansarullah movement and reinstall a Riyadh-friendly former president. The war, however, has failed to achieve either of the goals, morphing into a protracted conflict and causing a humanitarian crisis in Yemen.

UN-brokered talks between Yemen's warring sides have also failed to end the conflict so far. Iran has repeatedly called for a swift end to the brutal Saudi-led military campaign.

## Iraqi Kurds Reject Call to Delay Referendum

ARBIL (Dispatches) -- Iraqi Kurds have rejected a call by the U.S. to postpone a referendum on the independence of their autonomous Kurdish region, planned for next month, according to a high-ranking Kurdish official.

During a phone call on Thursday, U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson had asked Massoud Barzani, president of Iraq's Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), to postpone the poll over fears it would distract from the fight against Daesh.

But speaking to Reuters on Saturday, Hoshiyar Zebari, a close adviser to Barzani, said "The date is standing, Sept 25, no change."

The U.S. State Department said in June it was concerned that the referendum would distract from "more urgent priorities" such as the defeat of Daesh militants. While saying it appreciated the "legitimate aspirations" of the people of Iraq Kurdistan, the State Department said it supported a "unified, federal, stable and demo-

cratic Iraq" and had voiced its concerns to Kurdish authorities.

"On the issue of the postponement of the referendum, the President (Barzani) stated that the people of the Kurdistan Region would expect guarantees and alternatives for their future," said the statement issued by the Kurdish presidency after Tillerson's call, giving no further details on the Kurdish leader's reaction to the U.S. request.

Masrour Barzani, head of the Kurdish government's security council and son of President Barzani, sought to allay fears on Friday that the referendum, which is planned for 25 September, would distract from the fight against Daesh.

Seaking in Washington, Masrour Barzani said that the Kurdish government was committed to fighting "terrorism regardless of the political relationship with Baghdad."

"Those opponents who say this is not the right time, my question to them is when is the right time?"

## Iran in Talks to Buy 48 Airbus Helicopters

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- Iran is holding talks with European plane-maker Airbus to buy 48 helicopters for civilian use, an Iranian official was on Saturday quoted as saying, as Iran continues its shopping spree of Western aircraft after the lifting of sanctions.

"The Health Ministry is planning to order 45 HEMS (Helicopter Emergency Medical Service) helicopters and the purchase is being negotiated by the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development," Deputy Minister Asghar Fakhrieh-Kashan said.

"Ports and Maritime Organization is also planning to hold a tender to purchase three search-and-rescue helicopters," he added.

Airbus Helicopters, the world's largest commercial helicopter manufacturer, was not immediately available for comment.

Iran has ordered more than 200 planes since sanctions against the country were lifted last year in re-

turn for curbs on the country's nuclear activities.

Flag-carrier Iran Air has ordered 100 planes from Airbus, 80 from U.S. rival Boeing and 20 ATR turboprops, but implementing the deals has been hampered by uncertainty over financing.

On Thursday, U.S. President Donald Trump said he did not believe that Iran was living up to the spirit of the 2015 deal to curtail its nuclear weapons program. But it was not immediately clear whether Washington may take measures that could affect Tehran's plane purchases.

In June, Airbus said two other Iranian airlines had committed to buying 73 planes in a last-minute flurry of deals for the aircraft manufacturer at the Paris Airshow.

Fakhrieh-Kashan said Iran was holding negotiations to merge the helicopter order into the Iran Air-Airbus contract signed in December.

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