

Over 50% of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon 'Extremely Poor'

BEIRUT (Dispatches) – The UN's refugee agency says more than 50 percent of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon are now living in extreme poverty and are highly vulnerable than ever before.

Some 1.5 million Syrian refugees have been living in Lebanon since 2011, making up a quarter of the coun-

Thought for Today

Acquire wisdom and truth from whomever you can because even an apostate can have them but unless they are passed over to a faithful Muslim and become part of wisdom and truth that he possesses, they have a confused existence in the minds of apostates.

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## Yemeni Forces Fire Missile at Saudi Army Command Center



Houthi fighters inspect the damage after a Saudi airstrike on the presidential palace in the Yemeni capital, Sana'a, December 5, 2017.

SANAA (Dispatches) – Yemeni forces have reportedly fired a ballistic missile at a Saudi army command and control center in the kingdom's southwestern Jizan region, as the Riyadh regime steps up its bloody attacks against the country.

A Yemeni military source told Arabic-language al-Masirah television network on Saturday that the medium-range Qaher M-2 missile had accurately hit the target south of Jizan.

Meanwhile, Colonel Aziz

Rashid, a spokesman for the Yemeni military, noted that the missile strike was a preemptive attack to foil the Saudi mercenaries' activities.

He also stressed that the Yemeni missile force was capable of hitting strategic targets deep inside the Saudi territories.

Yemeni forces regularly fire ballistic missile at positions inside Saudi Arabia in retaliation for Saudi military strikes on Yemen.

More than 70 Yemeni people

were killed in airstrikes by Saudi warplanes on the impoverished country of Yemen, reports said Friday.

Yemen's al-Masirah television network said the Saudi warplanes bombed a market in the Mawza district in the west of Ta'izz province on Friday. According to a preliminary count, the airstrike left eight people dead and 15 others injured.

At least 15 people also lost their lives in Saudi air raids on

the northern province of Sa'ada. According to al-Masirah, 12 of the victims were killed in two airstrikes that hit a market and a car in the Munabbih district. The three other victims, including two women, were killed in earlier air raids on the districts of al-Dhaher and Shada. The aerial attacks also left five people injured in the northern province.

Medics and security sources also reported on Friday that Saudi air raids claimed the lives of 28 people around Yemen's west coast.

Saudi airstrikes also killed another 20 people, mostly women and children, in al-Hudaydah Province, in Yemen's northwest.

The airstrikes were carried out against residential areas on Friday. Another 10 people were injured.

Saudi Arabia has been incessantly pounding Yemen since March 2015 in an attempt to crush the popular Houthi Ansarullah movement and reinstate the former Yemeni president, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, a staunch ally of the Riyadh regime.

More than 12,000 people have been killed since the onset of the campaign. Much of the Arabian Peninsula country's infrastructure, including hospitals, schools and factories, has been reduced to rubble due to the war. The Saudi-led war has also triggered a deadly cholera epidemic across Yemen.

## Iraqi Forces Launch Operation to Clear Daesh Remnants



Members of the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), better known as Hashd al-Sha'abi, flash the victory gesture as they ride atop an infantry-fighting vehicle during their advance towards villages between the northern Iraqi cities of Hawijah and Kirkuk on October 6, 2017.

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – Iraqi security forces launched an operation on Saturday to hunt down remnants of Daesh terrorists at rugged rural area in northern central Iraq, the Iraqi military said.

On Saturday morning, the troops backed by paramilitary Hashd Shaabi brigades advanced from three directions to clear Mteibijah area near the border between the provinces of Salahudin and Diyala, the media office of the Iraqi Joint Operations Command (JOC) said in a brief statement.

At the end of the day, the troops searched 14 villages scattered in the area and managed to destroy a Daesh hideout and detonated nine roadside bombs, the JOC said in a separate statement.

The troops will continue the operation in the coming days until they clear the whole the sprawling rugged area that extend from western part of Diyala to Himreen mountainous area and nearby Mteibijah area in the neighboring Salahudin province.

Dozens of Daesh terrorists fled their former bases in Salahudin province and Hawijah area in west of Kirkuk after the Iraqi forces cleared these areas from the extremist militants during anti-IS offensives in the past few months.

On Dec. 9, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi officially declared full liberation of Iraq from Daesh terrorists after Iraqi forces recaptured all the areas once seized by the extremist group.

Meanwhile, Iraqi security forces have found two mass graves in

the country's northern province of Nineveh, which contain the bodies of roughly a hundred members of the Izadi minority group believed to have been executed by Daesh terrorists.

A local source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said government troops, supported by fighters from the Popular Mobilization Units, commonly known by the Arabic name Hashd al-Sha'abi, unearthed the mass graves in the town of Sinjar, situated over 400 kilometers northwest of the capital Baghdad, on Saturday morning. The graves contained the bodies of 90 people, Arabic-language al-Ghad Press news agency reported.

The victims apparently came from the nearby villages of Mujamma al-Jazirah and al-Qabousiyah.

The grisly findings were made only three days after a mass grave containing the remains of at least 50 people was found in Sinjar.

On November 27, Iraqi army forces uncovered an Izadi mass grave in al-Ba'aj town, which was under control of Daesh until June this year. It contained the bodies of 98 people.

A week earlier, government forces had found a mass grave containing the bodies of 73 people, including women and children, executed by Daesh in Rambussi area near the town of Qahaniyah, located about 100 kilometers from Mosul.

Back in August 2014, Daesh overran Sinjar, killing, raping, and enslaving large numbers of Izadi Kurds.

Sinjar was recaptured in November 2015, during an operation by Kurdish Peshmerga forces and Izadi fighters.

## Palestinian President's Spokesperson: Changes to 1967 Borders Unacceptable

RAMALLAH (Dispatches) – Palestinian President Spokesperson Nabil Abu Rdeinah said Saturday that Palestinians will not accept any changes to the 1967 borders of East al-Quds.

According to a statement published by the official Palestinian news agency (Wafa), Abu Rdeinah said "this American position proves once more that the current U.S. administration is completely

out of the peace process."

"Recognizing al-Quds as Israel's capital and moving the U.S. embassy to the city or taking any unilateral decision on final status is a violation of international law and consolidates the occupation," he said. "This is unacceptable and we denounce it."

Those statements come against the backdrop of the statements attributed to a White House official

saying that the American administration will recognize the Western Wall as part of Israel.

Palestinians refer to the wall as the Buraq wall for its significance to Islam and Jews refer to it as the Wailing Wall. It is located within the compound of Al-Aqsa Mosque, holy to Muslims and under the supervision of Jordanian Wakf.

U.S. Vice President Mike Pence

is scheduled to visit the Western Wall during his visit to the occupied territories on Dec. 20.

Palestinian's political aspirations and demanded rights are based on the Zionist regime's occupation of Palestinian territory in 1967, including their demand to establish their state within the border of June 4, 1967, also known as the 1949 Armistice Line with East al-Quds as its capital.

Lavrov:

## U.S. Pressuring Afghanistan to Buy American Weapons

KABUL (Press TV) – The United States has been pressuring Afghanistan to ditch thousands of free Kalashnikov assault rifles that it has received from Russia and buy American equivalents instead, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov says.

"The Americans insist that 50,000 Kalashnikov rifles with munitions that were handed over to the Afghan security forces free of charge be removed from operational use and Afghanistan buy U.S.-made rifles and submachine guns instead," Lavrov told Russian lawmakers.

Russia has donated the weapons over the past few years, with at least 10,000 of them having been delivered in 2016.

Upon receiving the batch, Hanif Atmar, who is the national security adviser to President Ashraf Ghani, hailed the move as a sign of the "deep friendship between" Afghanistan and Russia.

"This important donation is from an important friend of Afghanistan in a crucial time for Afghanistan and the region," he said at the time.

Having been in use for decades now, the AK rifle series has proven reliable in various battle conditions. Its older, iconic model, the AK-47, remains in active use in Afghanistan and other countries.

Lavrov said Moscow had already raised concerns with Kabul about the true intentions behind the U.S. demand and the fate of the Russian-provided weapons in case the Afghans cave in to the U.S. pressure.

"Along with a question where these 50,000 rifles are to go — and we have asked the Afghans about that — we have another question: what is the reason behind these plans to strip the Afghan army of the possibility to use weapons it is accus-

tomed to and to make it use what it is yet to get comfortable with," he said. "There is no answer to this question other than that the Americans are seeking to militate against us just for the fun of it."

According to the top Russian diplomat, Washington has also told the Afghan government to stop buying Russian helicopters and opt for US-made rotorcraft.

Afghanistan has been plagued by years of militancy and a devastating U.S.-led war that has been raging since 2001. It is now almost entirely dependent on foreign aid to maintain security.

The latest push to replace Russian weapons with American ones seems in line with U.S. President Donald Trump's new strategy for Afghanistan, which includes prolonged military presence and an increase of troop levels in the country.

## Jordanian Billionaire Detained in Saudi Arabia

AMMAN (Dispatches) – Sabih al-Masri, Jordan's most influential businessman and the chairman of its largest lender Arab Bank, was detained in Saudi Arabia for questioning after a business trip to Riyadh, family sources and friends said on Saturday.

Masri's arrest, which follows the biggest purge of the Saudi kingdom's affluent elite in its modern history, has sent shockwaves through business circles in Jordan and the Palestinian territories, where the billionaire has major investments.

A Saudi citizen of Palestinian origin, Masri was detained last Tuesday hours before he was planning to leave after he chaired meetings of companies he owns, according to the sources.

He is the founder of Saudi Astra Group, which has wide interests

in diversified industries ranging from agro-industry to telecommunications, construction and mining across the region.

"Masri was heading to the airport and they told him to stay where you are and they picked him up," said a source familiar with the matter who asked not to be named.

Reasons for Masri's detention were not clear but political sources said the Saudis might have used him to put pressure on Jordan's King Abdullah not to attend a Muslim summit to discuss U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to recognize al-Quds as the Zionist regime's capital.

The Jordanian monarch attended the Istanbul summit, however. He is a custodian of Muslim holy sites in al-Quds and has been vocal in criticizing Trump over his decision on al-Quds.