

# 'U.S. Interfering in Polls to Help Netanyahu'

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – An Israeli paper speculates that the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump could be meddling in Israel's elections to help secure a win for Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

In a report, The Jerusalem Post raised the suspicion after Trump shared a photo directly from Netanyahu's Instagram account, which showed an election poster made by Netanyahu's ruling Likud party of the two shaking hands and smiling.

The advertisement captioned "Netanyahu: In a different league" prompted similar criticism after first showing up in Tel Aviv.

It has now turned up elsewhere across streets in the territories occupied, by the Zionist regime said Arutz Sheva on its website.

The Jerusalem Post further pointed to the large numbers of likes and comments under Trump's

share, saying this raised "concerns about election interference."

The network went as far as saying Likud had "recruited" Trump to promote its election chances.

Late last month, it was reported that the party had released a promotional video glorifying the two politicians' relationship by boasting about Trump's relocation of the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to the holy occupied city of al-Quds last May.

The embassy relocation flew in the face of internationally-recognized Palestinian demands that the occupied city's eastern part serve as the capital of their future state.

It also circumvented a United Nations General Assembly resolution that had called on Trump to retract its recognition of al-Quds as the regime's "capital," which he had announced in late 2017.

Likud's video begins with a text on the screen stating, "They said



A picture shared on U.S. President Donald Trump's Instagram account from Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's page shows an election poster made by Netanyahu's ruling Likud party of the two shaking hands and smiling.

it's impossible," referring to the embassy transfer.

It also features Trump's announcement of the relocation and Netanyahu's statement that "the U.S. embassy needs to be here, in Jerusalem (al-Quds)."

Trump began contributing to Ne-

anyahu's political powerbase in 2013, when he appeared in a video made by a Likud promoter, voicing all-out verbal support for the premier.

So vote for Benjamin, terrific guy, terrific leader, great for Israel," Trump had said in the footage.

## Since End of Fighting

# Population of Syria's Dayr al-Zawr Grows Six-Fold



The population of the Syrian province of Dayr al-Zawr has increased six-fold since the end of hostilities in the area, the governor of the province says.

MOSCOW (Dispatches) – The population of the Syrian province of Dayr al-Zawr has increased six-fold since the end of hostilities in the area, the governor of the province, Abdul Majeed al-Kawakibi, said on Wednesday.

"The success achieved with the support of the Syrian government in the province of Dayr al-Zawr has allowed citizens to re-

turn to their homes. As a result, the population has increased from 200,000 to 1.18 million people," al-Kawakibi said at a meeting of the joint Russia-Syria coordination center on refugee repatriation.

To promote the return of refugees, the authorities of the province are expanding services and opening new areas of accommo-

dation, especially in rural parts of the province, he added.

"The restoration of social facilities and infrastructure focuses on the restoration of schools. As of today, the number of fully functioning schools has increased from 36 to 265, and the number of students has reached 93,400. The process of reconstruction continues," al-Kawakibi said.

Syria has been in a state of war since 2011, with the government forces fighting against numerous terrorist groups. Since the Syrian government has regained control over most of the country's territories that were seized by terrorists, it is now focused on creating favorable conditions for repatriating refugees.

In another development, Fadi Saadun, the governor of Syria's province of Idlib, told Sputnik that "the Turks are interested in Idlib remaining occupied by terrorists". Saadun believes that, first of all, there are political reasons for this; secondly, the

province is a huge market for Turkish goods.

According to the Idlib governor, the residents of the province are supporting the Syrian government and are expecting a speedy release.

Fadi Saadun also noted that the Syrian government is doing everything possible to keep schooling and medical care services available to the residents of the occupied province by sending medicine and vaccines, as well as textbooks and teaching materials there.

"When the fighters of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, which is part of the Al-Nusra Front, took control of the entire province, the humanitarian situation deteriorated sharply. Arrests of civilians became more frequent, and looting became widespread. Several killings of civilians have even been reported", Fadi Saadun said.

Every year Ankara exports \$ 1.6 billion worth of goods to Syria, primarily to the areas controlled by the Al-Nusra Front.

## Lebanon Commits to Quick Reforms

BEIRUT (Dispatches) – Lebanon is committed to carrying out fast and effective reforms that could be "difficult and painful" to avoid a worsening of economic, financial and social conditions, according to a draft government policy statement released on Wednesday.

The government formed last week is also committed to bringing down the debt-to-GDP ratio by boosting the size of the economy and reducing the budget deficit, the draft policy statement said.

The statement drawn up by a committee of ministers this week sets the main policy objectives of Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri's government and will be put to a vote of confidence in parliament next week.

Lebanon has one of the highest debt-to-GDP ratios in the world, at around 150 percent.

As of the 2019 budget, the government is committed to a "financial correction" equal to at least one percent of GDP a year over five years, the draft policy statement said.

This would be achieved by boosting revenues and cutting spending, starting with transfers to the state-run power company, it said.

Lebanon would also continue the policy of exchange rate stability that is a priority for "social and economic stability", it said.

The government would also award licenses for offshore energy blocks in a second round of tenders by the end of 2019, it added.

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

"We are expecting the United States to respect our mutual interests and avoid pushing Iraq into a regional conflict," he said.

Earlier this month, Qais al-Khazali, head of Asaib Ahl al-Haq or League of the Righteous, suggested U.S. troops may eventually be driven out by force if they do not yield to the will of the Iraqi people.

Former Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi also weighed in on Monday, saying Iraqi sovereignty must be respected and its interests should not be compromised.

"Iraq should not be used as a spring board to attack its neighbors. We are not proxies in conflicts outside the interests of our nation," he wrote in a Twitter post.

Iraq's former foreign minister Hoshiyar Zebari also condemned Trump's remarks, saying they were embarrassing for Baghdad.

Jaafar al-Husseini, a spokesman for the Iraqi pro-government Kata'ib Hezbollah voluntary forces, called on parliament to speed up legislation to drive out foreign forces, warning that the anti-terror force won't wait long.

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firm and appropriate response to teach a lesson to the criminal and lying rulers of Israel," Shamkhani was quoted as saying by Fars news agency.

President Rouhani on Wednesday congratulated Syria on its victory in the fight against terrorism.

"We have no doubt your victory in the face of a grand plot in the region led by the U.S. and some other countries is a victory for both the Syrian nation and the entire region," he told the Syrian foreign minister.

Muallem said Iran has proven to be capable of defeating U.S. plots thanks to its conviction and steadfastness.

"The Islamic Republic's success in defeating such plots is a great victory for the entire region, including Syria," he said.

The Iranian president also said bilateral ties are "stronger than ever" but the two sides still need to enhance their cooperation towards eliminating remaining problems which Syria is facing.

Returning complete stability and security to Syria is one of Iran's important foreign policy objectives, Rouhani said.

Muallem said the Syrian government and people are grateful to Iran for its unstinting assistance in the war on terrorism, and support for Syria's territorial integrity, and opposition to foreign occupation.

Separately on Wednesday, President Rouhani urged an end to foreign interventions in the region as he renewed Iran's call for a Middle East free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

Rouhani made the remarks in a speech to foreign dignitaries and ambassadors in Tehran on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution.

"Our slogan is that the presence of foreign troops in the region and their interventions must end. Our slogan is a world free of violence and extremism," he said.

Rouhani said that Iran's foreign policy is based on respecting other countries' rights while countering any foreign intrusion in its affairs. "Based on this, we do not dominate others and do not accept any domination either."

He said that Iran seeks good ties with friendly countries across the world irrespective of their religions.

"The Iranian nation never intended, neither in the past 40 years nor before that, to launch aggression against their neighbors or other countries, and whenever our neighbors needed help, we offered them assistance ... without any expectations or anything in return," he added.

Rouhani took a swipe at the U.S. for its withdrawal from a nuclear deal with Iran, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), saying Washington has failed in this historic test and reneged on its obligations.

"Under chimerical excuses and in defiance of all regulations, the U.S. has created problems for itself, the Iranian nation, regional countries, Iran's partners as well as ... its own world and regional partners," he said.

"Despite U.S. infringements and Europe having acted so weakly and inefficiently in implementing its commitments, the Islamic Republic of Iran continues to honor its obligations, which means ethics and moral and political obligations are of high significance to Iran," Rouhani said.

He also criticized Washington for its "illegitimate sanctions" against Tehran and said the U.S. has been doing its utmost to pile up pressure on and frustrate the Iranian nation but stressed that the Iranian people "are more united than ever."

Rouhani said since the victory of the Islamic Revolution four decades ago, the U.S. has been trying to employ all it has in power against Iran as they lost a great ally and a base in the region, but added that they have failed in all fronts against Iran due to their "miscalculations".

Nevertheless, Iran will accept a U.S. apology and repentance despite Washington's history of aggression if it comes up with one, Rouhani said.

"If the U.S. expresses penitence and rectifies its previous mistakes, makes precise calculations, apologizes for its previous interventions in Iran, is ready to accept the grandeur and dignity of the Iranian nation and the great Islamic Revolution and speaks to the Iranian nation respectfully, we will be ready to accept its repentance despite its years of oppression against us," he said.

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

A month after the systems arrived in Syria, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Vershinin told Russia's Sputnik news agency that the delivery would be followed by additional steps, without providing any further details.

He also issued a veiled warning to the occupying regime of Israel, saying Russia hoped the Tel Aviv regime would exercise "good judgment" on the shipment of the S-300 batteries to Syria.

Zionist PM Benjamin Netanyahu announced on Tuesday that he will be traveling to Moscow in just over two weeks for a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

This will be the second meeting between the two leaders since Syria's downing of the Russian intelligence plane in September.

Netanyahu and Putin met briefly in Paris in November on the sidelines of ceremonies commemorating 100 years to the end of World War I.

## Erdogan Says EU Fails to Meet Commitments Under Migration Deal

ANKARA (Sputnik) – The European Union does not meet its commitments on readmission of migrants under the agreement with Ankara, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said.

"We are making great efforts in the Aegean Sea to prevent new tragedies with refugees. The agreement with the European Union has played a deterrent role, and Turkey continues to fulfill its obligations. But we see that

the European Union does not follow the readmission mechanism, as required by the agreement," Erdogan said at a joint press conference with Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, who on a visit to Turkey.

Currently, 4 million refugees are residing in Turkey, while the country has spent about \$35 billion on hosting them, the president stressed.

In March 2016, the European Union and

Turkey concluded a migration deal in which they agreed that Syrian refugees arriving in Greece would be returned to Turkey if their claim for asylum was rejected, while Syrian asylum seekers in Turkey would be resettled in Europe on a one-for-one basis. Brussels, in turn, vowed to provide financial aid to the country to cover the costs of migrant reception.