

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – Syria has accused the Saudi regime of “politicizing” the Hajj pilgrimage by preventing its nationals from travelling to the kingdom to perform the rituals for the seventh straight year. The Syrian Ministry of Awqaf (Religious Endowments) announced in a statement that Saudi Arabia was still imposing what it described as “impossible conditions” for the Syrians to visit the country for the pilgrimage, Russia’s Sputnik news agency reported. “Saudi authorities for the seventh consecutive year do not allow the Syrian citizens to perform the pilgrim ritual of Hajj.

Vicious pleasures of this world and salvation are like two enemies or two roads running in opposite directions or towards opposite poles, one to the North and the other to the South. Whoever likes to gain the pleasures and pomps of this world will hate austerity in life which is necessary to gain salvation. Reverse will be the attitude of a man desirous of achieving Eternal Bliss.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

Saudi-Led Forces Commit ‘Possible War Crimes’ in Yemen

LONDON (Dispatches) – Amnesty International says Saudi Arabian-backed militants could be committing war crimes in Yemen by interfering with the flow of humanitarian supplies into the impoverished country.

The UK-based human rights body said in a statement on its website that the militants stop the aid-laden ships to inspect their cargoes even though it is the United Nations which is mandated to do so.

They divert the ships to the Yemeni ports which are controlled by a Saudi-led coalition of invaders whom they work for, or delay them for further inspection sometimes for a month or more, the organization added.

“The times that these inspections are taking are effectively obstructing the flow of humanitarian aid and essential goods. And that is why, in our analysis, we have found that this could amount to collective punishment,” the statement quoted Lynn Maalouf, the Middle East research director at the Amnesty, as saying.

The coalition has been waging a war on the Arab world’s already most impoverished country to restore its former Saudi-allied officials. Yemen’s Health Ministry



Saudi Arabian-backed militants could be committing war crimes in Yemen by interfering with the flow of humanitarian supplies into the impoverished country, Amnesty International says.

says more than 600,000 people have either been killed or injured during the three-year-old invasion.

The combination of the war and blockade has brought the country close to the edge of famine.

Meanwhile, a report had revealed that hundreds of detainees have suffered torture and sexual abuse by the Emirati officers at the jails Abu Dhabi runs in war-torn Yemen.

Citing victims and witnesses, the Associated Press reported that the detainees, who are held without charges, have been sodomized, raped, probed and stripped down in at least five prisons.

In one case, detainees suffered sexual abuse at Beir Ahmed prison in the southern city of Aden on March 10, when fifteen Emirati officers ordered prisoners to undress and lie down for anal cavity checks, claiming they were looking for contraband cell phones.

Those prisoners who resisted were beaten until they bled, and threatened with barking dogs.

“They tortured me without even accusing me of anything. Sometimes I wish they would give me a charge so I can confess and end this pain,” said a prisoner, who was detained last year and has been in

three different jails.

“The worst thing about it is that I wish for death every day and I can’t find it,” he said.

The detainees also smuggled letters and drawings from inside the Beir Ahmed prison to the AP, describing instances of sexual abuse.

In another development in the country, Yemeni officials say the airport in the strategic port city of Hudaydah is still under the control of the Houthi Ansarullah movement, rejecting reports that the facility had fallen to the hands of Saudi-backed forces.

Yemen’s army spokesman Brigadier General Sharaf Luqman dismissed claims that the invaders had gained ground in Hudaydah as he showed photos of enemy armored vehicles blown up in the city.

He also hailed the Yemeni fighters’ achievements in the country’s western coast as a “miracle.”

The Yemeni fighters, Luqman said, have been fighting against Daesh and al-Qaeda militants in Hudaydah’s al-Durayhimi district, and have surrounded all Saudi-backed forces and mercenaries in the al-Jah neighborhood.

The mercenaries have two choices, either to surrender or die, he pointed out.

U.S. Airstrikes in Syria Leave More Civilian Casualties



A Syrian man carries a child who was retrieved from a collapsed building following a U.S. coalition air strike on the terrorist-held neighborhood of Sakhur in the northern city of Aleppo in July 2016.

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – At least eight civilians have lost their lives and several others sustained injuries when the U.S.-led coalition purportedly fighting the Daesh terrorist group carried out a string of airstrikes against Syria’s eastern province of Dayr al-Zawr.

Local sources, requesting anonymity, told Syria’s official news agency SANA the airborne assaults targeted residential buildings in the al-Shaafah town on Thursday evening.

The sources further noted that the airstrikes caused great destruction in targeted areas, forcing many families to leave their homes in the village to escape the heavy bombardment of the U.S.-led coalition military aircraft.

The U.S.-led coalition has been conducting airstrikes against what are said to be Daesh targets inside Syria since September 2014 without any authorization from the Damascus government or a UN mandate.

The military alliance has repeatedly been accused of targeting and killing civilians. It has also been largely incapable of achieving its declared goal of destroying Daesh.

Syria’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, in two separate letters addressed to United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres and the rotating President of the UN Security Council Vasily Nebenzya on June 5, condemned the continuing attacks by the U.S.-led coalition against innocent Syrians, and its assaults on the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of the conflict-plagued Arab country.

Meanwhile, the Iraqi voluntary and pro-government Popular Mobilization Units have pledged to

get revenge for a deadly air raid on their fellow fighters in Syria’s eastern province of Dayr al-Zawr earlier this week, blaming the United States or the Zionist regime for the attack.

Hezbollah Brigades spokesman Jaafar al-Husseini said it was still too early to say definitively whose forces carried out the late Sunday strike against the border town of al-Hari near the frontier with Iraq but insisted it “could only have been” the Americans or Zionists.

“When it becomes known who was responsible then there will be an appropriate response and the hand of the resistance will strike anywhere,” Hussein said during a memorial ceremony for the fallen fighters at a mosque in Baghdad.

Both the Syrian government and Iraqi Popular Mobilization Units – commonly known by the Arabic name Hashd al-Sha’abi, initially pinned the blame on the U.S.-led coalition purportedly fighting the Daesh terrorist group.

“We have reasons to believe that it was an Israeli strike,” a U.S. official later told AFP on condition of anonymity.

In another development in Syria, government forces have reportedly encircled a U.S. military base at the al-Tanf border crossing with Jordan, after recapturing large parts of the Badiya region from Daesh.

As part of an anti-terror operation that was launched from the Hamimeh region in southern Aleppo and the second and third oil pumping stations in Badiya a few days ago, Syrian forces and allied popular fighters liberated an area that ran 45 kilometers wide and 60 kilometers deep towards the border with Iraq.

Despite Opposition at Home Washington Gives Turkey First F-35

ANKARA (Dispatches) – The United States has delivered the first of the six F-35 warplanes it has contracted to give to Turkey, despite domestic opposition over Ankara’s decision to buy the Russian S-400 anti-aircraft missile system.

Manufacturer Lockheed Martin officially handed over the first plane to Turkish officials during a ceremony in Fort Worth, Texas, media outlets reported.

A second plane will be brought “at a later date” to Luke Air Force Base in Arizona, said Lieutenant Colonel Mike Andrews, a Pentagon spokesman. The remaining

four will be staying in the US until 2020.

Turkey, which is a NATO member, has been a partner in the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter project, a consortium financing the warplanes, since 1999.

To Washington’s disappointment, the country is also to start taking delivery of the Russian surface-to-air defense system by early 2020. For now, Russia is producing the defense systems for Turkey under a loan agreement concluded between the countries last December.

US senators have opposed F-35’s delivery in the light of An-

kara’s plans to purchase the Russian systems.

In a defense budget bill approved on Tuesday, the Senate demanded that F-35 sales be scrapped if Turkey went ahead with its S-400 purchase plan.

“Any effort by the government of the Republic of Turkey to further enhance their relationship with Russia will degrade the general security of the NATO alliance, and NATO member countries, and degrade interoperability of the alliance,” the bill reads.

If both chambers of the US Congress approve that version of the bill, US President Donald

Trump’s administration will be obliged to exclude Turkey from the F-35 project, remove from the aircraft all parts made in Turkey, and ban the Turkish F-35s from leaving US territory.

Ankara’s close ties with Russia are just one bone of contention in the Turkish-American relations.

Turkey has strongly opposed US plans to arm anti-Ankara Kurds in Syria and Iraq. The country is also raging at Washington over its refusal to extradite Pennsylvania-based cleric Fetullah Gulen, whom Ankara accuses of masterminding a 2016 coup against the Turkish government.

Top Iraqi Court Endorses Manual Election Recount

BAGHDAD (Press TV) – Iraq’s top court has upheld a law mandating a nationwide manual recount of all ballots from last month’s parliamentary elections.

The verdict from the Supreme Federal Court confirmed the recount process, which was opposed by some parties who made significant gains in the election.

The court ruling concerned a law passed by Parliament that mandated a full, manual recount of the vote. Chief Justice Medhat al-Mahmoud said the legislation was broadly constitutional and endorsed the order to replace the Independent Elections Commission with a panel of nine judges to supervise the recount.

“The Supreme Federal Court

finds that parliament’s decision was to organize the electoral process and restore voter confidence in the electoral process; it was within parliament’s constitutional rights and does not contradict the constitution,” said Mahmoud.

Mahmoud stated that all of the roughly 11 million ballots, including those of voters living abroad, displaced persons and security forces, must be recounted.

Parliament, which had mandated the recount after a government report found serious violations had taken place, had also cancelled some results such as overseas and displaced votes by amending the election law this month.

The chief justice, however, ruled that the mass invalidation of overseas, displaced, and Peshmerga ballots in the country’s semi-autonomous Kurdistan Region was unconstitutional.

“This cancellation ... presents a squandering of votes and confiscation of the will of voters in these areas which violates constitutional articles that guarantee the right to equality and voting,” noted Mahmoud.

Mahmoud said the sweeping measure was unjust to voters whose ballots were shown to be legitimate.

The recount process began after judges took over the leadership of Iraq’s Independent High Elections Commission.

Taliban Kill 16 Afghan Soldiers, Kidnap Engineers After Ceasefire Ends

KABUL (Dispatches) – Taliban militants killed at least 16 Afghan police and two civilians in western Badghis province after their three-day ceasefire for the Eid al-Fitr holiday ended at the weekend, officials said on Friday.

The Taliban, fighting to reimpose its strict law after their 2001 ouster, resumed their campaign on Thursday after rejecting President Ashraf Ghani’s request to extend their ceasefire beyond Sunday.

On Wednesday, they killed at least 30 soldiers and captured a military base in Badghis.

A senior security official in Kabul said the Taliban were fighting to capture eight checkpoints in

Badghis. On Thursday, they gained control over two checkpoints and ambushed arriving reinforcements.

Haji Saleh Bek, governor of the Abkamari district, said 16 police were killed.

Another government official, Mohammad Naser Nazari, said the Taliban had planted a bomb on the body of a soldier that exploded when people attempted to retrieve the bodies. Two civilians were killed.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the most recent attack, but the Taliban are active in Badghis and have repeatedly claimed attacks against Afghan security forces there.

The Taliban also assaulted a road construction company compound in the Spin Boldak area of the southern province of Kandahar late on Thursday, according to a local government official.

The insurgents then kidnapped 13 engineers and 20 security guards, officials announced. Four security forces were killed when they attempted to rescue the hostages, all of whom were Afghan nationals.

Last month, seven Indian engineers and an Afghan national working for a power plant were kidnapped in Baghlan province in the north, prompting several private international companies to reduce their presence in Afghanistan.