

Hezbollah Official:

# Iraq March, Lebanon Gov't Formation Dealt Heavy Blows to U.S.

BEIRUT (Press TV) – The White House has been dealt stinging blows following the massive march in Iraq against the presence of U.S. troops in the country as well as the formation of a new government in Lebanon, says a senior official from the Lebanese resistance movement, Hezbollah.

“The U.S. administration was slapped in the face this week following the events in Beirut and Baghdad. The Iraqi people pressed their demand, and poured out onto the streets in a million-man demonstration to substantiate that the blood of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani (the commander of the Quds Force of Iran’s Islamic Revolution Guards Corps) and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis (the deputy head of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Units) sealed the departure of U.S. soldiers from Iraq forever,” said Sheikh Nabil Qaouk, deputy chief of Hezbollah’s executive council, at a ceremony in Wadi al-Hajir region of southern Lebanon on Sunday.

The Hezbollah official said the formation of a new Lebanese government led by Prime Minister Hassan Diab disappointed President Donald Trump of the United States, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs David Schenker and other U.S. statesmen who had pinned their hopes on chaos, siege of the resistance front and subjugation of the Lebanese nation.

Qaouk highlighted that the new administration in Lebanon was on a national rescue mission of preventing economic collapse and confronting corruption.

“Hezbollah will be at the forefront of its supporters.”

Lebanon announced the formation of the new government on January 21. The country had



Thousands of Iraqis demonstrate in the heart of capital, Baghdad, on January 24, 2020 to demand the ouster of U.S. troops from the country.

been without an effective government since caretaker Prime Minister Saad Hariri resigned in October last year under pressure from protesters exhausted by state corruption and mismanagement.

Diab now heads a cabinet of 20 members, mostly specialists backed by political parties.

“I’ve been appointed in the face of many accusations. I wanted to work, not to argue. I have abided by the law informing me to form a government. I followed the rules and regula-

tions to form a new team of ministers,” he said, moments after the lineup was read out at the presidential palace in the capital Beirut.

“This is a government that represents the aspirations of the demonstrators who have been mobilized nationwide for more than three months.”

He pledged that his government “will strive to meet their demands for an independent judiciary, for the recovery of embezzled funds, for the fight against illegal gains.”

Suspected to Have Been Kidnapped by Settlers

## 8-Year-Old Palestinian Boy Found Dead

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – The body of an eight-year-old Palestinian, who had gone missing in al-Quds for around a day, is found at the bottom of a cistern in the occupied city amid suspicion and accusations of his murder by Zionist settlers.

Qais abu Ramila from al-Quds’ Beit Hanina neighborhood was found lifeless after being reported missing by his family, The Jerusalem Post reported.

The paper cited the occupying regime’s police as saying that the youngster “was last seen entering a car.”

“When we arrived at the scene

there was a big bustle, dozens of people were walking around the place,” it quoted Yanai Levy, an Israeli paramedic, as saying in a statement.

His parents said they believe he was kidnapped, telling the Israeli outlet Maariv, “We demand the police check security footage [from the streets].”

“If it turns out he was kidnapped by [West Bank] settlers it would set the entire neighborhood on fire,” they said.

Ahmad Tibi, a member of Knesset (the Zionist regime’s parliament), told Israel’s Ynet news website, “Things are wor-

risome.” “I hope that all doubts will be proven false,” he added.

Some, meanwhile, placed the blame for the child’s death squarely on violent Zionist settlers.

The settlers have in the past been found guilty in several cases of murdering Palestinians as young as an infant.

On July 31, 2015, a large fire broke out after settlers threw firebombs and Molotov cocktails into two Palestinian houses in the town of Duma, located 25 kilometers (15 miles) southeast of the city of Nablus in the north of the occupied West Bank, set-

ting them ablaze while their inhabitants were asleep.

The arson attack killed 18-month-old baby Ali Dawabsheh and critically wounded his father and mother, Sa’ad and Riham, who later succumbed to their injuries. Ali’s four-year-old brother, Ahmad, who was also wounded in the assault, remained the sole survivor of the ill-fated family.

In July 2014, a Palestinian teenager named Mohammed Abu Khdeir was kidnapped and his body discovered in the forest in al-Quds after being burned by three Zionist settlers.

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response to the systematic crimes committed by the armed terrorist groups which continue to exploit the unwavering military and logistic support provided by Western countries and their tools in the region,” the letters read.

Also on Saturday, the Pentagon announced that an American soldier had died in Syria, adding that the incident was under investigation.

According to a release by the department, Army Specialist Antonio I. Moore, 22, from Wilmington, North Carolina, died in Syria’s Dayr al-Zawr Province on Friday “during a rollover accident while conducting route clearing operations.”

General Frank McKenzie, the U.S. Middle East commander, made an unannounced tour of five military bases in Syria, during which he was asked about the future of American troops in the Arab country.

“This is an area where we made a commitment. I think we’re going to be here for a while,” he replied.

On Saturday morning, McKenzie met with Mazloun Abdi, the commander of the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) - a U.S.-backed alliance of mainly Kurdish militants. He said that Abdi wanted assurances that Washington would continue to help SDF militants.

The U.S. commander said his answer was that Washington would continue to partner with militants and control Syrian oil fields, but that he had not put a deadline on it.

“He knows, and I agree, that we’re not going to be here for 100 years,” McKenzie said during a stop at Green Village military outpost, east of Dayr al-Zawr.

“I frankly don’t know how long we’re going to be here and I have no instructions other than to continue to work with our partner here.”

Zionists...  
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and Avi Berkowitz, on Air Force One while returning to Washington from Switzerland on Wednesday.

Addressing his cabinet before departing for the U.S., Zionist PM Benjamin Netanyahu described the current environment, characterized by close ties with Trump, as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that the occupying regime should “not miss”.

The U.S. president’s plan is expected to be extremely favorable to Israel. Palestinian officials threatened on Sunday to withdraw from key provisions of the Oslo accords, which define relations with the occupying regime of Israel, if Trump announces his Middle East plan.

Saeb Erekat, the chief Palestinian negotiator, told Agence France-Presse that the Palestine Liberation Organization reserved the right “to withdraw from the interim agreement”.

The Trump initiative will turn Israel’s temporary occupation of Palestinian territory into a permanent occupation, Erekat said.

The plan’s release has been repeatedly delayed, and it seems to have little chance of success. The Palestinians, accusing Trump of being unfairly biased toward the Zionist regime, have already rejected it.

But the plan could give Netanyahu, who is in the middle of his third re-election campaign in less than a year, a push as he tries to remain in office while fighting criminal charges of fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes.

While Netanyahu has tried to divert attention from his legal troubles and focus his campaign on his close ties with Trump, his opponent Benny Gantz has focused his campaign on the prime minister’s criminal charges and expected trial.

Students...  
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She said a CBP officer asked her “what Iranian people think about the explosion in Saudi Arabia,” an apparent reference to the wave of explosions that had rocked Saudi oil facilities a few days earlier, blamed on Yemen’s Houthi forces.

“I said I am not a political person — I’m interested in philosophical questions,” she said.

Pegah, 28, was preparing to study for a master’s degree in business administration at Southern New Hampshire University. She was returned home on Aug. 1 from Logan airport.

She said a CBP officer had asked her a series of questions like which ships Iran hid weapons in, and why Iran had captured a British oil tanker in July.

“He said, ‘Did you know we can catch you and keep you here in the United States, and no one will understand where you are, the same way Iran does to Americans?’”

Pegah said she was frightened. “I said, ‘I don’t know anything. I really don’t. I’m just a student.’”

After inauguration in 2016, U.S. President Donald Trump controversially pushed through a ban suspending issuance of immigrant and non-immigrant visas to applicants from the Muslim-majority countries of Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen.

The restriction, which has gained notoriety as “a Muslim ban,” later expanded to include Venezuela and North Korea, and, as Trump suggested during his electoral campaign, could end up affecting even more countries.

How...  
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Prime Minister Abdul-Mahdi’s insistence that America’s pressure on the Iraqi government arises from China’s growing ties especially in the oil sector hasn’t received adequate media attention. This may be due to much of the US pressure being exerted on the caretaker government covertly and behind closed doors.

Now that the Iraqi prime minister has lifted the lid on Trump’s bullying tactics, mainstream media has no reason to shy away from it. The evidence strongly suggests that America under Trump cannot countenance China’s presence nor Iran’s substantial influence in Iraq.

The flip side is that both China and Iran are eager to free Iraq by ridding it of US troops. Both have different means to do so which has the potential to saddle Trump with the prospect of exiting his army in ignominy.

The Trump administration is thus faced with a huge dilemma: how to depart gracefully yet retain a presence?

It knows that parliamentary approval to remove American forces along with all foreign troops means the end of the road. Challenging it as Pompeo is doing, is unsustainable and to defy Iraq is in effect defying international conventions.

The martyrdom of Qassem Soleimani, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis and a number of their colleagues on Iraqi soil is the straw that proverbially broke the camel’s back. Far from attaining any of Trump’s stated objectives, the targeted killings have had results entirely unfavorable to his goals.

Iran is firmly united behind its revolutionary leadership, while Trump is facing an impeachment trial in a country deeply divided. The notion of a superpower is in tatters while Iran’s regional status has grown immensely.

China’s entry will have further ramifications for America. This as one commentator explained: “China has the means and the ability to dramatically undermine not only the U.S.’ control over Iraq’s oil sector but the entire petrodollar system on which the U.S.’ status as both a financial and military superpower directly depends.”

\*Iqbal Jassat is an executive member of the South Africa-based Media Review Network.

## Kuwait Outraged After Filipino ‘Blood for Blood’ Demand

CAIRO (Dispatches) – Kuwait has denounced as a “rejected transgression” remarks by a senior Philippine officer who demanded “blood for blood” in the case of a Filipina recently killed in Kuwait, triggering tensions between the two countries.

Earlier this week, the Philippines’ Foreign Affairs Secretary Teddy Locsin Jr said he rejects any offer of blood money in the case of Jeanelyn Villavende who Manila has said was brutally killed in Kuwait.

“THERE WILL BE BLOOD @DFAPHL for Jeanelyn Villavende. I renounce & reject any offer of blood money for her torture/murder. I want two lives for the life they took,” Locsin said in his official Twitter account.

He added that a lawyer handling the case is not authorized to “suggest or accept blood money from her killers”.

“Kuwait expresses dismay and denunciation of this statement that includes a rejected transgression on the powers of the security and judicial

authorities in the country,” an official source at the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry said, according to Al Rai newspaper.

The source added that the Philippine official’s remarks contradict the “simplest rules of international relations” and seek to influence ongoing investigations into the case.

Kuwait has arrested employers of Villavende after her suspicious death last month.

An official Philippine autopsy found that the house maid had been sexually abused before she was murdered.

In response, the Philippines imposed a ban on the deployment of newly hired workers to Kuwait.

In 2018, ties between Kuwait and the Philippines soured after the body of a Philippine housemaid was found inside her employers’ freezer. The row was shortly resolved after the two countries reached an agreement regulating employment of domestic workers.

## Egypt’s FM Heads to U.S. for Nile Dam Talks

CAIRO (Xinhua) – Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry has left for Washington for talks over the disputed Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) on the Nile River.

In a statement, Egyptian foreign ministry said that Shoukry headed to Washington to participate in the U.S.-sponsored ministerial meeting during which Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia will discuss the filling and operation of Ethiopia’s new dam.

The meeting will be attended by representatives of the World Bank, the statement

added.

The ministerial meeting comes as all parties agreed in mid-January to resume discussions in Washington on Jan. 28-29 with the aim of reaching a comprehensive agreement on the rules of filling and operation of the dam.

Upstream Nile Basin country Ethiopia started building its grand hydropower dam in 2011 on the Blue Nile, while Egypt, a downstream country, is concerned that the dam might affect its 55.5-billion-cubic-meter annual share of Nile water.

Egypt’s fellow downstream country Sudan eyes future benefits from the GERD construction despite Egyptian concerns. The GERD is expected to produce over 6,000 megawatts of electricity and become Africa’s largest hydropower dam upon completion.

Egypt seeks a minimum annual flow of 40 billion cubic meters of water from the Blue Nile branch to its lands, while Ethiopia wants to allow an annual passage of 35 billion cubic meters only during the period of filling the dam and the times of drought.