

‘Saudi Arabia Building Dungeon Under MbS Palace’

RIYADH (Dispatches) – Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is building a secret jail under his palace in Jeddah to imprison his opponents, Arab media reports have revealed.

“A secret prison will be built at al-Salam palace; at present, 10 stories have been constructed under the palace with solitary cells, some of them completely covered in dark,” the Arabic-language al-Ahd al-Jadid news website wrote on its twitter page on Wednesday.

It noted that the prison will be used for occasions like what happened in Ritz-Carlton hotel when it was closed to business and became a detention center for those detained in line with the MbS’ crackdown on the opponents in November 2017.

The Arab paper went ahead so far to say that “Bin Salman, himself, intends to supervise the interrogation and torturing operations”.

There is yet no other source to confirm the al-Ahd al-Jadid’s report.

The Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Riyadh, hosted hundreds of rich and once-powerful Saudis who were detained in what the Saudi regime called an anti-corruption campaign.



The picture taken on May 21, 2017, shows the hallway of the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Billionaires, royals and bureaucrats who were considered a danger to bin Salman still remain locked up, including Prince Turki bin Abdullah and former economy minister Adel Fakeih, a key architect of the kingdom’s transformation plan.

Some are now in the al-Ha’er prison, a maximum-security facility south of the

capital where many extremist militants are incarcerated.

Early in 2018, the Saudi attorney general said 56 men remained locked up, some the subject of criminal investigations, with more than \$106 billion in cash, real estate, businesses, securities and other assets recovered in the Ritz operation.

Architects Struggle to Save Cairo’s Historic Heart

CAIRO (Reuters) - Alaa al-Habashi was looking for ingredients for a Ramadan feast when he stumbled on an Ottoman-era mansion being used as a slaughterhouse and butcher’s shop in Cairo’s historic district.

“I was blindsided by the beauty,” the architect said of the house which he first saw more than two decades ago. Built of brick and stone, it has a large inner courtyard and a number of rooms with decorative painted wooden ceilings.

He struck up a friendship with the butcher, who owned the building, and received a call from him several years later saying a property developer wanted to buy it and tear it down.

Determined to save the building, Habashi bought it in 2009, only to be told he could raze it but not restore it. He refused to give up and won the right to restore it in a two-year legal battle. A decade after he bought the building, the restoration is almost complete.

His battle was part of a larger fight to save old buildings which some professional restorers and architects fear is being lost because of bureaucracy, official corruption and laws which they say do little to protect Egypt’s architectural heritage.

“I’m not at all optimistic. I believe only 25% of the buildings will survive,” said May al-Ibrashy, a restorer who has been working in historic

Cairo for about 25 years.

The five-square-kilometre (about two-square-mile) historic quarter, which has one of the world’s biggest collections of Islamic architecture, has been declared a World Heritage site by the United Nations’ cultural agency UNESCO.

But though its main monuments are not under threat, many houses and smaller buildings are being demolished.

Government inspectors, fearing they could be held legally responsible for any problems, have declared many centuries-old buildings in danger of collapse since earthquakes in 1992 and 2005. Many have been demolished and replaced by cement and brick high-rise buildings that critics describe as garish.

The demolitions appear at odds with government officials’ pledges to maintain Cairo’s role as Egypt’s “cultural, tourism and heritage capital”, despite work on building a new capital east of Cairo to ease pressure on the city of over 20 million.

Those fighting to save old buildings in historic Cairo say the demolitions are destroying a potential stream of tourists and revenue from tourism, which earned Egypt \$11.6 billion in 2018, according to central bank figures.

Lawyers Seek Kurdish Politician’s Release From Turkish Jail

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) – Lawyers applied on Wednesday for Selahattin Demirtas, former leader of Turkey’s pro-Kurdish Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP), to be released from jail after a court ruled he was eligible to be set free, an HDP source said.

Demirtas, one of Turkey’s best known politicians, has been in jail for almost three years and faces several legal cases, mainly on terrorism charges.

A Turkish court last week ruled that he should be released as the trial continues in the main case against him, in which prosecutors are seeking a jail sentence of up to 142 years.

But Demirtas’ release was blocked because he had been sentenced to four years and eight

months in jail last September over comments he made in a speech in 2013.

The HDP source said Demirtas’ lawyers had applied for the three years he has spent in jail to be discounted from his existing sentence, which would make him eligible to be released on parole.

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has urged Turkey to process his legal case swiftly, saying his pre-trial detention has gone on longer than could be justified. A Turkish court last November rejected an appeal for his release.

Ankara accuses the HDP of ties to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which has waged a decades-long insurgency in Turkey and is considered a

terrorist organization by the European Union, the United States and Turkey. The HDP denies such links.

In another development in Turkey, a court on Wednesday acquitted an Austrian student, activist and journalist of terrorism charges and lifted his travel ban, according to his lawyer, who called his detainment last year “unjust and unlawful.”

Max Zirngast was accused of being a member of a leftist terrorist organization based on a number of articles he wrote about Turkey, and on demonstrations in which he took part while in the country.

A political science student who writes for the far-left online publication Re:volt, Zirngast

had been jailed for some three months last year before his trial began. The arrest a year ago had prompted former Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz to demand an explanation from Ankara.

Lawyer Murat Yilmaz told Reuters on Wednesday the court had acquitted Zirngast of the charges and lifted a travel ban that was imposed in December.

“Max had no links to any illegal organization but we couldn’t explain this to the prosecutors. They did not want to understand,” he said. “Justice was served today but Max’s detention and arrest were unjust and unlawful.”

Three others, who were being tried in the same case, were also acquitted, the lawyer said.

Annexation ... (Continued From Page One)

regime seized in the 1967 Six-Day War, along with the West Bank and East Jerusalem Al-Quds.

More than 600,000 Zionist settlers now live in the West Bank and annexed East Al-Quds, among three million Palestinians.

Arab and Muslim leaders have unanimously decried the U.S. moves backing Netanyahu’s policies, but done little to challenge them.

They have instead insisted on achieving a so-called two-state solution and establishing a Palestinian state based on the borders of 1967 with East Al-Quds as its capital.

Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner has been tasked with hammering out a plan to purportedly resolve the bitter Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but the plan has been dismissed a sell-out of the Palestinian cause.

The plan’s economic aspects were unveiled at a Bahrain conference in June, floating the prospect of pumping some \$50 billion worth of investment into a stagnant Palestinian economy.

It failed however to address key Palestinian demands such as the establishment of their own independent state. It remains unclear when Kushner’s full plan will be rolled out with the Israeli elections looming on September 17.

U.S.... (Continued From Page One)

Trump and dozens of members of the executive branch. He then headed to a commemoration at the Pentagon.

Less than a month after the terror attacks, Bush announced on Oct. 7, 2001, that U.S. and British troops had begun striking Afghanistan for harboring the Al-Qaeda terrorists blamed for 9/11. The massive air campaign initially targeted troops, training camps and air defenses of the Taliban, which ruled Afghanistan from 1996 and hosted Osama bin Laden as he masterminded the Sept. 11 attacks.

For nearly a year, U.S. envoy Zalmay Khalilzad has been negotiating with the Taliban on issues including a U.S. troop withdrawal and Taliban guarantees that they will not attack American interests.

It’s unclear if the U.S.-Taliban talks will resume, but Trump has said he wants to withdraw about 5,000 of the 14,000 U.S. service members still in Afghanistan. More than 2,400 American service members have been killed in the conflict.

The U.S.-led NATO combat mission ended in 2014, but the allied forces continue to allegedly train, advise and assist the Afghan security forces.

Majorities of Americans, including veterans, think the war in Afghanistan was not worth fighting, according to a May poll from Pew Research Center. Fifty-nine percent of all adults said the war in Afghanistan was not worth fighting, given the costs to the United States versus the benefits, while 36% said it was.

Opinion was similar among veterans specifically, with 58% saying the war was not worth fighting and 38% saying it was.

Trump campaigned for president on a pledge to withdraw U.S. troops from Afghanistan.

The top Democrats vying for the nod to challenge Trump in 2020 also have called for the removal of U.S. troops, though they have offered different timetables and parameters for any such withdrawal.

Former Vice President Joe Biden and Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren have said they would ensure American combat forces return from Afghanistan during their first term, while California Sen. Kamala Harris and Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders have lauded that timeframe but stopped short of full commitment to it.

Russia ... (Continued From Page One)

Over the past decade, Russia has more than quadrupled its gold reserves to more than 2,200 tonnes and now owns the fifth-largest stockpile by country. China’s reserves reportedly stand at more than 1,950 tonnes.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has taken a special interest in breaking up America’s “exorbitant privi-

lege” in the words of former French President Charles de Gaulle through the dollar hegemony.

In June, Putin urged five major emerging economic powers - Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, known as BRICS - to accelerate developing a system that could replace the dollar.

China, on the other hand, is on a campaign to make the renminbi a global reserve currency and its rising gold reserves could add to world confidence in the currency.

China’s launch of yuan-denominated Shanghai futures in March generated a lot of enthusiasm around the world.

Experts say the new futures contract traded on the Shanghai International Energy Exchange is now on course to become an alternative international oil benchmark not priced in dollars.

Iran... (Continued From Page 2)

nuclear weapons and has a policy of deliberate ambiguity about its nuclear capabilities.

“Israel talking about adhering to non-proliferation is like (the) mafia talking about adhering to the laws against organized crimes,” he said.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif also responded to the occupying regime of Israel’s claims on Twitter, saying, “The possessor of REAL nukes cries wolf—on an AL-LEGED ‘demolished’ site in Iran.”

In his remarks to the UN meeting, Gharibabadi also commented on Saudi Arabia’s nuclear ambitions pursued under the auspices of U.S. President Donald Trump.

He said the kingdom was developing a “very opaque and vague” nuclear program, adding that although Riyadh had signed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), it followed the IAEA’s small quantities protocol.

Saudi Arabia signed in 2005 the so-called small quantities protocol with the International Atomic Energy Agency, which exempts countries with no or minimal nuclear programs from inspections.

Riyadh, which is constructing a nuclear reactor, has so far resisted calls by the IAEA to implement proportionate safeguards and an inspection regime that would prohibit possible deviation towards weaponization.

Gharibabadi said Saudi Arabia’s policies were regrettably supported by the U.S. government for political and economic gains.

He said countries must make it clear to Saudi Arabia that the international community will not tolerate any deviation from a peaceful nuclear program.

Saudi Arabia has announced plans to spend \$80 billion to build 16 nuclear reactors over the coming two decades.

Back in March, U.S. Energy Secretary Rick Perry approved six secret authorizations by companies to sell nuclear power technology and assistance to Saudi Arabia as the Trump administration has quietly pursued a wider deal on sharing U.S. nuclear power technology with the kingdom.

Analysts have warned that a nuclear Riyadh under its “reckless” leadership would pose a threat to the countries in the region.

“The small quantities protocol was designed to simplify safeguards for states with minimal or no nuclear material, but it is no longer adequate for Saudi Arabia’s expanding nuclear program,” Kelsey Davenport, director of Nonproliferation Policy at Arms Control Association, told Middle East Eye in June.

U.S. lawmakers have also expressed concern that sharing nuclear technology with Saudi Arabia could lead to a nuclear arms race in the Middle East.

Center... (Continued From Page 2)

The council also noted that Soleimani’s prolonged detention has severely affected his eyesight and caused him to lose much weight.

Soleimani’s family is paying all the medical and legal costs, it noted. The U.S. government is preventing his access to decent medical treatment, despite the fact that he suffers from irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).

The body called on the world’s justice-seeking people and organizations to help pursue the scientist’s release.

355 Meters of Snakeskin Seized at Istanbul Airport

ISTANBUL (Daily Sabah) – Turkish customs and anti-smuggling officers seized 93 pieces of snakeskin, which when combined reached a lengthy 355 meters, from a passenger who tried to smuggle it in checked baggage at Istanbul Airport (IST) Wednesday.

Following an initial investigation, customs enforcement and anti-smuggling units made a risk assessment for incoming passengers and their baggage. An Indonesian passenger

who was set to arrive in Istanbul on a Saudi Arabia Airlines flight was determined to be risky and was taken under surveillance.

After x-ray scans of the suspicious passenger’s baggage showed that the bags were heavier and denser than they should have been, security forces intercepted and searched the bags of the suspect who had walked through the green channel, which is for passengers not carrying any prohibited /

restricted items and have nothing to declare.

The market value of the snakeskin seized was estimated to be around 320,000 (\$55.447) Turkish liras.

A forensic investigation related to the incident is still ongoing.

Snakeskin leather is commercially illegal under the convention on international trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora (CITES).