

BEIRUT (AFP) – Firefighters in Lebanon's capital said Tuesday they put out a fire at a building under construction, in what was the third blaze to hit the city since a massive explosion at the port.

Footage shared on social media showed black clouds of smoke billowing off of bright red flames that climbed up the side of the curvaceous building with latticed covering.

AFP reporters at the scene saw firefighters use a crane to aim water hoses at its smoldering facade. It was not immediately clear what caused the fire.

One, who enters the places of evil repute has no right to complain against a man who speaks ill of him.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

Qatar, Pakistan Rule Out Normalization With Zionist Regime

DOHA (Dispatches) – Doha will not join other Persian Gulf Arab regime in establishing diplomatic ties with the Zionist regime, a Qatari official has said, adding that normalizing relations with the Zionist regime “can’t be the answer” to the Zionist-Palestinian conflict.

“We don’t think that normalization was the core of this conflict and hence it can’t be the answer,” Lolwah al-Khater, Qatar’s foreign ministry spokesperson said in an interview with Bloomberg.

“The core of this conflict is about the drastic conditions that the Palestinians are living under” as “people without a country, living under occupation,” she said.

Al-Khater’s statement came ahead of Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates signing their normalization deals with the Zionist regime in a ceremony scheduled in the White House.

Palestinians have slammed the deals as grave betrayals by the Arab states, further undermining



Palestinians take part in a protest against the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain’s deal with the Zionist regime to normalize relations, in Nablus in the Israeli-occupied West Bank September 15, 2020.

their efforts to achieve self-determination.

The Palestinian leadership wants an independent state based on the de facto borders before the 1967 war, in which the Zionist regime occupied the West Bank and the

Gaza Strip and annexed East al-Quds.

Meanwhile, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan reacted to Bahrain’s normalization of ties with the occupying regime following the UAE, saying, “Any recognition

of Israel will face strong opposition from Palestinian people. We cannot make a decision which runs counter to the aspirations of the oppressed Palestinian nation. We will continue to support the fair resolution of the Palestinian issue.”

“If the whole world wants to recognize Israel, Islamabad would not do so and would never make a decision contrary to the wishes of the Palestinian people” Khan told Urdu-language 92 News television news network on Tuesday.

He underlined that the Pakistani government will never compromise on its fundamental principles of supporting Palestine and its liberation, as stated by the founder of Pakistan Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

“Until a just solution to the Palestinian issue is produced, any recognition of the Zionist regime is ruled out. How can we accept to normalize with the Zionists when the main Palestinian parties do not accept it?” the Pakistani premier said.

After Initially Denying Even Considering It Trump Admits Wanted to Assassinate Syrian President



U.S. President Trump speaks with then-Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis during a Cabinet meeting in 2017.

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – U.S. President Donald Trump has admitted that he was set to assassinate Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in 2017, contradicting his earlier denial that he did not seek to kill him.

“I would have rather taken him out,” Trump said Tuesday on Fox News. “I had him all set, Mattis didn’t want to do it.”

Trump said during the Fox interview that he does not regret deciding against moving forward with the killing, but faulted former defense secretary James Mattis, whom he called “highly overrated” and a “bad person.” The ex-Pentagon chief, who left the administration in January 2019, has been critical of Trump.

“To me he was a terrible general, he was a bad leader,” Trump said of Mattis.

Mattis in December 2018 resigned in protest of Trump’s decision to withdraw U.S. troops from Syria.

A book written by journalist

Bob Woodward in 2018 said Trump urged Mattis to come up with a plan to assassinate Assad, but that the then-defense secretary did not go along with the president’s demands. The discussions about assassinating Assad, according to the book, came after a fake alleged chemical attack on civilians in April 2017 that was blamed on the Syrian government.

The U.S. launched cruise missiles at Syria in response to the chemical attack the West had pinned on President Assad, but the targets were limited to military installations.

After details of Woodward’s book became public, Trump denied that he had sought Assad’s death.

“No, that was never even contemplated, nor would it be contemplated,” the president told reporters in September 2018. “And it should not have been written about in the book. It’s just more fiction. The book is total fiction.”

As Arms Sales Continue to Saudi Arabia, UAE Fear of War Crimes Probe Rises Against U.S.

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – U.S. officials are at growing risk of being prosecuted for war crimes over the sale of arms to Saudi Arabia and the UAE, a New York Times investigation has revealed.

The investigation comes as U.S. President Donald Trump clears the path for further sale of advanced weapons to Persian Gulf despotic regimes following Abu Dhabi’s normalization of ties with the Zionist regime.

Interviews with more than a dozen current and former U.S. government officials show that the legal fears related to the arms sales, over the course of two presidential administrations, run far deeper than previously reported. Those concerns are said to have prompted a number of officials to consider hiring their own lawyers to discuss the risk

of being arrested while vacationing overseas.

The main concerns stem from the use of American weapons by Saudi Arabia and the UAE to target civilians in the war in Yemen. The five-year campaign in the impoverished Arab nation has been one of the bloodiest in the region’s history.

UN investigators last week issued a detailed report on atrocities in Yemen and asked the Security Council to refer actions by all parties to the International Criminal Court (ICC) for potential war crimes prosecution.

American legal scholars have expressed the opinion that regardless of whether the UN is able to mount a legal investigation led by the ICC, a foreign court could charge American officials based on the pattern of

indiscriminate killing caused by the Saudi and UAE led bombing campaign. Some countries, including Sweden and Germany, assert universal jurisdiction (UJ) over war crimes.

These fears were raised in 2016, when a State Department lawyer determined that American officials could plausibly be charged with war crimes. The department’s top lawyers, however, decided not to send the analysis to the secretary of state’s office, though it was shared with some agency officials.

“If I were in the State Department, I would be freaking out about my potential for liability,” Oona Hathaway, a Yale Law School professor and a Defense Department lawyer in the Obama administration is reported saying in the Times. “I think anyone

who’s involved in this program should get themselves a lawyer. It’s very dangerous territory the U.S. is in, continuing to provide support given the number of civilians who have been killed.”

American arms sale to its Persian Gulf allies has been a major bone of contention in Congress. Last year, lawmakers moved to challenge Trump over weapons sale to the Saudis. Trump, however, circumvented Congress by declaring a national emergency.

Serious questions are now being asked over Trump’s pledge to sell advanced weapons to the UAE under its normalization agreement with the Zionist regime. With no assurance that the Persian Gulf country will not use F-35 fighter jets against civilians, U.S. officials risk being indicted for war crimes.

Saudi Regime Under Pressure Over Detained Activists, Khashoggi Trial

GENEVA (Dispatches) – Dozens of Western countries called on Tuesday for the release of women activists detained in Saudi Arabia and for those behind the killing of dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi to be brought to justice.

Germany, speaking on behalf of the European Union at the United Nations Human Rights Council, decried Saudi Arabia’s “prolonged detentions of women rights defenders,” including Loujain al-Hathloul.

At least a dozen prominent women’s rights activists were arrested in Saudi Arabia in 2018 as it lifted a ban on women driving cars, a step that many of the detainees had long campaigned for.

Several of the arrested women say they have suffered torture and sexual assault in detention.

Denmark’s ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, Morten Jespersen, read out a joint statement on behalf of 29 countries -- including Australia, Britain and Canada -- urging the kingdom to “release all political detainees” and voicing concern at the detention of “at least five women activists”.

They include al-Hathloul, Nouf Abdelaziz, Samar Badawi, Nassima Al-Sadah, Mohammed Al-Bajadi, and Miyaa Al-Zahrani, the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR) said in a statement.

John Fisher of Human Rights Watch denounced Saudi Arabia’s “brutal targeting of defenders and dissidents” and urged the release of the women activists and “others arbitrarily detained”.

Separately, the UN’s International Organization for Migration (IOM) said it was alarmed by the “deteriorating” conditions for Ethiopian migrants detained in Saudi Arabia and was seeking access to those in need of urgent aid.

On Saudi journalist who was brutally murdered in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in 2018, Germany’s ambassador, Michael Freiherr von Ungern-Sternberg, said “We stress the need for full accountability and transparent prosecution of those involved in the killing of Jamal Khashoggi,” added

A Saudi court this month jailed eight people for between seven and 20 years for the murder. The trial

drew criticism from a UN investigator and from human rights campaigners who said the masterminds of the murder remained free.

None of the defendants were named in what was described as the final court ruling on the killing.

Khashoggi -- a royal family insider turned critic -- was killed and dismembered, in a case that tarnished the reputation of de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Khashoggi, a 59-year-old, was strangled and his body cut into pieces by a 15-man Saudi squad inside the consulate, according to Turkish officials. His remains have not been found.

Riyadh has described the murder as a “rogue” operation, but both the CIA and a United Nations special envoy have directly linked bin Salman to the killing.

Agnes Callamard - the United Nations’ special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions - also found “credible evidence” that bin Salman and other senior Saudi officials were liable for the killing in an investigative report published in June 2019.

IED Targets British Diplomatic Vehicles in Baghdad

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – The UK Embassy in Iraq’s capital Baghdad said that an improvised explosive device (IED) attack against British diplomatic vehicles had occurred earlier in the day, Reuters reported.

The blast took place in al-Qadisiya neighborhood in the west of the heavily fortified Green Zone, the ministry source told Xinhua on condition of anonymity, without giving more details.

Unidentified militant groups frequently attack convoys delivering supplies for U.S.-led troops in Iraq, Iraqi military bases housing U.S. troops across Iraq and the U.S. embassy in the Green Zone.

Earlier on Tuesday, two Katyusha rockets fell in the Iraqi capital, targeting the so-called green zone, Security Media Cell said in a statement.

“Two Katyusha rockets landed in the green zone when hitting the area at 01:00 a.m. on Tuesday [22:00 GMT on Monday]. The C-RAM air defense system responded to the attack, and no losses or

material damage occurred as a result,” the Security Media Cell said in a statement, as quoted by Al Sumaria.

The strike reportedly targeted the U.S. Embassy. The Baghdad green zone, which hosts Iraqi government facilities and foreign diplomatic missions, frequently suffers from rocket attacks.

The rockets were fired from the Ali Saleh district, located in the Iraqi capital, the service added.

On Jan. 5, the Iraqi parliament passed a resolution that requires the government to end the presence of foreign forces, especially the U.S., in the country.

The parliament resolution came after a U.S. drone struck a convoy of vehicles at Baghdad airport on Jan. 3, assassinating Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, commander of the Quds Force of Iran’s Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, deputy chief of Iraq’s Hashd Shaabi popular forces.

Britain is part of a U.S.-led coalition.