

**'32 ISIL Terrorists Killed, Injured in Iraqi Air Raids'**

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – More than a dozen Takfiri ISIL terrorists have been killed and many more wounded in Iraqi army airstrikes on the northern province of Kirkuk, an Iraqi security source says. Iraq's al-Sumaria News quoted the official as saying on Saturday that 15 terrorists were killed and 17 others sustained injuries when Iraqi Sukhoi fighter jets bombarded a convoy affiliated with ISIL in Hawijah District in southern Kirkuk. Three vehicles carrying military equipment were also destroyed during the aerial assaults.

*Contentment is the capital which will never diminish.*

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

**Amid Economic Woes**

**Saudi Kingdom Plans Sale of Oil Assets**



*The file photo of a Yemeni man walking past flames rising from the ruins of buildings destroyed by Saudi-led airstrikes in the capital, Sana'a.*

RIYADH (AFP) – Saudi Arabia is planning to generate a \$2-trillion wealth fund by auctioning off its oil assets amid the heavy costs of its war on Yemen and near-record low global oil prices. The plan was revealed by the Persian Gulf kingdom's deputy crown prince Mohammad bin Salman, UK-based daily The Guardian reported Friday.

The ruling Saudi family will transfer the revenue from the sales to the country's public investment fund (PIF), which will then be tapped to purchase strategic financial and industrial assets abroad. According to the report, which described the Saudi plan as "preparation for a world beyond oil," the sale of a first tranche of shares to private investors "via an initial public offer-

ing (IPO) in the state-owned Saudi Aramco" oil company could begin as soon as next year, with the objective of building enough wealth to eventually acquire some of the world's largest corporations such as the US-based Apple. "IPOing Aramco and transferring its shares to PIF will technically make investments the source of Saudi government revenue, not oil," said

Mohammad, who is the son of Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz, in an interview with Bloomberg in Riyadh. "What is left now is to diversify investments, so within 20 years we will be an economy or state that doesn't depend mainly on oil," he said. Saudi Arabia emerged as the world's third largest military spender in 2015, despite facing a budget deficit of nearly \$100 billion caused by a sharp slump in oil prices as well as the rising cost of the war in Yemen. The Saudi war on Yemen has not only been economically disastrous for Saudi Arabia, Riyadh has killed its way into a humanitarian disaster in Yemen as well. The war has so far killed over 8,400 people, among them 2,236 children, and nearly 16,000 others have been injured since March 2015. Saudi Economy Minister Adel Fakeih announced in December last year that the regime's expenditure in 2015 climbed by 13 percent to USD 260 billion, noting that nearly USD 5.3 billion of the amount was spent on military measures, which he attributed to the kingdom's war on Yemen. The significant surge in the Saudi military spending has come against the backdrop of sinking world oil prices. The slump has seriously impacted Saudi Arabia, which relies on oil for nearly 90 percent of its revenue.

**Turkey's Treatment of Journalists 'Troubling'**



*A demonstrator with his mouth covered, stands outside the Istanbul courthouse, where Turkish opposition Cumhuriyet daily's editor-in-chief Can Dundar and Ankara bureau chief Erdem Gul attend their trial.*

WASHINGTON (Press TV) – US President Barack Obama has voiced concern over the Turkish government's approach toward media freedom under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Obama said Friday he had openly spoken with Erdogan about "very troubling" developments in Turkey, especially in regard to freedom of the press, religion and democracy. "I have expressed this to him directly so it's no secret, that there are some trends within Turkey that I have been troubled with," he said during a news conference at the end of a nuclear security summit in Washington.

"There is no doubt that President Erdogan has been repeatedly elected through a democratic process, but I think the approach that they've been taking towards the press is one that could lead

Turkey down a path that would be very troubling," he added. The Turkish government is under international criticism for restricting freedom of the press and crackdown on journalists. Activists say Erdogan has filed over 1800 court cases against critics, including many journalists, for insulting him since he took office in August 2014. Still, Obama said that Turkey is a NATO ally and an important partner in fighting terrorism. The Turkish president was among some 50 world leaders who joined Obama at the nuclear summit to discuss ways to reduce the threat of a nuclear attack. Erdogan's security staff clashed with angry protesters on Thursday ahead of his speech at the Brookings Institution in Washington.

**UN: Violence Killed 1,119, Wounded 1,561 in Iraq in March**

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – Latest figures released by the United Nations (UN) show that armed clashes, acts of terror and violence claimed the lives of 1,119 people and left 1,561 others wounded in Iraq only in the month of March. The UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) said on Friday that the number of civilians killed stood at 575 and those injured at 1,196. With 259 people killed and 770 others hurt, Baghdad was the most-affected province in the conflict-hit country. The casualties in March saw an increase compared to those recorded in February, when 670 people were killed and 1,290 wounded. Jan Kubis, the special representative of the UN secretary general for Iraq, voiced concerns about persistent violence in the Middle

Eastern state. "I am extremely disturbed at the continuing loss of life and injury as a result of terrorism, violence and armed conflict. It is totally unacceptable that civilians should bear the brunt of violence," Kubis said. He further expressed hope that Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi's proposed reforms to the country's political structure would offer hope for a better future in Iraq. In January, a report compiled by UNAMI and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, warned that violence suffered by civilians in Iraq "remains staggering," with at least 18,802 civilians killed between January 1, 2014 and October 31, 2015. Some 3.2 million Iraqis have also been displaced internally over the



*A displaced woman carries her child in a building that is used as a temporary shelter in Makhmur, Iraq.*

same period, the report said. It further added that the Takfiri ISIL terrorist group commits "systematic and widespread violence and abuses of international human

rights law and humanitarian law. These acts may, in some instances, amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity, and possibly genocide."

**40 Bodies Removed From Mass Grave in Syria's Palmyra**

Damascus (Dispatches) – Syrian forces have found 40 bodies in a mass grave in the central city of Palmyra, which was recently liberated by the forces from the Takfiri ISIL terrorist group. An unnamed field source had earlier put the number at 25, and said that three children and five women were among them, Syria's official SANA news agency reported on Friday. The source, however, later revised the figure, saying that 15 more bodies, all of them being those of women and children, had

been found. The Syrian forces continue to excavate the grave, which was discovered by the engineering units and Syrian popular forces, the source said, adding that some of those buried had been beheaded and others had signs of brutal torture on them. Palmyra had fallen to Daesh last May. The Syrian army, backed by popular defense groups and a Russian aerial campaign, recently regained control over the city after some four weeks of fierce fighting with ISIL.

The Syrian soldiers have now been clearing bombs and landmines planted in Palmyra by ISIL. Syrian officers said they have so far detonated 500 mines in Palmyra's urban areas while the number of those undiscovered remains unknown. "They planted two to three mines together every 100 meters. The mines were laid to impede the advance of the government force," said Munzer, a commander of the Syrian army. An unidentified Syrian field general said the road to the Western city of Homs is 100 percent safe,

but the other roads such as those leading to the town of Sukhnah and the city of Dayr al-Zawr need to be cleared from mines. Meanwhile, Syria's antiquities chief Maamoun Abdelkarim said the full extent of damage in the ancient city could take weeks to establish because of the mines laid amid the ruins. The Syrian army has vowed to press ahead with its counter-terror military operations and drive ISIL elements out of their major strongholds in the conflict-ridden Arab country.

**Epistle of Imam Ali (AS) to Malik al-Ashtar published in Spanish**

TEHRAN – The famous epistle of the Commander of the Faithful, Prophet Muhammad's (SAWA) divinely-designated vicegerent, Imam Ali ibn Abi Taleb (AS) to his governor of Egypt, Malik al-Ashtar, on how to efficiently govern that province, has recently been published in Spanish in a book by Editorial Galac Publications in Venezuela. The book entitled "Consejos Para Un Buen Gobierno" (Tips for Good Governance) is scheduled to go on display at the 12th Venezuela International Book Fair, the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization (ICRO) announced on Wednesday. Malik al-Ashtar was a faithful disciple of Imam Ali (AS) and the head of an-Nakhaei clan. He was also a brave warrior and commander-in-chief of the armies of the Imam (AS). This epistle, hailed as the finest charter of human rights, is found in the famous book "Nahj al-Balagha" (Highway of Eloquence), has so far been rendered into French, English, Persian, Urdu, Portuguese, German, Swedish, Russian, Italian, Turkish, Japanese, and several other languages.

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*It is good news that the famous epistle of Imam Ali (AS) to one of his governors is being circulated in different languages. My friend Jamsheed, better known as Jimmy the simpleminded, remarked, "The original in Arabic should be circulated in all Arab states as well. The Arab rulers need it more than others."*