

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) -- The U.S. Congress misses a deadline to decide on re-imposing anti-Iran sanctions, which were lifted under the 2015 nuclear deal, with reports saying the lawmakers sought to kick the decision on the issue back to President Donald Trump. Trump had given Congress until December 12 to decide whether to slap economic sanctions on Tehran anew. White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders told a press briefing that the Trump administration "continues to make encouraging progress with Congress to fix the U.S.-Iran deal and address long-term proliferation issues."

PARIS (Dispatches) -- The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) has strongly condemned a recent move by U.S. President Donald Trump to declare Jerusalem Al-Quds as the so-called capital of the occupying regime of Israel. In a meeting chaired by Venezuelan Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza here, NAM member states denounced Trump's measure as illegal and contrary to international law and UN resolutions. They also emphasized that any change in the status quo of Al-Quds by any party or government would be illegal and invalid.

**Viewpoint**  
By: Kayhan Int'l Staff Writer  
**Would the OIC Communique Change Realities on the Ground?**  
P. 2

**Doc on Plasco Tragedy Premieres at Cinema Verite**  
P. 3



**Queiroz World's 7th Best National Team Coach**  
P. 6



**Zionist Jets Strike Gaza Amid al-Quds Tensions**  
P. 8



## Iraqis See No Future Without Hashd al-Shaabi

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) -- In little more than three years the Hashd al-Shaabi, or Popular Mobilization Units, have risen from disparate alliance of volunteer militias to become a battle-tested force in Iraq. And despite the apparent end of the war against Daesh in Iraq, they are resisting pressure from the West to disband - the group's leaders insist they are here to stay. "We need this force and insist on maintaining it to eradicate and destroy terrorism in Iraq," said Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy commander of Iraq's Hashd al-Shaabi forces. "The future of the Hashd is to defend Iraq. We need military forces that have this experience of battling terrorists and any international threats, and Iraq must maintain enough force." Hashd al-Shaabi fighters have bolstered the Iraqi military since mid-2014, volunteering to fight on front lines against Daesh at a point when the Iraqi army was in a state of collapse. Three days after the fall of Mosul to Daesh, Grand Ayatollah Seyyed Ali al-Sistani - Iraq's highest Shia religious authority - issued a call-to-arms fatwa, pronounced at the Holy Shrine of Imam Hussein in Karbala, calling on any Iraqi man - regardless of faith - who was able to carry a weapon, to volunteer to defend his country and its citizens against Daesh. The Hashd al-Shaabi's reputation now precedes them. They are feared by Daesh, disliked by Peshmerga - who perceived them as a threat long before the Kurdish region's ill-fated bid for secession - and, across much of the rest of the country, they are widely credited with having played a critical role in saving Iraq from Daesh. Although Iraq now has a range of battle-hardened security forces, the Hashd has proved to be the stand-out success story, rising from assorted pre-existing militias and groups of volunteers in mismatched uniforms to a credible military force, whose fighters have honed their skills on some of the most dangerous battlefields of the 21st century. "We see our role as complimentary to the Iraqi army role," explained Muhandis. "They can't fight without us and we can't fight without them." He said the Hashd al-Shaabi's non-military units, including engineering, communications, and an intelligence apparatus he claimed was the best in Iraq, also had an important role to play in helping rebuild the country. The considerable power of the Hashd has unnerved Western governments, however. Despite being part of the country's official military since November 2016, the U.S. is ramping up pressure for it to be disbanded. Last month a U.S. senator introduced a bill to designate two Hashd brigades - Asaib Ahl al-Haq and Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba - as terrorist organizations. The leader of the latter, Akram al-Kaabi, was already designated as such in 2008. Hadi al-Amri, the leader of the Badr Brigade, one of the Iraq's longstanding militias and now part of the Hashd, accused the U.S. of double standards. "The U.S. says it is essential for American forces to stay in Iraq, while saying the Hashd is not necessary. These double-standards have to end," he said. "Now we are living in the last days of Daesh but we still have a big responsibility and it would be a risk to think victory against Daesh is the end of story." Muhandis said Iran was the only country which offered his men support in the wake of Mosul's fall to Daesh in 2014. "Not one single bullet" came from the U.S. during the first six months of Daesh's so-called caliphate in Iraq, said Muhandis. Later, the Americans decided to instead supply and train the Peshmerga and Iraq's demoralized regular armed forces. "Hashd al-Shaabi is not a vetted portion of the Iraqi security forces and thus receives no U.S. equipment or training," the U.S. media office told the Middle East Eye. A number of Hashd brigades and senior commanders including Muhandis, who is also designated a terrorist by the U.S., also played a key role in resisting America's occupation of Iraq. Already controlling much of the country's restive Anbar province, in June 2014 Daesh swept across northern and central Iraq and seized control of Mosul, prompting terrified Iraqi soldiers to down arms, swap uniforms for civilian attire and flee. Meeting little resistance, in just over a week Daesh had expanded its control to almost a third of Iraq and - just 30 km from Baghdad - was closing in on the capital. After Ayatollah Sistani's fatwa, local government and military offices were inundated with tens of thousands of civilian volunteers, including doctors, engineers and journalists, as well as existing military personnel, some of whom quit their official army roles to volunteer. With existing military apparatus unable to absorb such large numbers, many volunteers were distributed among independent militias who had also responded to the fatwa. The former Iraqi prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki, established an umbrella organization - the Hashd al-Shaabi - which would be able to coordinate between such groups, organizing logistics and support. "People listened carefully to Sayyed Sistani and the response was huge. They put on any military clothes they had, took their own weapons, went straight to the edge of Daesh-occupied territory and prepared to start fighting," recalled Hashd media team member, Karrar Hazam.

(Continued on Page 7)

# Emergency OIC Summit Declares: Al-Quds, Capital of State of Palestine



Leaders and representatives of member states pose for a group photo during an Extraordinary Summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on last week's U.S. recognition of Jerusalem Al-Quds as Israel's so-called capital, on December 13, 2017 in Istanbul.

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) -- Islamic leaders on Wednesday urged the world to recognize occupied East Al-Quds as the so-called capital of Palestine, as Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas warned the United States no longer had any role to play in the "peace" process. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan convened in Istanbul an emergency summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), seeking a coordinated response to the recognition by U.S. President Donald Trump of Jerusalem Al-Quds as Israel's so-called capital. With the Islamic world itself mired in division, the summit fell well short of agreeing any concrete sanctions against the Zionist regime or the United States. But their final statement declared "East Al-Quds as the capital of the State of Palestine" and invited "all countries to recognize the State of Palestine and East Al-Quds as its occupied capital." They also condemned "in the strongest terms the unilateral decision by the President of the United States America recognizing Al-Quds as the so-called capital of Israel, the occupying power." They declared Trump's decision "null and void legally" and "a deliberate undermining of all peace efforts" that would give impetus to "extremism and terrorism." The status of Jerusalem Al-Quds is perhaps the most sensitive issue in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While the Zionist regime expands its illegal seizure of the extremely sensitive city, the Palestinians want the eastern sector, which the international community regards as annexed by Israel as the capital of their future state. Erdogan denounced Israel as a regime defined by "occupation" and "terror". "With this decision, Israel was rewarded

for all the terrorist activities it has carried

## Scores Killed in Saudi Aerial Rampage in Sanaa

SANAA (Dispatches) -- Saudi aircraft struck a military police camp in the Yemeni capital Sanaa on Wednesday, killing at least 39 people and wounding 90 more, including some prisoners, an official and witnesses said. The strike is part of an air campaign by the Western-backed regime in Riyadh on Yemen that has escalated since the Houthis crushed a "sedition" last week led by former Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh and killed him. One official in eastern Sanaa said Saudi aircraft launched seven raids. He estimated there were about 180 prisoners being held there. The official said rescue teams had pulled out 35 bodies from the rubble,

out. It is Trump who bestowed this award even," said Erdogan, who holds the rotating chairmanship of the OIC. He said all countries who "value international law and fairness" should recognize occupied Al-Quds as the capital of Palestine, saying Islamic countries would "never give up" on this demand. Using unusually strong language, Abbas warned that there could be "no peace or stability" in the Middle East until Al-Quds is recognized as the capital of a Palestinian state. Moreover, he said that with Trump's move the United States had withdrawn itself from a traditional role as the mediator in the search for Mideast "peace". "We do not accept any role of the United States in the political process from now on. Because it is completely biased towards Israel," he said. The final statement from the OIC echoed this sentiment, saying Trump's move was "an announcement of the U.S. administration's withdrawal from its role as sponsor of peace" in the Middle East.

(Continued on Page 7)

## Zionist Minister Invites Saudi Crown Prince

OCCUPIED AL-QUDS (Dispatches) -- The occupying regime of Israel's intelligence minister Yisrael Katz wants Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman to visit, his spokesman said Wednesday, in what would be an unprecedented trip involving two sides with no official diplomatic ties. Zionist leaders have repeatedly spoken of improving ties with the Arab world and hinted at behind-the-scenes cooperation, particularly involving their efforts to limit Iran. Katz issued the call during an interview with Elaph, a news website run by a Saudi businessman, his spokesman Arye Shalimar said. The call was not included in the final version of the interview published online. Shalimar could not comment on why, but said Katz had indeed made the comments. "He said that he asks the king to invite (Prime Minister Benjamin) Netanyahu officially to Riyadh, and he asks MBS, Muhammad bin Salman, the son, to come and visit Israel," Shalimar said of Katz, who is also transportation minister. Katz made the call because "he wants regional peace -- that's part of his three-layered program," his spokesman said, referring to security and economic cooperation leading to eventual "peace". He referred to Saudi Arabia as a leader in the Arab world. Netanyahu has spoken repeatedly and with pride about growing rapprochement with "moderate Arab states" without naming them, although he is assumed to be referring to Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf monarchies.

(Continued on Page 7)

## French Group Lafarge Funded Daesh: Lawyers

PARIS (Dispatches) -- French cement group Lafarge paid close to \$15.2 million to armed organizations, including Daesh, to keep operating in Syria from 2011 to 2015, human rights lawyers said. The lawyers were speaking at a news conference on the course of a preliminary inquiry launched in June by French prosecutors into Lafarge's operations on suspicion of "financing of a terrorist enterprise". The lawyers for rights group Sherpa said a large part of the money went directly or indirectly into the pockets of Daesh and that payments lasted until well after the closure of Lafarge's Jalabiya plant in September

2014. They were citing a figure pinpointed by prosecutors examining Lafarge's activities in Syria, in the throes of war since 2011, and drawn from an internal report by U.S. law firm Baker and McKenzie for Lafarge. "As part of the inquiry, the precise figure retained is 12,946,000 euros (\$15.2 million) paid by Lafarge between 2011 and 2015 to terrorist organizations, including Daesh," Sherpa lawyer Marie Dose said. Lafarge became LafargeHolcim, the world's largest cement maker, in 2015 after a takeover by Swiss Holcim.

(Continued on Page 7)