

Iraq Parl't Committee Urges Evacuation of U.S. Embassy Troops



Members of the Iraqi security forces stand guard during the visit of the country's prime minister in the southern city of Basra, April 11, 2021.

BAGHDAD (Press TV) – The defense and security committee of Iraq's parliament has called for the evacuation of combat troops from the U.S. embassy in Baghdad.

Badr al-Ziyadi, a member of the defense and security committee, on Monday called for "the evacuation of any U.S. combat troops from the American embassy in Baghdad".

The MP told al-Maalomah news agency that while the U.S. claims to be maintaining troops for training, there are combat forces to protect its warplanes as well as Americans in Iraqi bases.

Moreover, "there is an agreement that stipulates the protection of the foreign advisors by the Iraqi government" headed by Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi, he added.

Two lawmakers with the Fatah (Conquest) Alliance at the Iraqi parliament also warned of U.S. intentions to maintain its military presence in Iraq.

Al-Maalomah cited Abbas al-Zamly as saying that the U.S. seeks to keep its forces in Iraq forever and doesn't intend to withdraw them.

Despite its overtures, "the U.S. doesn't want to leave Iraq in any way", he added on

Monday.

The United States and Iraq announced in a joint statement last week that they have agreed on the withdrawal of all American combat troops from the Arab country.

Al-Zamly stressed that the Iraqi security forces are able to protect the country, adding the U.S. combat forces have no role in fighting terrorism in Iraq.

He further said Washington "violated all international laws" when it assassinated top Iranian and Iraqi anti-terror commanders General Qassem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, stressing that the withdrawal of the U.S. combat forces from Iraq is "a matter of time" and that they would leave "sooner or later".

Anti-American sentiments have been running high in Iraq since the U.S. assassinated Gen. Soleimani and Abu Mahdi in Baghdad in a drone strike on January 3, 2020.

Just two days later, Iraqi lawmakers unanimously passed a bill mandating the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Iraq.

It is estimated that there are currently 2,500 American troops in Iraq.

Iraqi lawmaker Mohammad al-Baldawi said, "The US is exploiting Iraq's position among the region's countries and is striving not to get out of Iraq in one way or another."

He urged the Iraqi government to implement the parliament's decision to end the presence of foreign troops in Iraq and to prevent any U.S. plot aimed at keeping its forces in the country.

Iraqi resistance groups have pledged to take up arms against U.S. troops if Washington fails to comply with the parliamentary order.

Saudi ... (Continued From Page One)

out drone attacks against military aircraft hangars at Jizan airport, also known as King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz airport, in the kingdom's southern Jizan region and King Khalid air base in Asir in retaliation for the Saudi aggression.

Jeddah is about 800 kilometers from the Yemeni border.

Last February, a member of Yemen's Ansarullah movement said Saudi Arabia uses its airports across the kingdom to launch deadly aerial attacks on Yemen, making them "legitimate targets" of the war-torn country's retaliation strikes.

"We advise airlines not to use Saudi airports because they are used for military purposes in the aggression and blockade on Yemen," Supreme Political Council member Muhammad al-Bukhaiti said in a tweet on February 10.

Saudi Arabia, backed by the U.S. and its other regional allies, launched a devastating war on Yemen in March 2015, with the goal of bringing the government of Yemen's former president, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, back to power and crushing the popular Ansarullah movement.

The offensive and a simultaneous siege that the invaders have been imposing on the country have led to the death of tens of thousands of Yemenis.

Al Masirah reported on Sunday that Saudi border guards had shot dead a civilian off Alrko area in the border district of Monabeh in Yemen's Sa'ada Province.

Yemen's forces have pledged to sustain their retaliatory measures as long as the invaders and their supporters continue the war and their siege.

Victories in Ma'rib

The latest operation came a day after at least 70 fighters were killed in fierce fighting for Yemen's strategic northern city of Marib.

The Yemeni army and their allied popular forces have been trying to liberate Marib, the capital of an oil-rich region and the Saudi-backed forces' last significant pocket of territory in the north since February.

Agence France-Presse reported that the battle between Yemeni troops, and militants loyal to Yemen's former president was raging on three fronts in Ma'rib.

Pro-Hadi military sources told AFP that Yemeni forces had intensified their offensive to retake Ma'rib, adding the battle had left at least 123 killed on both sides in the past 48 hours.

One of the sources said the Yemeni forces "are launching simultaneous attacks" in the areas of Kassara and al-Mashjah, northwest of the city, and Jabal Murad in the south.

"They have made progress on the Kassara and al-Mashjah fronts, but they have been thwarted on the Jabal Murad front," he said.

The advances came while the Saudi warplanes launched airstrikes that failed to halt the Yemeni operations.

Another source claimed that the air raids had "destroyed 12 military vehicles, including four tanks and a cannon" belonging to fighters from Yemen's popular committees.

Acts... (Continued From Page One)

to impose a so-called "anti-separatism" law that purportedly aims to reinforce the country's secular system.

Reacting to the latest attacks on mosques across France, president of the National Observatory Against Islamophobia, Abdallah Zekri, denounced the current anti-Islam climate in a country that preaches democracy and freedom of religion.

"Unfortunately, the declarations of certain politicians are only making things worse," he said as quoted by AFP.

French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin condemned the defacing of the Islamic center as "unacceptable" and ordered law enforcement agencies to increase vigilance around Muslim places of worship in the country.

"The anti-Muslim inscriptions that have been inscribed on this cultural and religious center are unacceptable. Freedom of worship in France is a fundamental freedom," Darmanin claimed during a visit to the Avicenna mosque in Rennes.

This is while Darmanin -- a conservative in President Emmanuel Macron's government -- is the main sponsor of legislation passing through parliament that is allegedly designed to challenge what it portrays as encroaching fundamentalism that undermines French values.

France follows a strict form of secularism -- known as "laïcité" -- purportedly aimed at separating religion and public life, despite its insistence on freedom of religion.

The French Council of Muslim Worship (CFCM) expressed concerns in a statement that the incident against the Islamic center in Rennes occurred two days after the arson attack on the mosque in Nantes as well as death threats against a prominent female Muslim journalist.

It further blamed the upsurge in anti-Muslim acts on the ongoing debates around a current piece of legislation "indiscriminately targeting" the Muslim community, insisting that such political debates "have unfortunately served as forums for haters of all stripes."

French Muslim journalist Nadiya Lazzouni who has been critical of the government's growing Islamophobia campaign in the past year appealed to President Macron for protection after receiving death threats.

Lazzouni, who gained popularity by debating conservative French politicians on TV and arguing against the ban on hijab, told the BFM TV channel she was in contact with Macron's administration and had asked him for protection, noting that she was informed by a presidential security adviser that the authorities were treating the situation "very seriously" and "an investigation has been launched in order to assess the degree of the threats."

Lazzouni shared a photo on social media of a handwritten letter she said had been sent to her, containing insults and threats of putting "a bullet in neck."

South Korean... (Continued From Page 2)

Ali Larjani, an advisor to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, also urged the South Korean government to release Iranian assets as soon as possible to prevent any adverse impact on mutual relations.

"Our assets are in your country's banks and your government should try to be trustworthy in this matter and release them as soon as possible. This issue should not have a negative effect on the relations of the two countries," he told Chung Monday.

Iran's Foreign Ministry said unblocking Iran's funds was important to advance relations.

"Our ties have been affected by this issue," ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh told reporters on Monday. "Some solutions have been discussed, but it remains to be seen to what extent and to what extent they will be operational."

Lebanon Expands Claim Amid Maritime Dispute With Zionist Regime

BEIRUT (Dispatches) – Beirut has amended the maritime boundary claim it had originally submitted to the United Nations by 1,430 square kilometers, with Michel Najjar, public works and transport minister of the country's caretaker government, reporting on Monday that he had signed a document to that effect.

The decree must now be endorsed by caretaker Prime Minister Hassan Diab and President Michel Aoun, after

which it would be sent to the UN.

The new claim partially overlaps with the Karish gas field, a large field occupied by the Zionist regime thought to contain up to 2.1 billion cubic feet of natural gas.

Earlier, media reported that David Hale, U.S. under secretary of state for political affairs, would visit Lebanon to try to pressure the government not to expand its maritime claim, and

instead give up claims to the roughly 1,400 square km of sea area.

UN-sponsored talks on resolving the maritime dispute between Lebanon and the Zionist regime stalled late last year due to overlapping claims.

Relations between Lebanon and the Zionist regime have been tense for many decades, with the Zionist regime occupying a strip of Lebanese territory known as the Shebaa

Farms in 1981, in a move rejected by the United Nations as "null and void and without international legal effect."

The regime invaded Lebanon during the 1982 Lebanon War, and stationed troops in the southern part of the country until the year 2000. In 2006, the two fought a war, with Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance forces fighting defeated the regime by not allowing it to reach its goals.

Turkey Set to Tighten COVID-19 Curbs Again After Surge: Source

ANKARA (Reuters) – Turkey's daily coronavirus infection numbers have soared above 50,000 and President Tayyip Erdogan is likely to order a tightening of restrictions this week ahead of the vital tourism season, a senior government official said.

Turkey ranks fourth globally in new case numbers, which peaked near 56,000 last week - a five-fold jump from early March, when Erdogan loosened social curbs in what he called a period of "controlled normalization".

Ankara has blamed lax public adherence to rules and virus variants for the surge, and on March 29 it announced weekend lockdowns and closed restaurant dining for Ramadan, the Islamic fasting month that starts on Tuesday.

But the official told Reuters the short-lived normalization period did not go well and measures were set to be tightened even more after a cabinet meeting scheduled for Tuesday.

"There does not appear to be a solution other than taking much harsh-

er measures," the person said. Erdogan's cabinet will act on proposals made by a government science board, the official added, requesting anonymity.

The official said steps may include limiting intercity travel, which doctors say is key to transmission, restricting movement of those under 20 and over 65 years, and closing sports and leisure facilities.

Separate sources on the 38-member science board said some wanted a complete lockdown throughout Ramadan or failing that, restrictions on movement between cities and reductions in public transport use within cities by adjusting work shifts.

"The plan is to lower case numbers before the tourism season fully begins, because daily case numbers above 50,000 will impact tourism in a seriously negative way," the official said.

Last year the pandemic slashed Turkey's tourism revenues - a major source of foreign currency to curb its chronically high current account deficits - by two-thirds to \$12 billion.

Palestinians in Chicago Topple Extremist Pro-Zionist Candidate

CHICAGO (Dispatches) – The Palestinian community in Chicago, Illinois, succeeded in defeating extremist right-wing and pro-Zionist candidate, Sharon Brannigan, in the local election, news agencies reported.

According to news agencies, the Palestinian community mobilized other Arab communities and supporters of the Palestinian cause to take part in a campaign to ensure Brannigan does not win in the Palos Township Council of Chicago election race.

Brannigan is said to have carried out "many bigoted attacks on Arab Americans and other

neighbors."

Palestinians, Arabs, and their supporters participated in the campaign against Brannigan using the hashtag #ByeBrannigan.

Brannigan and the town's board attempted to silence the community but they consistently failed, even after they hired a security company to bully protesters and call the Palos Hills police, leading to the arrests of five leaders of the movement, Fight Back news website reported.

Protesters were vindicated, however, when the judge deemed Brannigan's testimony

"contradictory", dismissed the case, and "essentially affirmed the right of protestors to chant and challenge Brannigan and other trustees at the township meetings," according to an October 2020 statement from the Arab American Action Network.

Incumbent Assessor Robert Maloney appeared to win with 62 percent of the unofficial vote, however, results reported by Cook County clerk's office last week are unofficial until certified and all mail-in and provisional ballots are counted. The canvass deadline is 27 April.