

Hezbollah: Saudi Arabia Should Stop Interfering in Regional Countries

BEIRUT (Dispatches) – The head of the Executive Assembly of Hezbollah resistance movement, Hashem Safieddine, has demanded that Saudi Arabia stop its “hegemony” over the Lebanese people and “blatant interference” in regional countries’ affairs.

“What is required of it [Saudi Arabia] is not to interfere in the Lebanese people’s classifications and incite them against each other,” Safieddine told a party gathering near Beirut.

“For those interested in [Lebanon’s] ties with Saudi Arabia, we [announce that we] want Saudi Arabia to stop the policy of bullying nations”, Safieddine also said.

“We say to the United States, Saudi Arabia and their arms in Lebanon, you do not know the strength of this resistance, as it is capable of achieving a sovereign, free and independent homeland without any dependence on the outside,” he added.

The Hezbollah official expressed the party’s support for the opposition in



A portrait of late prominent Shia Muslim cleric Nimr al-Nimr in the Lebanese capital, Beirut on 7 January 2016

the Arabian Peninsula, wishing them a “dignified life because they deserve it”.

The gathering addressed by Safieddine was organized by Hezbollah to commemorate the sixth anniversary of the execution of Saudi dissident Sheikh Nimr Baqir al-Nimr. The Shia cleric

led protests in eastern Saudi Arabia in the early 2000s, but was executed by Riyadh along with 46 other people in January 2016 for “igniting sectarian strife” or “belonging to terrorist organizations”.

Safieddine’s remarks come amid tensions between Beirut and Riyadh.

Saudi Arabia in October expelled Lebanon’s ambassador and banned its imports after then Lebanese Information Minister George Kordahi called for an end to the Riyadh-led aggression on Yemen.

Last month, Kordahi submitted his resignation to ease tensions with Saudi Arabia, but the rift is still ongoing.

Safieddine also said that the designation of Hezbollah as a terrorist group is an “aggression” that the group strongly rejects.

“We want the world to know that whoever targets the resistance with a word has to hear the answer.”

Hezbollah was established following the 1982 Zionist invasion and occupation of southern Lebanon. The movement drove out Zionist troops from Lebanon in May 2000.

Since then, the group has grown into a powerful military force, dealing repeated blows to the Israeli military, including during a 33-day war in July 2006.

Actors Stand With Harry Potter Actress Over Palestinian Solidarity Post

LONDON (Middle East Eye) – Dozens of film stars have issued a statement in support of actress Emma Watson after she was criticized by Zionist regime officials for standing in support of Palestinian rights.

More than 40 actors - including Mark Ruffalo, Susan Sarandon, Viggo Mortensen and Oscar-nominated directors Asif Kapadia and Mira Nair - endorsed a letter organized by Artists for Palestine UK, a cultural network “standing together for Palestinian rights”.

“We join Emma Watson in support of the simple statement that ‘solidarity is a verb’, including meaningful solidarity with Pales-

tinians struggling for their human rights under international law,” the letter said.

“We recognize the underlying power imbalance between Israel, the occupying power, and the Palestinians, the people under a system of military occupation and apartheid,” it added, citing last year’s report by Human Rights Watch that said the Zionist regime was committing crimes of apartheid.

The letter also references the ongoing attempts to evict Palestinians from their homes in the East Al-Quds neighborhoods of Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan, which made major headlines last May.

The artists, including Watson’s

Harry Potter co-stars Miriam Margolyes and Julie Christie, also said they denounce all forms of racism, including Islamophobia.

“Opposition to a political system or policy is distinct from bigotry, hatred and discrimination targeting any group of humans based on their identity.”

Screenwriter and producer James Schamus and directors Asif Kapadia, Mira Nair and Ken Loach have also spoken out in support of the actress.

The post elicited widespread support from Palestinian activists but drew fierce criticism from Zionist officials with some accusing Watson of antisemitism.

Several celebrities have come in support of the Palestinian cause over the past few years.

In October 2021, bestselling Irish author Sally Rooney said she had chosen not to sell the translation rights for her latest novel to a publishing house based in the occupied territories, citing concerns about the Zionist crimes against Palestinians.

The developments come as the Boycott, Divestment and Sanction (BDS) movement is already urging countries around the world to impose a military embargo on the occupying regime, and boycott firms complicit in its occupation of the Palestinian territories.

Several Rockets Target U.S. Embassy in Baghdad

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – Several rockets on Thursday hit the heavily fortified Green Zone that houses the U.S. embassy in central Baghdad, wounding a woman and a child, the Iraqi military said.

“Several rockets were fired from the Doura neighborhood in southern Baghdad, targeting headquarters of diplomatic missions, which are protected by the Iraqi forces,” the media office of the Iraqi Joint Operations Command (JOC) said in a statement.

One of the rockets fell on a school building inside the zone, wounding a woman and a female child, according to the statement.

Meanwhile, an Interior Ministry source anonymously told Xinhua that the air defense weapons protecting the U.S. embassy opened fire on two rockets and blew them

up before reaching their targets, while a third rocket landed on a school building, causing damage.

There were no immediate reports of casualties at the U.S. embassy and no group has claimed responsibility for the attack yet.

Reuters earlier cited two Iraqi military officials, who also spoke on condition of anonymity, as saying that at least two Katyusha rockets were fired at the U.S. embassy, adding that they were shot down before reaching the compound.

The attack was the latest in a series of attack targeting U.S. interests in the Arab country.

Last month, at least two Katyusha rockets landed in Baghdad’s highly fortified Green Zone.

On July 8, at least three Katyusha rockets landed within the

Green Zone, two days after several drones targeted the U.S. embassy in Baghdad, with the weapon systems set up to fortify the facility firing at least four times to try to down the aircraft.

Back then, a faction of Iraqi Hashd al-Sha’abi forces rejected the involvement of the anti-terror resistance fighters in the July 8 rocket attack against Baghdad’s Green Zone.

“The U.S. embassy has so far not had a place in the equation of reactions from the Iraqi Resistance Coordination Committee. Should we decide to attack the facility, it will be struck with precision-guided munitions, not Katyusha rockets, to prevent collateral damage,” Qais Khazali, who leads the Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq resistance group, wrote in a tweet.

He added that Katyusha rockets are notorious for missing their targets and hitting urban areas, and Iraqi resistance groups will not utilize them if the U.S. embassy in Baghdad comes into such an equation.

Over the past months, convoys carrying logistical equipment belonging to the U.S. military as well as U.S. military camps in Iraq have also come under several attacks.

Iraqi lawmakers approved a bill that requires the government to end the presence of all foreign military forces led by the U.S. in the country.

Last year, Baghdad and Washington reached an agreement on ending the presence of all U.S. combat troops in Iraq by the end of the year.

Building ... (Continued From Page One)

taxes on oil imports to Iran through the export of tea and other commodities. In November, Iran signed a similar deal with Pakistan in exchange for gas for rice. Iranian officials say they are also in talks with Turkish companies to build houses in the Persian Gulf country in exchange for oil and gas.

In contrast to his predecessor Hassan Rouhani, President Raisi said he was eager to build ties outside the West and was watching countries like China and Russia as more permanent partners.

“Mr. Raisi’s administration has a particular focus on the East,” said Major General Muhammad Bagheri, chief of staff of Iran’s armed forces, during a recent visit to Moscow.

Iran’s recent efforts have yielded an important source of foreign currency. The value of goods transiting across its borders from most Asian countries rose to \$33 billion, up 45 percent, in the eight months to November 2021, according to the latest figures released by the customs authority announced by Iran.

A spokesman for the U.S. State Department, while declining to comment on Iran’s barter transactions, said that the U.S. was enforcing sanctions on Iran. “We will of course address any attempts to evade sanctions,” the spokesman said.

Meanwhile, amid rising global oil prices, China is stepping up shipments of Iranian crude. On Thursday, Raisi said Iran’s oil exports – of which Beijing is the largest recipient – have increased by 40% since he took office in August, a number that is in line with independent estimates. In turn, Beijing’s sales to Tehran, which includes key items such as auto parts and drugs, rose to nearly \$1 billion in November 2021, the highest level since April 2019, according to Chinese customs data.

Foreign Policy said Thursday growing Sino-Iranian relations undermine the United States and secure China’s access to Iranian oil and other important commodities.

“For its part, Iran will get billions of dollars in Chinese energy and infrastructure investment, undercutting the effectiveness of U.S. sanctions” against the Islamic Republic, it said.

Much of Beijing and Tehran’s cooperation focuses on economic and diplomatic ties, it said, adding Chinese investment will provide economic stimulus and revenue for Iran and increasingly mitigate the effectiveness of U.S. sanctions against Iran.

Overwhelmed... (Continued From Page One)

cases, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says. Hospitals have also sounded the alarm about staffing problems, insufficient resources and worsening conditions. Health experts say that while the variant may cause less severe symptoms in people who are vaccinated and otherwise healthy, it’s still extremely dangerous for people who are unvaccinated and may have other conditions. Nearly 63% of people in the United States are fully vaccinated.

At the University of Chicago Medical Center where Mechanic works, he said COVID-19 patients are just as sick as they have been throughout the pandemic.

“It’s shocking how sick people are,” Mechanic said. “They’re still getting sick and dying of Covid today. That hasn’t changed.”

Chicago estimates that 56% of Black residents have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, lagging White and Latino people in the city. The CDC has recorded similar data, reporting that 54% of Black Americans have received one vaccine dose.

“At this point, I can’t believe I’m still doing this,” Mechanic said. “I’m still calling (patients’) families and holding the phone to their ear while they gasp for air, knowing it’s likely the last words they’ll speak.”

Police... (Continued From Page One)

through the windshield and three more times outside the vehicle,” she added.

Police have said Hash’s black pick-up truck had no visible dents and Walker’s body did not show any signs of impact other than bullet wounds.

Hash has been placed on administrative leave but has not been arrested or charged with a crime. State investigators have begun an investigation into the killing.

On Thursday, a judge granted a petition from Fayetteville police chief Gina Hawkins to publicly release footage that she says will show exchanges between Fayetteville police officers and three witnesses at the scene of the shooting. The Fayetteville Observer reported.

On Thursday night, Crump said the family and the broader Fayetteville community were demanding to know why Walker was “senselessly shot and killed” by an off-duty officer.

“We have been asked to believe that this was a case of ‘shoot first, ask later,’ a philosophy seen all too often within law enforcement,” Crump said in a statement earlier in the day.

Widespread racial justice protests broke out across the U.S. in 2020 following the killing of Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota. A police officer was later charged with murder and sentenced to 22-and-a-half years in prison, in a rare prosecution of a law enforcement officer in an on-the-job incident.

Intermittent protests have continued across the U.S. surrounding other high-profile killings of unarmed Black people, with many advocates calling for wider federal reforms to policing.

U.S. police officers kill an average of 1,000 people each year, with an overrepresentation of African Americans among the victims.

Police are rarely prosecuted, although the major anti-racism protests of 2020 prompted some changes in the courts, with convictions against some police and others in high-profile shooting deaths.

Three ... (Continued From Page One)

A woman was shot to death Wednesday night, also in Englewood. The 29-year-old was sitting in a parked car in the 7400 block of South Vincennes Avenue when two people approached and opened fire about 7 p.m., police said. She was taken to the University of Chicago Medical Center, where she was pronounced dead.

Neutralizing... (Continued From Page 2)

of Blinken on Tuesday, 110 House Republicans urged the White House to enforce the existing sanctions against Tehran.

“The United States and our partners must increase pressure on Iran to stop its dangerous nuclear advancements,” the letter read.

They particularly called on the Biden administration to enforce the existing sanctions on Iran’s oil trade with China.

On Thursday, an Iranian website affiliated to the country’s Supreme National Security Council said the United States has resorted to a new political and psychological ploy to further pressure Iran.

Nour News said the Western countries, especially the U.S., are trying to put psychological pressure on the Iranian negotiating team in order to impose their will on Tehran while shirking their own responsibilities and obligations.

The Islamic Republic will not back down on its legal and logical positions under any circumstances, even though the U.S.-led side of the negotiating table is trying to bypass Iran’s initiatives on the need for the U.S. to provide guarantees as well as the necessity of a process to verify the removal of U.S. sanctions, it said.

Nour News branded the new letter by U.S. lawmakers as an “overused approach” that was also employed during the original talks that led to the formation of the JCPOA in 2015.

It said even if the pressure on the U.S. president is real, “this is merely a domestic U.S. issue and shall have no bearing on other parties to the negotiations”.

“If the U.S. president does not have enough authority to manage the political elements of his country to reach an agreement, he should not have entered into this path at all,” the article said.

The move shows that the U.S. administration does not have the necessary authority and ability to fulfill its obligations, and this issue calls into question the principle of negotiations to reach an agreement, it added.

Diplomats from Iran and the other remaining parties to the JCPOA are engaged in the eighth round of diplomatic negotiations in Austria’s capital to bring the U.S. back into compliance.

Yemeni... (Continued From Page 2)

The top Yemeni diplomat said the footage was nothing but a piece of cinematic work, and it was meant to invent pretexts for a strike on Hudaydah.

He then slammed the international community’s stance vis-à-vis the Saudi war on Yemen. “Every country pursues its own interests. That explains why many world states are silent [on Yemen war] and standing idly by. Their interests are close to those of aggressors, particularly Saudi Arabia,” Abdullah said.

He said the Yemeni nation has the right to live in a free and independent country, and that Yemen seeks peaceful relations with others.

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

The war has left hundreds of thousands of Yemenis dead, and displaced millions more. It has also destroyed Yemen’s infrastructure and spread famine and infectious diseases.

The Yemeni armed forces and allied Popular Committees, however, have grown steadily in strength against the Saudi-led invaders, and left Riyadh and its allies bogged down in the country.

HRW: Systematic Repression in Egypt Not Over

CAIRO (MEMO) – Human Rights Watch (HRW) said, despite ending the state of emergency by Egyptian President, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi in October 2021, the Egyptian government attached emergency decree provisions to other laws, and Emergency State Security Courts continued to prosecute human rights and peaceful political activists.

The rights watchdog said in its annual report in January 2021, the implementing regulations for the associations law formalized extensive and arbitrary restrictions on independent civil society organizations, requir-

ing groups to register by 11 January, 2022, or risk dissolution.

According to the report, the Egyptian authorities used discriminatory morality and debauchery laws to arrest and detain female social media influencers on unjust charges of “undermining family values.”

“President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi’s government, in 2021, continued down its well-trodden path of unrelenting repression,” said Joe Stork, deputy Middle East and North Africa Director at Human Rights Watch.

HRW’s World Report 2022, which re-

viewed human rights practices in nearly 100 countries, indicates that the Egyptian security forces acted with impunity, routinely conducting arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances and torture of real or suspected political activists as well as ordinary citizens.

According to the report, the Egyptian authorities extended repression to advocates abroad by arresting and sometimes “disappearing” family members in Egypt, including the family of U.S.-based human rights defender, Mohamed Soltan.