



**Biden to Host Jordan King for Broad Array of Talks**

WASHINGTON (Reuters) – U.S. President Joe Biden will host Jordan's King Abdullah in what will be the first of three face-to-face meetings with leaders from the Middle East expected soon. Abdullah, who faced down a challenge to his authority in April from his half-brother, Prince Hamza, will have his first Oval Office talks with Biden since the U.S. president took power in January. He will also have a working breakfast with Vice President Kamala Harris on Tuesday at the vice president's residence. He will meet Secretary of State Antony Blinken at the State Department on Tuesday.

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# Hajj Pilgrims Pray for COVID-Free World

ARAFAT (Dispatches) – Thousands of face-masked Muslims gathered on Saudi Arabia's Mount Arafat on Monday, praying for an end to the pandemic and faster vaccination as the annual hajj pilgrimage reached its climax.

Saudi Arabia, home to Islam's holiest sites in Mecca and Medina, has barred worshippers from abroad for a second year running and restricted entry from within the kingdom to guard against the coronavirus and new variants.

Only 60,000 Saudi citizens and residents, aged 18 to 65, who have been fully vaccinated or have recovered from the virus and who do not suffer from chronic diseases, were selected for the rite, a once-in-a-lifetime duty for every able-bodied Muslim who can afford it.

"It is an indescribable feeling that I got selected among millions of people to attend the hajj. I pray for God to put an end to these hard times the whole world has gone through under the coronavirus," said Um Ahmed, a Palestinian pilgrim who lives in the Saudi capital Riyadh and said she lost four family members to



Thousands of pilgrims head to Namira mosque in Arafat for noon prayers after flocking to Mount Arafat where it is believed the Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) delivered his final sermon, for the most important of the hajj rituals.

the virus.

At the Namira mosque, pilgrims sat two meters apart on their prayer mats, some shedding tears and others raising both hands as they prayed at noon.

Karimullah al-Sheikh, from India, said he was praying for his country, which has seen a surge in infections, to get rid of the virus and for everyone there to get vaccinated promptly.

### Call for Mass Nationwide Anti-Regime Protests

Meanwhile, hundreds of Saudi political opponents, distraught with the recent online publication of pictures of the empty Grand Mosque complex in the holy city of Mecca next to crowded nightclubs in the kingdom, set fire to photos of the country's leaders, calling for mass anti-regime pro-

tests on the Day of Arafah.

The murals of King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and his son and the kingdom's crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), were targeted ahead of the nationwide demonstrations.

The Day of Arafah, which marks the second day of the annual Hajj pilgrimage, is the holiest day in the Islamic calendar, and the day after that is the first day of the major Islamic holiday of Eid al-Adha (the Feast of Sacrifice).

The anti-regime activists denounced what they described as the injustice of Saudi authorities, demanded the release of political prisoners, and called for an end to the intimidation and suppression of Saudis.

Among the Saudi opposition parties calling for nationwide protests against the ruling Al Saud regime on the Day of Arafah is a group called the "National Initiative for Change."

It condemned the secularization of the Saudi Arabian society, and called for an end to "tampering with the religion" as well plans to "destroy the identity" of Saudi nationals under MBS.

## Zionist PM Forced to Backtrack on Al-Aqsa Comments



The United Arab List, an Arab political party in the occupied territories, has stressed that the Al-Aqsa Mosque is "solely the property of Muslims."

AL-QUDS (Dispatches) – Zionist prime minister Naftali Bennett has backpedaled on earlier statements he made which he said Zionists will preserve freedom of worship for Jews at Al-Aqsa Mosque.

In a statement, his office said "There is no change in the status quo," adding that he had intended to say he would ensure Jewish access to visit the Muslim holy site and not to worship there.

Jews are only permitted to enter the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound but not to perform prayers within it.

The comment by the Zionist prime minister received a huge backlash.

Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas categorically rejected the statements by Bennett, saying his remarks were an escalation that would lead to a dangerous religious conflict for which the Zionist regime bears full responsibility.

Abbas considered Bennett's remarks as a defiance of the international community.

The United Arab List, an Arab political party and a part of the ruling coalition regime in the occupied territories, has stressed that the Al-Aqsa Mosque is "solely the property of Muslims", warning of renewed escalation after Zionist settlers stormed the Muslim holy site.

"The Al-Aqsa Mosque, in its 144 dunams, is solely the property of Muslims, and no one else has any right to it," the United Arab List said in a joint statement with its parent organization, the Islamic Movement.

The Al-Aqsa Mosque compound located in the Israeli-occupied Old City of Al-Quds, is a flashpoint holy Islamic site. The mosque is Islam's third holiest site after Masjid al-Haram in Mecca and Masjid al-Nabawi in Medina, Saudi Arabia.

On Sunday, over 1,500 settlers stormed the mosque to mark a Jewish holiday. During the aggression, Zionist troops fired tear gas and stun grenades at Palestinian worshippers, and arrested a number of them.

## 50,000 Phones Worldwide on Target List in Zionist Spyware Scandal

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – The notorious spyware developed by the Zionist NSO Group, Pegasus, is at the center of an international scandal involving the alleged phone hacking of more than 180 journalists, lawyers, and human rights activists from across the world, targeted for the purpose of snooping by authoritarian regimes including the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

The scale of the hacking, however, uncovered from leaked data, is likely to be much higher. As many as 50,000 phone numbers were said to have been selected for surveillance using the Zionist snooping technology, according to details of the investigation uncovering the hacking by the Pegasus Project, a ground-breaking collaboration by more than 80 journalists from 17 media organizations in ten countries. The group's work

was co-ordinated by Forbidden Stories, a Paris-based non-profit media organization, and Amnesty International.

Amongst the targets were some of the world's top media companies including the Financial Times, the Wall Street Journal, CNN, the New York Times, Al Jazeera, France 24, Radio Free Europe, Mediapart, El Pais, Associated Press, Le Monde, Bloomberg, Agence France-Presse, the Economist, Reuters and Voice of America. Further details on who was targeted are expected to emerge over the coming days.

NSO Group gained notoriety following the killing of Saudi Journalist Jamal Khashoggi almost three years ago. Members of his inner circle were targeted by the Zionist spyware which has become the weapon of choice for autocrats against critics and op-

position figures. A successful Pegasus infection allows access to all data stored on the device. An attack on a journalist for example could expose a reporter's confidential sources as well as allowing NSO's government client to read their messages, harvest their address book, listen to their calls, track their precise movements and even record their conversations by activating the device's microphone and camera.

Bin Salman has acknowledged that the foul play took place under his watch. The CIA and others have also placed the responsibility for the murder squarely on his shoulders, saying it was carried out by a team that had been directly tasked by the Saudi Royal.

Meanwhile, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is believed to have selected the editor of the

UK's Financial Times newspaper as well as journalists at The Economist and The Wall Street Journal to be spied on using Zionist spyware, according to a sweeping investigation.

The Guardian and 16 other media organizations collaborated on the investigation into a leaked list of over 50,000 mobile phone numbers selected for possible surveillance by customers of the spyware firm NSO group since 2016.

The Zionist regime runs a hugely infamous spying program, whose reach it has been trying to extend as far as thousands of kilometers beyond the occupied territories.

The regime's fingerprints have been found on countless murder and sabotage cases around the world.

Tel Aviv has also secured notoriety for trying to have its spy apparatuses maintain an edge over their international counterparts.

## Foreign Missions in Afghanistan Call for Taliban Ceasefire

KABUL (Dispatches) – Fifteen diplomatic missions and the NATO representative in Afghanistan urged the Taliban on Monday to halt their military offensives just hours after the rival Afghan sides failed to agree on a ceasefire at a meeting in Doha.

A delegation of Afghan leaders met the Taliban's political leadership in the Qatari capital over the weekend but the Taliban, in a statement late on Sunday, made no mention of a halt to Afghanistan's escalating violence.

"This Eid al-Adha, the Taliban should lay down their weapons for good and show the world their commitment to the peace process," the 15 missions and the NATO representative said, referring to Tuesday's Muslim holiday in Afghanistan.

The statement was supported by Australia, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, the European Union delegation, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Korea, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Britain and the United States and NATO's senior civilian representative.

The development followed a message released late Sunday by Taliban leader Hibatullah Akhundzada, calling on Kabul to stop relying on "foreigners" to resolve the conflict in Afghanistan and insisting that the militants favor "a political settlement" by the Afghan parties.

Head of Kabul's High Council for National Reconciliation, Abdullah Abdullah also issued a statement on Monday, merely saying Afghan leaders and the Taliban discussed ways to reach

a political settlement to end the conflict.

"We agreed to continue the talks, seek a political settlement to the current crisis, avoid civilian casualties, facilitate humanitarian assistance & medical supplies to tackle Covid-19 pandemic," Abdullah added in a Twitter post.

The spokeswoman for Kabul's negotiating team, Najia Anwari, said, "The high-level delegation is here to talk to both sides, guide them and support the (government) negotiating team in terms of speeding up the talks and have progress."

"We expect that it (will) speed the talks and... in a short time, both sides will reach a result and we will witness a durable and dignified peace in Afghanistan," she added.

## Turkish Opposition Vows to Restore Ties With President Assad

ANKARA (Dispatches) – Turkey's main opposition leader has vowed to send 3.5 million Syrian refugees back home and rebuild ties with President Bashar Al-Assad if he beats President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in the next election.

In a video posted on his Twitter account, the leader of the Republican People's Party (HDP), Kemal Kilicdaroglu, announced his intention to reopen embassies in both countries, restore relations with Assad and return Syrian refugees "within two years" of coming into power.

Kilicdaroglu blamed the presence of Syrians for "big complaints from citizens who do not have jobs or income." He added that "bigger problems" to which there is no solution may be faced in the future.

"Go to Istanbul, Izmir, Kayseri, Hatay, Gaziantep, and Kilis, and you will find many of these widespread problems there," he stressed. He cited by way of example the southeastern district of Sanliurfa where, he said, Syrians work for half the wages of Turks and are therefore taking many of

the jobs.

According to the HDP leader, "The Syrians are close to us, but they will be happier on the soil they were born, and for this, we will work to send them there safely."

This is not the first time that he has announced plans to send back Syrians to their home country. He said the same thing last month. He also reiterated that the European Union (EU) would be paying for the Syrians' return.

Condemning the EU for complaining about the refugee crisis flowing through Turkey to Europe while failing to build infrastructure that would enable the refugees' return, Kilicdaroglu said, "I told them [the EU]: Put your hands in your pockets and build schools, hospitals, infrastructure and roads, and then we will send them back to their country."

He stressed on Twitter that he is "nothing like" Erdogan. "No one can declare my country to be an open prison for refugees. Let me tell you in advance, very tough negotiations are waiting for you."