

FAIZABAD (Xinhua) – Heavy rainfall that triggered avalanches and flash flood has inflicted property damages and rendered scores of people homeless in northern Afghanistan, a provincial official said Sunday. Mawlawi Mohammad Akram Akbari, provincial government director for Natural Disaster Management and Humanitarian Affairs, said the downpour occurred in Kofab district of Afghanistan's northern Badakhshan province on Saturday. The avalanches and flooding caused by the downpour that swept across Chantio village of Kofab district Saturday afternoon completely destroyed 20 houses, 25 shops and 600 acres of farmland, rendering scores of people homeless, the official said.

## Saudi FM Shifts Stance, Says Arabs Need New Approach Towards Syria



Syrian President Bashar al-Assad (C) among a group of army soldiers

DUBAI (Reuters) – Saudi Arabia's foreign minister said consensus was building in the Arab world that isolating Syria was not working and that dialogue with Damascus was needed "at some point".

Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud's remarks at a Munich security forum on Saturday mark a shift from the early years of the 12-year foreign-backed

war in Syria when several Arab states including Saudi Arabia backed terrorists that fought Bashar al-Assad.

"You will see not just among the GCC (Persian Gulf Cooperation Council) but in the Arab world there is a consensus growing that the status quo is not workable," he said.

The minister said without a

path towards "maximalist goals" for a political solution, another approach was "being formulated" to address the issue.

"So that's going to have to go through a dialogue with the government in Damascus at some point in a way that achieves at least the most important of the objectives especially as regards the hu-

manitarian angle, the return of refugees, etc," he said.

Asked about reports that he would visit Damascus following visits by his Emirati and Jordanian counterparts after the earthquake, Prince Faisal said he would not comment on rumors.

Riyadh has sent aid planes to government-held territory in Syria as part of earthquake relief efforts after initially sending aid only to the country's militant-held northwest.

Assad has been basking in an outpouring of support from Arab states that normalized ties with him in recent years, notably the United Arab Emirates which aims for Arab influence in Syria.

Other Arab states remain wary and U.S. sanctions on Syria remain a complicating factor.

Assad has recovered control of most of Syria with support from Russia along with Iran and resistance movements such as Lebanon's Hezbollah.

## Hezbollah: U.S. Sanctions Nothing Less Than War



A woman tosses rose petals as people gather to welcome tankers carrying Iranian fuel, upon their arrival from Syria in the city of Baalbeck, in Lebanon's Bekaa valley, on September 16, 2021.

BEIRUT (Dispatches) – A high-ranking official with Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement has slammed the sanctions imposed by the United States on the countries that are opposed to Washington's policies, saying the restrictive measures are a "crime" with the same destructive effects of a "military operation."

Speaking in Beqaa province, head of Hezbollah Executive Council, Sayyed Hashem Safieddine, stressed that the U.S. bans are aimed at killing people and bringing about destruction.

"The U.S. sanctions slapped on Lebanon and other countries that are not aligned with Washington are a crime not less than a military operation, because the objective is to kill people and bring about destruction and devastation," he noted.

Safieddine further criticized the Lebanese who offer giving up to the U.S., saying such proposals cannot set the Arab country free from its problems.

"This approach can neither resolve the presidential case nor help the economy. The solution lies in lifting the U.S. sanctions against Lebanon."

Lebanon has been without a president since last October, when Mi-

chel Aoun's mandate expired. A caretaker cabinet with limited capabilities has been overseeing the government's responsibilities in the Middle Eastern country.

Also in his remarks, the Hezbollah official noted that the Lebanese resistance will counter the sanctions through the programs, which the Americans are well aware of.

"The main goal of Hezbollah is to protect human dignity and raise its status... Hezbollah has mobilized all its capabilities for the nation and does not stop serving the people even for a moment."

Lebanon is contending with its worst financial and economic crisis since its 1975-90 civil war. The Lebanese currency has lost more than 90 percent of its value since fall 2019 and the prices of basic goods have skyrocketed.

The U.S. has exacerbated the woes by putting Lebanon under siege and adopting the so-called Caesar Act, which has hindered the Arab country's economic cooperation with its neighbors.

Creditors under the U.S. influence such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have conditioned the release of billions of dollars in emergency loans to specific reforms.

### 'Progress on Maritime Border With Iraq'

## Kuwait Shies Away From Normalization With Zionists

KUWAIT (Reuters) – Kuwait and Iraq will hold a round of legal and technical talks as they look to bring an end to a maritime border dispute, which if resolved would spur economic development between the states, Kuwait's foreign minister says.

The land border between the two was demarcated by the United Nations in 1993 after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, but it did not cover the length of their maritime boundaries, and this was left for the two oil producers to resolve.

Sheikh Salem Abdullah al-Jaber al-Sabah said the two sides

would hold talks on Sunday and he was hopeful of progress.

"It's very high priority for my government and we are working with Iraq to finalize the demarcation of that maritime border," al-Sabah said in an interview at the Munich Security Conference. He said their legal and technical teams were meeting in search of a deal. "We are moving ahead."

A deal could open the door to closer cooperation, from the construction of ports, management of border oil fields, and the general ease of trade and transport between the two states. Al-

Sabah held talks with Iraq Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani in Munich on Friday.

Kuwait is often seen as a mediating power in the region and has always been a supporter of the Palestinian cause. It has shied away from joining Persian Gulf Arab neighbors, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, in formalizing relations with the Zionist regime.

Asked whether that position could change, al-Sabah said the situation between the occupying regime and the Palestinians was not getting better. He said the priorities were for the Palestin-

ians to have a homeland and for there to be a so-called two-state solution.

"The first Arab-Israeli peace deal was in 1979, more than 40 years ago and what has come of that? The Abraham Accords were done two years ago and what has come of that? The situation for the Palestinians is still as dire as it was ever before," he told Reuters.

"I don't see how the Abraham Accords are bringing closer a two-state solution," he added, referring to a raft of agreements between the Zionist regime and Arab states in recent years.

## Media: Syrian Air Defenses Respond to Zionist Missile Attack on Damascus

DAMASCUS (Xinhua/Al Jazeera) – The Syrian air defenses responded to an attack by the Zionist regime early on Sunday in the capital Damascus, the Syrian national TV reported.

Several powerful explosions were heard in Damascus after midnight. The Syrian state media said immediate investigations showed it was an attack by the Zionist regime.

At least five people were killed, 15 wounded and several residential buildings damaged in the airstrikes on the Syrian capital Damascus, Syrian state media reported.

The raids hit a building in central Damascus's Kafr Sousa neighborhood near a large, heavily guarded security complex, Reuters news agency said, citing witnesses.

Loud explosions were heard over a central area of the capital around 12.30am (2130 GMT

Saturday), and the Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) reported that Syrian air defenses were "confronting hostile targets in the sky around Damascus".

Citing a military source, SANA reported that five people had been killed, among them a soldier, along with "destruction of a number of residential buildings".

"It caused damage to several civilian homes and material damage to a number of neighborhoods in Damascus and its vicinity," the army said in a statement.

Footage posted by state media showed that a 10-storey building was badly damaged in the attack, crushing the structure of its lower floors.

"The strike on Sunday is the deadliest Israeli attack in the Syrian capital," said Rami Abdel

Rahman, head of the so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a United Kingdom-based group that has a wide network of sources inside Syria.

The occupying regime frequently carries out missile attacks on targets in Syria, mostly using the airspace of Lebanon or the occupied territories.

Syrian has repeatedly complained to the UN over Zionist assaults, urging the Security Council to take action against Tel Aviv's crimes. The calls have, however, fallen on deaf ears.

In early November 2022, Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Faisal Mekdad emphasized that his country will definitely give a crushing response to such acts of aggression at some point in the future.

## Taliban to Turn Foreign Bases Into Economic Zones

KABUL (Anadolu) – Afghanistan's interim government has decided to take control of the bases of the U.S.-led foreign forces across the country "with an intention" to convert them into special economic zones.

The decision was taken during a meeting of the country's Economic Commission with Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar Akhund, the deputy premier for economic affairs, in the chair in Kabul, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce said in a series of tweets on Sunday.

"Following a thorough discussion, it was decided that the Ministry of Industry and Commerce should progressively take control of the remaining military bases of the foreign forces with the intention of converting them into special economic zones," the ministry said.

For this purpose, it added, pilot operations will begin only on the bases in Balkh and Kabul.

In addition, it was determined that a selected delegation would be tasked with examining the

completion and quality of the remaining works of the Shah Wa Aros Dam.

A survey will be carried out, and the results will be presented at the Economic Commission's subsequent meeting, it added.

"In addition, it was decided that two separate committees led by the railway authority and the Ministry of Energy and Water should identify the projects and submit its findings to the Economic Commission," the ministry further said.

Progress on several major infrastructure projects, which are "on the verge of completion" were also discussed, while the budget allocation was approved for the next year, it maintained.

The Taliban stormed back to power amid landmark Doha talks with the U.S. in August 2021. However, none of the countries has so far recognized the Taliban government, though diplomatic missions of many countries are operating in Kabul.