

MOSCOW (TASS) – The planned meeting between Russia, Turkey, Iran, and Syria has been canceled for technical reasons, according to media reports. The Russian Foreign Ministry told Vedomosti that it had not approved the meeting, which was scheduled to involve deputy foreign ministers. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov expressed hope that the meeting could be rescheduled within a week. Meanwhile, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu announced plans to hold consultations in Moscow after talks with his Iranian counterpart.

What a difference is there between a deed whose pleasure passes away leaving behind it the pangs of pain and punishment and the deed whose oppressive harshness comes to an end leaving behind Divine rewards!

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

## Palestinian Martyred by Zionist Troops in West Bank

AL-QUDS (Dispatches) – The Zionist regime's military said troops shot a Palestinian on Friday near the city of Ramallah in the occupied West Bank. Palestinian authorities said the man died of his wounds a short while later.

The Palestinian Health Ministry identified the man as Yazan Khaseeb, 23.

It said Khaseeb died "after the occupation [Zionist troops] opened fire on him at the northern entrance of al-Bireh" city near Ramallah, in the occupied West Bank, on Friday.

The death comes amid simmering tensions as the Zionist regime have intensified crackdown on growing armed Palestinian resistance.

The official Palestinian news agency Wafa reported that he was arrested in critical condition by the occupying regime's troops, only to succumb to his serious gunshot wounds and pronounced dead a few minutes later.

Palestinian ambulance and medical staff were denied access by the regime army to the scene, where the young man was first reported wounded.

Khaseeb's body was held by occupation military forces for two



Zionist troops shot Palestinian Yazan Khaseeb, 23, near the city of Ramallah in the occupied West Bank.

hours, before it was turned over to the Palestinian side.

The Zionist regime's army later asserted in a statement that its forces "spotted a suspect and asked him to identify himself". It further claimed that the man then drew a knife and the troops opened fire and "neutralized" him.

It added the killing took place close to Beitin, a Palestinian village near al-Bireh. None of the Zionist troops was harmed in the purported incident.

Since the start of this year, at least 88 Palestinians, including 17 chil-

dren and one woman, have been killed by regime forces, according to the Palestinian health ministry.

Jenin recorded the highest number of fatalities with 35 victims, followed by Nablus with 21.

Seven Palestinians were also shot and killed by Zionist troops in Al-Khalil, and another six lost lives in Al-Quds. The rest of the Palestinians were fatally shot in the cities of Ariha, Qalqilya, Ramallah, al-Bireh, Bethlehem, Salfit and Tubas as well as the besieged Gaza Strip.

The European Union called for an immediate investigation into the

murder of 16-year-old Palestinian teenager Omar Awadin by Zionist troops in the occupied West Bank city of Jenin a day earlier.

In a tweet, the bloc called for a prompt and transparent investigation into the killing, affirming that children enjoy special protection under international law.

Over the past months, the occupying regime has ramped up attacks on Palestinian towns and cities throughout the occupied territories. As a result of these attacks, dozens of Palestinians have lost their lives and many others have been arrested.

Local and international rights groups have condemned the occupying regime's excessive use of force and "shoot-to-kill policy" against Palestinians.

Palestinians in various parts of the occupied West Bank and al-Quds have held a general strike to mourn the victims of the latest Zionist raid into Jenin.

According to the Palestinian Wafa news agency, businesses, schools, universities and various other facilities shut down their doors in Jenin and other towns. The strike also included public transportation.

## For First Time Poll: More U.S. Democrats Sympathize With Palestinians Than Zionists



Sympathy towards Palestinians has increased among Democrats in the United States over the last year, following a wave of violence by the Zionist regime in the occupied West Bank.

WASHINGTON (Middle East Eye) – Democrats in the U.S. are more likely to sympathize with Palestinians than with Zionists for the first time since 2001, a new poll has found.

For the poll released by Gallup, Democrat voters were asked: "In the Middle East situation, are your sympathies more with the Israelis or more with the Palestinians?"

In response, 49 percent said that they sympathized more with the Palestinians and 38 percent sympathized more with the Zionists.

There has been an eleven-point increase over the past year in sympathy toward Palestinians from those who voted Democrat.

Meanwhile, the same voters' sympathy for Zionists has been on the decline for more than a decade, since a high point in 2014 when 58 percent sympathized with Zionists and only 23 percent with Palestinians.

The shift is the first since the poll started 22 years ago.

The violence against Palestinians has been on the rise since the beginning of 2023, with at least 85 people killed, including 16 children, by Zionist troops and settlers, making it the bloodiest start to a year since 2000, according to the Palestinian health ministry.

Meanwhile, the regime's right-

wing prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has seemingly burned bridges with many Democrats in the U.S. by openly aligning with the Republican Party in general and former president Donald Trump in particular.

The occupying regime is currently experiencing a political crisis that has pitted Netanyahu's far-right cabinet against the regime's civil society, academic, and business elite, as well as former ministers and military figures.

The prime minister is also spearheading a controversial plan to overhaul the regime's judiciary, a move that has seen weeks of mass protests across the occupied territories.

Sympathy toward the Palestinians also hit a new high among political independents, with 32 percent sympathizing with Palestinians, according to the poll.

Gallup's new poll finds that, overall, "sympathy toward the Palestinians among U.S. adults is at a new high of 31%".

For decades support for the Zionist regime was a largely bipartisan affair in Washington. But the polarization of American and Zionist politics has resulted in sharper dividing lines emerging over the Zionist-Palestinian conflict.

## Assad: War on Syria Proved West Acts Against Own Claims on Democracy

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – Syrian President Bashar al-Assad says the years-long foreign-backed war in his country has proven that everything the West does runs counter to what it claims about democracy and humanitarian principles.

Assad made the remark in an interview with Channel One Russia on Friday, saying the West attempts to "transform other countries into subordinate states" by portraying itself as an advocate of pro-democracy and pro-freedom movements.

"The war in Syria has proven that the West will not change and seeks to transform other countries into subordinate states that meet its conditions, even at the expense of the interests of the peoples," the Syrian president said.

"Freedom is a beautiful term, but this freedom could be that of a person to kill, destroy and do everything bad,

and democracy for the West is to be an agent and subservient to them."

Assad said Western countries seek to transform smaller or weaker countries into "vassal states" to satisfy their needs even at the expense of the interests of these nations.

He said certain Western governments tried to persuade him to resign during the foreign-sponsored war but they later realized that Syria "fully understands Western policy."

"During the war, certain Western governments tried to persuade me to resign the presidency in exchange for full immunity," the Syrian president said, without providing any further details and naming any countries.

"They gave up on these attempts a long time ago and understood that Syria fully understands Western policy, that it no longer fools us."

The U.S. and its allies invaded Syria in 2014 under the pretext of fighting

Daesh. The Takfiri terrorist group had emerged as Washington was running out of excuses to extend its regional meddling or enlarge it in scale.

The U.S.-led coalition sustains its illegal presence on the Arab country's soil, although Damascus and its allies defeated Daesh in late 2017.

Damascus has repeatedly urged the United Nations Security Council to end the U.S.-led military presence in the country, saying that illegal US deployment is tantamount to occupation and aimed at plundering Syria's natural resources.

Former U.S. president Donald Trump admitted on several occasions that American forces were in the Arab country for its oil wealth.

Elsewhere in the interview, Assad pointed to a potential meeting with his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan and said the interests of the Syrian people must be taken into ac-

count before any meeting with Ankara.

Assad said contacts between Syria and Turkey had started at the level of security and defense ministers, and a meeting at the level of deputy foreign ministers was under discussion.

"We can have a meeting at the level of foreign ministers, and the most important of these meetings is to achieve the interest of Syria, end the war and stop the bloodshed," the Syrian president said.

Turkey cut off its relations with Syria in March 2012, a year after the Arab country found itself in the grip of rampant and hugely deadly violence waged by foreign-backed militants and terrorists, including those allegedly supported by Ankara.

Since 2016, Turkey has conducted three major ground operations against United States-backed militants based in northern Syria.

## Experts: 20 Years After Iraq War No Lessons Learned by War Proponents

WASHINGTON (Middle East Eye) – Looking back at the past two decades since the U.S. invasion of Iraq in March 2003, foreign policy experts warn that Washington has learned few lessons since then, and the lack of accountability for the war's proponents has created an environment where a similar American-led war could occur.

"My basic answer to the question of 'could it happen again?' is for sure, absolutely it could happen again," Ahsan Butt, an associate professor at George Mason University, said during a panel hosted on Thursday by the Cato Institute in Washington.

"The real lessons of the Iraq war really haven't been learned."

In the lead-up to the U.S. invasion of Iraq, top officials in the American government, including former President George Bush, said that Saddam Hussein was in possession of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs).

They cited U.S. intelligence, including on the basis of information from a now-discredited Iraqi opposition group, which turned out to be false. Nevertheless, Washington launched an invasion with little opposition from Congress, leading to a war that killed hundreds of thousands of people in Iraq, and later in Syria.

And leading up to the invasion, there was near unanimous support for the war in Washington, with few news outlets pushing back against the links between Iraq's Hussein, WMDs, and Al-Qaeda.

Individuals like Bush, former deputy defence secretary Paul Wolfowitz, former secretary of state Condoleezza Rice, and many others who supported the war efforts, did not face any consequences for their mistakes nor did their reputations suffer.

"We have to be honest that the worst advocates, cheerleaders and purveyors of the worst

lies of the Iraq war have not been held accountable. They continue to exercise outsized influence in most of our key institutions and the media," said Don Caldwell, vice president of the Center for Renewing America and a veteran of the Iraq War.

"The worst thing though, is the fact that there has not been a repudiation of the mindset that led us to the war in Iraq."

The experts noted that in the past two decades, several factors have changed in the U.S. that help to create more opposition to U.S. policy decisions.

One is that the U.S. political landscape is more partisan than it was in 2003, which makes it more difficult to come to unanimous decisions about going to war.

Caldwell also noted that there are many more institutions in place in Washington that would push back against the drums of war.

## Egyptian, Turkish FMs Hold Talks in Cairo Amid Improving Ties

CAIRO (Reuters/Al Jazeera) – Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu held talks with his Egyptian counterpart in Cairo on Saturday, in the first such visit after a decade of ruptured ties.

Cavusoglu and Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry were expected to discuss a range of bilateral and international issues in a step towards restoring normal relations, according to statements from the two sides.

"I'm very glad that we are taking concrete steps for normalizing relations with Egypt ... We will do our best not to rupture our ties again in future," Cavusoglu said.

Shoukry said: "We will come to talks (on restoring ambassadors) at the appropriate time, depending on the positive results it brings."

Ties between Turkey and Egypt were severely strained after Egypt's then-army chief Abdel Fattah al-Sisi led the ouster of Muslim Brotherhood's Mohamed Mursi, an ally of Ankara, in 2013. Sisi was elected president the following year.

The two countries have also been

at odds in recent years over Libya, where they backed opposing factions in an unresolved conflict, and also over maritime borders in the gas-rich Eastern Mediterranean.

Consultations between senior foreign ministry officials in Ankara and Cairo began in 2021, amid a push by Turkey to ease tensions with Egypt, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia.

As part of that tentative reconciliation, Ankara asked Egyptian opposition TV channels operating in Turkey to moderate their criticism of Egypt.

Last month, Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry visited Turkey in a show of solidarity after the massive earthquakes that killed more than 50,000 people in Turkey and Syria.

Mursi died in prison in Egypt in 2019. Other senior members of the Muslim Brotherhood are jailed in Egypt or have fled abroad, and the group remains outlawed.

Last month, Egypt's government, which has been struggling to manage an acute shortage of foreign currency, said Turkish companies had committed to \$500 million in new investments in Egypt.