

TEHRAN -- Iran's chargé d'affaires in Saudi Arabia has thanked Riyadh for its assistance in repatriating Iranian nationals from Sudan where the army and a rebel group are engaged in heavy fighting.

This happened during a meeting between Iranian Chargé D'affaires Hassan Zarnegar Abarghouni and commander of Saudi Arabia's Western Region General Ahmed al-Dablis. A video shows the Saudi military officials warmly greeting Zarnegar.

Kayhan International



AL-QUDS (Dispatches) -- An Israeli army officer was removed from his post on Sunday for attending a political protest in uniform, the first such case during a crisis over the regime's planned judicial overhaul that has stirred rancour within the military ranks.

Local media identified the officer as a major who was televised carrying a stretcher in a publicity stunt during a pro-regime rally that was convened on Thursday in an attempt to off-set months of demonstrations against the reforms.

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Viewpoint

Forever Persian Gulf

Iranians Mark Persian Gulf Day



Iranian Judo Athletes Win Three Medals at IBSA Asian Championships



Iraq Resistance: U.S. Occupation Troops Legitimate Target in West Asia



President Raisi Due in Syria for 'Very Important' Visit

TEHRAN -- Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi will go to Damascus on Wednesday at the official invitation of the Syrian president for a "very important" two-day visit.

"Dr. Raisi's trip to Damascus next Wednesday is a very important trip due to the changes and developments that are taking place in the region," IRNA news agency on Sunday quoted Iran's ambassador to Syria, Hussein Akbari, as saying.

Raisi will lead a "high economic-political delegation" in his trip. The visit comes against the backdrop of a rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia, and increased Arab engagement with Damascus.

Iran is a major ally of President Bashar Assad and has given financial and military support to the country the 12-year-old war on Syria. Iran says it has deployed forces in Syria at the invitation of Damascus but only as advisers.

"This trip will not only be beneficial for Tehran and Damascus, but it is also a very good event that other countries in the region can also take advantage of," Akbari was reported as saying.

Muhammad Jamshidi, the president's deputy chief of staff for political affairs, said Raisi will visit Syria to celebrate the resistance front's victory. "West Asia has undergone a tense period of geopolitical change with 2 results: victory of Iran & failure of

the U.S.," he wrote on his Twitter account.

Raisi's visit will be the first by an Iranian president to Damascus since the start of the war in Syria in 2011.

The last Iranian president to visit the Syrian capital was Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, in September 2010.

Last week, the defense and intelligence heads of Iran, Russia, Syria, and Turkey held talks in Moscow as part of efforts to bring a political solution to the war-torn country.

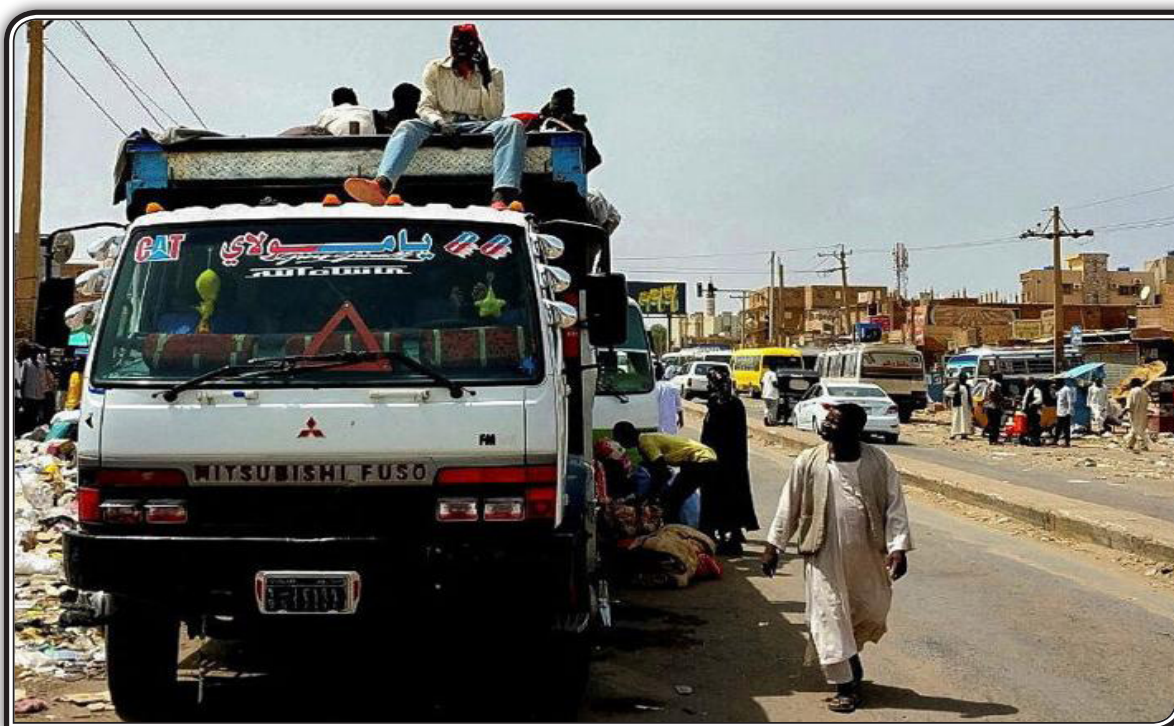
Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei last year hailed the relationship between Tehran and Damascus as "vital for both countries", saying it should be strengthened "as much as possible".

Iranian Foreign Minister Hussein Amirabdollahian said on Friday the planned presidential visit signals the "multidimensional" cooperation between the two countries.

Jordan on Monday will host foreign ministers from Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Syria for talks on Syria's war and ending Damascus's diplomatic isolation in the region, the foreign ministry in Amman said.

Assad is hoping full normalization of ties with wealthy Persian Gulf monarchies and other Arab states will help to finance the reconstruction of the country's war-ravaged infrastructure.

'Nightmare' of Civil War Haunts Sudan



People gather to ride a truck to flee outside Khartoum, during clashes between the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces and the army, in Khartoum on April 28, 2023.

KHARTOUM (AFP) -- Heavy fighting again rocked Sudan's capital Sunday as tens of thousands have fled the bloody turmoil and a former prime minister warned of the "nightmare" risk of a descent into full-scale civil war.

Army forces clashed with paramilitaries in Khartoum as deadly hostilities have entered a third week despite the latest ceasefire, which was formally set to expire at the end of the day.

"There has been very heavy fighting and loud gunfire ... since the early morning on my street," a southern Khartoum resident told AFP.

Clashes were reported around the army headquarters in central Khartoum, and the army also carried out airstrikes in the capital's twin city of Omdurman across the Nile River.

Foreign nations have scrambled to evacuate thousands of their

citizens by air, road and sea since the fighting plunged the poverty-stricken country into deadly turmoil on April 15.

A first Red Cross plane brought eight tonnes of humanitarian aid to Port Sudan, from Jordan, on Sunday. It carried surgical material and medical kits to stabilize 1,500 patients, the International Committee of the Red Cross said.

Millions of Sudanese have endured crippling shortages of wa-

ter, food, medicines and other basic supplies, while tens of thousands have fled to neighboring countries, with more on their way.

Satellite images showed long bus convoys at the Egyptian border, while the UN said tens of thousands had escaped to Chad, South Sudan, Ethiopia and the Central African Republic.

The turmoil could deepen further in the power struggle between army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, head of the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

Sudan's former premier Abdalla Hamdok warned Saturday that the conflict could deteriorate into one of the world's worst civil wars.

"God forbid if Sudan is to reach a point of civil war proper... Syria, Yemen, Libya will be a small play," Hamdok told an event in Nairobi. "I think it would be a nightmare for the world."

The violence has killed at least 528 people and wounded about 4,600, the health ministry said, although the real casualty toll may be higher from fighting in 12 out of Sudan's 18 states including the Darfur region.

The UN World Food Programme has warned the unrest could plunge millions more into hunger in a country where 15 million people already need aid to stave off famine.

(Continued on Page 7)

Parliament Votes to Remove Industry Minister

TEHRAN -- Iran's parliament on Sunday voted to dismiss the country's industry minister, the first member of President Ebrahim Raisi's cabinet to be impeached since his election in 2020.

Parliamentarians, who voted to remove Industry, Mines and Trade Minister Reza Fatemi-Amin, accused him of failing to control "skyrocketing prices of automobiles and the rising costs of industrial production" and lambasted him for mismanagement.

"162 of the 272 parliamentarians present voted to unseat the minister," parliament speaker Muhammad Baqer Qalibaf said on a televised broadcast.

The chamber has 290 seats. Fatemi Amin survived a previous impeachment in 2022.

The decision came following discussion among lawmakers and government officials who questioned the minister.

President Raisi defended Fa-

temi Amin saying all the fields related to the minister's portfolio showed growth. He urged lawmakers to reinstate the minister.

"The point is that stability in the ministry is important," he said.

Opponents said the minister failed to manage his field of activities in industry, mines and trade citing skyrocketing prices of products.

The impeachment marks the sixth change in Raisi's Cabinet in the less than two years since he came to power.

In March, Raisi replaced the minister of agriculture and the head of planning and budget. Raisi dismissed the education minister after a delay in payments to teachers in April. In December, Raisi replaced the minister of roads after he became terminally ill. Last year, Raisi replaced the labor minister after protests by workers and retirees over payments.

Protesters Pack Central Tel Aviv Again

TEL AVIV (Dispatches) -- The latest protest against the occupying regime of Israel's controversial judicial plans packed central Tel Aviv, as divisions persist just days before lawmakers return to parliament.

Opponents of the changes have kept up demonstrations in the commercial hub and across the occupied territories since January, despite prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu putting the controversial program on ice a month ago.

"History has its eyes on you," read a placard held aloft at the rally in Tel Aviv, where demonstrators lit flares in the latest show of political discontent.

The Zionist society has been deeply split over the plan, which seeks to weaken the supreme court and hand politicians greater influence over the selection of judges.

Netanyahu's extremist regime argues the proposals are necessary to rebalance power between the judiciary and elected officials, while opponents say they represent a threat and puts the illegal

entity on the verge of disintegration.

The weekly rallies have repeatedly drawn hundreds of thousands onto the streets of Tel Aviv.

The protesters gathered against the backdrop of cross-party talks hosted by president Isaac Herzog this month, which have sought to reach a compromise on the plan.

The negotiations were launched after Netanyahu announced a halt to the plan on March 27 "out of a desire to prevent a rift" in the face of mass protests and a general strike.

However, the opposition has remained skeptical of the premier's intentions and no compromise has been reached.

With parliament due to hold an opening session Monday after a recess, both backers of the reform and its detractors have sought to keep up the pressure on politicians.

The architect of the change, minister Yariv Levin, addressed thousands of supporters who rallied in Al-Quds on Thursday.

The event was also attended by

extremist finance minister Betzalel Smotrich, who vowed the regime will not "give up" on the plan.

The cabinet ministers are part of a coalition of right-wing, extreme-right and ultra-Orthodox Jewish parties which took office in late December.

President Herzog has warned of a brewing "civil war" and an approaching "abyss" if a compromise on the radical judicial changes could not be reached.

"Those who think that a real civil war, with human lives, is a border we won't cross, have no idea," he has said. In the Zionist regime's 75th year, "the abyss is within touching distance," he said. "A civil war is a red line. At any price, and by any means, I won't let it happen."

Last month, Herzog told the general assembly of the Jewish Federations of North America in Tel Aviv, "I am convinced that there is no greater existential threat to our people than the one that comes from within: Our own polarization and alienation from

one another."

The standoff has opened up profound questions about the illegal entity that go beyond the makeup of the supreme court and the power of the executive to override its decisions.

Behind his anxiety lies a fear of a sharp deepening of divisions which have always existed in Occupied Palestine between European Ashkenazis and Middle Eastern Mizrahi, between religious Al-Quds and laid back Tel Aviv and between right-wing settlers and urban liberals.

The growing power of the extremist parties that helped Netanyahu to power last year has alarmed many secular Zionists, who often resent the special conditions and subsidies that enable many Orthodox men to avoid military service and study in Torah schools rather than take paid employment.

According to a survey by Channel 12 News last week, around 51% of Zionists are pessimistic about the future of the entity.

(Continued on Page 7)