

BAGHDAD (Al Jazeera) – The so-called Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) political party in northern Iraq has ended a months-long boycott of the Kurdish Regional Government cabinet meetings with its main coalition partner, the ruling Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). The move eased tensions between two factions, who fought a war in the 1990s. The PUK had boycotted cabinet meetings since Hawker Abdullah Rasoul, an intelligence officer who had spent two decades with the PUK, was killed in his SUV by a bomb in Erbil on October 7, 2022, according to three Kurdish government officials who spoke to Reuters on condition of anonymity.

Thought for Today
Whenever a tradition of the Holy Prophet is related to you, scrutinize it, do not be satisfied with mere verbatim repetition of the same because there are many people who repeat the words containing knowledge but only few ponder over them and try to fully grasp the meaning they convey.
Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

Resistance Hails Iran, Hezbollah

Yemenis Hold Mass Rallies to Support Palestinians

SANA'A (Dispatches) – Yemenis participated in huge rallies across the country to express support for the Palestinian people and their resistance under the slogan "Revenge of the Free".

In over 20 popular areas in the provinces of Saada, Taiz, Dhahar, Dhale, Raymah, Hajjah, Amran, al-Jawf, and al-Mahwit, the protesters praised the "Revenge of the Free" operation launched by Palestinian resistance movements in response to the bloodshed by the Zionist enemy.

In a statement, the protesters also commended every military action undertaken by Palestinian resistance movements against an adversary that only understands the language of power, according to al-Mayadeen.

The statement highlighted the "unity of the Palestinian front in the face of an arrogant enemy," recognizing the tremendous sacrifices made by the Palestinian people in their quest for victory. It also strongly condemned the international community's silence regarding Israeli crimes in Palestine.

The Joint Operations Room of the Palestinian Resistance Factions says the retaliatory rocket attacks and steadfastness of resistance fighters upset the regime's calculations during



Members of the Al-Quds Brigades, the military wing of the Islamic Jihad resistance group, hold a military parade as part of the 35th anniversary of the foundation of the movement, in Gaza City.

the latest aggression on the besieged Gaza Strip.

"The new round of fighting with the occupying Israeli regime further strengthened the resistance front. The Zionist enemy mistakenly believed that the time was ripe for assassination of Palestinian resistance leaders, but it was a grave miscalculation," it said in a statement on Saturday evening.

The umbrella group said that Zionist military officials had planned to wrap up the latest onslaught on the Gaza Strip in a very short span of time, but were stunned by the scope of resistance fighters' preparedness and rapid response to air raids.

The Joint Operations Room of the Palestinian Resistance Factions warned the regime against employment of the policy of targeted killings, adding that resistance fighters have their fingers on the trigger and will not hesitate to respond in case the regime resorts to carrying out assassinations.

The Palestinian resistance factions also paid homage to those killed in the latest Zionist aggression against the Gaza Strip, saying that the fallen resistance fighters confronted the Zionist enemy's calculations and hostile strategies.

Ziyad al-Nakhalah, the secretary general of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad resistance move-

ment, extended his sincere gratitude to anyone that stood by the group, "particularly Iran, Hezbollah as well as brethren in Egypt and Qatar", during the latest Zionist onslaught on Gaza.

Head of the political bureau of the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas also hailed Iran's support for the resistance in Palestine, during the regime's relentless onslaught against the besieged Gaza Strip.

In a statement on Sunday, Ismail Haniyeh appreciated the Joint Operations Room of the Palestinian Resistance Factions for taking control of the situation in Gaza and preventing the regime from achieving its goals, Lebanon's Arabic-language al-Mayadeen television news network reported.

He went on to say that the resistance fighters through the Joint Operations Room, took the initiative and carried out the "Revenge of the Free" operation, displaying their capabilities and resilience.

"The steadfastness of resistance fighters thwarted the enemy's attempt to impose new equations, whether by singling out the Al-Quds Brigades, the military wing of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad resistance movement, or driving a wedge between the resistance groups," he said.

Zionist Demolition of Palestinian Bedouin Homes Spike in Naqab



Mohamed Abu Qwaider looks on at the destruction of his cousin's home following its demolition.

NAQAB (Al Jazeera) – Recent data from the Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality (NCF), an Arab-Jewish NGO advocating for Bedouins in the Naqab (or Negev) Desert, show approximately 15,000 buildings have been razed in the last six years in the Bedouin areas of the Naqab.

Home demolitions are not unusual for Palestinians, but often the focus is on the occupied territory. Palestinian Bedouins in the Naqab did not leave their native place after the Zionist regime was established in 1948.

Regime authorities have carried out repeated demolitions in both recognized and unrecognized villages in the southern desert region – home to most of the 200,000 Bedouins. But only 11 out of 35 Bedouin villages have been recognized by the occupying regime, which means most houses are deemed "illegal".

Zionist regime authorities regulate construction activity in the desert, but they have not implemented urban plans in many villages due to land ownership disputes or because of the backlog in approving building permit applications. Palestinian Bedouins say it is nearly impossible to secure permits to build legally.

In this regard, there is virtually no difference between recognized and unrecognized villages as both residents often cannot obtain building permits and lack basic infrastructures of water, electricity, sewage disposal, and roads.

While the highest number of demolitions – 192 in 2022 – was in the unrecognized village of al-Fu-

rah, the recognized Bedouin city of Rahat – the largest Bedouin city in Naqab – experienced the second highest number of demolitions at 176.

This year has already seen a sharp rise in demolitions with the regime's so-called lands authority (ILA) distributing 450 demolition notices to residents across Naqab in February.

Huda Abu Obaid, a coordinator at NCF, the Arab-Jewish NGO, said they expect to see the number of demolitions spike this year, attributing the increase to technological developments and the new hardline regime in office.

In 1992, Mohamed Abu Qwaider watched his mother's home bulldozed by the Zionist army in the unrecognized Bedouin village of az-Zarnug in the Naqab Desert.

The then-10-year-old helped his family rebuild the house using stone and concrete, sturdier than the previous metal shack. A few days after completing their new home, the family got another demolition order stating the structure was built illegally and had to watch it flattened to the ground.

"I was too young so I didn't know the regulations," Abu Qwaider, now 41, said. "All I knew is that we had the right – anybody has the right to upgrade their house and live peacefully," he told Al Jazeera.

More than 30 years later, the constant cycle of demolitions and rebuilding has not stopped – rather, it has accelerated as the occupying regime steps up its campaign against construction carried out by Palestinian Bedouins.

Syria Extends Permission on Post-Quake Aid Border Crossings

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – Syria has extended permission for the United Nations to use two border crossings for post-earthquake aid for an additional three months, a Syrian official says.

Syria "has decided to extend the permission it granted to the UN and its specialized agencies to use the two border crossings of Bab Alsalama and al-Ra'i for an additional period of three months ending on 13 August," Bassam Sabbagh, Syria's UN ambassador, said in a tweet.

"This decision is based on Syria's keenness on enhancing stability and improving the living

and humanitarian situation of all Syrians, and comes within its efforts to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid to all those in need in all Syria," he added.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad initially agreed to open the two crossings for three months starting on 13 February, a week after an earthquake that killed more than 50,000 people in Turkey and Syria. Parts of the northwest are held by foreign-backed militants in the 12-year-long war.

The UN on Friday asked Syria's government to extend its approval for the two crossings to

deliver aid into opposition-held zones, a spokesperson said.

Furthermore, a senior advisor to the Syrian president says Turkey must end its occupation of the Arab country and withdraw its forces.

Bouthaina Shaaban, a political and media advisor to President Assad, made the remarks on Saturday in response to a question raised by IRNA about a recent meeting among the foreign ministers of Iran, Russia, Turkey and Syria in Moscow.

In a final communiqué at the end of the four-party meeting on Wednesday aimed at recon-

ciliation and resumption of ties between Damascus and Ankara in various dimensions, top diplomats from Iran, Turkey, Russia and Syria underscored the Arab country's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

All regional countries agree that Western arrogance is the primary source of conflicts in the region, the Syrian advisor said.

Shaaban said the media play a role of grand significance in countering the Western hegemony and the way their media reflect developments based on their own objectives.

Lebanese, UAE Foreign Ministers Speak After Man Dies in Custody

BEIRUT (AP) – Lebanon's foreign minister has spoken with his counterpart in the United Arab Emirates following the death of a Lebanese citizen while in custody in the oil-rich Persian Gulf nation, the foreign ministry said in a statement.

Lebanon's Foreign Ministry said in a short statement that Lebanon's ambassador to the UAE, Fouad Dandan, spoke by telephone with the wife and brother of the late Ghazi Ezzedine, 55. The envoy later received a signed letter from the family saying the man died as a result of heart problems.

Ezzedine's death had earlier raised questions about his possible mistreatment by authorities in the UAE. Earlier this week, a committee of family members of Lebanese citizens detained

in the UAE, including the man who died earlier this month, alleged in a statement that Ezzedine had died as a result of being tortured.

The foreign ministry statement said UAE's Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan told his Lebanese counterpart Abdallah Bouhabib that Ezzedine's family can leave the UAE or stay if they want. The statement did not say whether the family will be allowed to take the man's body for burial in Lebanon following reports that they were prevented from doing so.

Sima Watling, a researcher with Amnesty International focusing on the Persian Gulf country, told The Associated Press on Friday that according to Ezzedine's family, he had been arrested on March 22 along with eight other people, including two of his brothers, on un-

known charges.

Ezzedine died on May 4, she said. His family was only notified several days later, when his son was asked by authorities to come to the cemetery and identify the body, she added. Ezzedine's son was only permitted to see his father's face, while his body was kept covered.

UAE authorities denied the family's request to bring him back to Lebanon for burial, Watling said. The two brothers who were detained along with him were subsequently released from detention but banned from leaving the country.

UAE authorities have detained dozens of Lebanese in the past. In 2019, the UAE sentenced one Lebanese national to life in prison and two to ten years in prison.

Turkey Says Won't Wait for U.S. F-35 Jets, Wants \$1.4bn Back

ANKARA (Sputnik) – Ankara has no plans to wait until it is brought back to the U.S. F-35 multirole fighter program, from which it was officially removed two years ago, and seeks a refund of \$1.4 billion paid for the jets, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said.

"We want our money now. We want the money we paid there to be returned. Our friends from the ministry came together and reviewed the steps we will take from now on. We are now taking care of ourselves," Cavusoglu told the media.

He added that Ankara does not want the situation to "turn into a snake story like with the Patriot defense system".

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan previously stated that the country had paid \$1.4 billion for

the jets.

In April 2021, the U.S. excluded Turkey from the F-35 program after Ankara purchased Russia's S-400 air defense systems. Washington annulled the joint memorandum on the F-35 fighters with the country, while signing the document with seven other project partners — the United Kingdom, Italy, the Netherlands, Australia, Denmark, Canada and Norway. Erdogan said later that year that Turkey had received a U.S. offer to buy F-16 jets instead, one generation behind the F-35s. The U.S. Congress has been debating whether to include restrictions on the sale of jets in its annual defense spending bill for fiscal 2023, while the U.S. State Department has been trying to convince lawmakers that the deal was aligned with Washington's interests.