

# UN Envoy Calls for 'Serious Steps' to Restore Peace to Yemen

SANA'A (Dispatches) – The UN special envoy for Yemen has urged both parties of the war to take “serious steps” toward lasting peace amid intensified mediation efforts to resolve the eight-year conflict.

During a visit to Japan, Hans Grundberg stressed the need to maintain and intensify international advocacy for a sustainable political settlement that ushers in a future of durable peace and development in Yemen.

“This is a critical time. The parties have a responsibility to build on the progress achieved and take serious steps toward lasting peace,” he said.

“The coherence of the international community and its unity of objective on Yemen will be pivotal assets in this regard.”

In parallel with UN efforts led by Grundberg, Oman has also been trying to close gaps between Yemen’s Ansarullah resistance movement and Saudi Arabia.

The peace efforts are aimed at extending a UN-brokered ceasefire, which is still largely in place



Yemeni prisoners gesture after being released by the Saudi-led coalition upon arrival at the airport in Sana'a, Yemen, October 15, 2020.

despite its official expiry last October.

In April, Omani and Saudi delegations held peace talks with Ansarullah officials in Sana'a.

Also on Monday, the al-Masirah television network reported that Washington has stepped up its “interferences” in Yemen, citing meetings between the U.S. Ambassador to Yemen Stephen Fagin and members of the so-called presidential leadership council, Faraj al-Bahsani and Sultan Ali al-Arada.

During both meetings, the report

said, Fagin advised the council not to pay the salaries of state employees out of oil revenues.

“Despite being announced that meetings come to ‘discuss peace efforts and a political settlement in Yemen,’ they have completely different goals,” the report added.

“They come within the framework of the counter-move taken by the Americans to undermine the Omani mediation efforts and thwart the efforts to end the aggression against Yemen.”

Last week, Ansarullah chief Ab-

dul-Malik al-Houthi accused the United States of “obstructing real peace” and “fair entitlements for our dear people.”

Saudi Arabia started a brutal war of aggression against Yemen in March 2015, enlisting the assistance of some of its allies, including the United Arab Emirates.

The war, which has enjoyed generous arms, logistical, and political support from the United States and several other Western governments, has been seeking to restore power in Yemen to the country’s former Riyadh- and Washington-friendly government.

The former Yemeni government’s president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi resigned from the presidency in late 2014 and later fled to Riyadh amid a political conflict with Ansarullah. The movement has been running Yemen’s affairs in the absence of a functioning administration.

The war has, meanwhile, killed tens of thousands of Yemenis and turned entire Yemen into the scene of the world’s worst humanitarian crisis.

## Turkmenistan... (Continued From Page One)

Under the swap deal, Iran receives up to two billion cubic meters of gas from Turkmenistan and deliver an equivalent amount to Azerbaijan at the Astara border.

Iran has major natural gas fields in the south, but has imported gas from Turkmenistan since 1997 for distribution in its northern provinces, especially during the winter.

The swap deal allows Iran to consume the imported gas in the country’s north and export an equivalent amount at a higher price to neighboring countries.

## 8 Killed... (Continued From Page One)

average, while 210 survive gunshot injuries. The group found that 46 per day are killed.

On Monday, nine people were injured when gunfire erupted along a beachside promenade in Hollywood, Florida, sending people frantically running for cover at the crowded beach on Memorial Day.

Police and witnesses said the shooting began as a group of people fought in front of a busy stretch of shops on the Hollywood Oceanfront Boardwalk about 7 p.m.

The shooting upended busy holiday weekend festivities at the popular beach destination where there was already a heavy police presence to oversee the big crowds.

Police spokesperson Deanna Bettineschi said four children between the ages of 1 and 17 were hit, along with five adults between 25 and 65. All of the victims were in stable condition, a hospital spokeswoman said.

At least one person was in custody, but police were looking for more suspects, Bettineschi said.

Hollywood Mayor Josh Levy said that he was “deeply saddened and angered” by the shooting. Dozens of officers are assigned to the beach on busy holiday weekends and that meant there was an immediate response and multiple people were detained, Levy said in a statement.

Videos posted on Twitter on Monday evening showed emergency medical crews responding and providing aid to multiple injured people.

Hollywood Beach is a popular beach destination about 11 miles (17 kilometers) south of Fort Lauderdale and 20 miles (32 kilometers) north of Miami. The beach was expected to see more visitors than usual because of the Memorial Day holiday.

## Report... (Continued From Page One)

including about the existence of undeclared nuclear activities or material in Iran.

“There are no undeclared nuclear activities or material in Iran. All accusations are merely based on fake and incorrect information provided by the usurping regime of Israel,” he said.

In a meeting with IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi here in March, President Ebrahim Raisi said Iran expects the IAEA to adopt a “professional and fair” approach to its nuclear energy program and refrain from being affected by certain powers which are pursuing their own specific goals.

In February, AEOI spokesman Behrouz Kamalvandi complained that the IAEA publicizes confidential reports about Iran’s nuclear activities even before investigations are complete in order to prepare the ground for fabrications against the country’s peaceful nuclear program.

He also criticized the IAEA for allowing the correspondence between Tehran and the agency to leak to the press.

## Biden Calls Erdogan, Links Turkey’s F-16 Sale With Sweden’s NATO Bid

WASHINGTON (Reuters) – U.S. President Joe Biden said he had spoken with re-elected Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan about Ankara’s desire to buy American F-16 fighter jets and its objection to Sweden joining NATO.

The conversation took place after Biden called Erdogan to congratulate him for winning Turkey’s presidential run-off on Sunday.

Erdogan received 52 percent of votes to Kemal Kilicdaroglu’s 48 percent, after the election went to a

second round following the failure of either candidate to win a majority in the first round on 14 May.

“I spoke to Erdogan. I congratulated Erdogan. He still wants to work on something on the F-16s. I told him we wanted a deal with Sweden, so let’s get that done. And so we’ll be back in touch with one another,” Biden told reporters at the White House.

Erdogan has expressed his reluctance to ratify Sweden’s membership of NATO since it applied for

membership last year, complaining that the Scandinavian country wasn’t doing enough to combat terrorism, referencing its harboring of wanted Kurdish militants.

Bids to join the military alliance must be ratified by all its members. Turkey and Hungary are yet to approve Stockholm’s application.

Asked whether he anticipated any movement from Erdogan on Sweden’s bid, Biden said: “I raised that issue with him. We’re going to

talk more about it next week.”

The U.S. Congress has previously proposed Swedish membership as a condition for the sale of F-16 fighter jets to Turkey.

It has objected to Ankara’s attempts to buy \$20bn worth of F-16s and modernization kits, citing Turkey’s refusal to approve NATO enlargement, its record on human rights and its policies regarding neighboring Syria.

Ankara ratified NATO membership for Finland in March.

## Kuwait ‘Open’ to Ending Visa Ban on Philippines Amid Workers Row

KUWAIT (Middle East Eye) – Kuwait said it “remains open” to negotiating with the Philippines after a worker-protection row saw the Persian Gulf state impose a visa ban on Filipinos.

Kuwait suspended all new work visas for Filipino workers last week, accusing Manila of violating Kuwaiti law and breaking the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

Kuwait’s Deputy Foreign Minister Mansour al Otaibi said his

country would be open to lifting its ban if Manila admitted to breaking Kuwaiti and international law.

“The Philippine embassy must admit its violation of Kuwaiti laws and the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic relations,” said Otaibi.

“The embassy must also pledge not to repeat its violations, and those responsible for these violations will be held accountable.”

Kuwait issued the ban on Wednesday, saying the Philippines broke several labor agreements

between the two countries.

The alleged violations carried out in Kuwait include housing abused workers shelters, looking for women who had run away without informing local authorities, communicating with Kuwaiti citizens without permission and pressuring employers to add clauses to work contracts.

The row is the latest escalation in long-running dispute between the two countries over worker protections and employer rights.

Manila stopped sending first-time workers to Kuwait after the charred dead body of Filipino worker Jullebee Ranara was found in the desert in January this year.

Ranara was reportedly killed by her employer’s son, having had her skull smashed in before being burnt and left to die in the desert.

Two weeks ago, the two countries began talks after the Philippines requested a meeting to discuss the suspension of workers’ visas.

## Desert Wells Help Iraq Harvest Bumper Wheat Crop as Rivers Dry

KARBALA (Reuters) – Amin Salah used to grow wheat near the banks of Iraq’s Euphrates River, but persistent droughts have led him to switch to farming unlikely new grounds deep in the harsh desert of Najaf.

Watered by sprinklers fitted to wells dug more than 100 meters under the sun-bleached earth, his land now produces double what it did compared to when he relied on ancient methods that flood fields with river water, he said.

“It’s a golden year, a golden season,” said Salah, wearing a traditional white robe and reflective sunglasses as he walked his field and noted the benefits: less money and water spent, as well as a bigger and quality harvest.

Iraq’s government says this officially supported shift has allowed the country to double areas cultivated with wheat this year to some 8.5 million dunams (850,000 hectares) com-

pared to roughly 4 million (400,000 hectares) last year.

Agriculture Ministry spokesperson Mohammad al-Khuzai said that has translated into a harvest of around 4 million tons of wheat — the largest in years and 80 percent of the needs of a country with a 43 million population who eat bread at almost every meal. The shift in methods is driven by necessity: Iraq’s two main rivers, along which civilization emerged thousands of years ago, have lost more than half of their flow due to reduced rainfall, overuse and upstream dams.

Drilling the desert for water could provide immediate relief in a country that the UN says is among the five nations most vulnerable to climate change in the world, and where climate-induced migration has already begun. However, heavy use of the wells could bleed desert aquifers dry, agricultural experts and

environmentalists warn. Some farmers have already noted a drop in the water table.

Iraq has more than 110,000 wells, but only a fraction, some 10,000, are fitted with modern systems that prevent water waste, said Karim Bilal, an agricultural engineer and former director of Najaf’s agriculture directorate.

Hadi Fathallah, director of public policy at consultancy Namea Group who has researched agriculture in Iraq said: “It’s very desperate to go to desert wells.

“You are plugging into aquifers that have been gathering water for thousands of years and will disappear in a few years if used this way,” he said.

Iraq should focus on modernizing agriculture, engage in water diplomacy with its neighbors to increase river flows and revitalize agricultural areas that have not recovered from war, Fathallah said.

## Greetings... (Continued From Page One)

Thus, in the absence of his father, he was the Beacon of Light for guiding all those who called on the threshold of the Prophet’s Ahl al-Bayt.

He was 35-years old, when the mantle of the Divine Trust of Imamate came to rest on his shoulders in 183 AH on the martyrdom of Imam Kazem (AS) through poisoning in the dungeon of Baghdad.

For the next twenty years, before his own life was cut short in 203 AH at the age of 55, again by poisoning, he spared no efforts to steer the ship of Islam to the shores of salvation through stormy seas of Abbasid tyranny.

So dexterously did he discharge his duties that he was hailed by the Ummah as “Reza”, or the person who is completely satisfied with the Will of God and with whom all other people, whatever their jurisprudential denomination, and whether friend or foe, are also satisfied.

For seventeen years in his hometown Medina if the spiritual leadership of Imam Reza (AS) pleased the masses, it aroused the displeasure of the Abbasid regime, especially the new self-styled caliph, Mamoun, who had made distant Marv in Khorasan, his capital, and to which he forced the Prophet’s Heir to come in the year 201 AH. The deceitful Mamoun tried to dupe the people into believing that he was willing to hand over the temporal power of the Islamic realm to the Prophet’s Ahl al-Bayt by declaring Imam Reza (AS) as “Heir Apparent” and minting coins with the 8th Imam’s name to celebrate the occasion.

The “Imam ar-Raouf”, however, exposed Mamoun and the entire institution of the caliphate as scandalous and devoid of any Islamic legitimacy, by expressing those immortal words: “If the caliphate is yours, you cannot give it to others what God has given you, but if it is not yours, you cannot give to others what does not belong to you.”

Imam Reza (AS) thus showed that his position as the Prophet’s Infallible Heir was beyond the grasp of anyone, and whether or not he possessed political powers, real authority belonged to him as God’s representative on earth during his lifetime.

That is the reason when time has erased the graves of the imposter caliphs, let alone their palaces of pleasure, the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt, whether in the grand mausoleums of Mashhad, Najaf, Karbala, Kazemayn and Samarra, or in their roofless resting places in the criminally destroyed Jannat al-Baqie Cemetery of Medina, continue to rule the hearts and minds of the faithful, as the Divinely-designated “Raouf ar-Raheem”.