

[UAE calls for talks to defuse US-Iran tensions](#)

Sun, 2019-06-23 16:40

ABU DHABI: The United Arab Emirates on Sunday called for negotiations to defuse tensions between the United States and Iran after Tehran shot down a US drone.

“Tensions in the Gulf can only be addressed politically,” Anwar Gargash, UAE minister of state for foreign affairs, wrote on Twitter.

He said the crisis in the Gulf region “requires collective attention, primarily to de-escalate and to find political solutions through dialogue and negotiations.”

“Regional voices (are) important to achieve sustainable solutions,” said Gargash.

Tehran on Thursday shot down a US surveillance drone which it said entered Iranian airspace, a claim denied by Washington which said the aircraft was above international waters.

The United States launched cyberattacks against Iranian missile control systems and a spy network in retaliation for the drone incident, according to US media reports Saturday.

Tehran is yet to react to the reports published by The Washington Post and Yahoo News.

US President Donald Trump said Friday he had called off strikes against Iran at the last minute, as such an attack would not have been a “proportionate” response.



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Trump says US 'moving forward' with additional sanctions on Iran
British minister to visit Iran on Sunday for talks on tensions

[Saudi Arabia, UAE, UK, US condemn Abha Airport attack, 'dangerous' Iranian](#)

influence

Sun, 2019-06-23 17:54

LONDON: Saudi Arabia, the UAE, US and the UK have condemned the Houthi attack on Abha Airport in the south of the Kingdom earlier this month which injured 26 people, while calling for Iran to stop actions that destabilize the region.

During a meeting held in London, the quartet of countries expressed their concern over escalating tensions in the Middle East and the danger the Iranian regime poses in Yemen and across the Gulf, including attacks on oil tankers off the coast Fujairah on 12 May and in the Gulf of Oman on 13 June.

The quartet said in a statement the Houthis had to end all restrictions on food aid deliveries to Sanaa from the World Food Programme to ensure the delivery of life-saving assistance to people in need.

The four nations added that they were committed to the Yemeni peace process and fully support the UN Yemen envoy Martin Griffiths, saying: "We call on the Yemeni parties to engage constructively with the special envoy to accelerate implementation of the agreements reached in Stockholm. We call on the Houthis to facilitate full and unhindered access for UNMHA, UNDP and UNVIM.

"We call on the Houthis to withdraw fully from the ports of Hodeidah, Ras Issa and Saleef and we look to the Security Council to review progress when they meet on 17 July," they said.



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Human Rights Watch declares Houthi Abha airport attack a 'war crime' as another missile targets city
US working with Arab Coalition to prevent Iran from arming Houthis: envoy

[Iraq boosts security measures at base where US trainers stay](#)

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Sun, 2019-06-23 01:49

BAGHDAD: Security measures were increased at one of Iraq's largest air bases that houses American trainers following an attack last week, a top Iraqi air force commander said on Saturday. The US military said operations at the base

were going on as usual and there were currently no plans to evacuate personnel.

The stepped-up Iraqi security measures at Balad Air Base, just north of the capital, Baghdad, come amid sharply rising tensions in the Middle East between the US and Iran.

The current regional crisis is rooted in the US withdrawal last year from the 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers. Washington subsequently reimposed sanctions on Iran, sending its economy into freefall and cutting deeply into its oil exports.

Gen. Falah Fares told The Associated Press by telephone that the measures include a nighttime curfew, boosting security inside and near the base as well as surveillance of nearby areas. He said these measures are being carried out in coordination with the US

“All unnecessary movements have been reduced,” Fares said, adding that the curfew now lasts from sunset until sunrise. He said the change was made after Balad Air Base, home to a squadron of Iraqi F-16 fighter jets, was hit with three mortar shells last week without inflicting casualties. The curfew had previously been from midnight to sunrise, he said.

Col. Kevin Walker, US Air Forces Central Command Director of Force Protection, denied in a statement later on Saturday reports that US forces are evacuating contractors or any other personnel from Balad Air Base.

FASTFACT

Iraq hosts more than 5,000 US troops, and is home to powerful Iranian-backed militias, some of whom want those US forces to leave.

“Operations at Balad Air Base are continuing as normal. Claims that personnel are being evacuated are categorically false,” Walker said. “There are no plans at this time to evacuate any personnel from Balad.”

“The safety and security of all air force personnel and those that provide services to the US Air Force are constantly evaluated, and should there be increased threats to our people, the US Air Force will put measures in place to provide the protections required,” he said.

Like neighboring Iran, Iraq has been trying to maintain a fine line between allies Tehran and Washington. There have been concerns that Baghdad could once again get caught in the middle, just as it is on the path to recovery. Iraq hosts more than 5,000 US troops, and is home to powerful Iranian-backed militias, some of whom want those US forces to leave.



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US forces prepare to evacuate contractors from Iraqi base
After years of war and drought, Iraq's bumper crop is burning

[Ankara's open-door refugee policy under spotlight](#)

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Sun, 2019-06-23 01:33

ANKARA: When the offensive in the countryside around Hama and Idlib by Russian and Syrian regime forces resulted in the displacement of about 300,000 people, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) warned that mass refugee waves should be expected if humanitarian conditions get worse. The reaction of Ankara is a key: Will the open-door policy be maintained? However, Ankara has made it clear that the country can take no more refugees. Hosting 4 million Syrian refugees, "Turkey's capacity to host a new wave of

migrants has almost reached its limits," Abdullah Ayaz, head of the Turkish Interior Ministry's migration management department, said on June 19 during a meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean in Ankara. Rather than maintaining its open-door policy, Ankara has said a political solution is the priority for the conflict around Idlib, the rebel-held stronghold in Syria that became the scene for serious clashes between Assad-linked forces and opposition forces.

"There is no agreed mechanism for going from Idlib to Turkey because for the moment Turks don't know how hard it will be for them to handle a new refugee wave. Instead, they are focusing on placing them in the safe zones in the north (of Syria)," Navvar Saban, a military analyst at the Omran Center for Strategic Studies in Istanbul, told Arab News.

Saban doesn't expect the border to open or that Turkey will allow a flow of refugees that it cannot handle.

"But, from a humanitarian perspective, Turks should work to provide services to those internally displaced people inside the safe zone along its border with Idlib. They have to monitor the actual procedures for the local allies to provide help for them," he added.

Saban also noted that Ankara should put more pressure on Moscow to follow the Idlib cease-fire agreement and to stop attacking the safe zone.

"By doing that Turkey will avoid a whole new wave of refugees," he said.

Turkish observation posts in Idlib were also recently attacked by Assad regime forces.

Since late April, around 375 civilians are estimated to have been killed by Russian and regime bombardment in the region.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Ankara has made it clear that the country can take no more refugees.
- Rather than maintaining its open-door policy, Ankara has said a political solution is the priority for the conflict around Idlib.

Selim Sazak, a doctoral researcher at Brown University and adjunct fellow at the Century Foundation, thinks that Turkey's refugee crisis is past the point of sustainability.

"Refugee policy, or more properly, anger toward it, is one of the few things that unites Erdogan's supporters and detractors alike," said Sazak, pointing out a report by Bilgi University's Migration Studies Center, whose survey found overwhelming support for the repatriation of Syrian refugees across all parties.

"Ought Turkey to keep an open-door policy? Maybe. Can it? Not as easily as it used to, especially with political upheaval and economic troubles at such an all-time high," he told Arab News.

For Omar Kadkoy, a Syrian-origin researcher on refugee integration at Ankara-based think tank TEPAV, it is costly both politically and economically to pursue an open-door policy.

"This why Ankara favors diplomacy to contain further military escalation," he told Arab News.

“If, however, large-scale displacement becomes unavoidable, accommodating the displaced in areas close to the border would be the lowest humanitarian denominator since the capacity of the Euphrates Zone is limited and the situation in Afrin (north of Aleppo) is further complex and fragile,” he added.

Therefore, Kadkoy thinks that this won't be an easy task and in a similar scenario, the international community must act alongside Ankara to bear the responsibility of meeting the emergency requirements.



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Syrian refugee charged in bomb blast planning ordered detained EU threatens sanctions over Turkey's Cyprus drilling

[Sudan's transitional council deputy thanks Saudi Arabia, UAE for assistance](#)

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Sat, 2019-06-22 20:18

LONDON: Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt have provided Sudan with assistance without interfering in its affairs, the deputy head of the transitional military council in Sudan Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo said on Saturday. Dagalo also thanked Saudi Arabia and the UAE for their support. He also said that infrastructure and services in Sudan are now the priorities for the military council.

He added that the Sudanese Rapid Support Forces (RSF) are fighting terrorism and illegal immigration.

Earlier on Saturday, Sudan's protest leaders said they are meeting with an Ethiopian envoy over proposals to resume negotiations with the ruling military council.

The leaders say they've received Ethiopia's initiative for the transition from military to civilian rule, and would declare their position during Saturday's meeting with Ethiopian diplomat Mahmoud Dirir.

The protesters are represented by a coalition of political groups, the Forces for the Declaration of Freedom and Change.

Transition talks collapsed over the military's crackdown against a protest sit-in earlier this month that killed dozens.

The protesters are calling for an international probe into the crackdown, as well as for restoring all previous deals they'd made with the military council before resuming talks.

These deals would include a three-year transition period, a protester-appointed Cabinet and a FDFC-majority legislative body.



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Sudan protesters hold night gatherings to rekindle movement Sudan's military council dismisses public prosecutor, appoints replacement