

Jordanian officials deny claims of rift with Riyadh

Author:

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AMMAN: Jordanian officials have rejected Western media claims of a rift between Jordan and Saudi Arabia over Amman's attempts to forge new alliances in the face of a growing economic crisis. Jordanian Foreign Ministry spokesman Sufian Qudah said the claims failed to reflect Jordan's foreign policy.

Qudah was responding to a report in the UK daily newspaper The Times which claimed that Jordan's King Abdullah in recent months had opened talks with Turkey and Qatar, and had made subtle overtures to Iran. The Jordanian ruler was also angered by US President Donald Trump's aggressive support for Israeli interests, the report claimed.

Foreign relations experts were also quick to dismiss the claims.

Musa Shteivi, head of Jordan University's strategic studies center, told Arab News there was "absolutely no change" in Jordanian foreign policy due to the US plans.

"There are some in the media who are on a fishing expedition, swinging in the dark and making accusations not based on the reality on the ground," he said.

Muhammad Momani, a former Jordan government spokesman, described claims of King Abdullah defying Trump and the Saudis as "surprising."

"Our relations with all Arab countries, and especially our Gulf brothers, is excellent," he told Arab News.

Momani, now chairman of the independent Amman daily Al-Ghad, rejected suggestions by the British newspaper that Jordan is moving closer to Iran and Qatar.

"The fact is there is no Jordanian ambassador in Iran and the same applies to Qatar," he said.

Several analysts pointed out that Jordan had ended its economic treaty with Turkey in November 2018 and was yet to renew the partnership despite pressure from some in the business community.

In its report on Monday, The Times claimed that "King Abdullah has in recent months opened talks with Turkey and Qatar, long-standing rivals of Saudi Arabia. It has even made subtle overtures to Iran, the Gulf state's main enemy and a country about which the king was issuing dire warnings until recently."

The newspaper said the Jordanian moves come amid a mounting economic crisis

with Riyadh reducing cash subsidies that have kept the country afloat for decades.



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[A true taste of Egypt at Ramadan in Cairo's Midan Al-Hussein](#)

Mon, 2019-05-27 23:25

CAIRO: For many in Egypt, and beyond, Ramadan would not be complete without a short visit to the historical area of Midan Al-Hussein in the heart of Cairo.

It's a district that has come to symbolize the spirit of the country, particularly during the holy month. It's even earned itself an alternative name – Hayy Al-Bahga Al-Ramadenya (The "Ramadan Joy Neighborhood"). Throughout Ramadan, Midan Al-Hussein is full of life, its bustling streets echo with greetings, and there is a multitude of entertainment on offer.

This year, as it is every year, Midan Al-Hussein is lit with traditional Ramadan lanterns and decorations. The Al-Hussein Mosque, which towers over the area, is full of Muslims praying, reading the Qur'an, or reciting Zikr.

"Ramadan in Al-Hussein is completely different from any other place," Ahmed Shawky, a frequent visitor to the area, told Arab News. "There is an amazing here, which is why I like to spend a lot of time here."

Al-Fishawy – one of Cairo's more-popular traditional coffee shops – is one of the spots that Shawky cites as a good place to spend time with his friends. "I also walk around the narrow alleys of Khan Al-Khalili, and I sometimes go to the mosque for taraweeh prayers. Then I end my day with sahoor."

Sayyed Al-Noursi, one of the caretakers of Al-Hussein Mosque, echoes Al-Fishawy's sentiments about the neighborhood's unique Ramadan spirit.

"Blessings and prayers increase during Ramadan," Al-Noursi told Arab News. "In Al-Hussein, I feel like I'm in the pulsing heart of Egypt. The area radiates with all shades of greatness, love and joy.

"Tourists also love to visit Midan Al-Hussein in Ramadan," he continues. "They like to take part in the festivities. They don't even eat or drink during daytime, which is why we love them and enjoy telling them about the characteristics of this neighborhood and the mosque."

The coffee shops are another sign of the festivities of the month. Abdel Qader Biso, manager of an establishment near the mosque, told Arab News that he eagerly awaits the special atmosphere of the holy month every year.

"There are times in the year where business is slow, but in Ramadan the coffee shop is always a full house," Biso said.

During Ramadan, customers crowd the coffee shops to drink traditional Ramadan drinks including karkadeh – which Biso says is the best-selling drink in his shop – and Egyptian tea with mint.

"We also serve sweets," Biso said. "The top sellers are rice pudding and Om Ali. Both Egyptians and foreigners order these items."

Perhaps the busiest spot of all in Al-Hussein during iftar is Farahat – a restaurant renowned for its stuffed pigeon dish. The restaurant was already crowded as we approached, and there were twice as many people again queuing up outside.

For Al Hajj Samir, one of the waiters, Farahat's popularity has its drawbacks. "As waiters, we can't eat until the last customer leaves," he explained.

It's clear the Ramadan Joy Neighborhood is living up to its name, and remains as popular as ever. Thousands of people flock here for its marvelous

atmosphere, and it is in the rich culture and history of Midan Al-Hussein – more than any other place – that one finds the embodiment of Egyptian Ramadan.



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Egypt's street iftar comes with a community flavor
Detroit's Islamic Center organizes 'Iftar tent' to offer free meals

Algeria's July election date implausible: Media

Author:

Mon, 2019-05-27 23:17

ALGIERS: Algerian media said Monday there was very little chance a presidential election will be held as planned on July 4, after only two candidates – both little known – submitted their candidacies.

“The election ... will without any doubt be postponed or canceled,” the francophone El Watan daily asserted.

The poll was originally meant to take place on April 18, but longtime President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's resignation early last month, on the back of huge street protests, forced a postponement.

To be eligible, the candidates – aeronautical engineer Hamid Touahri and Abdelhakim Hamadi, who heads a veterinary drug company – have to be backed by 600 local councillors and lawmakers or 60,000 voters in more than half the country's regions.

“There is little chance that these two (candidates) will successfully collect” the required signatures, El Watan said.

Arabic daily Echorouk said there was no doubt that “the Constitutional Council should officially announce the postponement” of the poll.

Touahri and Hamadi met a deadline of midnight on Saturday to submit their candidacies, setting in motion a 10-day period for the Constitutional Council to rule on their eligibility.

Despite Bouteflika's departure, protesters have continued to stage mass demonstrations each Friday.

They want regime figures including army chief Ahmed Gaid Salah and interim President Abdelkader Bensalah to step down ahead of any poll, and demand new independent institutions to oversee voting.



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Algeria voter apathy could mar legislative election
Algeria's ruling party names relatively young new leader amid protests

[Israel targets anti-aircraft positions in Syria's Quneitra province](#)

Mon, 2019-05-27 21:42

JERUSALEM: Israel's military said it attacked a Syrian anti-aircraft position that fired on one of its warplanes on Monday, and Syrian state media reported that a soldier had been killed in what it called an "Israeli aggression." "Syrian anti-aircraft systems fired at an IDF fighter jet during a routine flight in northern Israel," an Israeli military statement said, adding that the plane was not hit but that the Syrian projectile landed in Israeli territory.

A Syrian military source was cited by state news agency SANA as saying "the Israeli enemy targeted one of our military positions" in Quneitra province, which is adjacent to the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights.

It said one soldier was killed, another injured and a military vehicle

damaged.

Last year, anti-aircraft fire brought down an Israeli jet returning from an air raid in Syria, prompting a wave of Israeli strikes against other targets there.

Israel has acknowledged carrying out hundreds of strikes in recent years to curtail the influence of its arch-foe Iran and Tehran's Lebanese ally Hezbollah, which are fighting on the side of President Bashar Assad in Syria's war.

"Our policy is clear: we are not prepared to tolerate any aggression against us. We will respond forcefully and aggressively," said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a video released after the incident.



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Regime bombing kills 12 civilians in Syria's northwest
Israel bombs Iranian targets in Syria

Kuwait emir calls for caution amid regional tension

Mon, 2019-05-27 21:04

JEDDAH: Kuwait must be cautious and ready to confront the dangerous tensions in the region, the country's emir said Monday.

Speaking during his annual address to mark the last 10 days of Ramadan, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, referred to the delicate situation in the Arabian Gulf, in clear reference to tensions between Iran on one side and the US and its allies on the other.

"The bitter reality of the region, its dangerous dimensions and consequences, and the developments taking place call upon us to realize the current situations and circumstances, be cautious and ready to confront them in order to protect the safety and security of our dear country," the emir said.

He emphasized the importance of national unity in protecting the country during "this turbulent time."

Sheikh Sabah said Kuwait would stand up against anyone who tries to stir up internal strife in his country.

He also praise the role of the GCC in overcoming regional challenges.

"We know that sticking to our Gulf community and maintaining the privileges we have achieved within the GCC framework is the security that enables us to face such dangers and challenges," he added.

Sheikh Sabah is expected to attend a GCC summit convened by King Salman in Saudi Arabia this week.

The emir also called on the media to play their role consciously and responsibly and denounced the misuse of social media to spread rumors and hatred.

He also highlighted the government's efforts to empower youth and increase their contributions to the state building and society development.

He reiterated that the youth are the true wealth of the nation, and that they have both his attention and that of the government.



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