

Iran must stop supporting militias for peace offer to be taken seriously: Expert

Author:

Sun, 2019-05-26 23:42

JEDDAH: Iran needs to dismantle its proxies and end its interventions in Arab affairs before seeking to normalize relations with its Gulf neighbors, a political expert told Arab News on Sunday.

“The Gulf countries have been calling for normal relations with their neighbors for years, but their calls have fallen on deaf ears on the Iranian side,” Hamdan Al-Shehri, a political analyst and international relations scholar, said.

Accusing Tehran of “playing games,” Al-Shehri described Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif’s suggestion that Iran wanted to improve relations with its Gulf neighbors as worthless “as long as it continues meddling in the affairs of other countries, and fails to halt its evil militias from sabotaging and destabilizing regional security.”

Iran has for long pursued a policy of outsourcing its meddling to external militias, which indirectly supports, such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Houthis in Yemen.

Zarif, who is on a two-day visit to Iraq, told a joint news conference in Baghdad with his Iraqi counterpart Mohammed Al-Hakim that Iran wants to build balanced relations with its Gulf Arab neighbors and had proposed signing a non-aggression pact with them.

However, Al-Shehri said that Tehran needs to address three key issues – its nuclear program; its terrorist militias, which have been spreading chaos in the Gulf region and beyond; and its ballistic missile program – before making any such proposals.

“The question is, would Iran be ready to give up all three files? If they want their neighbors to accept them and normalize relations with them, they have to be honest and stop playing games,” he said.

Al-Shehri described Zarif’s regional tour as an attempt to rally support and send a false message that Iran has friends and allies who would stand by them in their crisis with the US.

“Where were these countries when Iran’s terrorist proxies in Yemen, the Houthi militias, launched missiles and drones attacking the holiest Islamic site in Makkah and other Saudi facilities?” Al-Shehri asked.

Zarif said Iran will defend itself against any military or economic aggression, calling on European states to do more to preserve a nuclear

agreement his country signed.

“We will defend (ourselves) against any war efforts, whether it be an economic war or a military one, and we will face these efforts with strength,” he said.

Strains have increased between Iran and the US following this month’s sabotage attack on oil tankers in the Gulf. Washington and other regional allies have concluded that Iran is most likely behind the attacks.

Tehran has distanced itself from the bombings, but the US has sent an aircraft carrier and extra 1,500 troops to the Gulf, sparking concerns over the risk of conflict in the volatile region.



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Iran will defend itself against any aggression: foreign minister Iranian FM meets Iraqi PM as part of regional tour

Algeria graft prosecutor refers two ex PMs to supreme court

Sun, 2019-05-26 16:07

ALGIERS: An Algerian prosecutor has asked the Supreme Court to investigate two former prime ministers and eight former ministers for alleged corruption, state television reported on Sunday, citing a statement from the prosecution.

Mass protests broke out in Algeria earlier this year demanding the removal of the ruling elite and the prosecution of people demonstrators regard as corrupt.

Most of the 10 politicians named by the public prosecution served in the Cabinet just before President Abdelaziz Bouteflika resigned on April 2 after pressure from protesters and the army.

The two former prime ministers are Ahmed Ouyahia and Abdelmalek Sellal, who was also Bouteflika's election campaign manager, according to the list broadcast by state television.

The former government ministers on the list are Amara Benyounes, Abdelakader Zaalane, Amar Ghoul, Karim Djoudi, Abdessalam Bouchouareb, Boudjemaa Talai, Amar Tou and Abdelkader Bouazghi.

They were in charge of sectors such as trade, transport, public works, finance and industry, transport, high education and agriculture.

The legal action came as Algeria's Constitutional Council said two candidates had registered for the July 4 presidential election.

FASTFACT

The two former prime ministers are Ahmed Ouyahia and Abdelmalek Sellal, who was also Bouteflika's election campaign manager, according to the list broadcast by state television.

The deadline for registration passed at midnight on Saturday.

The Constitutional Council said in a statement that it had received the files of two candidates, Abdelhakim Hamadi and Hamid Touahri, both unknown figures. No major party has nominated a candidate.

The poll is strongly opposed by protesters who reject any vote held under authorities they say are tarnished by corruption from the rule of Bouteflika.

Army chief of staff Lt. Gen. Ahmed Gaed Salah has said major corruption cases

would be pursued to try to calm the protests which started on Feb.22.

Bouteflika's youngest brother, Said, and two former intelligence chiefs have been placed in custody by a military judge for "harming the army's authority and plotting against state authority."

At least five prominent businessmen have also been detained pending trial over involvement in corruption cases.

Protesters also want the resignation of interim president Abdelkader Bensalah and Prime Minister Nouredine Beoui, who are considered as part of the ruling elite that has run the country since independence from France in 1962.



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Arrests in Algeria ahead of weekly protests
Tens of thousands march to demand change in Algeria

Sudan's top opposition rejects strike call in protest rift

Author:

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Sun, 2019-05-26 11:38

KHARTOUM: Sudan's main opposition group and supporter of the protest movement on Sunday rejected its call to stage a two-day general strike, in the first sign of a rift within the movement negotiating the launch of civilian rule. Talks between leaders of the umbrella protest movement, the Alliance for Freedom and Change, and army generals who seized power after ousting autocrat Omar Al-Bashir last month are deadlocked over who should lead a new governing body – a civilian or soldier.

In a bid to step up pressure on the generals, the protest movement has called for a general strike starting Tuesday, but the National Umma Party, a key backer of the movement, rejected the measure.

"We reject the general strike announced by some opposition groups" in the Alliance for Freedom and Change, the National Umma Party said in a statement. "A general strike is a weapon that should be used after it is agreed upon by everybody," Umma said.

"We have to avoid such escalated measures that are not fully agreed."

The National Umma Party led by former premier Sadiq Al-Mahdi said any such decision should be taken by a council of leaders of the protest movement. Such a council was still not in place and "will be composed in a meeting on Monday", it said.

It was Mahdi's elected government that Bashir, who himself was deposed on April 11, toppled in a coup in 1989.

In a recent interview with AFP, Mahdi warned protesters not to "provoke" the army's rulers as they had been instrumental in ousting Bashir.



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Sudan interim military council chief Al-Burhan meets with Egypt's President El-Sisi
Sudanese protesters call for strike amid divisions with army

[Syrian troops regain control of village they lost to rebels](#)

Author:

AP

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1558866905028446100

Sun, 2019-05-26 10:17

DAMASCUS: Syrian state media say government forces have regained control of a northwestern village, just days after losing it to militants.

State TV says troops captured Kfar Nabudah on Sunday from militants, including members of Al-Qaeda-linked Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham group.

Government forces first captured Kfar Nabudah on May 8, then lost it on

Wednesday. The village is located on the southwestern edge of Idlib, the last major rebel stronghold in the country.

The opposition's Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights says Syrian government forces carried out scores of airstrikes, and used barrels bombs and artillery shells to retake the village.

The latest round of violence erupted late last month, wrecking a cease-fire brokered for the area by Russia and Turkey and raising fears of a wider government offensive.



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Turkey sends weapons to opposition fighters in Syria
Syrian journalist claims torture, humiliation at hands of Turkish forces while crossing border

[Three French Daesh members sentenced to death in Iraq](#)

Sun, 2019-05-26 13:59

BAGHDAD: An Iraqi court on Sunday sentenced three French citizens to death after they were found guilty of joining Daesh, a court official said. Captured in Syria by a US-backed force fighting the extremists, Kevin Gonot, Leonard Lopez and Salim Machou are the first French Daesh members to receive death sentences in Iraq, where they were transferred for trial. They have 30 days to appeal.

Iraq has taken custody of thousands of extremists repatriated in recent months from neighbouring Syria, where they were caught by the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces during the battle to destroy Daesh's "caliphate". Iraqi courts have placed on trial hundreds of foreigners, condemning many to life in prison and others to death, although no foreign Daesh members have yet been executed.

Those sentenced on Sunday were among 12 French citizens who were caught in Syria and transferred to Iraqi custody in February.

Rights groups including Human Rights Watch have criticised Iraq's anti-terror trials, which they say often rely on circumstantial evidence or confessions obtained under torture.

Analysts have also warned that prisons in Iraq have in the past acted as "academies" for future extremists, including Daesh supremo Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi.



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Daesh militants riot in Tajik prison, 32 killed