

[Qatar emir announces attendance at GCC summit in Saudi Arabia](#)

Mon, 2021-01-04 22:38

DOHA: Qatar said Monday its ruler Sheikh Tamim would attend the GCC summit being held in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday.

The announcement came after Kuwait said there had been a [breakthrough in the boycott of Qatar by Saudi Arabia](#) and other Gulf and Arab countries since 2017.

“The Emir of the country is heading the delegation of the State of Qatar to participate in the meeting of the... Gulf Cooperation Council,” Sheikh Tamim’s office said.

His attendance at the summit, being held in AlUla and chaired by Saudi Arabia’s King Salman, was confirmed after Kuwait announced the Kingdom would reopen its borders and airspace to Qatar.

Saudi crown prince Mohammed bin Salman [said on Monday](#) the summit would create a united front, would bolster peace and prosperity and lead to a closing of ranks to promote solidarity in the face of regional challenges.

The Kingdom, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt had boycotted Qatar since June 2017 over its support for extremist groups and ties with the Iranian regime.



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Saudi Arabia and Qatar to open airspace, land and sea borders 'Inclusive' GCC summit to lead members to 'reunification': Saudi crown prince

[Saudi Arabia and Qatar to open airspace, land and sea borders](#)

Mon, 2021-01-04 21:24

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia reopened its airspace and land and sea borders with Qatar on Monday, in a breakthrough agreement aimed at ending the three-year diplomatic dispute with Doha.

The full deal is expected to be signed on Tuesday at the annual summit of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) leaders in the northwestern Saudi city of AlUla, [attended by Qatari emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani](#).

The Anti-Terror Quartet – Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt and Bahrain – imposed a diplomatic, trade and travel embargo on Qatar in June 2017.

Recent mediation efforts have been led by Sheikh Nawaf Al-Sabah, the emir of Kuwait. "Based on Sheikh Nawaf's proposal, it was agreed to open the airspace and land and sea borders between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the state of Qatar, starting from this evening," Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Sabah said on Monday.

White House special adviser Jared Kushner, US President Donald Trump's son-in-law, is expected to fly to the Kingdom to witness the signing on Tuesday, along with US Middle East envoy Avi Berkowitz and Brian Hook, a special State Department adviser, Reuters reported.

"We've had a breakthrough in the Gulf Cooperation Council rift," a senior Trump administration official said.

Under the emerging agreement, the four countries will end the blockade of Qatar, and in exchange, Qatar will not pursue lawsuits related to the blockade.

"At the signing on the 5th, leadership from the Gulf Cooperation Council plus Egypt will be coming together to sign an agreement that will end the blockade and put an end to the Qatari lawsuits," the official said.

"It's just a massive breakthrough. The blockade will be lifted. It will allow for travel among the countries as well as goods. It will lead to more stability in the region."

[Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said on Monday](#) that the Kingdom's policy was based on a firm approach that achieved the national interests of the GCC and Arab countries, in order to achieve security and stability.

“The GCC summit will be an inclusive summit, unified in ranks and focused on prosperity ... in terms of reunification and solidarity in facing the challenges in our region,” the crown prince said. UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash said: “More work lies ahead and we are moving in the right direction.”



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‘Inclusive’ GCC summit to lead members to ‘reunification’: Saudi crown prince
GCC chief calls for stronger Gulf cooperation to overcome pandemic challenges

[Lebanon bristles at Iranian air chief's remarks on missiles and sovereignty](#)

Author:

Mon, 2021-01-04 01:36

BEIRUT: The Lebanese have reacted angrily to an Iranian commander's remarks about their missile capabilities and sovereignty, with people in a pro-Hezbollah town attempting to burn a picture of the slain Quds Force leader Qassem Soleimani.

Amir Ali Hajizadeh boasted on Saturday that Lebanon owed its missile capabilities to Iran and that the country was in the front line of Iran's fight against Israel.

"Tehran supports any party that stands against Israel," he added.

President Michel Aoun tweeted on Sunday that the Lebanese had "no partner" in protecting their country's independence, sovereignty over its border and territory, and freedom of decision.

But the mildness of his response – and its delay – was criticized by some media and public figures.

The leading daily newspaper Al-Nahar called the Iranian stance "a very blatant breach challenging the principle of the sovereignty of Lebanon and a lack of respect to the minimal standards of dealings between states."

The newspaper was surprised by Aoun's initial silence on Hajizadeh's remarks, while former MP Fares Souaid renewed his call for the president to resign.

He said: "Iran's Revolutionary Guard has announced its leadership of Lebanon's missiles against Israel. Where is the Lebanese state? Mr. President, for the sake of your dignity and ours, resign."

Lebanon's former ambassador to Jordan Tracy Chamoun, the granddaughter of former President Camille Chamoun, described Aoun's response as "shy."

She said: "The foreign minister should summon the Iranian ambassador to answer to the matter and to be warned. If you are unable to uphold sovereignty, then at least save face."

FASTFACTS

- **President Michel Aoun tweeted on Sunday that the Lebanese had 'no partner' in protecting their country's independence, sovereignty over its border and territory, and freedom of decision.**

- **The mildness of his response – and its delay – was criticized by some media and public figures.**

Hezbollah hung pictures of Soleimani, who was killed in a US drone strike on Jan. 3, 2020, along the roads extending from the southern suburbs of Beirut to southern Lebanon and in the border town of Al-Khiam, which overlooks Israeli positions on the other side of the border.

But the act was criticized on social media. Former justice minister, Ashraf Rifi, said that naming Lebanese streets after the "leaders of vandalization and Iranian militias" did not represent Lebanon. He also described the hanging of the pictures as "an illegal and provocative act" that entrenched the image of Lebanon as a "prisoner of Iran."

Hussein Al-Wajeh, who is a media affairs adviser to Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri, said that Lebanon was not and would not be the front line for Iran's battle. "The Lebanese will not pay any price on behalf of the Iranian

regime. Despite this, some Iranian officials insist on considering Lebanon an Iranian province.”

Kataeb Party leader Sami Gemayel said that Lebanon and the Lebanese were “hostages” to Iran through Hezbollah. “They are using us as human shields in their battle, which has nothing to do with Lebanon.

“The president, the government, and parliament are false witnesses and they are covering the capture of Lebanon.”

Salam Yamout, head of the National Bloc Party, said that involving Lebanon in battles associated with regional disputes was a direct threat to the interests of the Lebanese and their battle to restore their sovereignty and dignity.



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10 hurt in Lebanon gas depot blast Lebanon on the brink of a virus 'catastrophe'

[Israeli prosecutors spell out allegations against Netanyahu](#)

Author:

Associated Press

ID:

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Sun, 2021-01-03 19:49

JERUSALEM: Israeli prosecutors on Sunday released an amended indictment spelling out detailed charges against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a corruption case in which he is accused of trading favors with a powerful media mogul.

Netanyahu has been charged with fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes in three corruption cases. One of them alleges that Netanyahu promoted regulations worth hundreds of millions of dollars to the owner of the Bezeq telecom company in exchange for positive coverage on its popular Walla news site.

In response to a request from Netanyahu's lawyers for more details, Israeli prosecutors released a letter Sunday alleging there had been 315 incidents of Walla being requested to make its coverage more favorable for Netanyahu and his family. They said there were indications that Netanyahu was personally involved in 150 of those incidents.

It said the requests included giving more time or prominence to positive articles about Netanyahu and his family, changing headlines and lowering or even removing unfavorable stories. It also included alleged requests for negative coverage of Netanyahu's rivals.

The document listed all 315 suspected incidents, which allegedly included numerous requests to publish flattering articles and photos of Netanyahu's wife Sara, to conceal reports of embarrassing expenditures and personal information about the Netanyahu family and attempts to embarrass his rivals. It quoted Bezeq's controlling shareholder at the time, Shaul Elovitch, as expressing concerns that Netanyahu would not approve lucrative business deals for the company if negative articles were published.

On Jan. 17-19, 2013, for instance, it said a Netanyahu associate persuaded Elovitch to publish stories saying that the wife of Naftali Bennett, head of a rival religious party, worked in a non-kosher restaurant. Several weeks later, Netanyahu, through the same associate, allegedly pressed Walla to remove critical articles about a lacy dress his wife had worn to the swearing-in of the new parliament and replace it with favorable reviews. The site consented to both requests, it said.

On another occasion, Elovitch, at Netanyahu's request, allegedly ordered Walla to halt a live broadcast of a rally by Netanyahu's opponents during the country's 2015 election campaign.

Netanyahu's trial began last year and is scheduled to resume next month. He denies all charges against him, saying he is the victim of a witch hunt orchestrated by a hostile media, police and prosecutors.



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Netanyahu says he greeted released US spy Pollard at airport
Israel may try to provoke war with attacks on US forces in Iraq: Iran's Zarif

[10 hurt in Lebanon gas depot blast](#)

Author:

Associated Press

ID:

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Sun, 2021-01-03 18:52

BEIRUT: At least 10 people were injured Sunday when an explosion rocked a warehouse storing gas canisters near Lebanon's border with Syria, the Lebanese Red Cross and the army said.

The Red Cross said it dispatched several teams of rescuers to the village of Al-Qasr in the eastern Hermel region where the explosion occurred and rushed the injured to hospitals.

"We have responded to an explosion in a warehouse that stores gas canisters.

We have responded with three teams. Ten people have been wounded and transported to nearby hospitals," a Red Cross statement said. A Lebanese army spokesman told AFP the blast was caused by the explosion of gas canisters in a warehouse. The region of Hermel is known for its many illegal border crossings into Syria which are used by smugglers to move various types of contraband across the frontier. Smuggling takes places both ways, but has been stepped up from Lebanon into Syria since the start of the war there in 2011 and as the country faces a growing economic crisis and international sanctions. The Shiite movement Hezbollah, a key ally of the Syrian government, is often accused by Lebanese media and some political parties of running smuggling operations into Syria to the detriment of Lebanon which is grappling with its worst economic crisis since the 1975-1990 civil war.







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Lebanon on the brink of a virus 'catastrophe'
Car bombs kill six in pro-Turkey north Syria: Monitor