

UK's Prince William kicks off solo Middle East tour in Kuwait

Author:

Mon, 2019-12-02 18:56

KUWAIT CITY: The UK's Prince William, Duke of Cambridge, met with the Emir of Kuwait on Monday during his solo Middle East tour.

The Duke of Cambridge was received by Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at the Bayan Palace, where the two enjoyed a five-course lunch.

During their meeting, which was attended by dignitaries, government ministers, ambassadors and religious leaders from the Muslim and Christian faiths, the Emir expressed his sympathies for the recent London Bridge Attack in which two people were killed.

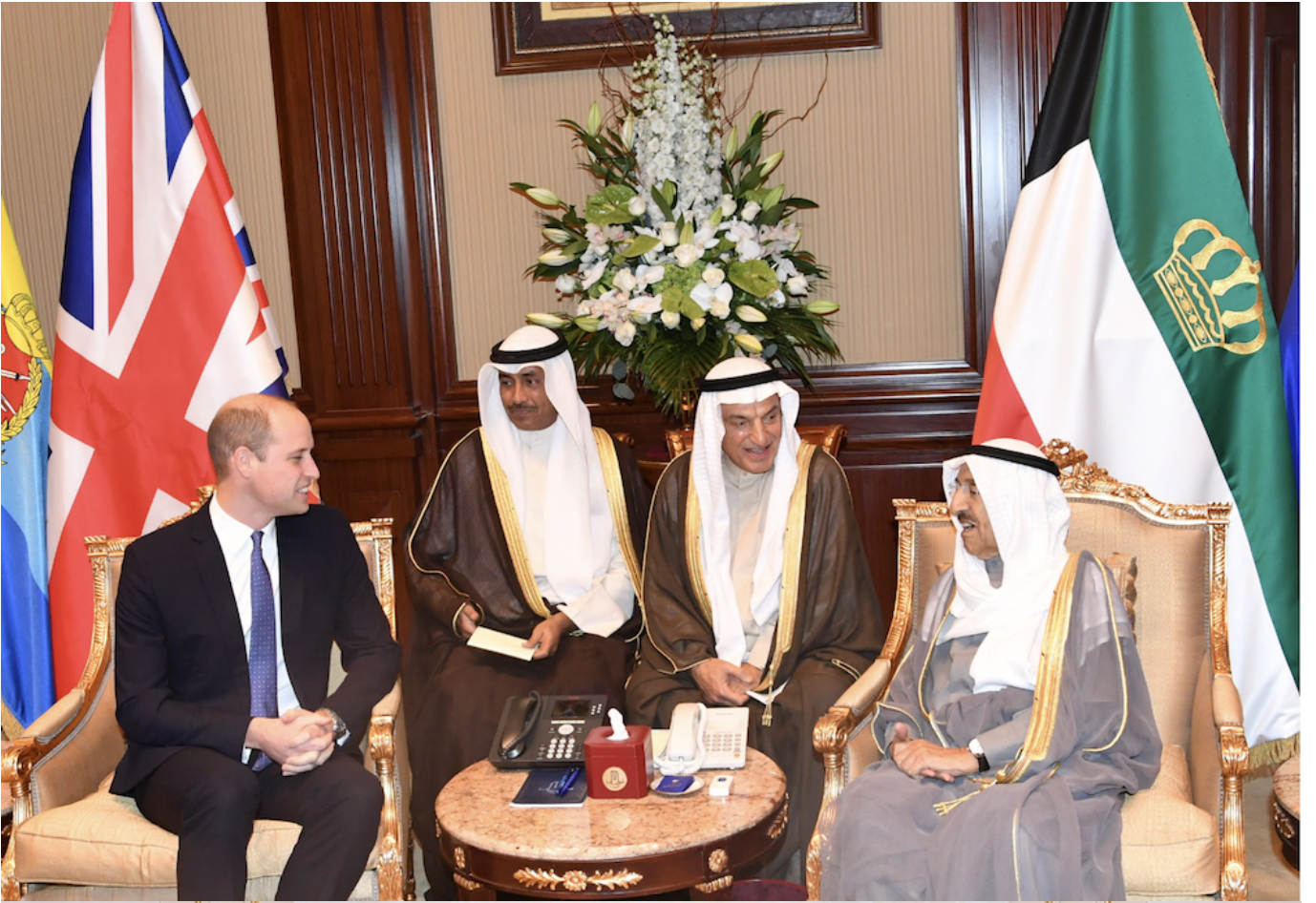
He had sent a cable of condolence to Queen Elizabeth II and UK prime minister Boris Johnson on Saturday.

Also on Monday, Prince William visited the Jahra Nature Reserve where he was briefed on Kuwait's efforts to preserve its natural habitats.

The Duke will also visit Oman on his journey to the region, which Kensington Palace said was a mission of strengthening British-Gulf cooperation.

"Throughout the tour, the Duke's programme will pay tribute to the historic ties Britain shares with Kuwait and Oman, and will highlight strong links and cooperation in many areas, including education, the environment, and defence," a statement read.

"From the modern capitals of Kuwait City and Muscat, to the vast Kuwaiti deserts and stunning wadis in the Omani mountains, the visit will take in both countries' unique cultures, their beautiful landscapes, and diverse communities," it added.







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Prince William and wife Kate leave Pakistan, day after aborted flight

[Amnesty puts Iran death toll above 200 as US says Tehran target of regional anger](#)

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Mon, 2019-12-02 15:40

LONDON: At least 208 people are believed to have been killed during a crackdown on protests in Iran last month, Amnesty International said Monday.

The steep increase in the number of dead came as the US said the clerical regime in Tehran was the uniting factor behind protests in Iraq, Lebanon and Iran itself.

“The number of people believed to have been killed during demonstrations in Iran that broke out on 15 November has risen to at least 208, based on credible reports received by the organization,” Amnesty said, adding that the actual death toll was likely to be higher.

The new toll ups the number of deaths according to Amnesty by almost 50, with the organisation saying dozens were recorded in Shahriar city in Tehran province, “one of the cities with the highest death tolls.”

Protests erupted on Nov. 15 after the shock announcement of a fuel price hike of up to 200 percent but were quickly quashed by authorities who also imposed a week-long near-total internet blackout.

Philip Luther, Amnesty’s research and advocacy head for the Middle East, called the number of deaths “evidence that Iran’s security forces went on a horrific killing spree,” and called on the international community to ensure those responsible are held accountable.

“The deaths have resulted almost entirely from the use of firearms,” Amnesty

said previously.

Amnesty added that, according to collected information, "families of victims have been threatened and warned not to speak to the media, or to hold funeral ceremonies for their loved ones.

"Some families are also being forced to make extortionate payments to have the bodies of their loved ones returned to them."

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Monday that the protests in Iran and demonstrations in Iraq and Lebanon, where Tehran has significant influence, showed people across the regime were fed up with the mullahs.

While acknowledging diverse local reasons for the unrest that has swept the Middle East as well as other regions, Pompeo pointed the finger at Iran.

Iraqi premier Adel Abdel Mahdi resigned "because the people were demanding freedom and the security forces had killed dozens and dozens of people. That's due in large part to Iranian influence," Pompeo said.

"The same is true in Lebanon, the protests in Beirut" he said at the University of Louisville.

"They want Hezbollah and Iran out of their country, out of their system as a violent and a repressive force," he said.

He said that protests inside Iran showed that Iranians were also "fed up."

"They see a theocracy that is stealing money, the ayatollahs stealing tens and tens of millions of dollars," he said.

In both Iraq and Lebanon, protesters have primarily called for an end to corruption, greater efforts to create jobs and a restructuring of the political system.

In Iraq, Abdel Mahdi had close ties with fellow Shiite-majority Iran but also enjoyed support from the United States. Protesters last week torched the Iranian consulate in Najaf.

In Lebanon, the United States has been seeking to isolate Hezbollah, the Shiite, pro-Iranian militant movement that is also a political party with berths in the previous government.

The Trump administration has put a priority on curbing Tehran's regional influence including by imposing sweeping sanctions.



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Iran disputes 'exaggerated' protest death tollsIran protests 'won't end until regime falls'

[Eight children among 9 killed in Turkish shelling on north Syria](#)

Author:

AFP

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1575298554230915100

Mon, 2019-12-02 14:46

BEIRUT: Eight children were among nine people killed Monday in a Turkish artillery attack that hit near a school in a northern Syrian town, a Britain-based war monitor said.

Those killed in the attack on Kurdish-held Tal Rifaat were all displaced from the Afrin region which was captured last year by Turkish troops and their Syrian proxies, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.



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Turkey 'may stall NATO defense plan over Syria dispute' France warns Turkey over Syria military action ahead of talks with European leaders

[Lebanese army separates rival protests near president palace](#)

Author:

Associated Press

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1575231217165097100

Sun, 2019-12-01 17:22

BEIRUT: Lebanon's armed forces have deployed near the presidential palace east of Beirut to prevent friction between rival Lebanese protesters as the stalemate over forming a crisis government continues.

Anti-government protesters had called for a rally Sunday outside the Presidential Palace in Baabda to press President Michel Aoun to formally

begin the process of forming a new government. Prime Minister Saad Hariri resigned over a month ago amid nationwide protests accusing the political elite of corruption and mismanagement of the economy. The call prompted a counter-rally by supporters of Aoun who called him a “red line.” Army soldiers formed a human chain to separate the groups on a highway leading to the palace, preventing clashes. Meanwhile, hundreds of anti-government protesters marched toward central Beirut amid a deepening economic crisis.





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Israel planning new settlement in heart of Hebron

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Sun, 2019-12-01 14:02

JERUSALEM: Israel's new hard-right defense minister on Sunday ordered officials to start planning a new Jewish settlement in the heart of the divided West Bank city of Hebron.

Naftali Bennett's announcement came as the prospects of a third snap election since April loomed larger, with the minister's New Right party leaning heavily on settlers for support at the polls.

The Defense Ministry said Bennett had instructed departments responsible for the Israeli occupied West Bank "to notify the Hebron municipality of planning a new Jewish neighborhood in the wholesale market complex."

The market area is on Hebron's once-bustling Shuhada Street, which leads to a holy site where the biblical Abraham is believed to have been buried.

The street is now largely closed off to Palestinians, who have long demanded that it be reopened.

The city is holy to both Muslims and Jews and is a flashpoint for clashes between Palestinians and Israeli settlers.

On Saturday, Israeli forces shot dead a Palestinian southwest of Hebron, with the army saying he was one of three men throwing petrol bombs at a military vehicle.

About 800 Israeli settlers live in the ancient city under heavy military protection, amid around 200,000 Palestinians.

Sunday's statement said the planned new building project would "double the number of Jewish residents in the city."

Senior Palestinian official Saeb Erekat said the new project was a result of the United States' decision last month to no longer consider Israeli settlements illegal.

The Bennett plan, he wrote in English on Twitter, "is the first tangible result of the US decision to legitimize colonization."

The move comes amid political turmoil in Israel after general elections in April and September ended in deadlock.

Neither Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and allies like Bennett, nor their opponents, won enough parliamentary seats to form a viable coalition.

Lawmakers now have until December 11 to find a solution or see parliament dissolved once again.

At Sunday's weekly cabinet meeting, Netanyahu also offered good news for the settlers, pledging 40 million shekels (\$11.5 million) for improved security.

"We are strengthening the security components in the communities in Judea and Samaria, of the Israeli citizens there," he said, using the biblical terms for the West Bank.

Israel's West Bank settlements are considered illegal under international law and are bitterly opposed by Palestinians.



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