

# Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman meets Dubai ruler

Thu, 2019-11-28 15:42

DUBAI: Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman met Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum on Thursday.

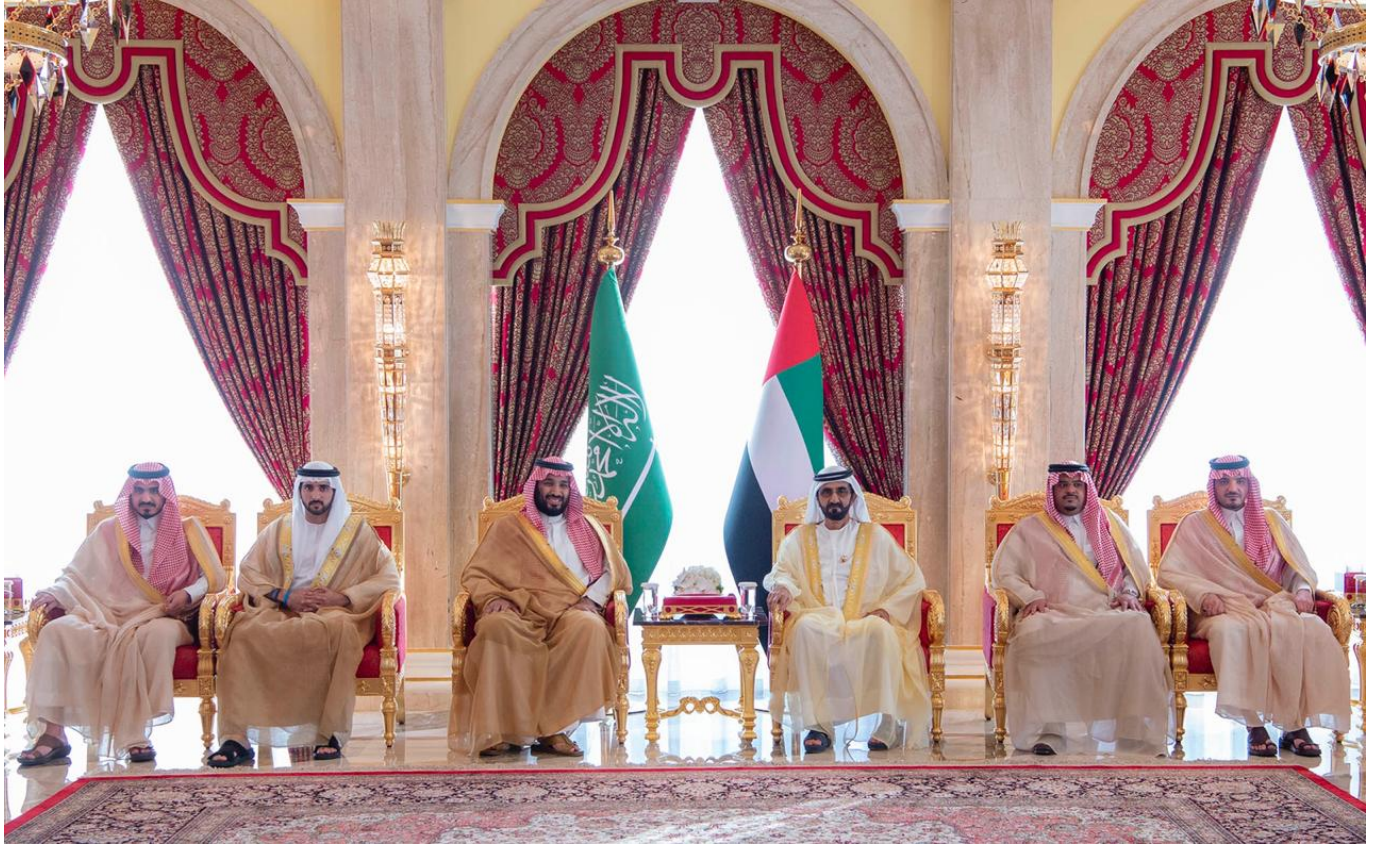
The meeting came after the crown prince arrived in the United Arab Emirates on Wednesday for an official visit.

The crown prince was received by Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan on arrival. The two leaders discussed regional issues and bilateral relations.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid said Dubai had received the crown prince "with all the kindness and love."

"You've been welcomed among your family and loved ones," Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid said. "History is made by the courageous..and today the region's history is being changed because of Mohammed bin Salman."

The Dubai ruler hosted a lunch for the Saudi crown prince and his accompanying delegation, which included the deputy emirs of Riyadh and Makkah, as well as several Saudi ministers. From the Emirate side, Dubai Crown Prince Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohamed bin Rashed attended the feast as well as a number of ministers.









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Saudi flag emblazoned on world's tallest tower to honor Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman UAE visit

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## [Iraqi forces kill 22 protesters in Nassiriya after Iranian consulate torched](#)

Author:

Reuters

ID:

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Thu, 2019-11-28 07:09

BAGHDAD: Iraqi security forces shot dead 22 protesters in the southern city of Nassiriya on Thursday, medical sources said, and authorities imposed a

curfew in Najaf after demonstrators burned its Iranian consulate.

Authorities set up joint military-civilian “crisis cells” to try to stem unrest and a paramilitary commander vowed to use force to stop any attack against Shiite Muslim religious authorities.

The torching of the consulate in Najaf, the southern holy city, escalated violence in Iraq after weeks of mass demonstrations that aim to bring down a government seen as corrupt and backed by Tehran.

It was the strongest expression yet of the anti-Iranian sentiment of Iraqi demonstrators as the gulf widens between a largely Iran-aligned ruling elite and an increasingly desperate Iraqi majority with few opportunities and minimal state support.

The inability of Iraq’s government and political class to deal with the unrest and answer protesters’ demands has fueled public anger.

Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi has promised electoral and anti-corruption reform but barely begun delivering while security forces have shot dead hundreds of mostly peaceful demonstrators in the streets of Baghdad and southern cities.

The protests, which began in Baghdad on Oct. 1 and have spread through southern cities, are the most complex challenge facing the Shiite-dominated ruling class that has controlled state institutions and patronage networks since the 2003 US-led invasion that toppled long-time Sunni ruler Saddam Hussein.

Young, mostly Shiite protesters say politicians are corrupt, beholden to foreign powers – especially Iran – and they blame them for a failure to recover from years of conflict despite relative calm since the defeat of Islamic State in 2017.

Security forces opened fire on protesters who had gathered on a bridge in Nassiriya before dawn, medical sources said. Some 22 were killed and 180 wounded, they said.

A curfew was imposed in Najaf after protesters stormed and set fire to the Iranian consulate late on Wednesday. Businesses and government offices remained closed in the city, state media reported.

“The burning of the consulate last night was a brave act and a reaction from the Iraqi people – we don’t want the Iranians,” said Ali, a protester in Najaf. “There will be revenge from Iran I’m sure, they’re still here and the security forces are going to keep shooting us.”

A protester who witnessed the burning of the consulate said security forces had opened fire to try to stop it.

“All the riot police in Najaf and the security forces started shooting at us, as if we were burning Iraq as a whole,” he said, declining to give his name.

‘INFILTRATORS AND SABOTEURS’

The military commander of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), an umbrella grouping of paramilitary groups whose most powerful factions are close to Tehran, said the groups would use full force against anyone trying to attack Iraq's most powerful Shiite cleric, who is based in Najaf.

"We will cut the hand of anyone trying to get near (Grand Ayatollah Ali) Al-Sistani," commander Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis said in a statement on the PMF website.

Observers said the events in Najaf would likely bring a tough response, rather than pushing the government into enacting reforms.

"Apart from casual statements ... the government has not announced any plan (or) given any clear account of what measures it will take," said Dhiaa Al-Asadi, adviser to powerful populist cleric Moqtada Al-Sadr. "Initiatives are going to be scarce."

Fanar Haddad, senior research fellow at the National University of Singapore's Middle East Institute, said the government might use the burning of the Iranian consulate as a pretext for an even more heavy-handed crackdown.

"The downside from the protesters' point of view is this might reinforce the government's narrative that protesters are infiltrators, saboteurs and up to no good," he said.

"It sends a message to Iran but also works to the advantage of people like Muhandis ... (giving) a pretext to clamp down and framing what happened as a threat against Sistani."

Sistani rarely speaks on political issues but traditionally wields enormous influence over public opinion, especially in Iraq's southern Shiite heartland. He has used Friday sermons in recent weeks to urge the government to enact real reform and stop killing demonstrators.

Security forces have used live ammunition, tear gas and stun grenades against mostly unarmed protesters. Some demonstrators have lobbed petrol bombs, bricks and fired slingshots at police.

Authorities set up "crisis cells" in several provinces to try to restore order, a military statement said on Thursday. They would be led by provincial governors but include military leaders who would take charge of local security forces.

The violence has killed more than 350 people, according to police and medics.







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Iraq condemns attack on Iran's consulate in southern Najaf – Foreign Ministry  
Casualties mount as Iraq protesters block highways to press reforms

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## [CAATSA sanctions against Turkey: Is the genie out of the bottle?](#)

Author:

Thu, 2019-11-28 02:59

ANKARA: Ankara tested its S-400 Russian-made air defense system this week. That move is unlikely to shield the country from sanctions, though. Indeed, it seems likely the US Senate and the US Treasury will bring forward some sanction packages in retaliation against Turkey moving forward with the Russian system.

The chairman of the Senate's Committee on Foreign Relations, the Republican Jim Risch, has already introduced legislation that would impose stiff sanctions on Ankara following its military incursion into northern Syria. The

senate only refrained from enacting those sanctions – which have bipartisan support – on the condition that Turkey remove the S-400 system from its arsenal.

The committee was set to re-examine the situation early in December, but is now understood to be growing impatient with Ankara's defiance and strongly considering the enforcement of the 2017 Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), along with banning US purchases of Turkish sovereign debt, and punishing the Turkish banking and energy sectors.

During his meeting with US President Donald Trump at the White House on Nov. 13, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was asked to abandon the Russian system that began arriving in Turkey in July at the Murted Air Base in Ankara with much fanfare. In response, Washington removed Ankara from the multinational manufacturing program for F-35 joint-strike fighter jets and banned the sale of those aircraft to Turkey.

This week, Turkey unexpectedly tested a component of the S-400 radar system in Ankara for two days while US-made F-16 jets flew low across the Turkish capital. It had been expected that Turkey would keep the Russian system deactivated in order to avoid US sanctions.

Instead, Ankara is widely considered to have issued a challenge to Washington that will likely see more voices urging congress to push ahead with CAATSA sanctions against Turkey as the radar tests are seen as a threat to NATO's security systems.

CAATSA sanctions include a range of options – from denials of visas of Turkish officials and the prohibition of export licenses to harsher measures such as the blocking of any transactions with the US financial system.

In a recent interview with the Turkish broadcaster NTV, Erdogan said he would continue trying to resolve the S-400 dispute with Washington until April 2020, when the system would be fully deployed. On Wednesday, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu made it clear that Turkey needs the system. "A product is not bought to be kept in the box," he said.

Soner Cagaptay, director of the Turkish program at the Washington Institute, described Turkey as "a hybrid state" in global politics, meaning it hopes to deepen its ties with Russia while remaining a member of NATO.

"We haven't seen Turkey's final word regarding the S-400 issue. Due to (Turkey's) hybrid nature, every discussion that Erdogan has with Trump has to be run by (Russian President) Vladimir Putin afterwards before he can finalize whatever he discusses with Trump," he told Arab News.

There is a general expectation that Ankara will only declare its final intent after Putin's visit to Turkey in January.

Aaron Stein, director of the Middle East program at the Foreign Policy Research Institute, said the implementation of the sanctions is up to Trump, but he expects some congressional efforts to insert related clauses into the consensus bill for the National Defense Authorization Act.

“Trump is holding off an increasingly angry congress and, I think, eventually, he will capitulate,” Stein told Arab News.

According to Cagaptay, Erdogan is still betting on Trump’s desire to preserve Turkish-US ties to hold off sanctions.

“We can expect very severe sanction legislation to be brought forward both in the House and Senate. But every sanction package has national security waivers that Trump can use to rescue Turkey again. Analysts are chronically underestimating the role of the Trump-Erdogan relationship to rescue (Turkey) from the crisis,” he said.

Stein agrees, to an extent.

“Ankara has placed all its bets on Trump. It is working, for now. But let’s see what happens if Trump caves to his own Republican caucus,” he said. “I think much of Turkey’s response will depend on the severity of the sanctions.”



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Turkey’s efforts to solve S-400 missile row with US to continue until April

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# HRW says Turkey's north Syria 'safe zone' not safe

Thu, 2019-11-28 01:50

BEIRUT: Human Rights Watch on Wednesday denounced abuses including executions and home confiscations in a Turkish-controlled swathe of northern Syria, where Ankara says it wants to resettle Syrian refugees.

Turkey last month established what it has dubbed a "safe zone" in a 120-km-long strip of land it seized from Syrian Kurdish fighters along its southern border.

The New York-based watchdog urged Turkey and its Syrian proxies to investigate "human rights abuses, in many cases potential war crimes," in the area running 30 km deep into Syrian territory.

"Executing individuals, pillaging property and blocking displaced people from returning to their homes is damning evidence of why Turkey's proposed 'safe zones' will not be safe," said Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East director at HRW.

Ankara claims it wants to resettle some of the 3.6 million Syrian refugees it hosts on Turkish soil in the area grabbed through a deadly offensive and subsequent deals.

"Contrary to Turkey's narrative that their operation will establish a safe zone, the groups they are using to administer the territory are themselves committing abuses against civilians and discriminating on ethnic grounds," Whitson said.

The group also said that Turkey-backed fighters had failed to account for aid workers who disappeared while working in the "safe zone."

Turkey's Oct. 9 invasion was the latest in a series of military operations on Syrian soil against Kurdish fighters it views as "terrorists."

Another Turkey-led offensive early last year saw pro-Ankara fighters take the northwestern region of Afrin from Kurdish combatants, with rights groups also reporting similar abuses in that region.

Turkish state media on Friday said around 70 Syrians, including women and children, crossed the border to the Syrian town of Ras Al-Ayn in the first of such returns.

But analysts have cast doubt on President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's claims that Turkey can repatriate up to two million Syrians to the "safe zone."



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113 Syrian refugees welcomed in Italy  
Car bomb claims lives of 17 people in northern Syrian village of Tal Halaf

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## [Egypt military court condemns high-profile militant Ashmawy to death](#)

Author:

Wed, 2019-11-27 23:40

CAIRO: An Egyptian military court on Wednesday condemned a high-profile militant, Hisham Ashmawy, to death by hanging over his alleged involvement in terror attacks, the army said.

Ashmawy was convicted for his role in 14 “crimes” including a deadly firefight with police in Egypt’s Western Desert in October 2017, an army spokesman said. The verdict is subject to appeal before a military court, a judicial source told AFP.

Ashmawy was initially sentenced to death in absentia in 2017 over an ambush in which gunmen killed 22 soldiers at a checkpoint near the porous border

with Libya in 2014.

The court ruled on Wednesday that Ashmawy was also “involved in the tracking, planning and filming of the security detail for then-Interior Minister Mohamed Ibrahim on Sept. 5, 2013,” the spokesman said in a statement.

Ibrahim survived a suicide car bombing near his Cairo home but some 20 policemen and civilians were wounded.

Dubbed Egypt’s “most wanted man” by local media, Ashmawy was returned to Cairo in May after his capture last year by forces of Libyan military strongman Khalifa Haftar in the city of Derna, eastern Libya.

Egypt’s President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi had asked for the militant to be handed over. “We want him to serve time in prison,” he said.

A former special forces officer, Ashmawy was dismissed in 2012 over his religious views. He joined Ansar Beit Al-Maqdis based in the restive Sinai of eastern Egypt but broke off after the group pledged allegiance to Daesh in November 2014.

Known by his nom de guerre “Abu Omar Al-MuHajjir,” Ashmawy announced the formation of Al-Mourabitoun in Libya, in July 2015.

Egypt has for years been fighting an insurgency in North Sinai that escalated after the military’s 2013 ouster of President Muhammed Mursi following mass protests.

In February 2018, the army and police launched a nationwide operation against militants focused on North Sinai.



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