

# Iraqi PM Abdul-Mahdi refuses to resign over deadly protests

Mon, 2019-10-28 00:38

BAGHDAD: Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi will not resign in response to the demands of demonstrators and refuses to allow his country to slide into civil war, his spokesman said Sunday.

Baghdad and seven other Shiite-dominated southern provinces have witnessed mass demonstrations since the beginning of the month. The protests have been against corruption, unemployment and a lack of basic services.

Demonstrations stalled after the first week when at least 147 people, including security personnel, were killed and more than 7,000 injured in a bloody crackdown by the Iraqi government and its allies.

But the protests resumed on Friday after Iraqi forces vowed not to use live ammunition against demonstrators.

Despite the pledge, at least 74 people have been killed and more than 3,600 wounded in the past three days, according to the Independent High Commission for Human Rights in Iraq.

Protesters have responded to the violence by increasing their demands, which now include the resignation of Abdul-Mahdi and his government, changing the election law, and holding fresh elections.

The prime minister's insistence on not resigning, means the cycle of violence is expected to continue and increases the possibility of clashes erupting between the different Shiite factions.

"Abdel-Mahdi will not resign in this critical and difficult circumstance," Sa'ad Al-Hadaithi, the prime minister's spokesman, told a local Iraqi TV station on Sunday evening. "The resignation of the government could lead the country into a dangerous situation. We warn of the loss of civil peace and the collapse of the country into chaos.

"The prime minister continues to respond to the legitimate demands of the demonstrators and will not allow the loss of control of the situation."

Most of the casualties in Baghdad have been from tear gas, while in the provinces they have mainly been caused by clashes when demonstrators attempted to attack the headquarters of Iranian-backed political parties, security officials and witnesses told Arab News.

Abdul-Mahdi attempted to quell the protests with a promise to secure hundreds of thousands of jobs, speeding up corruption trials, and increased welfare for poor families.

But after a two week pause, the incentives appear to have failed with large

numbers of demonstrators, returning to the streets with increased popular support, especially in the Shiite communities.

His refusal to resign is linked to the positions of his local and regional allies. Several Iraqi political leaders allied with Abdul-Mahdi told Arab News that an agreement overseen by Gen, Qassem Soleimani, the powerful Iranian military commander, was made to keep Abdul-Mahdi in his post until the end of the crisis.

Soleimani, who commands the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, is accused of leading the crackdown on demonstrators in Baghdad when they first erupted.

"All the Iraqi political parties involved in the government were clearly informed that they are not allowed to take any step to resign Abdul-Mahdi now," a prominent Shiite governmental advisor close to Abdul-Mahdi told Arab News.

"At the first days of the crisis (demonstrations), we suggested to ask the prime minister to resign to calm the demonstrators and gain some time, but Haj (Soleimani) rejected this.

"He (Soleimani) said in front of most of the prominent political leaders that he is committed to protecting Abdel-Mahdi to the end and would not allow him to fall because of the protests.

"He said he would agree on the resignation of Abdul-Mahdi just after the end of the crisis. Maybe after two months and Abdul-Mahdi knew and agreed on this."



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Iraqi security forces used 'excessive force' during protests that killed 157 -government inquiry

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## [Daesh spokesman killed in fresh north Syria raid: SDF official](#)

Author:

AFP

ID:

1572208607785536000

Sun, 2019-10-27 20:25

AIN AL BAYDAH, Syria: The Daesh group's spokesman was killed Sunday in northern Syria, a top Kurdish official said, hours after the extremists'

leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi was announced dead.

The official with the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces said Daesh spokesman Abu Hassan Al-Muhajir had been killed, after SDF chief Mazloum Abdi said he had been "targeted" in a fresh raid.

"Al-MuHajir, the right-hand of Baghdadi and the spokesman for IS, was targeted in the village of Ain Al-Baydah near Jarablus, in a coordinated operation between SDF intelligence and the US army," Abdi said on Twitter.

An AFP correspondent in Ain Al-Baydah, which is controlled by Turkey-backed Syrian rebels, said two vehicles were hit by airstrikes: a small pick-up truck and a larger truck carrying a small metal container.

He saw two corpses lying outside the first vehicle while a third charred body was in the metal container.

He could not identify who was behind the strikes or if they were carried out by warplanes or a drone.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights confirmed the death of Al-Muhajir, saying he was among five IS members who were killed in a US-led operation backed by the SDF.

In a later post on Twitter, SDF spokesman Mustefa Bali said: "We believe Daesh spox. Al-Muhajir was in Jarablus to facilitate Baghdadi's entry to Euphrates Shield area," referring to a zone in northern Syria controlled by Turkey's Syria proxies.

"The two US-led operations have effectively disabled top Daesh leadership who were hiding" in northwest Syria.

"More still remain hiding in the same area," Bali said.

Earlier on Sunday, Trump said Al-Baghdadi was killed, dying "like a dog," in a daring, nighttime raid by US special forces deep in northwest Syria.

Trump said that US forces killed a "large number" of Daesh militants during the raid, which culminated in Al-Baghdadi cornered in a tunnel, where he detonated a suicide vest.

The operation to kill Al-Baghdadi took place near a small village in northwestern Syria called Barisha, more than a 100 kilometers west of Ain Al-Baydah.

The Daesh "caliphate" was eradicated in March, nearly five years after it was proclaimed by Al-Baghdadi, largely reducing the militants to scattered sleeper cells.

At the time, the Daesh spokesman came out of months of silence to spur on his troops.

He had not delivered a speech since March.



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[Abu Hassan al-Muhajir](#)

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World reacts to Daesh leader Al-Baghdadi's death  
Trump: Daesh leader Al-Baghdadi 'died a coward' in US raid in north-west Syria

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## [Lebanese student protesters say it is their duty to carry on](#)

Author:

Zaynab Khojji

ID:

1572203889585171900

Sun, 2019-10-27 22:14

BEIRUT: Lebanese students Lail Al-Durzi, 29, Firas Harb, 23, and Ghiwa Nasr,

22, insist they will not quit the protests that have paralyzed Beirut despite spending more than 11 days on the streets of the capital.

Al-Durzi, from Beirut, graduated from the Lebanese University and worked in media before leaving his job because he had not been paid for three months. "I joined the revolution because the government was unable to extinguish a fire. How can we entrust it with our lives and future?" he told Arab News. Al-Durzi said that he is still unable to pay rent for the house he shares with his mother.

"My father died and my brothers work for the Internal Security Forces and have been serving for 10 days. They do not know I am protesting and my mother opposed my participation at first, but then she changed her mind and supported me because politicians were noticing us," he said.

He is active on social media along with his unemployed friends. "We shed light on unenforced rights in Lebanon, theft cases, taxes, social cases, and violence against women."

Al-Durzi fears the revolution will fail. "The activists who spend the night in tents are being assaulted by people who insult us and steal from us without the intervention of the security forces," he said.

"People we do not even know come to us with simple sandwiches to eat. But we have not given our full trust to anyone. We need time to establish a reference to the revolution."

Harb, who has a master's degree in architecture from the Lebanese University, has been jobless for a year. "It hurts to see the youth's culture expand while we cannot invest our knowledge anywhere, not even in our homes," he said.

His father owns a shop that sells vegetables, while his mother is unemployed, and his brother and sister are still in school.

"My mother opposed my participation in the protest, but last night she texted in support," he said. "Many reasons forced us to take to the streets. We might not be a generation of war, but we are fighting an emotional war.

"The 10 days I have spent so far in Martyrs Square brought waves of optimism and others of pessimism that made us think of leaving. Nonetheless, we meet people that encouraged us to stay through their belief in righteousness of their cause.

"We are being hurt by people who do not like our protests. People here have different backgrounds and we do not know the objectives of everyone in the square," Harb told Arab News.

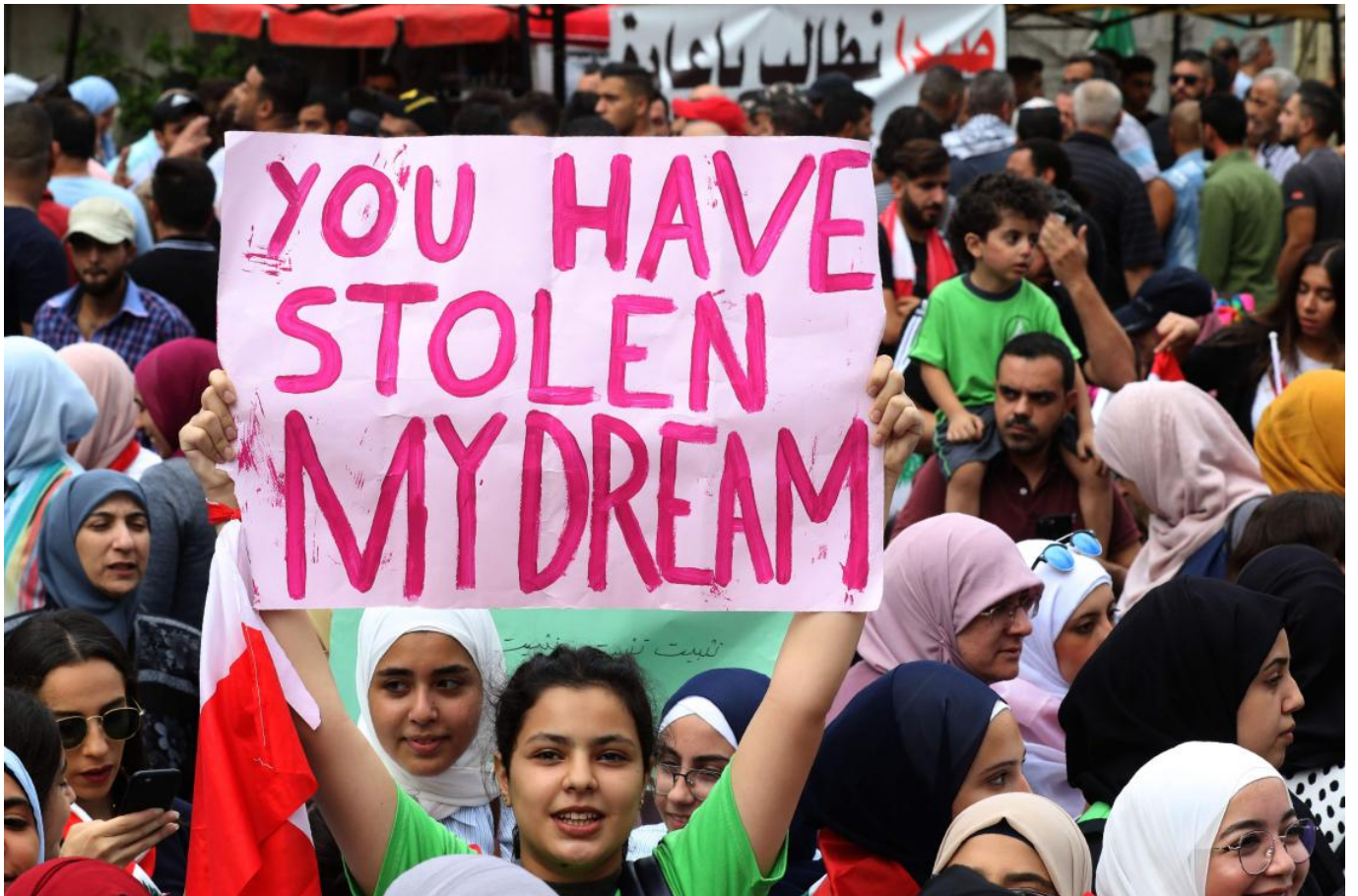
Nasr, who specialized in biology and English literature at the Lebanese University, is staying in a bigger tent for protection.

"Our parents are children of war and were affected by it. I took to the street because we had a gasoline and bread shortage, which forced my elderly grandmother to bake for us. The Whatsapp tax came after and sparked the revolution," she said.

"Politicians do not understand that we want to sack the entire political class. We do not prefer one leader over another.

"This revolution is not organized like the others. People are different and we have to accept that for it to succeed.

"The youth will not give up. It is our duty to carry on. If this revolution fails, politicians need to know that the people will never remain silent anymore and they will be watching them," she added.



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Crowds swell as Lebanese protest leadership concerns grow  
Lebanese president fails to calm protesters

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## [Arab News-YouGov study reveals new Arab perceptions of Japan](#)

Sun, 2019-10-27 02:26

RIYADH: Arabs rank Japan higher than any member of the Middle East Quartet (the US, UN, EU and Russia) as a neutral mediator between Palestinians and Israelis, a new survey suggests.

The Arab News-YouGov poll of Arabic speakers in 18 countries indicates that Japan, a non-military nation that applies the principles of peace and stability, commands enormous soft power in the region.

A large majority of those surveyed, 56 percent, considered Japan the most neutral mediator of any Israel-Palestine peace deal. Japan was also chosen by 87 percent as a country they would like to visit.

Arabs associate Japanese people with positive attributes such as being hardworking (61 percent), organized (54 percent) and punctual (42 percent).

The overall impression of Japan is positive, and becomes more so with age.

## **Opinion**

This section contains relevant reference points, placed in (Opinion field)

Younger generations have a more dynamic understanding based on cars, technology and anime. Saudis and Emiratis in particular consider the relationship between Japan and the Arab world to be a positive one.

Overall, Japan was ranked number one for the quality of its products. Sony was the most recognizable Japanese brand (60 percent), followed by Muji (32 percent). Toyota was the favorite Japanese car brand among Arabs, chosen by 35 percent.

In general, Japan is perceived in a positive light and regarded as a trusted partner in the Arab world.



Coverage of the Arab News-YouGov survey continues today and tomorrow, in print and online.



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Japan is Arabs' favored Middle East peace mediator, poll finds  
Poll reveals Japan as the land of rising soft power  
Arabs' interest in Japan is an untapped economic potential  
Arab consumers associate Japan with high quality

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## [Most Arabs familiar with UAE's space partnership with Japan](#)

Sun, 2019-10-27 02:05

DUBAI: The Arab world has a high level of awareness about the UAE's space partnership with Japan, according to a YouGov online poll of 18 countries designed to gauge Arabs' perception of Japan on various topics.

In the survey, which asked 3,033 Arabic speakers from the GCC, North Africa

and the Levant, aged 16 or above, two-thirds correctly identified the UAE as the Arab country “currently working with Japan’s space program.”

Unsurprisingly, most Emirati respondents (81 percent) gave the correct answer.

“Space has become a huge field in the UAE,” said Mariam Alshehhi, an Emirati who is studying space in the UAE. “It will play a large part in the future of our country, so it is only right that we, as the youth, get acquainted with the topic in detail and are aware of what we are doing in this field.”

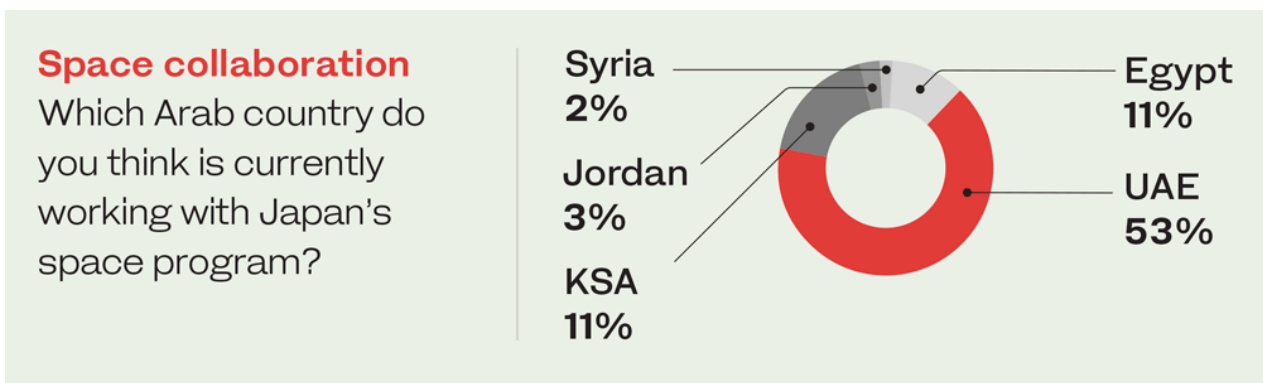
The UAE is leading the region in the field, having just sent its first astronaut, Hazza Al-Mansoori, to space, where he conducted 16 scientific experiments in cooperation with international space agencies, including the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA).

Some of the experiments he conducted on board the International Space Station (ISS) concerned the effects of microgravity. The results of two phases of experiments will be compared to contribute to supporting the UAE curriculum with new scientific materials.

In 2016, JAXA and the United Arab Emirates Space Agency signed an agreement to strengthen cooperation in exploration for peaceful purposes.

In October 2018, KhalifaSat, the first UAE-made high-quality, remote-sensing Earth observation satellite, was successfully launched from the Tanegashima Space Centre in Japan.

The satellite’s role is to beam images to a ground station in Abu Dhabi. The pictures are said to help governments and private companies across the globe in climate change, disaster relief and urban planning.



“It is widely known that both the UAE and Japan have a vision to become innovative countries. Space development is one of the areas where we have invested heavily in recent years,” a senior Japanese diplomat based in the Gulf region told Arab News.

Amer Al-Sayegh, the KhalifaSat project manager, says the mission has helped the UAE form partnerships with Japanese colleagues, not only in technical work but as two teams and cultures working together for the same vision.

In addition, the Arab world’s first mission to Mars, an unmanned exploring

probe named Hope, is due to be launched from the Tanegashima Space Centre in 2020.

“These are only a few examples of our collaborative work between the two countries,” the Japanese told Arab News, referring to the Emirates Mars Mission. “We hope our cooperation will be developed even further in the future.”

In 2003, Japan’s government created JAXA as an independent administration agency through the merger of three organizations.

JAXA focuses on asteroid sampling, as demonstrated by two major programs.

First, in 2009, the unmanned cargo transporter Konotori resupplied the ISS. In 2010, the Hayabusa probe returned to Earth after collecting samples from the asteroid Itokawa. This year, there have been two landings of Hayabusa2 on the asteroid Ryugu to gather samples.

“JAXA’s program is quite specialized and reflective of the Japanese approach to space and the future of space mining,” said Theodore Karasik, senior advisor at Gulf State Analytics in Washington DC.

“The symbolism of the UAE’s effort is meant to inspire innovation and capture the imagination. Moreover, the UAE plans to put a colony on Mars in 2117 for new generations. The idea is to have a shift in mindset towards education and innovation, whereby other Middle Eastern countries can participate in scientific projects that help propel more innovation and space travel.”

For Hamdan Alrashidi, an Emirati who is interested in studying space, the opportunities in the field are endless. “We want to be able to support our country however we can, and space has always been a fascinating topic for me,” said the 21-year-old.

“There is so much for us, as Emiratis, to learn from countries who have experience in the field, and Japan is definitely one of them.”





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[Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency](#)  
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Arab consumers associate Japan with high quality  
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Poll reveals Japan as the land of rising soft power  
Poll reveals a crowded list of Arabs' favorite Japanese car brands