

# [At least five dead in blasts in Iraq's Kirkuk](#)

Thu, 2019-05-30 22:41

KIRKUK: At least five people were killed and 18 injured in a series of explosions in the Iraqi oil city of Kirkuk, medical sources in the city's general hospital told Reuters on Thursday.

At least six improvised explosive devices went off in the northern city and two more were defused by security forces, the Iraqi military said in a statement. It gave a lower death toll of three and said 16 were injured. The explosion sites included two malls, an ice cream shop and a butcher's shop, local media reported.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility but Daesh militants are active in the area. Iraq declared victory over the group, which once held large swathes of the country, in December 2017.

But Daesh has switched to hit-and-run attacks aimed at undermining the Baghdad government.

Its fighters have regrouped in the Hamrin mountain range in the northeast, which extends from Diyala province, on the border with Iran, crossing northern Salahuddin province and southern Kirkuk.



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PUK begins demilitarization of headquarters in Kirkuk  
Iraq deploys special forces in Kirkuk amid Kurdish flag dispute

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# [US stands firm against Iran, it will strike if attacked: Brian Hook](#)

Thu, 2019-05-30 20:37

DUBAI: Iran needs to show more interest in talks than threats, a senior advisor to the US Secretary of State has said, adding that the US will respond with “military might” if its interests were attacked.

Brian Hook, the US Special Representative for Iran and Senior Policy Advisor to the Secretary of State, said a number of “military assets” had already been repositioned in response to intelligence that Iran was planning imminent attacks against American interests.

“We have made it clear that we will respond with military force if American interests are attacked by Iran,” Hook said at a press briefing on Thursday.

He said the US was awaiting the results of the investigations into the recent attacks on UAE, Saudi and Norwegian tankers in the region and said a “proper response” would then be discussed.

“We have been consistent in our messaging – Iran should show more of an interest in talks than threats and we have seen on an almost daily basis from the Iranian regime that they will not talk with the United States.”

“Iran faces a choice – they have to decide whether they want to be a normal country or a revolutionary cause,” he warned.

Hook said President Trump was open to negotiations, but he added that the US “maximum pressure campaign” was working “by nearly every measure.”

“The Iranian regime and its proxies are weaker today than when the (US) president took office over two years ago,” he explained.

Already, he said, Hezbollah’s leader Hassan Nasrallah had made a public call for support – “piggy banks have been placed in grocery stores in Lebanon to help raise funds,” while Hamas has enacted austerity plans to deal with a lack of funds from Iran.

He said Iran’s Shiite militia groups would have to “find new sources of revenue.”

And he said that the Assad regime today faced a fuel shortage crisis because

the US had cut off the 1–3 million barrels per month that Iran had previously supplied.

Even Iran’s military spending has been cut, he said, adding that it peaked during the nuclear deal.

“Since we exited the deal, Iran’s military spending for the budget that they released in March was cut by 28 percent.”

He said Iran was in recession and once the US oil sanctions take full effect, with a policy of zero imports for Iranian crude oil – the sanctions will deny the Iranian regime \$50 billion in revenue – that’s 40 percent of Iran’s annual budget.

Trump also said on Thursday that Iran’s economy is suffering from US sanctions and that the country is becoming a “weakened nation.”



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Saudi Arabia calls on Islamic nations to reject Iran’s ‘interference’ Iranian naval mines likely used in UAE tanker attacks: Bolton

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## [Morocco says it nabbed fugitive Italian mobster](#)

Author:

Thu, 2019-05-30 18:50

RABAT: An Italian mafia fugitive wanted for drug trafficking, murder, extortion and other alleged crimes has been arrested in Morocco, authorities in the North African country said Thursday.

Raffaele Vallefucio, 55, is accused of heading a cell within the Polverino clan of the ruthless Naples-based Camorra organized crime group, the General Directorate of National Security said in a statement.

He was detained in Tangiers on Wednesday under an Italian arrest warrant, with help from Interpol, it said.

Another Italian accused of links to the Camorra, 44-year-old Antonio Prinno, was arrested in late March in Marrakesh and is being detained pending extradition, a police source said.

The Camorra is one of Italy's three main mafia groups, along with Sicily's Cosa Nostra and the 'Ndrangheta, based mainly in the Calabria region. Morocco is one of the world's top producers and exporters of hashish, according to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime.



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Alleged ringleader admits Scandinavian hiker killings at Morocco trial  
Trial for murder of Scandinavian hikers to open in Morocco

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# [A look back at 50 years of OIC as it meets in Makkah for Islamic Summit](#)

Author:

Thu, 2019-05-30 00:03

JEDDAH: From defending Palestinian rights to taking a unified stand on threats against member states, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) – the world's second-largest inter-governmental body after the UN – has been making a difference in the Muslim world for the last 50 years.

The Islamic Summit in Makkah on Friday will be the organization's 14th ordinary summit, and will be attended by kings and heads of state and government of the OIC's 57 member countries.

The OIC first met a month after an arson attack inside Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem on Aug. 21, 1969.

An Australian tourist had set fire to a structure in the main Al-Qibly Mosque, destroying the 800-year-old pulpit of Saladin.

Reacting to the incident, representatives from 24 Islamic states gathered in Rabat, Morocco, from Sept. 22 to 25 for the first Islamic Summit, marking the birth of the OIC.



Saudi Arabia's late King Faisal arriving in September 1969 at the Islamic Summit in Rabat, where the OIC was established. (Getty Images)

The next year, the first ever meeting of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM) was convened in Jeddah, and a decision was taken to establish a permanent secretariat in the Saudi city, headed by the OIC's secretary-general.

The summit in Rabat was attended by representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) with observer status.

The attendees pledged their adherence to the UN Charter and condemned Israel for the Al-Aqsa arson attack.

The second Islamic Summit was convened in February 1974 in Lahore, Pakistan, after a gap of five years.

Representatives from nearly 35 countries attended, proclaiming that "the solidarity of the Islamic peoples is based not on hostility towards any other human communities nor on distinctions of race and culture."

The Lahore gathering called on OIC member states to sever all relations with Israel in favor of Islamic solidarity.

Seven years later, in January 1981, Saudi Arabia hosted the third Islamic Summit, known as the "Palestine and Al-Quds Al-Sharif Session," from which Iran and Libya stayed away.

The final declaration read: "All Muslims form one nation of moderation, rejecting alignment to any and all blocs and ideologies, steadfastly refusing to surrender to divisive influences or to conflicts of interests."

Convened against the backdrop of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the summit in Jeddah expressed its deep concern over Cold War developments, and renewed its call for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from the country.



A crowd watches as firefighters put out a fire in Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque in August 1969. (Getty Images)

The delegates decided that OIC member states would contribute at least \$3 billion for the creation of an Islamic World Development Program.

The Saudi crown prince at the time, Prince Fahd bin Abdul Aziz, declared a grant of \$1 billion by the Kingdom for its implementation.

In January 1984, Morocco hosted the fourth Islamic Summit in Casablanca at the invitation of King Hassan II, with representatives from 42 member states and international organizations, notably the UN and Arab League, in attendance.

The summit reaffirmed its commitment to the principles on which a solution to the Israeli-Arab conflict was to be based: Israel's withdrawal from all Arab territories occupied in 1967, and the restoration of the Palestinians' national rights, including their right of return and right to self-determination.

Three years later, in January 1987, Kuwait hosted the fifth Islamic Summit. The four-day meeting, attended by 44 member states, condemned the US for its support for Israel. With "Al-Quds Al-Sharif, Concord and Unity" as the theme, Senegal hosted the sixth Islamic Summit in Dakar in December 1991.



In the Dakar declaration, participants reaffirmed their “resolve to face the Israeli occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967; as well their determination to continue to reject and oppose the pursuit of Israeli plans and practices.”

The Islamic Summit returned to Casablanca for its seventh session in December 1994. The session, which coincided with the OIC’s 25th anniversary, was attended by 49 member states and international organizations.

At this gathering, delegates pledged to correct the image of Islam, referring to the spirit of “jihad” based on general principles of Shariah law.

The Palestinian issue also featured prominently at the summit, with participants voicing their support for the PLO in its struggle for Palestinian rights.

The delegates condemned Serbia’s aggression against Bosnia-Herzegovina, its non-compliance with UN Security Council resolutions, and its rejection of the Five-Nation Peace Plan.

The eighth session was convened under the patronage of Mohammad Khatami, Iran’s then-president, in December 1997, with “Dignity, Dialogue, Participation” as the theme.

The summit in Tehran was attended by 53 member states and inaugurated by Iran’s Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.

Large contributions were made by several Gulf countries, with Saudi Arabia alone giving \$10 million for OIC activities and institutions.

The ninth Islamic Summit was convened in Doha, Qatar, in November 2000, with the theme “Peace and Development: Al-Aqsa Intifada.”

It was attended by 52 member states, with Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Central African Republic, Ivory Coast and Thailand participating as observers, and Russian President Vladimir Putin taking part in the opening session.

Against the backdrop of the US invasion of Iraq, the 10th Islamic Summit was convened in Putrajaya, Malaysia, in October 2003.



A Palestinian helped by a paramedic out of her building damaged by an Israeli air raid on Gaza City on Nov. 19, 2012. (AFP)

Delegates strongly condemned threats by the Israeli government against then-Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, and appealed to the international community to force Israel to respect UN resolutions.

The summit strongly condemned the terrorist bombing of the Jordanian and Turkish embassies and the UN headquarters in Baghdad, and of holy sites in the Iraqi city of Najaf.

It also rejected “unfounded campaigns and allegations against Saudi Arabia,” and called for their end.

The summit expressed solidarity with, and support for, the Kingdom, and its backing of all Saudi efforts to fight terrorism.

The Islamic Summit returned to Dakar in December 2005 for its 11th session, where leaders pledged that their governments would do whatever it would take to make contributions amounting to \$10 billion to the Islamic Solidarity Fund for Development, which was established under the aegis of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB).

In 2013, the 12th Islamic Summit was convened in Cairo, Egypt, with the participation of 56 member states along with a number of international and regional organizations.

Participants condemned the Israeli assault of November 2012 on the Gaza Strip, and the policy of collectively punishing the Palestinian people,

particularly Israel's blockade of the enclave.

The last Islamic Summit before the upcoming one in Makkah was held in April 2016 in Istanbul, Turkey.

There, delegates reaffirmed their commitment to the OIC's central purpose: The Palestinian cause and the preservation of Haram Al-Sharif as an Islamic site.

They expressed concern for Muslim refugees who had to leave their home countries, notably Syria, due to armed conflicts and oppression. They also decried the rise of xenophobia and Islamophobia in Western countries.



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Pakistan pins high hopes on OIC summit  
OIC Islamic summit in Saudi Arabia to be held during last 10 days of Ramadan

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## [UAE and US launch joint defence cooperation agreement](#)

Wed, 2019-05-29 23:05

The United Arab Emirates and the United States announced on Wednesday the start of a joint Defense Cooperation Agreement, a statement issued by the

state-run news agency WAM said.

“The implementation of the Defense Cooperation Agreement between the UAE and the US will enhance military coordination between the two countries and at this critical time will give further progress to the strong military, political and economic partnership that exists between them,” the statement added.

The UAE and the US signed the agreement earlier this year.



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