

# Syria's return to Arab League not on summit agenda: spokesman

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Sun, 2019-03-24 13:12

CAIRO: The Arab League said Sunday it was not planning to discuss reinstating Syria's membership at a summit later this month, more than eight years after suspending it as the country descended into war.

The pan-Arab bloc, which is set to hold its annual summit in Tunisia on March 31, froze Syria's membership in November 2011 over a bloody government crackdown on protestors.

But several of the bloc's other 21 members have recently renewed ties with the regime of President Bashar al-Assad, and some have called for Syria to be re-admitted to the league.

"The issue of Syria's return to the Arab League has yet to be listed on the agenda and has not been formally proposed," said the League's spokesman Mahmoud Afifi.

He noted that the "Syrian crisis" however still tops the agenda, along with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the situation in Yemen and Libya.

Syria's conflict flared in 2011 with anti-government demonstrations that sparked a brutal regime crackdown.

It has since drawn in regional powers, killing 370,000 people and displacing millions.

But the regime, backed by allies Russia and Iran, has since re-conquered much of the territory it had lost to rebels and terrorists, and now controls some two-thirds of the country.

Syria's Kurds, which declared victory over Daesh on Saturday, control much of the oil-rich northeast, which the regime has hinted it may seize back in a military operation.

Earlier this month, Syrian officials attended a meeting of Arab states in neighbouring Jordan for the first time since the country's Arab League membership was suspended.

Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir in December made the first visit of any Arab leader to the Syrian capital since 2011.

The same month, Egypt hosted Syria's national security chief and top Assad aide Ali Mamluk.

The UAE also reopened its Damascus embassy in a major sign of a diplomatic thaw.

Arab states have also slammed US President Donald Trump's call for recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, a strategic territory the Jewish state seized from Syria in 1967.



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Syria Kurds urge world to take back foreign militants Trump declares all Daesh-held territory eliminated in Syria but SDF continue fighting

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## [Stopping Israeli violence, promoting regional security vital: Egypt, Jordan, Iraq](#)

Sun, 2019-03-24 15:59

LONDON: Stopping escalation of Israeli violence in Jerusalem and violations against the Al-Aqsa mosque is necessary, Egypt and Jordan said in a joint statement Sunday.

A further statement issued by Egypt, Jordan, and Iraq said that the countries support Palestine and its claim to East Jerusalem as its capital.

The three countries held an economic cooperation summit in Cairo on Sunday.

President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi hosted the summit that was attended by Jordan's King Abdullah II and Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi. The statement issued by the trio also emphasized the need to fight against terrorism in all its forms and confronting all those who provide terrorism with funds, arms, and media platforms. Egypt, Jordan and Iraq called for coordination with other Arab countries to restore stability in the region. They also emphasized the independence of Arab countries and the importance of preventing external intervention in their internal affairs. The statement stated the concept of the nation state must be strengthened in order to confront terrorism and sectarian strife. Support for Iraq's efforts to complete reconstruction and help displaced people return to their homes after the defeat of Daesh was also expressed by the three countries. On Saturday, Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi met with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi during his first trip abroad since taking office in October. During the meeting, Abdul Mahdi sought Egypt's support for efforts to tackle extremist militants in the region, and highlighted "the importance of drying up the sources of terrorism." He said "cooperation between Egypt and Iraq will be essential for this matter," according to an official statement.



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## Daesh extremists blow themselves up in north Iraq: army

Author:

AFP

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1553431396518426200

Sun, 2019-03-24 12:41

BAGHDAD: Three suspected Daesh group suicide bombers blew themselves up Sunday in northern Iraq, the army said, a day after the extremists' "caliphate" was wiped out in neighbouring Syria.

Army spokesman Yahya Rassoul said the incident took place in a region near the Syrian border, where extremists sleeper cells are believed to be present. He said the suspects died as troops surrounded them but there were no casualties among government forces.

Local officials said the suspects were killed as they were trying to attack troops in the village of Qayrawan, south of the mountainous region of Sinjar which borders Syria.

Fighters of the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces on Saturday pronounced the death of the nearly five-year-old Daesh "caliphate" which once stretched across a vast swathe of Syria and Iraq.

Their victory was hailed as a major landmark in the battle against the extremists but there have also been numerous calls for "vigilance" with many saying the fight is far from over.

Top SDF commander Mazloum Kobani on Saturday warned that a new phase had begun in anti-Daesh operations and appealed for sustained assistance from the US-led coalition to help smash "sleeper cells."

Diehard extremists continue to have a presence in mountainous or desert regions between Syria and Iraq, which had declared victory over Daesh in December 2017.

In Iraq some of these regions remain inaccessible to security forces.



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## [Security tops agenda as Iraqi PM visits Egypt in first foreign trip](#)

Author:

Reuters

ID:

1553349659880712600

Sat, 2019-03-23 13:37

CAIRO: Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi sought Egypt's support for efforts to tackle extremist militants in the region during a visit to Cairo on Saturday, his first trip abroad since taking office in October. After meeting Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, Abdul Mahdi highlighted "the importance of drying up the sources of terrorism" and said

“cooperation between Egypt and Iraq will be essential for this matter,” according to an official statement.

His comments came as US-backed forces said they had captured Daesh’s last shred of territory in eastern Syria at Baghouz, ending its territorial rule over a self-proclaimed caliphate straddling Syria and Iraq after years of fighting.

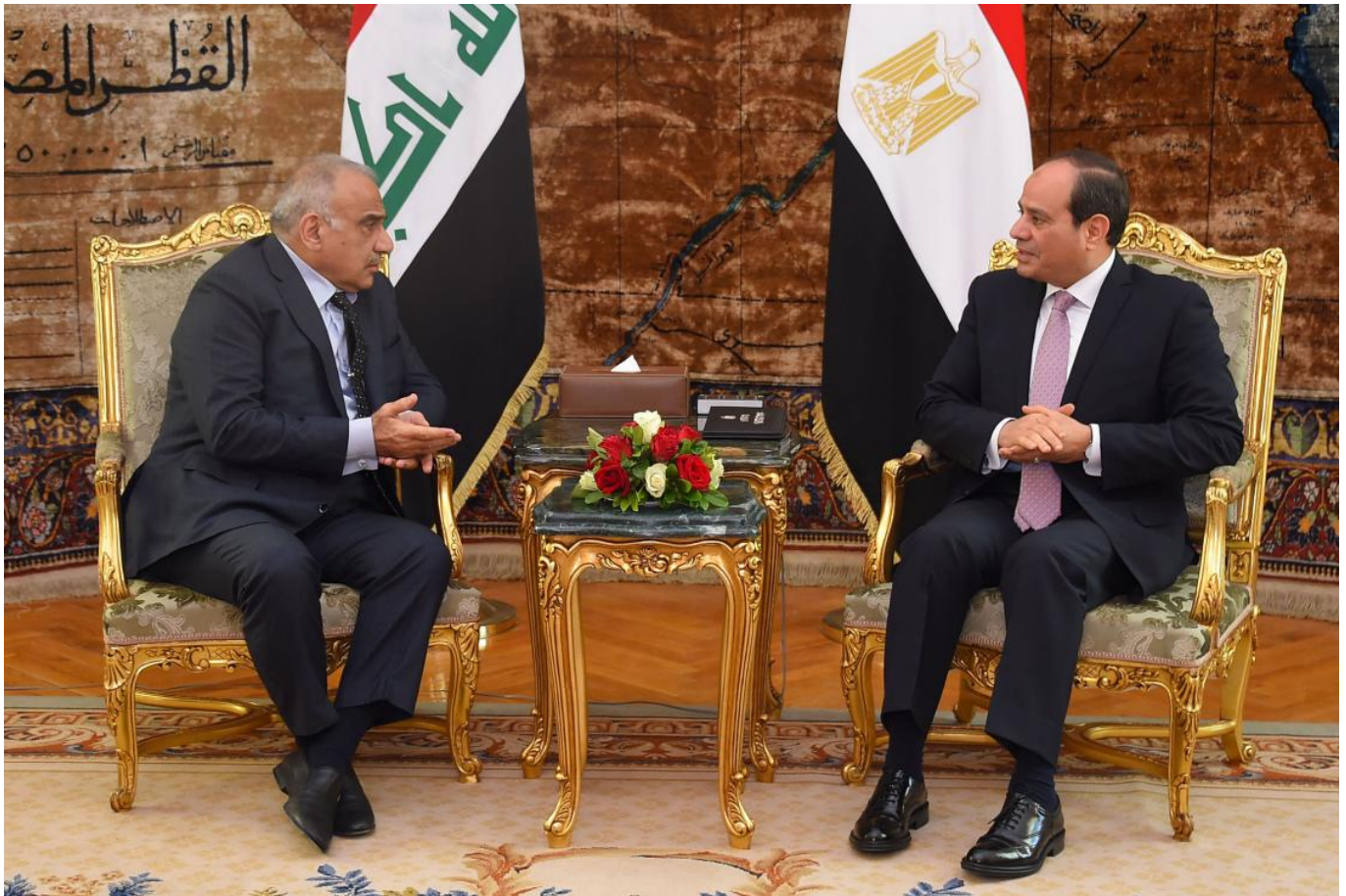
Though the defeat ends the group’s grip over the extremist quasi-state that it declared in 2014, it remains a threat.

Some Daesh fighters still hold out in Syria’s remote central desert and in Iraqi cities they have slipped into the shadows, staging sudden shootings or kidnappings and awaiting a chance to rise again.

The United States thinks the group’s leader, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, is in Iraq.

Defeating militants in Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula and restoring security after years of unrest has been a key promise of El-Sisi, the general-turned-president who came to power a year after the military overthrew Islamist President Mohammed Mursi in 2013.

Egypt has fought an insurgency waged by a Daesh affiliate in North Sinai since 2013. Hundreds of members of the security forces have been killed.





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## [Hundreds of Algerian lawyers protest against Bouteflika](#)

Author:

Reuters

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Sat, 2019-03-23 10:03

ALGIERS: Hundreds of Algerian lawyers protested again on Saturday in the capital to demand the immediate resignation of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika who has been for 20 years in power.

They gathered in Algiers' center, the scene of mass protests for one month, holding up slogans that read: "Respect the will of the people" and "Yes to a judiciary free from corrupt dignitaries."

Algerians first took to the streets a month ago to protest against Bouteflika's plan to seek a fifth mandate.

The 82-year old, who has rarely been seen in public since suffering a stroke in 2013, bowed to the protesters last week by reversing plans to seek re-election.

But he stopped short of quitting as head of state and said he would stay on until a new constitution is adopted. The move further enraged Algerians, and many of Bouteflika's allies have turned against him.

Some members of the ruling National Liberation Front party, known by its French acronym FLN, have also sided with the demonstrators.

The powerful military has been watching the protests unfold.

The generals have intervened in the past at momentous times, including canceling an election which Islamists were poised to win in 1992, triggering a civil war in which an estimated 200,000 people were killed.

On Friday, hundreds of thousands protested across the North African country.



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Thousands of Algerian protesters gather in central Algiers: witnesses