

Gulf states offer condolences over death of former US President George H.W. Bush

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LONDON: Gulf Arab states have offered their condolences over the death of former President George H.W. Bush.

Bush's death at the age of 94 takes on greater importance in the region over his actions in the 1991 Gulf War that saw Iraq expelled from Kuwait.

Leaders in the United Arab Emirates on Saturday offered condolences to both President Donald Trump and former President George W. Bush for the elder Bush's death.

Dubai's ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, who also is the UAE's prime minister and vice president, tweeted that Emiratis remember Bush as "a firm ally and friend."

Our condolences to the Bush family and to the American people on the passing of George H.W. Bush, who we remember as a firm ally and friend..

– HH Sheikh Mohammed (@HSHkMohd) [December 1, 2018](#)

Oman's Sultan Qaboos bin Said similarly offered condolences.

Kuwait's ruling Emir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah said that Bush tried to "create a new international order based on justice and equality among nations," and that his support "will remain in Kuwait's collective memory and will not be forgotten."

Memorable Quotes

George H. W. Bush



In a letter to US President Donald Trump, Al Sabah praised Bush's "historic and courageous stance... and his rejection of Iraq's occupation of Kuwait from the early hours".

"On behalf of the Kuwaiti government and people, I express my deepest condolences and utmost sympathy."

Former US president George H.W. Bush, who guided America through the end of the Cold War and launched the international campaign to drive Iraqi strongman Saddam Hussein's forces from Kuwait, died Friday at his home in Houston.

Tributes quickly poured in for the 41st US president – a decorated World War II pilot, skilled diplomat and onetime CIA chief who also saw his son George follow in his footsteps to the Oval Office.

Bush's passing comes just months after the death in April of his wife Barbara – his "most beloved woman in the world" – to whom he was married for 73 years.

"Jeb, Neil, Marvin, Doro and I are saddened to announce that after 94 remarkable years, our dear Dad has died," former president George W. Bush said in a statement.

Bush is survived by his five living children -a sixth child, daughter Robin, died of leukemia before her fourth birthday – and 17 grandchildren.

He died "at home in Houston surrounded by family and close friends," family spokesman Jim McGrath told AFP.

Bush suffered from Parkinson's disease and had used a wheelchair for several years. He had been in and out of hospital in recent months.

Funeral arrangements will be announced in due course, McGrath said.

The former president, a Republican, is expected to lie in state in the US Capitol and then be buried at his presidential library in Texas, where students held a candlelight vigil early Saturday, local media reported.



Memorable Quotes

George H. W. Bush



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Former US President George H. W. Bush dies at age 94 George W. Bush to receive award from Lincoln foundation

[Family says Egypt arrested Brit for military chopper video](#)

Author:

By MENNA ZAKI | AP

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Fri, 2018-11-30 (All day)

CAIRO: Egyptian authorities arrested a 19-year-old British tourist over a video he filmed on his cellphone that showed a military helicopter in the background, his family said on Friday.

Libyan-British Muhammed Fathi Abulkasem's arrest took place shortly after he arrived in Egypt's coastal city of Alexandria on Nov. 21 from neighboring Libya, his cousin Shareen Nawaz said. Egypt's Foreign Ministry couldn't immediately be reached for comment. The UK's Foreign Office confirmed the arrest of a Briton in Alexandria, but didn't elaborate.

"We didn't hear from him until 12 hours later," Nawaz said. "He basically told us he is held on suspicion of collecting information against the military." He filmed the video while his flight was landing, capturing a military helicopter flying by, she added.

Speaking from Manchester in the UK, Nawaz told The Associated Press that authorities checked her cousin's phone at the airport after being cautioned by his hotel's staff that his booking appeared "suspicious," without elaborating.

According to Nawaz, Abulkasem faced a court three times over the past week and that a lawyer was assigned to his case but later quit. His mother, Amaal Rafiq, confirmed his arrest in a Facebook post.

Taking unauthorized photographs or footage of or near military facilities, equipment or personnel is strictly prohibited in Egypt.

"We all have one of those landing videos on our phones," Nawaz said. "They shouldn't have military helicopters in public spaces if this is what will happen."



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Egypt arrests Briton on suspicion of spying: familyItaly summons Egypt ambassador over Regeni killing

[US-backed forces: Daesh security leader seized in Syria](#)

Author:

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Fri, 2018-11-30 20:31

BEIRUT: US-backed forces said Friday they had captured a leader of Daesh in eastern Syria where the Kurdish-led fighters have been battling the extremists.

A statement by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) identified the suspect as Osama Oweid Saleh and described him as "one of the most dangerous terrorists

of the Daesh group.”

But Rami Abdel Rahman, head of the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor, disputed the claim.

Abdel Rahman said Saleh was merely “a former local security official” in the eastern Deir Ezzor province.

In its statement the SDF said that Saleh “was a security official for the terrorists in Deir Ezzor and took an active part in planning and implementing more than 40 terrorist operations” for the extremist group.

It also said that he was “a security official” in other parts of Syria for Daesh, including in the former extremist bastion of Raqqa.

Saleh, it said, was ambushed by SDF fighters and captured on November 22 in the Deir Ezzor countryside.

Abdel Rahman told AFP that Saleh “could be a member of an Daesh sleeper cell.”

The SDF, an alliance of Kurdish and Arab fighters, is seeking to expel Daesh from a pocket of land in the Deir Ezzor province near the Iraq border.

The Kurdish-led forces have spearheaded the US-backed fight against Daesh in Syria.

On Monday the Observatory reported that the SDF suffered record fatalities in an assault by Daesh as holdout extremists kept up a fierce defense of their last Syrian redoubt.

It said a total of more than 200 people have been killed since around 500 Daesh fighters burst out of the fog shrouding the area in eastern Syria near the border with Iraq to launch their deadly assault last Friday.

Ninety-two of the dead were SDF fighters while at least 61 extremists and 51 civilians, mostly their relatives, also died in the violence, it said.



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Tunisia arrests 12 suspected Daesh members, dismantles cells: ministry
Daesh attacks kills 47 US-backed fighters in east Syria: monitor

[Italy summons Egypt ambassador over Regeni killing](#)

Author:

AP

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Fri, 2018-11-30 (All day)

CAIRO: Italy's foreign ministry formally summoned on Friday the Egyptian

ambassador to Rome to prompt Egyptian authorities to “act rapidly” in investigating the torture and killing of an Italian researcher nearly three years ago.

The decision by Italian Foreign Minister Enzo Moavero Milanesi comes after a recent meeting between Egyptian and Italian prosecutors. His office said in a statement that that caused “worry” to ripple through Rome over the prolonged investigation.

Giulio Regeni, a 28-year-old Cambridge University graduate student who was researching trade unions in Egypt, disappeared in Cairo on January 25, 2016 – the fifth anniversary of Egypt’s popular uprising when thousands of police deployed across Cairo to pre-empt any attempt to mark the occasion.

His body was found several days later by the side of a highway near Cairo with torture marks that activists and rights groups say resembled the results of widespread torture practices in Egyptian detention facilities.

In the statement, Moavero relayed Italy’s concerns and the need to see “concrete” developments in the protracted investigation. Meanwhile, Egypt’s ambassador to Rome offered assurances of his country’s willingness to continue cooperation between Egyptian and Italian prosecutors, it also said. However, nobody has been arrested or charged over the killing.

Egyptian and Italian prosecutors met earlier this week to discuss the state of the investigation, but judicial sources in Rome said the Cairo team failed to deliver a promised breakthrough.

That statement said that the two sides had agreed that “investigations are going well” and that they would “do everything in their power to find the perpetrators.”

Later, Moavero was quoted by Italian news agency ANSA as saying that the government will be discussing whether it would bar Italian companies from attending next week’s arms expo in Cairo, upon the return of Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte from the G20 summit in Argentina.

Italy has been pressing Cairo for years to identify and prosecute those responsible for the torture and killing of Regeni. Its latest move comes a day after its Chamber of Deputies announced the suspension of relations with the Egyptian parliament.

Egypt’s parliament said it regrets the decision of Italy’s lower house to break parliamentary ties over the lack of progress in the investigations. In a Friday statement, Parliament said it was “surprised” by the Italian chamber’s “unilateral” decision and called for the non-politicization of legal issues.

Italy has been pressing Cairo for years to identify and prosecute those responsible for the 2016 killing of Giulio Regeni. Researching labor unions in Egypt at the time, Regeni’s body was found bearing marks of torture. Italian media says prosecutors in Rome are set to launch an investigation into seven Egyptian secret service members they suspect were involved in Regeni’s abduction and murder. Egypt has long denied its authorities were involved.

Egypt has recently acknowledged that Regeni was being watched by police while in Cairo because of the nature of his research.



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[Syria 'stalemate' due to Astana process, says Washington](#)

Fri, 2018-11-30 22:06

WASHINGTON: The Astana process by Russia, Iran and Turkey to end the Syrian conflict has only led to a "stalemate" in efforts to establish a constitutional committee crucial to a political settlement, the US said on Thursday.

Establishment and convening of the committee by year's end "is vital to a lasting de-escalation and a political solution to the conflict," State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said in a statement.

Her comments came after the outgoing UN envoy to Syria, Staffan de Mistura, regretted that there was "no tangible progress" on the composition of the constitutional committee at two days of talks, which ended Thursday in the Kazakh capital Astana.

Moscow and Tehran, allies of the Damascus regime, began the Astana process in January 2017 along with rebel-backer Turkey.

SPEEDREAD

The Astana process has gradually eclipsed the earlier UN-sponsored negotiations framework known as the Geneva process, which had put more emphasis on political transition.

The Astana process followed a Russian military intervention which tipped the military balance in favor of Bashar Assad's authoritarian regime. "Russia and Iran continue to use the process to mask the Assad regime's refusal to engage in the political process" under UN auspices, Nauert said.

She added that "success is not possible without the international community holding Damascus fully accountable for the lack of progress in resolving the conflict."

The Astana process has gradually eclipsed the earlier UN-sponsored negotiations framework known as the Geneva process, which had put more emphasis on political transition but failed to curb violence that has killed more than 360,000 people and displaced millions.

Syria's war began in March 2011 as an uprising against Assad but morphed into a complex conflict with myriad armed groups.



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Russia accuses West of undermining Astana peace talks, begins missile system delivery to Syria