

Abu Dhabi crown prince and US defense secretary discuss strategic bilateral relations

Sun, 2021-11-21 23:16

DUBAI: Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed held talks with US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin on Sunday, state news agency WAM reported. During the meeting, which took place at the Al-Shati Palace in Abu Dhabi, the two sides discussed the existing strategic relations between the UAE and the US at various levels, especially in defense and military affairs, in addition to international and regional issues of common concern.

"The leaders discussed a range of shared security threats, including working together to increase regional defense and continuing to combat terrorism," Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said in a statement.

"Secretary Austin thanked the UAE for its long-standing hospitality in hosting US forces and conveyed his appreciation for the UAE's instrumental role as a transit location as the US military conducted the evacuation and retrograde mission from Afghanistan," the statement added.

The meeting was attended by UAE Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed.



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UAE's ADNOC secures \$3bn loan from Japan's JBIC and four other banks

Intense battle as Lebanese lawyers choose new members of Bar Association

Sun, 2021-11-21 22:57

BEIRUT: Lawyers in Lebanon conducted an election on Sunday to choose nine members of the Bar Association, and its new head.

The winning members of the association were Imad Martinos, Nader Kaspar, Elias Bazrelli, Abdo Lahoud, Iskandar Najjar, Fadi Al-Masry, Marwan Gabr, Wajih Massad and Maya Al-Zaghrini.

Former President Amin Gemayel said on Sunday: "We hope that the elections will come out with results that embody Lebanon's ambition, and that this Bar Association will be an example for all syndicates."

Gemayel, a lawyer like dozens of politicians, made the remarks as he exercised his electoral right.

Last year's elections were canceled due to the coronavirus disease pandemic.

The 2019 contest led to the election of a head from insurgent groups and the removal of the heads of the ruling parties who had run the Bar Association for decades.

About 7,600 lawyers voted, and 36 candidates stood, including nine for the position of the head of the association.

The election process continued throughout the day and witnessed attempts by the ruling parties to hide under the mantle of independent candidates.

This led to confusion for many voters and an additional effort by the uprising candidates to obtain the majority of votes.

The votes of lawyers loyal to the opposition were distributed among the Lebanese Opposition Front and the Our Bar list. Between the two lists, there were three joint candidates, most notably Najjar.

The parties, meanwhile, supported independent candidates having not named any themselves.

Lawyers affiliated with revolutionary groups kicked the former MP, lawyer

Nicola Fattoush, out from the Our Bar tent in the courtyard of the Palace of Justice, after they criticized him in relation to a quarrying business owned by him and his brother in the Bekaa region.

The competition for the position of association chief centered between Najjar and Kaspar. Kaspar has been a member of the Beirut Bar Association for more than 3 sessions, and was considered the most likely candidate, after the difference in votes between him and Najjar in the results of the elections exceeded 300 votes in his favor.

Kaspar had competed against previous incumbent Melhem Khalaf in the elections in November 2019.

At that time, the parties of the system supported him to prevent Khalaf's election, but the latter, backed by the October 17 uprising, defeated those parties.

Election observers said "the veteran parties in the electoral process preferred not to announce their support for any candidate in the first round, and then to tell the winning head of the Bar Association that he won because of their votes and that they supported him."

Independents at several universities in Lebanon in 2019 contested student elections, breaking the grip of the traditional parties, which, observers added, might explain the hesitancy of traditional parties to back candidates overtly.

Observers said that the political parties "have become afraid of the younger generation and shied away from announcing the names of their candidates. This is what prompted them to resort to naming candidates under the name 'independent.'"



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Lebanon needs to show that Hezbollah can change behavior, Bahrain minister says
Lebanon stops 82 people attempting sea crossing to Europe

[Yemeni troops make more gains in Taiz, Hodeidah](#)

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Sun, 2021-11-21 22:41

AL-MUKALLAH: Yemeni troops on Sunday pushed deeper into Houthi-controlled territory in the provinces of Taiz and Hodeidah, seizing control of mountains, villages and roads, according to local officials and media.

The Joint Forces announced seizing control of Al-Maghareb and Mehwar Al-Abed mountains in the Jabal Ras district in Hodeidah, and the mountains of Al-Rouenah, Al-Souhrah, Tour and other mountainous terrains in the Maqbanah district in Taiz province.

They also took control of a number of valleys east of Hays district, a day after gaining control over the town of Hays and neighboring areas in Hodeidah province.

Troops were seen retrieving military equipment, vehicles and ammunition that had been abandoned by fleeing Houthi fighters.

Video footage broadcast by media showed the bodies of dead fighters on the battlefields, as engineers worked on defusing landmines planted by the militia.

Officials visited liberated locations in Hays, where they pledged support to the locals and vowed to press ahead until the Houthis were defeated.

Media reported that the Houthis had sent military reinforcements, including dozens of armed vehicles and hundreds of fighters, to push back the Joint Forces in Hodeidah and Taiz.

"We are ready for the Houthi counterattacks," a military official from the Joint Forces' Giants Brigades told Arab News.

On Sunday, the Houthis mourned Brig. Mohammed Abdullah Abu Taleb, the commander of Houthi Preventive Security in Hodeidah, who was among several fighters killed in an Arab coalition airstrike in Hays district on Saturday as they fought the advancing Joint Forces, Al-Masdar Online reported.

The Houthis arranged funeral processions in Sanaa and other Yemeni provinces under their control for 40 fighters killed in fighting with troops and in coalition airstrikes.

As part of a new military strategy sponsored by the Arab coalition in Yemen, the Joint Forces on Nov. 13 announced withdrawing from more than 80km of areas on the Red Sea in Hodeidah province, including part of Hodeidah city, that are included in a truce under the UN-brokered Stockholm Agreement.

On Friday, the Joint Forces launched a new offensive targeting the Houthis in strategic highlands between Hodeidah and Taiz.

Heavy fighting between troops and the Houthis was reported in different locations in the central province of Marib, where the militia is pushing to advance toward the province's capital, Marib city.

The fiercest battles occurred in Juba district, south of Marib, where troops scored limited advances after killing and wounding dozens of Houthis.

Foreign Minister Ahmed Awadh bin Mubarak on Sunday warned that the Houthi invasion of the city of Marib would herald the end of the political process in Yemen and efforts to end the war. It could also trigger a humanitarian crisis as severe as the collapse of Marib's dam in ancient times that wiped out the kingdom of Sheba, he said.

"The repercussions of the fall of Marib will not only represent the creation of a horrific humanitarian situation, but will also mark the end of the

political and peace process in Yemen,” the minister told the Manama Dialogue in Bahrain.



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Saudi defenses intercept Houthi drone launched toward Najran airportUK
demands immediate release of UN staff detained by Houthis

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Sun, 2021-11-21 00:47

MANAMA: The US warned on Saturday it was capable of deploying “overwhelming force” in the Middle East as it faced questions about its willingness to use

its military power in the region.

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin told the Manama Dialogue in Bahrain's capital that all options would be open if diplomacy failed to halt Iran's nuclear program, but he was also forced to rebut claims that the US had become reluctant to use force.

The Pentagon chief was asked why Washington did not respond to last month's drone-and-artillery attack on a base used by the US-led coalition fighting Daesh in Syria.

"The United States of America maintains the right to defend itself. And we will defend ourselves and our interests, no matter what, at the time and place of our choosing," he replied. "And let no country, let no individual be mistaken about that. We are committed to defending ourselves and our interests and that includes our partners as well. And we're also committed to not allowing Iran to get a nuclear weapon."

Austin said Washington's major goal was to strengthen its "unmatched" alliances in the Middle East, but that military force remained an option with tens of thousands of its troops stationed in the region.

In brief remarks to the forum, Saudi Arabia's Prince Turki Al-Faisal called for "demonstrative action" in the region, including the "total enforcement" of the arms embargo on Yemen's Houthis.

Austin said: "America's commitment to security in the Middle East is strong and sure. Ultimately, our mission is to support diplomacy and to deter conflict and to defend the United States and our vital interests. If we're forced to turn back aggression, we will win and we will win decisively."

Addressing the forum, Bahrain's Foreign Minister Abdullatif Al-Zayani said Lebanon needed to demonstrate that Hezbollah could change its behavior to mend a rift with Gulf states.

"We (can) extend support and try to find solutions in the future, but once it is demonstrated that Hezbollah can be changing its behavior,"

Al-Zayani said.



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Iranian navy seizes foreign ship in Gulf smuggling diesel – Iranian media
France warns Iran against ‘sham’ nuclear negotiating stance

[Lebanese army stops boat carrying 90 people off coast](#)

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Sat, 2021-11-20 00:11

BEIRUT: The Lebanese army said Saturday it had stopped a boatload of 91 people including Syrian and Palestinian refugees from departing Lebanon illegally.

Women and children were among the group intercepted Friday by a navy patrol off the coast of Qalamoun in northern Lebanon, the army said.

It said the boat almost sank in bad weather and that all on board were rescued and taken to shore.

The statement did not specify their intended destination.

The Republic of Cyprus, a European Union member just 160 kilometers (100 miles) away, is a common destination for would-be migrants trying to flee Lebanon, which is mired in economic and political crisis.

On Friday the Lebanese security forces said they had thwarted an attempt by 82 people to illegally cross by sea from the Lebanon into Europe.

The Internal Security Forces said they raided a "tourist resort" in the Qalamoun area on Thursday after being tipped off.

They found "82 people, including men, women, and children, who were planning to head to Europe via sea in an illegal manner for a fee of \$5,000 per person," without specify their nationality.

The number of people attempting to make deadly sea crossings out of Lebanon has surged since the country's financial crisis began in 2019.

Most of the would-be migrants are already refugees who fled the war in neighboring Syria, but an increasing number of Lebanese nationals are also attempting the perilous journey.

Around 80 percent of Lebanon's population is estimated to be living under the poverty line, as defined by international organizations, and the Lebanese pound has lost 90 percent of its value against the dollar on the black market.

Lebanon says it hosts more than 1.5 million Syrians, nearly a million of whom are registered as refugees with the UN.

Official estimates put the number of Palestinian refugees in the country at 180,000 but the actual number could be as high as 500,000.



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Iraqi migrants caught in border tensions in Belarus fly homeLebanon stops 82
people attempting sea crossing to Europe