



Children are silhouetted against the sky as they play with a ball on the top of straw bales during a sunny autumn day with temperatures around 12 degrees Celsius in Aubing near Munich yesterday. Meteorologists forecast unsettled weather during next days in the southern region of Germany. — AFP

## SYRIAN MOTHER LIVING UNDER SIEGE...

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Since Madaya came under total siege in mid-2015, more than 60 victims have died of famine and malnutrition. "Our bodies are no longer used to eating," reads one panel. "My children are hungry but are getting sick, severe stomach pains from the food because their bodies aren't able to digest and absorb the food because they were hungry for so long."

Artist Dalibor Talajic said he made a conscious effort to avoid straying into the sensational. "I didn't want to do a war comic," said the Croatian artist - who lived through Yugoslavia's breakup in 1991. "I wanted to make a comic with a civilian point of view, where you're really powerless. You can't do anything. You're just waiting for it to pass or for you to die."

Before now Talajic was best known for his work on Deadpool, a comic about antiheroes that were featured in a film of the same name earlier this year. The illustrator said he is "not a typical Marvel artist where everything

must be larger than life", preferring instead to stay anchored in reality. "I always try to keep things more familiar, more grounded, more probable."

But attempting to convey the grim daily life of besieged Syrians without sensationalizing was no easy task. "It was challenging," Talajic said, noting that he never saw photos of the young mother or the family. "It's like blade running the thin line of being exploitive of someone's hardship." The brutal story of daily life under siege is occasionally broken up with small bright moments. "It is a mother, but it is every mother," Talajic said. "It is a family, but it's every family."

This is not Marvel's first foray into real life heroes: The comic book company also depicted Pope John-Paul II, St Francis of Assisi and Mother Teresa. ABC did manage to deliver some of Talajic's images to the mother: "she found that he really nailed the features of the people, the ambiance, the town," ABC News Producer Rym Momtaz said. "If she ever gets out," artist Talajic said, "the pictures will go to her." — AFP

## SYRIA REGIME KEEPS UP ALEPPO ASSAULT

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The assault on Aleppo was launched just days after the collapse of a ceasefire in Syria that was brokered jointly by Russia and the United States. Russia says its air strikes target extremist militias such as the Islamic State group but critics say it is more occupied with keeping Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad in power than killing jihadists. An analysis published yesterday by the US-based IHS Conflict Monitor said that in the first quarter of 2016, just 26 percent of Russian strikes in Syria targeted IS. That dipped to 22 percent in the second quarter, and 17 percent in the third quarter, the report said.

Yesterday, two of Syria's most powerful jihadist groups joined forces, as Fateh al-Sham Front - a former Al-Qaeda affiliate

announced it had taken Jund al-Aqsa under its wing. Jund al-Aqsa is designated as a terrorist organization by Washington and has been accused of ties to IS. The Jund al-Aqsa group said it was trying to settle differences with Ahrar al-Sham, with which it has been fighting for days in the north-western Idlib province, so as not to weaken rebel fighting against Assad's government. The Observatory said the two rebel groups were still fighting late into yesterday evening.

Jund al-Aqsa's statement - circulated by rebel officials from other groups and carrying the Fateh al-Sham Front stamp - did not say how pledging allegiance to Fateh al-Sham Front would mend its relationship with Ahrar al-Sham. The Observatory, which also reported Jund al-Aqsa's announcement, said the group was seeking the protection of Jabhat Fateh al-Sham. — Agencies

## COURT RESTORES CITIZENSHIP OF PRO-OPPOSITION...

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They include former Islamist MP Abdullah Al-Barghash and about 60 members of his family and relatives whose nationalities were revoked along with Shemmari. The lower court had ordered the government to restore Barghash's citizenship, but the ruling was overturned by the appeals court, which said courts were not competent to rule on citizenship matters. His case is still at the court of cassation, which set the next hearing for mid-November.

Others who had their citizenship revoked include Islamist preacher Sheikh Nabil Al-Awadhi and opposition activist Saad Al-Ajmi, who was deported to Saudi Arabia. They all have cases in courts. Shemmari said after the ruling that he had no doubt that the fair Kuwaiti judiciary would eventually rule in his favor. His lawyer Al-Humaidi Al-Subaie described the ruling as "historic" and thanked the judiciary.

Explaining its verdict, the court said the government's decision was "unlawful" and oppressive, because it breached the constitution. It said that Shemmari obtained Kuwaiti nationality by birth because he was born to a Kuwaiti father, and accordingly his citizenship cannot be revoked.

In another major development yesterday, MP Ahmad Al-Qudhaibi filed a request to grill Minister of Islamic Affairs and Justice Yaqoub Al-Sane for excessively delaying the issuance of the bylaws of the Anti-Corruption Authority (ACA). The lawmaker said that in December last year, the

constitutional court abolished the establishment of ACA, saying it was unconstitutional because of procedural flaws in the establishment law. He said that three weeks later, the National Assembly voted to pass the same law after introducing key amendments to plug loopholes, and the law was finally published on Feb 1 this year.

This required the justice ministry, being responsible for the ACA, to issue the bylaws for the authority within two months in accordance with the law to enable it to start working. But the minister failed until now to issue the bylaws, which means that he obstructed it from starting to function and effectively prevented the authority from receiving wealth disclosures from ministers, MPs and top bureaucrats.

The grilling will be announced on the opening day of the new Assembly term on Oct 18, and the minister can then ask for a two-week delay. Several other lawmakers are currently preparing similar requests to grill Finance Minister Anas Al-Saleh for being responsible for raising petrol prices. Two groups of MPs have already said they will file grilling requests against Saleh, and sources said a third may be on the way.

The flurry of grillings made pro-government MP Saadoun Hammad to say that he believes that the Assembly will be dissolved soon, and what remains is to determine the date, which is in the hands of HH the Amir. In a related development, five MPs submitted a draft law stipulating to ban the government from raising petrol prices without a law from the Assembly.

## GOVT POSTPONES \$10 BILLION BOND ISSUE...

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This implies the first quarter of 2017 is a likely time period for the issue, she said. Kuwait's Ministry of Finance did not respond to requests for comment.

Bankers said Kuwait may have been encouraged to delay its issue by the approach of a mammoth bond sale by Saudi Arabia, which is scrambling to finance its own budget deficit. The Saudi issue, expected to be around \$10 billion to \$15 billion, is now anticipated to come in late October. If Kuwait had issued before Saudi Arabia, demand could have been limited by investors holding back funds for the Saudi sale. Now that the Saudi sale is occurring so late in the year, Kuwait may not have time to issue before financial market participants start going on holiday in late December.

Kuwait's window of opportunity this year has been shrunk further by expectations for US monetary policy: 14 of 15 primary dealers polled by Reuters forecast an interest rate hike at the US central bank's mid-December meeting. But bankers said they believed the main reason for the delay was Kuwait's financial position. Although its state budget has been pushed into

the red by low oil prices, like Saudi Arabia's, Kuwait's finances are much stronger and its need to raise funds is not as urgent as Riyadh's.

Compared to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait "has much more room to be flexible and it has one of the lowest breakeven points for oil prices to balance its budget", said Faisal Hasan, head of investment research at Kuwait-based KAMCO Investment Co. Before a transfer of money to its sovereign wealth fund, Kuwait posted a budget deficit of KD 4.6 billion (\$15 billion) last fiscal year, its first deficit in 17 years - but that was dwarfed by Saudi Arabia's deficit of nearly \$100 billion last year.

"If you go down the list of Gulf Cooperation Council issuers, in terms of need and requirement to issue, at the top of the pile there's Saudi Arabia. At the bottom of the pile you have Kuwait and Dubai," said Abdul Kadir Hussain, head of fixed income asset management at Arqaam Capital in Dubai. "Kuwait has the highest flexibility in the region in terms of timing. As a bond investor I'd expect them to come to the market when market conditions are good. Spreads now are attractive but not outright cheap, so I'm not surprised they'd delay the issuance." — Reuters

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