

## Analysis

**Kuwait Times**  
Established 1961  
The First Daily in The Arabian Gulf

THE LEADING INDEPENDENT  
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF  
ESTABLISHED 1961

Founder and Publisher  
YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN

Editor-in-Chief  
ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYAN

EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432  
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7  
FAX : 24835620/1  
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163  
ACCOUNTS : 24833199 Extn. 125  
COMMERCIAL : 24835618

P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.  
Email: info@kuwaittimes.com  
Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

## Zimbabwe's parched Bulawayo rations to save dwindling water

Families in the southern Zimbabwean city of Bulawayo are going up to four days without running water as drought dries the dams the city depends on, city council officials said. The city has since late November imposed 96-hour dry periods for residential water customers, though industrial and business users have continued to receive service, according to the Bulawayo City Council. An extended drought has reduced supplies of stored water, forcing the city to decommission two of its major supply dams, said Nesisa Mpfu, a spokeswoman for the council.

Shortages of hydropower-produced electricity also have affected the city's ability to pump water from the dams, she said. "Out of six dams, Bulawayo now remains with four water sources," she said. The four-day water outages - up from three days previously - have spurred widespread local efforts to store more water and to find alternative sources.

Arnold Batirai, a councillor for Nketa, a suburb of Bulawayo, said many residents in his area had access to alternative water sources such as wells or water supply trucks provided by the council. But he acknowledged that not all borehole wells were still functioning, while shortages of fuel had affected water truck deliveries in some areas. "Despite these challenges, we do encourage residents to conserve water and report burst pipes or water leakages," he said.

Many residents now keep buckets or other containers of water in their homes, sometimes filled at their place of work. "I carry a 25-litre container to work, where I fetch water from the bathroom, mindful of colleagues who may report me to my superiors," said Siphathisiwe Ndimande, a mother of three who lives in Nketa.

Affluent residents in some suburbs have dug new deep wells in response to dry taps and installed large tanks that store thousands of litres of water. Other parched residents, such as 71-year-old Mildred Mkwandla, have installed water harvesting systems on their homes, to catch what rain falls. "Residents don't harvest rainwater but watch it flow away," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "My household is unaffected by the shedding because our main source of water is underground water, while I also harvest rainwater from the roof (and) that's connected to the taps," she said. Mkwandla said her household had installed a 46,000-litre (12,000-gallon) water tank to store rainwater, and now does not rely on city water - or pay bills for it.

Nqobizitha Mangaliso Ndlovu, Zimbabwe's Minister of Environment, Tourism and Hospitality Industry, said several years of drought had created serious problems for Zimbabwe's water supply. "We are still recovering from a devastating drought that occurred (in 2018) due to El Nino. Under normal circumstances during this time of the year, the country would have recorded significant amounts of rainfall with impact to our dams," he said.

### 'Water for all'

Zimbabwe has seen rain in recent weeks - including violent storms that destroyed roofs and washed away bridges - but water reserves overall remain low. Ndlovu said families had been advised to try to harvest rainwater and to plant early maturing crops, which require a shorter period of rainfall to grow. "My ministry is looking at how best to assist communities," he said. But some Bulawayo residents said the national government had done too little to help the city.

"Government has done nothing to solve Bulawayo's water crisis," complained Sinothando Mathe, who lives in Pumula North, a poor western suburb. Faced with struggling residents, Raji Modi, a Bulawayo South legislator and the country's deputy minister of industry, in November initiated his own "free water for all program".

Water trucks he has hired now deliver water to neighborhoods without it, drawn from his own borehole wells. "I have a sustainable water plant and decided to assist residents who go for days without due to water cuts," he said, noting the cost of the effort was mainly fuel for the trucks. Modi suggested pumping and storing more groundwater could be one way to help Bulawayo deal with its worsening water shortages.

"We need to invest in modern technology and effectively use underground water. Countries in the Middle East don't have much water yet don't have a crisis because they invest in technologies," he said. "We need to adopt the same because water is the foundation for industrialization and development," he said.

Bulawayo City Council officials said they remain optimistic Bulawayo will not face a "Day Zero" where taps run completely dry despite rationing and restrictions. Cape Town, in neighboring South Africa, avoided such a situation in 2018 by making widespread reductions in water use. Many of those restrictions still remain in place, in recognition of long-term climate-driven drying in the region. For now, Bulawayo officials have pinned their hopes on divine help. "Despite interventions in place, we pray it rains," said Sikhululekile Moyo, a councillor for Pumula North. — Reuters

All articles appearing on this page are the personal opinion of the writers. Kuwait Times takes no responsibility for views expressed therein.



Protesters hold pictures of Iranian commander Qasem Soleimani during a demonstration outside the US consulate in Istanbul on Sunday. — AFP

# Meant to cripple Iran clout, US strike unites its allies

The US killing of Iranian general Qasem Soleimani was meant to cripple Tehran's clout in the Middle East, but analysts see the allies of the Islamic Republic closing rank instead. As the head of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards' Quds Force, Soleimani oversaw Tehran's interventions in regional power struggles from Lebanon and Iraq to Syria and Yemen. Washington had hoped his killing in a Baghdad drone strike Friday would deal a blow to Iran and its network of proxies-but the plan appears to have backfired by uniting pro-Iran factions under an "axis of resistance".

"The strike unified the resistance forces and made combatting the United States a priority," said Qassem Qassar, a Lebanese expert in Islamic movements. "The assassination was a strategic mistake, and the response will be across the region - not just limited to Iraq," said Qassar. Indeed, pro-Iran factions in Iraq have seized on the strike to secure a political and popular revival.

Kataeb Hezbollah, a vehemently anti-American armed faction in Iraq, said the strike was "the beginning of the end of the US presence in the region". Iraqi populist cleric Moqtada Sadr swiftly reactivated his Mahdi Army, the notorious militia that fought US troops after the American invasion of 2003. "The Iraqi factions of the resistance must hold an immediate meeting to form the International Resistance Regiments," he tweeted, telling his fighters to "be ready".

### 'Turn the skies to hell'

Qais Al-Khazali, a paramilitary leader and bitter rival of Sadr's, echoed his calls for fighting units to mobilize following the strike on Soleimani. Khazali also threatened US troops who have been stationed across Iraq since 2014 as part of the global coalition battling the Islamic State group. On Sunday, Iraq's parliament voted in favour of ousting US troops although the decision rests with the government. "If you don't leave, or if you procrastinate in leaving, you will find a strong Iraqi response that will shake the ground beneath your feet and turn the skies above you into hell," Khazali warned.

Even Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, Iraq's highest Shiite authority, broke with standard protocol to mourn Soleimani. In a first, Sistani sent a letter to Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei to offer his condolences. Further afield in Lebanon, Iran-backed Hezbollah said the strike represented a threat to "all the movements, leaders and

## Iran nuclear deal hangs by thin thread

The Iran nuclear deal was already in tatters before the country announced the latest rollback of its commitments under the 2015 accord following the US assassination of a top general. But Iran has not said it wants to quit the agreement, leaving some room for the deal's remaining parties - Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia - to try to save it, according to analysts.

### What is the impact?

Iran had been expected to announce a new step back from its commitments under the deal following a series of measures since May last year in response to the US pulling out of the accord in 2018 and reinstating sanctions. The latest decision - to forego the limit on the number of centrifuges used in uranium enrichment - was in line with Iran's previous announcements, according to a diplomat. "There is nothing enormously new," the diplomat who is familiar with the matter told AFP, adding it was a "relief" the Islamic republic did not go even further.

Iran is "politically very careful... They are not saying we are leaving the deal," said Robert Kelley, a former inspections chief at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which monitors the deal's implementation. Friday's US killing of a top Iranian commander, Qasem Soleimani, in Baghdad in a drone strike has added to geopolitical tensions, while the 2015 accord - known formally as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action - had already been shaky.

The JCPOA offered Iran sanctions relief in exchange for scaling back its nuclear program, but remaining parties to the deal have so far been unable to find an efficient way to skirt reimposed US sanctions. "Iran's decision to put



An Iraqi woman holds a placard during the funeral of Soleimani, Iraqi paramilitary chief Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis and eight others in Baghdad's district of Al-Jadriya on Jan 4, 2020. — AFP

countries of the axis of resistance". The killing of "Qasem Soleimani is not an Iranian issue. It concerns the axis of resistance - it concerns the Muslim world," said the movement's influential head Hassan Nasrallah.

Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen, meanwhile, called for "direct and swift reprisals" to the strike. Palestinian movement Hamas slammed it as an "American rampage", and its head Ismail Haniya travelled to Tehran for Soleimani's funeral. And the leftist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine also urged "a coordinated, comprehensive and continuous response from resistance forces".

### 'Closing of rank'

"There could be a closing of rank and a reinforcement of the confessionalism," said Karim Bitar of the Paris-based Institute for International and Strategic Affairs. He said Iran's allies in the region would set economic or political goals aside to prioritize the "emergency security situa-

aside the cap on the number of centrifuges as its fifth step away from its JCPOA commitments is less harsh than the initially feared resumption of 20 percent enrichment," Ali Vaez of International Crisis Group tweeted.

The accord capped Iran's uranium enrichment at 3.67 percent, sufficient for power generation but far below the more than 90 percent level required for a nuclear weapon. Iran has already broken that limit with enrichment reaching 4.5 percent by November - still below the 20 percent level it had previously operated. It has always denied any military dimension to its nuclear program. On Sunday, Tehran also stressed it would continue to work with the UN's nuclear watchdog, the IAEA, which sends inspectors to Iran to monitor its activities. "The JCPOA may be a zombie, but it is not dead yet," Richard Johnson of the Washington-based organization Nuclear Threat Initiative tweeted.

### Centrifuges explained?

Centrifuges are used to enrich uranium. Under the nuclear deal, Iran agreed to slash their number to 5,060 from more than 19,000, and to maintain that level for a decade. It also agreed to use only less efficient, first-generation centrifuges. In September, the IAEA said Iran had started using advanced centrifuges to enrich uranium at its Natanz plant. Two months later, Tehran said it had resumed uranium enrichment at the underground Fordo plant south of the Iranian capital.

It remains to be seen how Iran will expand uranium enrichment after its latest declaration. "We will enter a period of waiting where we will see what is happening on the ground," the diplomat said, adding "technical details provided to the IAEA by Iran would give an idea" of the extent of the latest move. Analyst Kelsey Davenport of the Arms Control Association said "production rates and how quickly Iran's stockpile grows" depended on how many more centrifuges and what types Iran would install and use.

### Why is time of the essence?

The 2015 accord aimed to secure at least one year of

tion" triggered by Soleimani's death. "Soon enough, this decision by (US President) Donald Trump will be seen as counter-productive," Bitar predicted.

Trump has threatened Iran with "major retaliation" if it responds to the strike, openly warning in a tweet on Sunday that US action may even be "disproportionate". He had already threatened to bomb 52 unspecified targets in Iran if Tehran attacks US interests in the region. "Tehran has the sword of Damocles hanging over its head," Bitar told AFP. "But the threat of foreign intervention will reunite Iranians of all social classes, both opponents and supporters of the regime," he said.

Indeed, unprecedented crowds have turned out in Iran to mourn Soleimani and the four other Revolutionary Guards killed in the US strike. Ultimately, the assassination could end up bolstering the Iranian government, which will benefit from a phenomenon of "rallying around the flag", Bitar said. — AFP



Handout file picture provided on Nov 4, 2019 shows IR-8 centrifuges at Natanz nuclear power plant, some 300 km south of Tehran. — AFP

the so-called "breakout time" - the period needed to produce weapons-grade material for a bomb - though Iran has always denied this was its aim. Davenport said that timeframe was "slightly less" after Iran's steps in 2019. If Tehran was to step up uranium enrichment to 20 percent combined with an increase in the number and efficiency of its centrifuges, this would shrink further.

"Iran's nuclear program no longer faces any limitation in the operational field," the government said on Sunday. This extended to Iran's capacity for enriching uranium, the level of enrichment carried out, the amount enriched, and other research and development, it said. However, Tehran underlined again that any steps would be reversible should US sanctions be lifted. Current tensions make the lifting of sanctions highly unlikely, but according to Kelley, Iran was "playing the game until the very, very end, so that they can say, 'We never quit the deal.'" — AFP