



MOSUL: Two boys pose for a photo while sitting atop a destroyed house in a neighborhood recently retaken by Iraqi security forces from Islamic State militants, in west Mosul, Iraq. — AP

STREET TURNED TO RUBBLE IN MOSUL

FOOD REMAINS A PROBLEM

MOSUL: Two houses are all that remain standing on the street with no name in western Mosul, just blocks from the front lines of the battle to retake Iraq's second-largest city from the Islamic State group. The once-bustling neighborhood has been reduced to rubble, its sidewalks piled high with a jumble of concrete, bricks and metal. Standing amid the debris of what was once his home on the newly liberated street, Maan Nawaf blamed IS for the destruction around him.

It was IS fighters, he said, who drew the devastating firepower of the Iraqi and coalition warplanes to the street by positioning snipers on top of the buildings after ordering residents to leave, including his elderly mother. "We said we have a disabled woman, she can't walk. They said if you don't go, we will kill you," he said. The family knew the militants would make good on the threat: IS fighters killed two of his brothers, one of whom was a policeman, as well as his nephew, Nawaf said.

For the few residents who remain in Mosul's Wadi Hajar neighborhood, the war is far from over. Just blocks away, police units fired mortars at IS positions and helicopters circled overhead,

firing into the streets below. IS returned fire only sporadically, the treacherous calm luring the residents into the street between the crashes of mortars. Iraqi forces backed by US-led coalition airstrikes launched their assault on western Mosul in mid-February after taking the eastern sector of the city in more than three months of heavy fighting. While nearly two months of house-to-house battles have flushed the militants out of parts of the city's western sector, fighting rages nearby.

Food remains a problem. Few aid trucks reach the area and food distribution can descend into chaos. Among those who managed to grab a parcel at a recent distribution was Firas Mohammed Al-Jibouri. Taking it home with his young son, he opened it in his living room to find a packet of baby milk, bulgur and two bottles of oil. There was also some sugar and wheat. "It's just enough for one day. We are 25 people here - 25. Just one day," he said, looking forlornly at the small pile of provisions.

A former truck driver, Jibouri has lost his livelihood: His house is one of the two still standing but his truck is gone. Any vehicles that survived

the airstrikes were used for barricades or destroyed by advancing Iraqi forces fearful of car bombs. Out in the street, Jibouri pointed at individual piles of rubble and recalled those who were killed there, many of them members of his extended family. One pile used to be the Khaled Ibn Al-Waleed mosque, the centerpiece of the neighborhood. Jibouri said 43 people were killed there two months ago when it was hit by back-to-back airstrikes, the second striking as people were trying to dig out the victims of the first.

Surrounding one of the damaged trucks, a group of men and boys worked to remove a valuable intact wheel. One child rolled it away, and it wobbled away from him into a puddle of mud. As he struggled to lift it, a man and his young daughter sat silently in front of their house. Mahmoud Alo said the only thing he hears from his daughter, Amna, these days is a brief yes or no. Clearly traumatized by the violence around her, she has been sleeping little and spends her days staring into space. As gunfire reverberated nearby, drowning out her father's words, Amna looked around nervously at a helicopter rocketing an IS position. — AP

WHY IT MATTERS: AHMADINEJAD FILING FOR IRANIAN PRESIDENCY

DUBAI: Former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has defied the advice of the Islamic Republic's supreme leader and registered to run again for the nation's presidency. While the hard-line showman's candidacy still would need to be approved by authorities, his entering the race could upend politics in the country of 80 million people and affect global affairs. Here's why it matters:

Internal politics

Ahmadinejad's decision runs directly counter to advice offered in September by Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has final say over all state matters. While Ahmadinejad described that directive as "only advice," his decision challenges Khamenei's authority. Ahmadinejad's 2009 re-election sparked massive internal unrest. Coming back to the political stage now could reopen those wounds.

Worried neighbors

Sunni Arab states in the Gulf remain highly suspicious of Iran, especially after it secured its landmark nuclear deal with world powers. They see Iranian influence in the campaign of Shiite rebels in Yemen who hold that nation's capital despite a Saudi-led military campaign against them. They also stand opposed to Iran's backing of embattled Syrian President Bashar Assad. Israel is staunchly opposed to Ahmadinejad, who questioned the scale of the Holocaust and called for Israel's destruction as he presided over a massive expansion of Iran's nuclear activities.

The nuclear deal

Ahmadinejad's return to Iran's presidency could see the West, particularly the US, reevaluate the nuclear deal struck under the

administration of moderate President Hassan Rouhani, who is expected to seek re-election. Iran agreed to limit its enrichment of uranium in exchange for the lifting of some economic sanctions. Since the deal, Iranian oil has started flowing more freely in the world market. Airplane manufacturers Airbus and Boeing Co. have struck billion-dollar deals. US President Donald Trump, a staunch critic of the nuclear deal, could move to dismantle it, particularly if a hard-liner like Ahmadinejad is elected.

His chances of winning

Ahmadinejad's candidacy must be approved by the Guardian Council, a clerical body, before he can stand in the May 19 election. Half the 12-member council's members are selected by Iran's supreme leader and half by the country's judicial chief with parliament's approval. Even if his candidacy is given the green light, it's unclear whether he has enough popular support to win. Ahmadinejad remains a deeply polarizing figure, even among hard-liners, and his decision to register for the election could be a political stunt to try to remain relevant.

The bottom line

Iran remains a major force in the Middle East and supports Shiite militias fighting the Islamic State group in Iraq. It routinely has tense encounters with the US Navy in the Strait of Hormuz and the Persian Gulf. An Ahmadinejad presidency could inflame those tensions while increasing the likelihood of an Israeli military strike on the country's nuclear facilities. His name appearing on the ballot could cause unrest and spark other challenges to Iran's clerically overseen government. — AP

KAZAKHSTAN SETS A TIMELINE TO SWITCH TO LATIN ALPHABET

ASTANA: Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev yesterday set out a timeline for the ex-Soviet country to switch from Cyrillic letters to the Latin alphabet as part of a modernization drive. The 76-year-old leader has long called for ditching the Cyrillic alphabet which Kazakhstan shares with neighbor and ally Russia in favor of the more widely used Latin one. In an article published in the state-owned Egemen Kazakhstan newspaper Nazarbayev called for the government to begin "preparatory work" and "create a schedule" for the switch.

"By the end of 2017, after consultation with academics and representa-

tives of the public, a single standard for the new Kazakh alphabet and script should be developed," Nazarbayev wrote. "From 2018, [Kazakhstan] must train specialists to teach the new alphabet and produce textbooks for secondary schools," Nazarbayev added in the Kazakh-language paper. Nazarbayev has said in the past that the country should switch to the Latin alphabet by 2025. The Kazakh language is part of the Turkic family, like Turkish. It currently uses a modified version of the Cyrillic alphabet with 42 letters. Kazakhstan briefly used the Latin alphabet during the Soviet era before switching to Cyrillic letters in 1940. — AFP

Kuwait Times Celebrates the 12th edition of student painting competition Kuwait Beautiful & Green

Sponsored by Zain, Jazeera Airways, Samsung
Hosted by; JW Marriott Hotel

With the aim of boosting environmental public awareness, developing the sense of aesthete and caring for environmental issues in Kuwait, Kuwait Times prepared for its 12th Students Painting Competition to invest the success so far achieved since its inception in 1994, namely that achieved in the previous cycle in 2016 where over 8000 students aging 618- from over 135 public, private, Arab and foreign schools in Kuwait took part. We do hope 2017 participants would exceed 15000.

It has been already twelve years since Kuwait Times started organizing the 'Kuwait Beautiful & Green' students painting competition with the aim of promoting students' environmental awareness, encouraging them to effectively take part in various environment-oriented activities with an ultimate end of acquiring more knowledge and skills, sense of responsibility as well as positive attitudes. It also aims at boosting the principles of moderation and tolerance among students and encourages them to be ambitious, to protect public resources and to take sustainability-related initiatives that would help protect the environment. Environmental protection is not just a motto or meaningless words. It is in fact an integral part of our history and heritage. It is a way of life because we have been and will always be committed to peaceful co-existence between man and nature.

All Students aging 618- in various stages were invited to participate in the competition with drawings and paintings elaborating their environmental passions as the environment are the base of sustainable development in the form of planting rather than desertification, cleanliness rather than negligence and public safety rather than the lethal pollution.

This is how we want our Kuwait to be; a green beautiful oasis that reflects the beauty and high taste within our souls.

The last day of receiving drawing sheets will be on 20th April 2017

