

Kuwaiti official's photo with Netanyahu draws ire back home

'Contradicts with Kuwait's stance against normalizing ties with Israel'

By A Saleh and Agencies

KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti political movement strongly criticized a senior Kuwaiti government official for appearing in a group photo that also featured Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, taken while participating in an international conference on the Middle East.

"We highly condemn the appearance of Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah" in a group photo taken on the sidelines of the Peace and Security in the Middle East Conference in Warsaw, Poland, the Kuwait Progressive Movement (KPM) said in a statement yesterday. The conference had released the family photo which also featured, in addition to Jarallah and Netanyahu, Polish Foreign Minister Jacek Czaputowicz, US Vice President Mike Pence, Poland's President Andrzej Duda, and US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, among other participants. KPM further stated that Jarallah's appearance in the group photo "contradicts with Kuwait's official and public stances on rejecting normalization with the Zionist enemy."

"KPM warns that such a step has its serious negative impact on the political and public levels," reads a statement issued by the group yesterday. It also speculated that the photo serves as a "trial balloon to drag Kuwaiti diplomacy into the swamps of normalization with the Zionist entity," and expressed total rejection to "such attempts to normalize relations with an enemy that continues to occupy Arab territories in Palestine, Golan Heights and parts of Lebanon."

"[Israel] continues to deny Palestinians' national rights, evade international resolutions concerning Jerusalem and the return of refugees, and imposes criminal suppression on Palestinians fighting the occupation," the statement added, urging all Kuwaiti powers to fight and condemn such attempts.

UN council visit

Meanwhile, Israel has told the UN Security Council that it opposes a planned visit by the top UN body to the Palestinian territories for a close-up look at the situation, Kuwait's ambassador said Wednesday. Kuwait and other council



WARSAW: Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah (left) is seen in a group photo taken at the conference on Peace and Security in the Middle East in Warsaw on February 13, 2019. The photo also features Polish Foreign Minister Jacek Czaputowicz, US Vice President Mike Pence, Poland's President Andrzej Duda, Prime minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu, and US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. — AFP

members proposed the visit to the occupied territories during a meeting last week on Israel's decision to end the international observer force in the West Bank city of Hebron.

During a closed-door meeting on Wednesday, the council president briefed members on talks held with Israel and the Palestinians on the proposal for a visit. "He said Israel categorically refused the council visit," Kuwait's Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi told reporters after the meeting. "They don't want to receive a visit by the Security Council" even though they are pre-

pared to welcome delegations from countries on the council, he added. "We expressed our regret that this visit will not take place because it has been raised many times by the council."

Israel opposes UN visit to Palestine



The Israeli mission did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The visit would have come at a tumultuous time: Israel is headed for elections in April and the United States is reportedly putting the finishing touches to its much-awaited peace proposals.

The Security Council has adopted several resolutions on the Israeli-Palestinian peace

process that call for a two-state solution and holds monthly meetings on the conflict. Israel maintains that the UN body is biased in favor of the Palestinians. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres visited Israel and the Palestinian territories in August 2017 but the Security Council has never traveled on a mission to that region. In 1979, envoys from the top UN body went to Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt as part of a special mission. Over the past years, several proposals for a visit to Gaza and the occupied territories have been quashed by the United States, a veto-wielding member of the Security Council. The council later Wednesday traveled to Guinea-Bissau and Ivory Coast and is planning a trip to Mali in March. Last year, it made a high-profile visit to Myanmar and Bangladesh to meet with Rohingya refugees.

Kuwait continues to look for missing martyrs in Iraq

NEW YORK: A senior Kuwaiti diplomat affirmed that his country will continue the search for its missing martyrs in Iraq, praising the efforts of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in keeping this file on its agenda. The remarks were made by Kuwait's Permanent Representative at the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi, during the UNSC's

session on Iraq late Wednesday. The ambassador also applauded the UN's resolutions connected with the liberation of Kuwait from the Iraqi invasion in 1991.

Meanwhile, Otaibi hailed the efforts of the UN's mission in Iraq to achieve sustainable development in the country and meet the humanitarian needs of people. It is Kuwait's responsibility as a neighboring country to aid Iraq in overcoming hardships and security challenges, the Kuwaiti diplomat said. It is also the responsibility of the international community to cooperate in leading the country towards stability and security, he added.

In this context, Otaibi mentioned the initiative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to host the Kuwait

international conference for reconstruction of Iraq in February 2018. Speaking on the missing Kuwaitis in Iraq, the ambassador noted that this session comes in time of the 28th anniversary of Kuwait's Liberation Day. He added that the fate of our missing POWs in Iraq is still unknown and the bodies of our martyrs are still missing. He also noted the Iraqi cooperation in the matter, that led to identifying the remains of 236 out of 605 missing Kuwaitis. However, no new bodies had been identified since 2004, he added.

Otaibi called on the UN mission in Iraq to continue searching for the missing Kuwaitis and follow on procedures taken for Iraq to return Kuwait's stolen properties and national documents. Moreover, he affirmed Kuwait's full sup-



Mansour Al-Otaibi

port to Iraq in rebuilding the country, which was torn by the war with the so-called Islamic State (IS) in the past few years. — KUNA