

Local

Zain supports Kuwait's efforts to end violence against women

Company lights up headquarters in orange to support UN campaign

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its support to the United Nations Secretary-General's UNiTE by 2030 to End Violence against Women campaign (UNiTE Campaign). The initiative calls for global action to increase awareness, galvanize advocacy efforts, and share knowledge and innovations to address violence against women and girls around the world.

Zain's contribution to this global campaign comes as a continuation of its collaboration with the United Nations' various entities, including the UN Women Regional Office for Arab States. This joint effort reflects Zain's commitment to support initiatives and programs that shed light on the importance of protecting and empowering women, as well as those that enrich gender equality and inclusion

“ Domestic abuse law a source of hope ”

within communities and workplaces.

Commenting on the collaboration, Zain Kuwait's Chief Executive Officer Eaman Al-Roudhan said: "It is our utmost pleasure to be a part of the State of Kuwait's participation to support this global initiative by the United Nations, a contribution that seeks to find viable solutions to end violence against women. This issue continues to have a worrying impact on many women and girls in our Arab communities and around the entire world, and it is time to stand together, as one, to fight violence against women."

Roudhan added: "I offer my sincere gratitude to Minister of Social Affairs and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel for her trust by inviting us to be a part of this global initiative as one of the Kuwaiti private sector's national entities that represent our beloved country in this campaign. We are proud to light up Zain's main headquarter buildings at Shuwaikh in orange along with the country's many entities from both the public and private sectors to demonstrate Kuwait's role and efforts in advocating this cause."

Roudhan further explained: "It is a huge source of hope and pride to see Kuwait going a long way in supporting and protecting women, something that was strongly reflected by the recent passing of the domestic violence law in August 2020. This



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landmark law is clear proof of the great efforts exerted by the government of Kuwait to protect women and girls, which comes to achieve the fifth Sustainable Development goal under the umbrella of the National Development Plan 'New Kuwait'. The country's participation in this global campaign is nothing short of another step forward towards eliminating this issue from Arab and global communities."

Roudhan continued: "The goals of this campaign are well consistent with those of our sustainability strategy at Zain Kuwait and Group-wide. Our efforts also come in line with our commitment to take part in social campaigns that aim at protecting and enhancing the overall social welfare of Arab communities in particular, and the world as a whole. This is especially true when it comes to issues relat-

ed to protecting women and their rights."

Around the world, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated key risk factors for violence against women and girls, such as unemployment, economic insecurity, and school closures. Under the leadership of the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, the United Nations Secretary-General's UNiTE by 2030 to End Violence against Women campaign (UNiTE Campaign), calls for global action to increase awareness, galvanize advocacy efforts and share knowledge and innovations. Governments, civil society, women's organizations, young people, the private sector, the media, and the UN system must join forces to address the global pandemic of violence against women and girls.

Companies that have committed to the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs), including Zain,

recognize the important role of the private sector to support efforts to end violence against women. Sexual harassment and violence incur high costs to women in terms of lost earnings, missed career advancement and overall wellbeing. On the other hand, companies are impacted by employee absenteeism and productivity losses. Employers' investment in prevention and response to violence against women, including domestic violence, is not only the right thing to do, but also the smart thing to do.

Zain is keen on actively participating in the various local and regional projects that aim at contributing to the achievement of the country's various developmental goals. The company will spare no efforts to support any entity that serves the global sustainable goals and contributes to the progress and prosperity of the region.



A handout photo made available on Friday shows the damaged car of Iranian nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh after it was attacked near Tehran. — AFP

Iran accuses Israel of killing scientist...

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Iran's weekly COVID-19 taskforce meeting. "In due time, they will answer for this crime."

Former CIA director John Brennan warned on Friday that the assassination risked sparking a wider conflagration in the Middle East. "This was a criminal act and highly reckless. It risks lethal retaliation and a new round of regional conflict," Brennan tweeted. "I do not know whether a foreign government authorized or carried out the murder of Fakhrizadeh," he said. "Such an act of state-sponsored terrorism would be a flagrant violation of international law & encourage more governments to carry out lethal attacks against foreign officials."

Brennan noted that Fakhrizadeh was not a designated terrorist nor a member of Al-Qaeda or the Islamic State group, designated terror groups which would be legal targets. A strong critic of President Donald Trump, Brennan urged Tehran to "resist the urge" to retaliate and "wait for the return of responsible American leadership on the global stage", a reference to Nov 3 election winner Joe Biden, who will replace Trump on Jan 20.

Brennan was director of the CIA from 2013 to 2017, under the administration of president Barack Obama and then-vice president Biden. Brennan did not take part in Biden's election campaign and has not appeared to be involved in his preparations for taking office on Jan 20. But early this week Biden

named Brennan's former deputy director at the CIA, Avril Haines, as his director of national intelligence.

Khamenei called for "punishing the perpetrators and those responsible," in a short statement on his official website, urging that Fakhrizadeh's "scientific and technical efforts ... in all of the fields he was working in" should be continued. Fakhrizadeh, who headed the defense ministry's research and innovation organization, died after medics failed to revive him following the attack near Absard city in Tehran province's eastern Damavand county.

Israel has refused to comment on the assassination, but Israeli Channel 12 television reported yesterday that the level of alert had been raised in its embassies worldwide. A spokeswoman for the Israeli foreign ministry in Jerusalem refused to confirm the report. Lebanon's Hezbollah militia early yesterday "strongly" condemned the "terrorist operation that led to the martyrdom" of Fakhrizadeh.

The killing of Fakhrizadeh is the latest in a series of killings of nuclear scientists in Iran in recent years that the Islamic republic has blamed on Israel. Iranian media have given little information regarding his work, but the head of Iran's atomic organization Ali Akbar Salehi said yesterday they had "good cooperation especially in the field of nuclear defense".

He told state TV that Fakhrizadeh had a PhD in "nuclear physics and engineering" and worked on his thesis with Fereydoon Abbasi-Davani, the former head of the atomic organization and himself a survivor of an assassination attempt in 2011. US media reports described Fakhrizadeh as the "No. 1 target of the Mossad", Israel's spy agency, and the "brains behind Iran's nuclear program". — Agencies

Gaza nuptials toned down...

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To contain the spread of coronavirus, the Islamist group Hamas that runs the strip, like authorities elsewhere, has banned large indoor gatherings. Families have been forced to hold smaller weddings in less-than-fairytale settings - like alleys and backyards - but saved bundles in the process. Ashour said these days many couples opt for scaled-back daytime nuptials which take "a little over an hour".

Once the Ashours' wedding was over, the musicians - three percussionists and a player of the traditional reed flute called a ney - headed home before the evening curfew. They had more performances

booked for the next day, as their small, travelling business is now thriving. A few days later they were in Jabaliya, a town in the north of the strip, for the wedding of Ahmed Omar Khallah, a 28-year-old postman.

Khallah said that for him, too, the timing is good: "There is no work, no money, but we have saved a lot by marrying now," he told AFP. He was picking up his bride from a beauty salon called "Al-Hour al-Ayn", an Islamic expression referring to the beautiful eyes of the women of paradise. Its proprietor, Fadwi, confirmed that "many young couples prefer to get married during the corona period because the costs are lower. They don't have to rent wedding halls or pay for large buffets."

Fadwi has changed his business hours to accommodate the new routine as Hamas police patrols enforce the night-time curfews. "We now start work around 7:00 am," he said, "because people only get married in ceremonies until 5:00 pm". — AFP

Kurds look on as Israel befriends...

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always been demonized as Israeli "agents" during their own struggle for independence.

"It's good Arab countries are normalizing with Israel," said Himdad Najat, a 38-year-old English language teacher in the regional capital of Arbil. But, he pointed out, "there's an emotional link between Kurds and Jews because of the injustices we both lived". Kurds make up sizeable communities in Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey but have long faced persecution in those countries and do not have a state of their own.

Jews had also faced centuries of ill-treatment and did not have their own state until Israel was created in 1948. When fearful Jews fled Iraq for Israel in the 20th and 21st centuries, they often did so through the Kurdish region. As Arab hostility toward Israel intensified, the new state tried to reach out to non-Arab communities in the Middle East. It found an opening with Iraq's Kurds who, like Israel, were opposed to the central government in Baghdad.

Israel then sought to provide humanitarian and military aid to Kurds who were chafing under strongman Saddam Hussein's brutal military campaigns in the north throughout the 1980s and 1990s. In 2017, Israel backed a controversial independence referendum in northern Iraq, even as Arbil's allies including the United States opposed the vote.

Ahead of the referendum, Kurdish activist Nabaz Rashad was enthusiastically campaigning in favor of independence. Many of his Arab friends across Iraq and other countries criticized his efforts, saying a

Kurdish state would establish a "second Israel in the Middle East". Now, 35-year-old Rashad looks at the wave of "normalization" deals with bitterness. "It's pure hypocrisy," he told AFP.

Still, he hoped it could bring stability to the Middle East, a region torn apart by conflict for decades. "Besides, as a Kurd it gives me hope when I see a new country is recognized or born," he said. "It makes us feel hopeful that one day Kurds will have their own state."

Iraqi Kurdistan is already ruled as an autonomous region, has its own security forces and manages its own land borders with neighboring Iran, Turkey and Syria. Rebwar Babakye, an MP who heads the foreign relations committee in the Iraqi Kurdish parliament, said Iraq should normalize ties with Israel to boost regional peace. "The sooner the better," he told AFP. "It could help Arab countries develop scientific and academic research through exchange programs, as Israel is the leading country in the area when it comes to scientific and technology research."

The Kurdish region cannot do it alone because Baghdad manages foreign policy but, Babakye said, "if an Israeli embassy opens in Baghdad tomorrow, the next day their consulate will be open in Arbil". Despite their historic links, rapprochement between Israel and Iraq's Kurds remains unlikely, said analyst Hiwa Othman. For years, the Kurds sought to leverage their connection to Israel to get access to a world superpower, the United States.

"Today, the US is in Arbil and Kurds do not need a middleman - so they do not need to have a political relationship with Israel," Othman told AFP. He added that, far more than Bahrain or the UAE, Iraq's Kurds have to also manage sensitive ties with Ankara - and Tehran - which both wield considerable sway in Arbil and oppose both Kurdish independence and Israel. — AFP