

Local

ICRC regional chief praises Kuwait's humanitarian work

Odeh thanks Amir for neutral role of Kuwait

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) held a media roundtable on Thursday with Omar Odeh, Regional Head of Delegation for GCC Countries and Kuwait, to mark the end of his mission. Odeh discussed bilateral cooperation on various issues during his tenure with Kuwaiti authorities and partners, praising Kuwait for its keenness in humanitarian work, which is an effective and important role. "Kuwait was one of the countries that made efforts to resolve disputes in all countries. We thank the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for the neutral role of Kuwait," he said.

Odeh discussed the top achievements of ICRC during his mission in Kuwait. "For the first time in decades, we were finally able to bring answers to hundreds of missing persons' families from the 1990-1991 Gulf War. ICRC is very pleased about the continued positive outcomes, driven by cooperation between Kuwaiti and Iraqi authorities in the framework of the tripartite commission," Odeh said.

"The mission was not easy and resolving these cases takes time, patience and cooperation between governments and humanitarian organizations. It can take years of work to uncover answers. Despite the epidemic, cooperation between countries continued and we were fortunate to find the remains and even identify them after years of searching," he said.

New sites

Odeh revealed that two weeks ago, the tripartite commission met in Riyadh, hoping new sites of the remains will be found. After the end of the 1990-1991 Gulf War, ICRC, Iraq, Kuwait and members of the coalition (Saudi Arabia, France, United Kingdom and the United States) established a tripartite commission to



KUWAIT: The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Regional Head of Delegation for GCC Countries and Kuwait Omar Odeh poses for a group picture with journalists. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

search for missing persons. In 2021, the tripartite committee was able to officially close 60 files of missing persons and return the remains of two people from Kuwait to Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

During the 52nd meeting of the tri-

He noted that the joint venture with KRCS and Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development links to strategic discussions to address the evolving humanitarian needs of communities affected by the consequences of conflict. "Also, to spread awareness on international law, there is a plan to educate and train local cadres in international humanitarian law."

Humanitarian situation

Odeh highlighted the humanitarian situation and priorities of thousands of people facing conflict in the Middle East and beyond, pointing out that ICRC helps people affected by conflict and armed violence and promotes laws that protect victims of war. Regarding Yemen, he said: "The Yemen situation is different from other conflict areas, as one of our responsibilities is to engage in dialogue and discussion regarding the conflict itself, and not just distribute aid. ICRC engages in sustained dialogue with the parties to the conflict in Yemen on the conduct of their troops during armed hostilities and promotes respect for the rules enshrined in the international humanitarian law, which protects civilians and others. There is an ongoing secret talk with the coalition, along with regular coordination and aid."

Cases of 30 missing persons formally closed

partite committee in December, it was announced that the cases of 30 missing persons and prisoners of war from the 1990-1991 Gulf War were formally closed, based on DNA analyses conducted at the Kuwaiti Department of Forensic Evidence. "For the first time, ICRC Regional Delegation in Kuwait signed a grant agreement with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) to support humanitarian assistance in Bangladesh, and this makes Kuwait a real model due to its important local and international role. In addition, there was cooperation with the Kuwait Fund and policy discussions to enhance cooperation," Odeh said.



Omar Odeh speaks during the media roundtable.

Concerning the criticism of the amount of help victims of the Ukraine-Russia war received compared to victims of other countries, Odeh said that any armed conflict is a disaster. "We wish no harm to civilians, and this applies to all armed conflicts. It was important to try to host talks and discussions with Russia and to educate it about the international humanitarian law and find a way to evacuate affected civilians. This communication took another turn, and what was provided was criticized and compared with other aid," he said.

Odeh affirmed ICRC always tries to find a balanced way to deliver help to all countries, but one of the most difficult things is that their needs are greater than any organization can handle.



Kuwait Airways launches flights to Madrid, Malaga

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways launched on Saturday its first commercial flights to Madrid and Malaga, three days per week, on Saturdays, Tuesdays and

Thursdays. The company's CEO, Maen Razouqi, said in a press statement that the cities of Madrid and Malaga were among the most important destinations for Kuwait Airways customers, and their launch comes in response to the remarkable and growing demand for travelers in Kuwait and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries (GCC). He added that Airbus A330neo was chosen for these two destinations, as the aircraft contained technological features and superior technologies, in addition to the spaciousness of its seats in line with the latest air trans-



Kuwait's Ambassador holds reception for UN panel candidate

NEW YORK: Kuwait's Permanent Representative at the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi held a reception at the Permanent Mission's headquarters in New York in honor of Rehab Boresli, the country's candidate for the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Addressing the reception, the Kuwaiti diplomat said Rehab Boresli has the

required qualifications and professional experience to become member of this UN committee, calling on member states to vote for her in the elections due on June 14-16. Speaking to the press following the event on Friday, he elaborated that the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) comprises independent experts and monitors the implementation by the party states of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. He hoped that the Kuwaiti permanent mission's efforts to rally up support for the country's candidate Boresli over the last couple of years would come to fruition during the committee's elections. Some 13 candidates from different countries are vying for nine seats in this committee. — KUNA



NEW YORK: Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi speaks at the reception with Rehab Boresli. — KUNA

Kuwait to host pediatric bone marrow transplant conference

KUWAIT: The inaugural pediatric bone marrow transplant conference is due to kick off in Kuwait

on Wednesday, the health ministry said on Saturday, hailing the initiative as a measure aiming to raise awareness about the health of children. The talks, a collaborative effort between Kuwait's pediatric association and a local medical body, aim to show how advanced the procedure has become in the country, thanks to the use of cutting-edge science, said Dr Sundus Al-Sheriada, the head of the National Bank of Kuwait's Pediatric Hospital's bone marrow transplant center

told a press conference. The talks will feature a slew of workshops covering various branches of pediatric health, according to Kuwait pediatric association deputy chief Dr Maha Borouli, saying that this particular field has seen major progress over the years. On the local pediatric body's main objectives, she added it was formed with the aim of providing support to Kuwaiti pediatricians, given the critical medical field they oversee, the physician underlined. — KUNA

local spotlight

Freedom of religion



By Atyab Al-Shatti

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Many religious campaigns are ongoing nationally and internationally to defend every human being's right to fundamentally exercise their religious beliefs without being abused or insulted, after incidents that took place lately oppressing individuals for their beliefs.

But looking into freedom of religion in a micro area of research, basically Kuwait, we stress the importance of pointing out the difference between how governing laws work as a protective umbrella for religions and rights practiced under this umbrella. The importance of such differentiation should work to amend the gaps between laws and actual practice and help build a more protective system.

According to article 35 of the constitution of Kuwait, freedom of belief is unrestricted, where the state shall protect freedom in the observance of religious rites established by custom, provided such observance does not conflict with morals or disturb public order. It is understood that every individual, regardless of their nationality, shall practice their beliefs keeping in consideration public orderliness and morals, yet some incidents related to officers applying the law revealed how the law is misunderstood.

Before the pandemic, an incident went viral on social media of an expatriate who took a statue to dip into the sea as one of his religious rituals which he was obliged to do, but ended up surrounded by verbal attacks by others, which later led to deportation. The individuals committing the verbal attacks were not deported, but the expatriate who was minding his own business was the one who was deported!

By presenting the incident in the manner mentioned above and searching for a legal area of accusation according to the national law that should present him as guilty, it basically shows that the misdemeanor of defamation of religions is punishable under article 111 of penal code no. 16 of 1960, which does not apply to what this person did.

This is a crime of contempt of religion, and in order for it to rise against the law it is attributed to, it requires some main pillars: The act of transgression, that is broadcasting an opinion that includes ridicule, contempt or belittlement of a religion or sect; the second is publicity, that is that the act of transgression and broadcast of opinion in one of the means of publicity stipulated by law, which does not apply in his case too.

The third pillar is an attack on religion or religious sect - the attack must take place against a religion, while what this individual did was simply practicing rituals. This person did not do anything insulting to any religion, but rather practiced rituals calmly without compromising public security or public order, which reveals that the deportation is not justified.

Within this ambiguity, it is clear enough that the understanding of the law should start with the law applicators, as they are the guide for all people here. It is highly essential to clarify the definition of religious beliefs and the importance of the protection of freedom of belief and granting it to everyone. It is also important to raise awareness among law applicators regarding religious rituals that do not violate public order and morals.

KU advances in six of QS World Rankings indicators

KUWAIT: The Kuwait University announced that it had made advances on six indicators of the recently announced QS World University Rankings of 2023. In a press statement on Friday, the national university admitted that its overall ranking remained unchanged in the category (1001-1200), but it had made strides in six of the QS eight indicators. The university scored 62.7 points in the employment outcomes indicator which assesses the ability to provide the employment market with highly-qualified graduates, the KU pointed out. KU added that its score in the international research indicator edged up to 52 points. This indicator gauges the diversification of the international research network and increasing of collaboration and knowledge transfer with other international educational institutions. The Kuwait University's score on the international faculty ratio indicator, which measures the university internationalization ability or the ability to attract high-quality international staff, rose to 25.8 points. The KU academic reputation also improved on the QS relevant indicator, as it scored 13.3 points. It progressed on the employer reputation indicator after scoring 7.7 points. QS employer reputation indicator assesses how universities prepare students for successful careers, and which institutions provide the most competent, innovative, and effective graduates. On faculty student ratio indicator, the Kuwait University ameliorated after securing 6.3 points. This indicator gauges how institutions provide students with meaningful access to lecturers and tutors. It recognizes that a high number of academics per student reduces the teaching burden and creates a more supportive student experience. The Kuwait University vowed to spare no effort to improve its ranking and offer world-quality educational services that meet international standards. — KUNA