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Taliban prisoners' release key to mutual trust: China

China on Monday said it believed the Consultative Loya Jirga's decision on the release of the 400 Taliban prisoners would pave ground for intra-Afghan talks.

Zhao Lijian, spokesman for the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, told a press conference in Beijing that the government of China welcomed the people of Afghanistan's decision via its traditional council.

He said, "The release of prisoners was agreed on at the consultative Loya Jirga in accordance with their rules of procedure. This important decision is an important step for the Afghan government and the Afghan Taliban to establish mutual trust and initiate intra-Afghan talks."

He further added that the release of Taliban prisoners could create trust between the Afghan government and the Taliban and termed the ... **P2**



It is 'Peace Monday', says U.S. envoy to Afghanistan

Ross Wilson, the Charge d'Affaires at the U.S. embassy in Kabul, has thanked everyone who participated in the peace talks program over the past five months and said "It's Peace Monday".

The U.S. embassy in Kabul on Monday said intra-Afghan talks must be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned. Wilson Ross in a video message said the intra-Afghan talks were said to be held next week in Qatar between the Afghan government and the Taliban.

Wilson said the U.S. welcomed latest progress in the peace process and that Washington wanted the talks to be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned.

He also called on other Afghans to support the peace process via social media and share their views in this regard. Wilson said the United States had made it clear to the Afghan negotiating team and the parties involved that peace talks must defend the achievements of the past years, respect Afghanistan's national sovereignty and the rights of all Afghans.

The U.S. diplomat reaffirmed ... **P3**

Ghani Signs Decree to Release 400 Taliban Prisoners



President Ashraf Ghani on Monday evening signed a decree to release 400 high-value Taliban prisoners, a source at the Presidential Palace said. The source said that Ghani also signed another decree on the release of the prisoners of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces who are imprisoned in government prisoners. The source, however, did not provide further details.

This comes after the Loya Jirga--the grand assembly-- in a resolution issued on Sunday approved the release of the 400 Taliban prisoners in an aim to quickly start the intra-Afghan talks and bring about a ceasefire and an end to the nation's war.

The resolution, which has 25 articles, was issued at Sunday's Loya Jirga session. President Ashraf Ghani,

former president Hamid Karzai, and other political figures also called on the Taliban for an immediate start to the intra-Afghan talks.

The members of the Loya Jirga in the resolution welcome and support the lasting peace with dignity to bring peace and stability to the country.

The resolution also states that if foreign fighters are among the 400 Taliban prisoners "they must be

handed over to their countries with valid guarantees."

It also said that the release of the remaining Taliban prisoners must come with the assurance that the direct talks between the government and the Taliban will start "without any excuses."

The resolution also called for an immediate and long-lasting ceasefire and called on the international community and the United States to implement their commitment regarding this.

The statement also said that the people and the government of Afghanistan must be assured that the released Taliban prisoners "will not return to war and their activity will be monitored."

The resolution urged the international community to cease direct and indirect intervention in Afghanistan's affairs and to cease their support for terrorist groups.

They urged the Taliban and Afghan government to end the violence and conflict in the country and to solve the rifts through negotiations.

It also pointed out that the "Islamic values, the role of scholars, basic government institutions, democracy and the two-decade achievements of Afghanistan" must be preserved and strengthened." ... **P3**

Afghanistan FM meets accredited ambassadors with Qatar's participation

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan H E Mohammad Hanif Atmar held a meeting via video call with the ambassadors accredited to Kabul on strengthening consensus for peace in Afghanistan. The State of Qatar was represented in the meeting by Ambassador of the State of Qatar to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan H E Saeed bin Mubarak Al Khayarin.

During the meeting, the Afghan Foreign Minister briefed the ambassadors on the recent ... **P3**



Afghan Cabinet Still Not Finalized

The Presidential Palace said Monday that Abdullah Abdullah, chairman of the High Council for Reconciliation, has yet to introduce his nominated ministers for the new cabinet. President Ashraf Ghani's deputy spokesman Dawa Khan Menapal said that nominees for ministers must meet the criteria for being a minister, so that the president can send them to the National Assembly for a vote of confidence.

"As soon as our political partners make a list according to the criteria, the government will send it to the parliament for a vote of confidence," said Menapal.

On the other hand, Fraidoon Khwazoon, spokesman for Abdullah Abdullah, said that they have sent their nominee list to the Presidential Palace.

"For our part, the problem is solved and we have sent the list of nominated ministers that is relevant



to us and it will be implemented according to the agreement," said Khwazoon.

A number of politicians and citizens of the country consider the existence of differences between Ghani and Abdullah as one of the main reasons for the delay with the cabinet, and say that the continuation of the work of the caretakers (ministers yet to be nominated) is against the law. It was expected that after a lot of

controversy and disagreement over the nomination of a number of figures to the new government cabinet, the ministerial nominees would be nominated after Eid and their educational and work documents would be sent to the House of Representatives for further consideration. But so far there is no news of a new cabinet.

"The big reason is that these two people do not get along with ... **P3**

Taliban prisoners'...

Jirga's suggestion as an important step towards the peace process. He said all parties should remain committed to peace and implement their promises in this regard. He added his country wanted to play positive role in the Afghan peace process.

Afghanistan FM...

political developments in Afghanistan, developments in the peace process, the Afghan government's efforts to combat the outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID-19) and the financial and technical needs of Afghanistan.

Raed Salah...

concede defending Al-Aqsa Mosque," he said. Israel occupied East Jerusalem, in which Al-Aqsa Mosque is located, during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. In a move never recognized by the international community, it annexed the entire city in 1980, claiming it as the Jewish state's "eternal and undivided" capital. On Nov. 24, 2019, a court charged Salah on several counts, including "incitement to terrorism" and "supporting a banned group," referring to the Islamic Movement in Israel, which was outlawed by the Israeli government in 2015. Although his sentence was originally set to start in March, it was postponed amid appeals by his defense. Salah is under house arrest with tightened restrictions. He is banned from communicating with the public except with his close relatives.

By FARZAD RAMEZANI BONESH

The role of Afghanistan's resources in security

Afghanistan is a mountainous country. Although this land has had precious mines since ancient times, during most of the 20th century it did not progress in terms of exploration and exploitation of its mineral resources and it did not receive much attention from foreign countries. After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, more attention was paid to this, leading to the discovery and identification of resources such as copper and iron.

After the fall of the Taliban and the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, this issue received more attention from the government and foreign countries.

During the last two decades, we have witnessed the Afghan government's efforts to identify natural resources in the country with the help of foreign governments and companies. Therefore, strategic, diverse and important reserves of copper, oil, gas, lithium, uranium, etc have been found and identified in different parts of Afghanistan. The total value of Afghanistan's underground reserves appears to be a trillion dollars or more.

Information and statistics regarding Afghanistan's natural resources are more general. But recognizing Afghanistan as a country with important, diverse and vast mineral reserves is important. These statistics should be considered in the analysis, policy-making and evaluation of organizations, non-governmental actors, and foreign powers. In the end, the existence of mineral resources could be both a threat to the country's security and an opportunity for improved security and economic development in Afghanistan.

From a specific point of view, Afghanistan's mineral reserves could be a source of hope for citizens for development and a formula for supplying financial resources. Currently Afghanistan faces such problems as a major proportion of its population in poverty, insecurity in many provinces, political and administrative corruption, low per capita income, dependence on foreign economic aid, and dozens of other economic challenges.

At the same time, ensuring security for Afghanistan's mineral reserves could be a major support for the country's economic, political and cultural growth and help eliminate backwardness. This requires security as a platform for development of the resource-extraction



industry.

It should also be noted that if the government can find a precise formula for the exploitation of Afghanistan's mineral resources, an important part of this will be ensuring that the financial needs of the security and military sectors are met. In addition, as the government's economic capability increases thanks to the increase in the export revenues of the mining sector, its ability to tighten security in the provinces and prevent drug cultivation will also increase.

This will have a positive long-term and mid-term effect on reducing the financial resources of insurgent groups from opium trading. In addition, by providing more security for the legal extraction of mineral resources, a large number of unemployed citizens and members of extremist groups will swarm to the mining sector and as a result, they will distance themselves from extremist groups such as Islamic State (ISIS).

Another cause of instability

Existence of mineral reserves in a country does not lead automatically to security and development. On the one hand, access to these reserves is a constant goal of extremist and terrorist groups. For the past two decades, the Taliban and other groups have sought to seize control of areas where there are underground

reserves or to extort money from companies and individuals extracting them.

In fact, terrorist or anti-government groups that benefit from this sector are trying to block the government's and investors' access to mines in different regions. Continuation of this could lead to new instability in the country and further strengthen opposition groups and terrorist movements.

In addition, the illegal extraction and sale of precious stones and minerals in Afghanistan could, in the shadow of the government's inability to contain it, be a factor in empowering armed groups in some areas. Also, the illegal profit of extraction and illegal sale of minerals by criminal organizations and armed opposition forces in some parts of the country is several times the government's profit. As well, some of these resources are smuggled out of the country. Unauthorized extraction by non-governmental actors not only harms the security-making process, but also strengthens such actors and terrorist and extremist groups. Apart from this, increasing foreign investment in underground reserves is a fundamental and obvious need. The exploitation of underground reserves requires sophisticated technology, so the government must provide the right conditions ...

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By Clive Baldwin

UK War Crime Revelations in Afghanistan Expose Justice Failings

A senior UK commander in 2011 feared a British military unit in Afghanistan had a "deliberate policy" of killing Afghan men, even when "they did not pose a threat" - which the commander called "indefensible behaviour" that "could be criminal."

Nine years later, the UK government is doing its best to ensure it is almost impossible to prosecute such crimes. This commander's concerns, along with other evidence about possible unlawful killings by UK forces in Afghanistan, came to light this week after being disclosed to a court and published in the Sunday Times newspaper.

The commander's legal assessment was correct - the execution of civilians, or indeed fighters who had surrendered and did not pose a threat, would be war crimes. But criminal liability under the principle of "command responsibility" also falls on senior commanders and

ultimately government ministers if they become aware of such crimes and fail to prevent or prosecute them. Despite a history of championing the laws of war, the United Kingdom has repeatedly failed to prosecute its own personnel when they commit war crimes.

The 2011 allegations are not isolated incidents. Evidence has continued to emerge, in UK court hearings and public inquiries, of abuses, such as torture, by UK soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan that appear on their face to be war crimes. But hardly any UK national - and no senior military or political figure - has after 2001 even been prosecuted, yet alone convicted.

Successive British governments have repeatedly interfered in criminal justice, most blatantly by ministers shutting down criminal inquiries into UK forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The current government is

going even further, having a draft law before parliament creating a "presumption against prosecution" for alleged crimes committed by UK soldiers overseas more than five years ago. Rather than ensure justice for crimes like those alleged in Afghanistan, it would make it even harder to prosecute, even when the evidence had been withheld for so long.

Britain's failure to prosecute its nationals responsible for atrocities overseas has a long history dating back to the British Empire. The current bill risks entrenching impunity for some of the worst crimes committed by British nationals.

The government should drop the bill and ensure any UK national responsible for war crimes and obstructing justice, anywhere in the world, no matter how senior, is brought to justice. That would send the message that foreign lives also matter.

80 Civilians Killed in Last Seven Days: Govt Data

Government data seen by TOLONews shows that at least 80 civilians were killed and 95 others were wounded in security incidents over the last week after the Eid ceasefire.

The data is from August 3 to August 9. The highest number of casualties have been in Nangarhar (49 dead or wounded) and the lowest has been in Kabul (1).

The security incidents have happened in 26 provinces including Kabul, Laghman, Nuristan, Uruzgan, Herat, Badakhshan, Parwan, Paktia, Wardak, Badghis, Sar-e-Pul, Ghor, Farah, Daikundi, Helmand, Balkh, Kunar, Logar, Takhar, Nimroz, Kapisa, Zabul, Kandahar, Baghlan, Ghazni and Nangarhar. "At least 175 civilians have suffered casualties over the last week in offensive attacks and roadside bombs of the enemies of the people of Afghanistan," Interior Ministry's spokesman Tariq Arian said.

Wali Mohammad is one of the dozens of terrorist attacks victims and is under treatment at Mirwais Hospital in Kandahar. He said that he was on his way home when he sustained injuries in a clash between government forces and the Taliban on Kabul-Kandahar Highway.

"I have seen many people. I am one of them. I was driving my car when I was caught in the clash," Mohammad said. Meanwhile, three explosions happened in

Kandahar and Kabul on Saturday, leaving 12 civilians dead, according to local officials. The two explosions in Kandahar occurred in Arghistan district and the explosion in Kabul happened in the western part of the city at a market in Company area.

"Seven incidents of this type have happened in Kandahar over the last month in which civilians have been targeted by bombs planted by militants. At least 21 civilians have been martyred in these incidents," said Jamal Barikzai, the Kandahar police spokesman.

The Taliban has not commented on the data provided by the government.

The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) said it is concerned about the continuation of civilian casualties in the country.

"Our office is very serious in this respect. We are condemning all of these. Perpetrators should be punished," said Shamsuddin Tanwir, an AIHRC official in the southern zone.

"It is probably by the Taliban as these attacks have similarities to those of the Taliban," said Assadullah Nadim, a military affairs analyst. Data provided by the AIHRC shows that 32 civilians were killed and at least 150 others were wounded from July 30 to August 2 - including the three days of the Eid ceasefire.

Iran-Afghanistan-Uzbekistan transit corridor operational

The pilot project of the Iran-Afghanistan-Uzbekistan transit corridor became operational under the TIR system with two trucks starting transporting goods from Iran to Afghanistan and finally to Uzbekistan on Monday.

According to IRICA Director of Transit Bureau Mostafa Ayati, following the recent successful opening of the KTAI corridor and the shipment of goods from Shahid Rajaei customs in south Iran to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan on 5 August, two transit cargoes from this customs left Dogarun border customs for Afghanistan and then to Uzbekistan on Monday.

"The development of transit corridors through Afghanistan as a short and low-cost route to Central Asian countries has been done via TIR system and with the cooperation of the International Road Transport Union (IRU), and Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), IRICA, and Iran Chamber of Commerce," he said.

"With the pilot opening of this corridor, it seems that Afghanistan is seriously



determined to develop transit in its territory and connect Central Asian countries to southern waters, including the ports of the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman (Chabahar)," he added. "The new Iran-Afghanistan-Uzbekistan corridor, as a new short and low-cost route, can play an effective role in developing trade and regional cooperation, and will lead to stable peace and security in Afghanistan," Ayati said.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran is the most economical route for the transit of goods from Central Asian countries due to short access to open waters," the official said, "The development of new routes, including the Iran-Afghanistan-Uzbekistan corridor, will end in the improvement of faster transportation of cargoes and reduction of costs."

"In fact, this route, along with the Turkmenistan route, helps to promote transportation, transit, and trade in the

Ecoregion," he added.

Back in late July, Iran sent two cargoes from Shahid Rajaei Port in the southern port city of Bandar Abbas to Kyrgyzstan through Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran (KTAI) corridor.

As Ayati informed at the time, the KTAI Corridor is established as a shortcut for transiting goods from Iran's southern ports to Central Asian countries including Afghanistan and Tajikistan.

WHO urges...

contact and test them also."

Getting the basics right provides a clear picture of where the virus is and the necessary targeted actions to suppress transmission and save lives, Tedros added. "Doing so means that where there are cases, the government can quickly implement targeted measures and focus on control efforts where they are needed the most."

He said countries such as France, Germany, South Korea, Spain, Italy and the UK had significant outbreaks of the virus, "but when they took action, they were able to suppress it."

In recent days, the UK had put areas in northern England under stay-home orders as clusters of cases were identified.

"Whether countries or regions have successfully eliminated the virus, suppressed transmission to a low level or are still in the midst of a major outbreak, now is the time to look at it all. By investing in the basics of public health, we can save both lives and livelihoods," said Tedros.

Countries that have done this successfully use a risk-based approach to reopen segments of societies, including schools.

The pandemic has claimed over 731,000 lives in 188 countries and regions since it originated in China last December, according to the US-based Johns Hopkins University.

More than 19.8 million infections have been reported worldwide, including over 12.1 million recoveries. The US, Brazil and India have the highest numbers of cases -- over 10 million in total.

It is 'Peace...

his country's support to Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and cooperation with the war-hit country, saying they stood by the Afghan government in the peace process.

Afghan Cabinet...

each other and that is why they do not agree on governors and ministers," said Abdul Rauf Shapoon, lawmaker.

In the political agreement, Abdullah's share includes appointing half the cabinet and the introduction of the members of the High Council of National

The role of...

for foreign investment.

But the lack of security in many parts of the region has discouraged sponsorship by investment firms and other international players. If this continues, will open the door to extremist groups and non-governmental individuals to the exploitation of the country's national resources, and will provide them with more financial resources and the possibility of greater insecurity.

Perspective What is clear is that Afghanistan's vast discovered mineral reserves could be seen as an opportunity to make the country more secure

He said his country would support two outcomes of the intra-Afghan talks --- one for a peaceful, independent, united and democratic Afghanistan and the other for maintaining the political, economic and social

Reconciliation.

"I hope that Dr. Abdullah Abdullah will announce the members of reconciliation council as soon as possible and that the cabinet will be completed," said Shahzada Massoud, a political analyst.

"Again, it is like the government of national unity, in which every ministry is lead by a acting

achievements of the past 19 years.

He said, "We will publish the achievements of the last 19 years on a daily basis and the cooperation of the U.S. in the same period as well."

minister," said Tamim, a resident of Kabul.

But sources say one dispute is over the nomination of the minister for the Ministry of State for Peace, where Abdullah has nominated Mustafa Mastoor for the ministry, and the president wants to nominate someone else.

and help it achieve its political and economic goals, but also as a threat to its security and as an opportunity for the influence of other actors. It should also be noted that, in principle, any domestic and foreign investment in Afghanistan's vast and diverse resources is tied to a variable called "security and stability." But the reality is that the government has failed to come up with a comprehensive approach to managing Afghanistan's underground reserves, and in practice, contrary to the plans it has been made, profits from this sector have fallen far short. Therefore, if the Afghan government fails to provide

adequate security in the short and medium terms, it should not be expected that its economic programs for domestic and foreign mineral exploitation and investment will have a significant impact.

What is clear is that Afghanistan's mineral sector has so far failed to provide an opportunity for improved security. But if peace talks are finally concluded and the Taliban shift their approach to providing security, this will provide an important opportunity to encourage foreign investment. Otherwise, the lack of security will continue to be the biggest challenge to exploiting Afghanistan's natural resources.

Ghani Signs...

The resolution also stated that the members of the Loya Jirga believe that women, as half of the body of society, should have a legal and political status and play a constructive role and participation in all stages of the process.

The Loya Jirga members also believe that the Constitution is a national guarantee which must be preserved, but, if necessary, it is possible to amend it, in accordance with the mechanism provided for within it, the resolution said.

The resolution mentioned that the Afghan security forces are guardians of the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country and must be "supported and strengthened."

According to government data, out of the 400 prisoners in question, 156 of them have been sentenced to death, 105 of them are accused of murder, 34 of them are accused of kidnapping that led to murder, 51 of them are accused of drug smuggling, 44 of them are on the blacklist of the Afghan government and its

allies, 6 of them are accused of other crimes, 4 are accused of unspecified crimes.

The list of 5,000 prisoners was given to the Afghan government by the Taliban to be released ahead of intra-Afghan negotiations, which are now expected to be held in Doha. So far, the government has released 4,600 of the prisoners on the Taliban list, and an additional 500 that were not on the Taliban list. These last 500 were freed during Eid in response to the Taliban's announcement of a ceasefire.

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Lebanese government resigns in full

The Lebanese government resigns in full, Lebanon's health minister, Hamad Hasan said.

"Lebanon's Prime Minister Hassan Diab will soon announce the complete resignation of our government," he told journalists upon leaving the palace.

Public Works and Transport Minister Michel Najjar confirmed this decision of the government of technocrats. "We are not resigning to relieve ourselves of responsibility. Ministers will carry on with their duties until the new government is formed," he said.

As it was announced to journalists at

the Serail Palace, the prime minister will officially announce the resignation of the government during his TV appearance at 19:30 (same time in Moscow).

The cabinet of technocrats was formed on January 21 and received a vote of confidence on February 11. Diab's government was supported by the parliamentary majority led by the pro-presidential Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) and the Shiite Amal-Hezbollah tandem. Parties of the pro-Western camp declined to participate in the cabinet and joined the opposition.



A look at the world

Lukashenko says protests were orchestrated from Poland, UK, Czech Republic

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said on Monday that protests on Sunday evening had been orchestrated by means of telephone calls from Poland, the United Kingdom, and the Czech Republic.

"We traced calls from abroad, and as a former intelligence officer you know that. Calls came from Poland, Great Britain, and the Czech Republic to control, I beg your pardon, sheep: they don't understand what they are doing and are easy to be controlled," BelTA agency quoted him as saying at a meeting with chairman of the CIS Executive Secretariat Sergei Lebedev, who headed a CIS observer mission at Sunday's presidential elections.



According to Lukashenko, Russian, Polish and Ukrainian citizens attempted to take part in mass protests that took place in Belarus.

"I'm not going to mention Poland: they've already settled down there, trying to pull the strings as well. I'm not going to talk about Ukraine: people came from there. I'm sure this is not state policy, however, there are many "Maidan-crazy" people over there whom I've already mentioned. Unfortunately, some people came from Russia as well," Lukashenko said, quoted by BelTA news agency.

Lukashenko has vowed to prevent Maidan-like events and appropriately respond to attempts to tear the country apart.

"I said that no Maidan-like events would take place here, no matter how much some might want it to happen. So everyone needs to calm down," Lukashenko said.

The head of state pledged to adequately respond to attempts to destabilize the situation in Belarus. "We won't let anyone tear the country apart," he added.

WHO urges action to contain virus as cases near 20M



Behind the rising numbers of registered novel coronavirus cases and deaths -- both expected this week to reach 20 million and 750,000, respectively -- is "a great deal of pain and suffering," and leaders need to embrace new measures to turn the outbreak around, the top official of the World Health Organization (WHO) said Monday.

Addressing a bi-weekly COVID-19 webinar for journalists Monday, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said: "I know many of you are grieving and that this is a difficult moment for the world."

"But I want to be clear, there are green shoots of hope and no matter where a country, a region, a city or a town is -- it's never too late to turn the outbreak around," he said, singling out countries that had succeeded in containing the virus.

Leaders need to take action and citizens need to embrace new measures, said Tedros. He cited countries in the Mekong Region in Southeast Asia, as well as New Zealand, Rwanda and many island nations across the Caribbean and the Pacific that were able to suppress the virus early.

"New Zealand is seen as a global example, and over the weekend, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern celebrated 100 days with no community transmission, while stressing the need to remain cautious," said Tedros. "Rwanda's progress is due to a similar combination of strong leadership, universal health coverage, well-supported health workers and clear public health communications."

The WHO chief noted that all testing and treatment for COVID-19 was free in Rwanda, so there were no financial barriers to getting tested. "And when people test positive for the virus, they're isolated and health workers then visit every potential ... **P3**

Raed Salah warns of Israeli plans against Al-Aqsa

Palestinian resistance icon Sheikh Raed Salah warned Sunday against the dangers that surround Al-Aqsa Mosque in occupied Jerusalem from plans by Israeli authorities.

Salah, the head of the Islamic Movement in Israel, was hosted in an online seminar by the Jerusalem Commission of the Ankara Civil Society Platform (ACSP) in Turkey shortly before he begins a 28-month prison sentence on Aug. 16.

He said the Israeli plans began with the occupation of the holy city in June 1967 when the first Israeli assault on the mosque was launched a few days after capturing the city with the destruction of the Mughrabi (Moroccan) quarter adjacent to the Al-Aqsa compound and then setting the mosque on



fire in 1969.

He said Israeli assaults since then have continued on a regular basis and are characterized these days by Israeli settlers breaking into Al-Aqsa to perform Talmudic rituals inside Islam's third holiest mosque.

Sheikh Salah said all political parties in Israel agree on maintaining Israeli control over Jerusalem, noting "there is a consensus on maintaining the occupation of the city in an attempt to isolate Al-Aqsa Mosque and then destroy it."

Commenting on the role of the Palestinian people -- especially in Jerusalem -- to defend the mosque, he said Palestinians have stood with steadfastness against all Israeli attempts. Sheikh Salah hailed efforts by Turkey and Malaysia at official and grassroots levels to defend and support Al-Aqsa.

He also stressed the importance of spreading knowledge among Muslims worldwide to keep them aware of what is going on in occupied Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Despite the endless Israeli attacks on Sheikh Salah, he has said on various occasions that he is determined to continue to defend Al-Aqsa. "Whatever the cost will be, we won't ... **P2**



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