

ARAB DISPATCH

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North Africa

#Libya – Bashagha comes back as Interior Minister



Source: Al Jazeera

On the 3rd of September, the Prime Minister of the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA), Fayeze al-Sarraj, has lifted the Minister of Interior Fathi Bashagha's temporary suspension.

The Prime Minister made an official statement saying that, after a meeting was held with Minister Bashagha on his role and responsibilities over the excess use of violence by the GNA's security forces

during the demonstrations that affected Tripoli on the 23rd of August against corruption among the political establishment and the dire living conditions.

According to the statement, during the five hours meeting Bashagha confirmed “*the cohesion of all security institutions and that they work under the leadership of the Prime Minister al-Sarraj with the coordination of al-Sarraj’s Presidential Council*”.

The quick reintroduction of the Minister of Interior, that according to *The Arab Weekly*, was suspended indeed after his earlier visit to Ankara without the coordination of the Prime Minister al-Sarraj, rising suspicions on an alleged coup supported by Turkey, might manifest the actual weakness of the Prime Minister al-Sarraj against the growing popular and military support gained by the Minister of Interior Bashagha who seems to be the real Prime Minister.

To know more about this topic:

- *Arab News*, Libya unity government names new defense officials after protests, 29/08/20, available at: <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1726591/middle-east>
- *Daily Sabah*, Libya’s sacked Bashagha says ‘ready to be questioned’ as UN calls for inclusive political process, 30/08/20, available at: <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/libyas-sacked-bashagha-says-ready-to-be-questioned-as-un-calls-for-inclusive-political-process/news>
- *The Arab Weekly*, Power struggle between Sarraj, Bashagha could mean Tripoli-Misrata clashes, 31/08/20, available <https://thearabweekly.com/power-struggle-between-sarraj-bashagha-could-mean-tripoli-misrata-clashes>
- *Libya Herald*, Serraj backs down over sacking his dominant Interior Minister, 04/09/20, available at: <https://www.libyaherald.com/2020/09/04/serraj-backs-down-over-sacking-his-dominant-interior-minister/>

Levant

#GazaStrip – Hamas agrees over a Qatari-mediated truce with Israel



Sources: *Jerusalem Post*

On the 31st of August, Yahya Sinwar, leader of the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, announced that a Qatari-mediated deal has been achieved to reduce tensions between Gaza and Israel.

The mediation brokered by the Qatari envoy Mohammed al-Amadi aims at containing the latest escalation of violence between Hamas and Israel on the Gaza Strip. Since the 6th of August, Gaza based groups affiliated to Hamas are launching explosive balloons and rockets across the fence while Israel is answering with night airstrikes targeting Hamas military spots. On the 11th of August tensions between the two sides reached their peak and Israel decide to close Gaza's Kerem Shalom good-crossing and, few days later, to ban Palestinians fishermen from the Gaza's fishing zone in retaliation for Hamas rocket fire and the launching of incendiary balloons across the fence.

According to *Al Jazeera*, after Qatar's mediation, Hamas has agreed with stopping launching explosives while Israel will lift the good crossing blockade, the ban from fishing and will restore the fuel supplies to Gaza power station suspended 13 years ago.

Additionally, the Hamas-linked *Sama News* reported that the Qatar envoy during his visit discussed with the Israeli gas company the pending natural gas pipeline project, proposed in 2015 but repeatedly postponed due to cross-border violence.

The natural gas pipeline if implemented would be able to transfer yearly up to one billion cubic meters of gas from Negev to Gaza, providing the coastal enclave with almost all its energy needs. With the implementation of the Gas Pipeline, El-Amadi is also hoping to de-escalate tensions between the two countries and to rein Hamas pressure on Israel for its electricity deficit.

To know more about this topic:

- *Al Jazeera*, Hamas says deal reached to end escalation of violence with Israel, 31/08/20, available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/08/hamas-announces-deal-escalation-israel-gaza-200831185721251.html>
- *Middle East Eye*, Hamas announces deal to end Gaza-Israel escalation, 31/08/20, available at: <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/hamas-israel-gaza-deal-escalation-qatar-mediation>
- *The Times of Israel*, Qatari envoy said to meet Israeli gas company to discuss pipeline to Gaza, 01/09/20, available at: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/qatari-envoy-says-hell-meet-israeli-gas-company-to-discuss-pipeline-to-gaza/>

Gulf

#Bahrain – After the UAE, Bahrain might follow normalisation



Source: Press TV

On the 1st of September Jared Kushner, advisor for the White House, announced a US tour in the Gulf region to normalise diplomatic ties between Arab countries and Israel, following the, so called, Abraham agreement, reached between Israel and the United Arab Emirates on the 13th of August.

After flying with an Israeli delegation to the United Arab Emirates, the US adviser flew to Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Qatar.

Although Saudi Arabia recently allowed for the first time an Israeli flight to use its airspace, the Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman discussed during Kushner's visit to the Kingdom *"the need for the Palestinians and the Israelis to resume negotiations and reach a lasting peace"*. The meeting did not tackle directly any possible recognition of Israel by the Kingdom.

Also the Bahraini King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa during his meeting with Jared Kuser did not comment directly on a possible future normalisation with Israel but he praised the United Arab Emirates for their major role in defending Islamic interests.

Although no gulf countries did comment or mention any possible normalising deal with Israel, Jared Kushner stated that other gulf countries might follow the UAE move.

On the other hand, only few days ago the Us Secretary of the State, Mike Pompeo, held meetings with Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa and his son. On the 26th of August the US diplomat landed in Manama most probably hoping to establish further links between Israel and the Arab Gulf.

During his visit to the Sultanate he spoke with King Hamad about the importance of building regional peace and the need of Gulf unity in countering Iran, an historic enemy for both Israel and the Gulf states. Additionally, on this occasion King Hamad stressed the importance of intensifying efforts towards a two-state solution for an independent Palestine with east Jerusalem as its capital, rejecting implicitly, any possible normalising deal with Israel.

However, in this regard, it is worth to mention, that back in 2017 the king seemed to be more open to the idea of lifting the Arab boycott against Israel stating that "*he doesn't understand what the boycott against Israel accomplishes*". In the 1990's the turning point was the end of the boycott by the GCC in connection with the then very promising Oslo Agreements that fully involved the Palestinians (1993).

To know more about this topic:

- *Haaretz*, Two US rabbis say Bahrain's King wants Arab boycott of Israel to end, 22/09/17 available at: <https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/two-u-s-rabbis-say-bahrain-s-king-wants-arab-boycott-of-israel-to-end-1.5452735>
- *Al Jazeera*, Bahrain rejects US push to normalise relations with Israel, 26/08/20, available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/08/bahrain-rejects-push-normalise-relations-israel-200826143913425.html>
- *Daily Sabah*, Pompeo holds closed-door meeting with royal family in Bahrain, 26/08/20, available at: <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/mid-east/pompeo-holds-closed-door-meeting-with-royal-family-in-bahrain>
- *Al Jazeera*, After UAE-Israel deal, Kushner pushes other Arab states for more, 02/09/20, available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/09/uae-israel-deal-kushner-pushes-arab-states-200901221048938.html>

#ArabInsight

By Maria Bagnara

#Lebanon – Reactions to the new Prime Minister



Source: The Arab Weekly

On the 31st of August, President Michel Aoun announced the nomination of the Lebanese envoy to Germany, Mustapha Adib, as the new Prime Minister. Former adviser to the Premier Najib Mikati, Adib will be the second Prime Minister to be elected in the last eight months, following Hassan Diab's resignation few days after Beirut's devastating blast.

The new PM received votes from 90 out of 128 parliament members and was endorsed by the most influential ruling parties: Christian Lebanese Forces, the Shia movement Hezbollah and the Sunni Future Movement.

During his first speech at the Baabda Presidential Palace, the incoming PM stressed the necessity to act quickly and when asked about his agenda he answered: “*there is not time for talk, promises or wishes, it’s time to focus on a new government to be formed as soon as possible*”.

Although the new designated Prime Minister has been endorsed by most of the Lebanese ruling parties and welcomed by the French President Emmanuel Macron during his last visit to Beirut on the 31st of August, political observers raised concerns about his nomination.

According to *al-Qabas* newspaper, many analysts and politicians believe that this nomination might bring back the political settlement to the era of Michel Aoun and Hezbollah Shiite Movement. The political analyst Aby Najm stated to *al-Qabas* that the Prime Minister Adib represents a “*نسخة منقحة عن دياب*” - “*revised copy of the former PM Hassan Diab*”.

The President of the Christian Democratic Political party (Hizb al-Kataeb), Samy Gemayel, expressed on his *Twitter page* his frustration over the nomination of Mustapha Adib by commenting: “*new manoeuvres for a failing government to re-float itself*”, adding that “*الألية واضحة: واحد بقرّر، جزء بنقذ وجزء بغطّي*” - “*tools are clear: one takes a decision, while one implements it and the other one covers it up*”. He concluded by writing: “*الهدف: استغناء الناس ومنع التغيير*” - “*the goal is to fool people and prevent any change*”.

Much stronger accusations arrived from Rafiq Hariri’s eldest son, Bahaa Hariri, who criticises the alleged closeness of the appointed Prime Minister to the Shiite movement by stating to *al-Markaziya* newspaper: “*مصطفى أديب هو وكيل آخر لنظام لبنان القديم - من غير المقبول أن يدير أمراء الحرب والمليشيات بلدنا.. نحن بحاجة إلى تغيير*” - “*Mustafa Adeb is another agent of the old Lebanon regime - it is unacceptable that warlords run our country, we need a complete change to achieve a new Lebanon*”.

Moreover, the civil society and, between them many “*أبناء ثورة ١٧ تشرين*” - “*sons of the 17th October Revolution*” did not accepted Mustapha Adib’s nomination as the new Prime Minister. Wassef Habib al-Harakeh, lawyer and civil activist deeply involved in last October’s protests, strongly rejected Mustapha Adib’s nomination. He expressed his frustration to *al-Markaziya* news agency stating:

“*كلّ سلطة تقبل إماءات خارجية من دون الاستماع في المقابل إلى صوت شعبها تعتبر ساقطة أخلاقياً وإنسانياً ووطنياً وفاقدة لأي*” - “*authorities accepting orders from outside the country without listening to the voice of its people lack of morality, humanity, love for the nation and legality*”. Commenting on Michel Aoun’s appointment of Mustapha Adib as the new Prime Minister he said: “*هذه السلطة تستخدم الكثير من الوسائل لغاية واحدة: بقاؤها*” - “*this government is adopting many manoeuvres for its main purpose: to survive*”.

On the other hand, Hassan Nasrallah, leader of the Shia Party Hezbollah, one of the major political forces in Lebanon, did not comment on Mustafa Adib's nomination. However, on the 30th of August on the occasion of the 10th of Muharram, the day of Ashura, during which Shia Muslims mourn the martyrdom of the Prophet's cousin, Husayn, he delivered a [speech](#) commenting on Macron's call, followed by President Michel Aoun, for a new political pact in Lebanon to be different from the current sect-based political system. During his speech Hassan Nasrallah declared that “*الحزب منفتح على أي نقاش حول عقد سياسي*” - “*the party is open to discuss over a new political pact in Lebanon as long as it respects the will of Lebanese citizens*”.

According to [al-Markaziya](#), many political analysts believe that Hezbollah are taking advantage from Macron's call for a new political pact to strengthen their position in the future government. Hezbollah's goal is in fact to amend the sectarian political system based on the equal division of parliamentary seats between Muslims and Christians in order to introduce a tripartite political system divided between Christians, Sunnis and Shiites.

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