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MONDAY, MAY 29, 2017 / RAMADAN 3, 1438 AH

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44 PAGES

150 FILS

Laptop ban may expand

WASHINGTON, May 28, (AFP): US Homeland Security John Kelly said Sunday that he was considering banning laptop computers on international flights into and out of the country, amid signs of "a real threat."

Kelly made his remarks during the Memorial Day weekend, one of the busiest travel periods in the US, and at a time when the bombing at a concert in Manchester, England has raised concerns that further attacks — possibly involving explosives packed in electronic devices — might be planned.

"There's a real threat — numerous threats against

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Migratory Passages: Human, Literary, Planetary



Photo by Omar Nakib

Mai Al-Nakib, an associate professor of English and comparative literature at Kuwait University and author of the award-winning short story collection *The Hidden Light of Objects*, talks about migratory passages.

After Iftar **بعد الإفطار**

— See Page 19 —

WORSHIP WITH LOVE, NOT TERROR

'Zain' video goes viral

2 mn views

KUWAIT CITY, May 28, (AFP): A video advertisement that depicts a would-be suicide bomber confronted by the faithful has gone viral two days into the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan.

"Worship your God with love, not terror" is the main message of the three-minute advert posted Friday online by Kuwaiti telecommunications giant Zain, which operates across the Middle East.

"I will tell God everything," says the voiceover of a child at the beginning of the ad as a man is seen preparing a bomb.

"That you've filled the cemeteries with our children and emptied our school desks ..."

The video featuring Emirati pop star Hussain al-Jassmi has registered nearly two million views on Zain's YouTube page and more than 4,000 shares on Facebook.

It features images from bombings across the region claimed by Al-Qaeda or the Islamic State group.

But it ends on a positive note with footage of a happy wedding and cheerful children dressed in white.

"We will encounter their hatred with songs of love," concludes a caption superimposed on a black background.

Gulf countries are part of the US-led coalition bombing IS extremists in Syria and Iraq. Some of them have also been targeted by attacks.

The month of Ramadan began on Saturday.

During that time, believers abstain from eating, drinking — even of water — smoking and sexual relations between sunrise and sunset.

The fast is conceived as a spiritual struggle against the seduction of earthly pleasures.

Zain is a leading mobile telecommunications provider in the Middle East and North Africa.

Zain operates in Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, South Sudan; and in Lebanon as touch (under a management contract).

Listed on the Kuwait Stock Exchange, there are no restrictions on Zain shares as the company's capital is 100% free float and publicly traded. The largest shareholder is the Kuwait Investment Authority with a 24.6% stake as of March 31, 2016.

MPs mull traffic issue, warn ministry on prices

By **Abubakar A. Ibrahim**
Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, May 28: The parliamentary Public Utilities Committee discussed Sunday the traffic issue with the government team.

Committee member MP Khalil Al-Saleh disclosed that they deliberated on opinions of the ministries of Interior and Public Works about the issue. He said the committee confirmed the Ministry of Public Works has not been provided with sufficient budget to address the problem.

He added the committee will ask the government to set up a company for buses due to the traffic congestion caused by many buses plying through the streets and to lay down clear strategy for eliminating traffic congestion. He also unveiled his plan to submit proposal on the government's working hours to start from 9:00 am and end at 5:00 pm.

Meanwhile, Parliament Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanim stressed the need to hold special sessions to complete deliberations on the reports of the Budgets and Final Accounts Committee within the current legislative round. He said he will invite parliamentary members to special sessions on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday this week and next week in accordance with Article 85 of the Constitution.

He added the current legislative round is expected to end by the middle of Ramadan, although the Parliament Office has yet to set the date. He explained the office had earlier proposed June 15, 2017 as the last day of the current legislative round to finish everything before the last 10 days of Ramadan but nothing has been finalized until now.

In another development, the Human Rights Committee discussed the criteria for granting pardon and alternative punishment with representatives of the ministries of Justice and Interior.

Committee Chairman MP Adel Al-Damkhi revealed the committee will submit its

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Ramadan Timings

Iftar	Monday	18:41
Imsak	Tuesday	03:06

Newswatch

DUBAI: The families of five Bahrainis killed during a security raid last week accused authorities of depriving them from bidding farewell to their loved ones after authorities buried the bodies without their permission.

An interior ministry official said the five were buried on Friday after having contacted the families to attend funeral services, only to change their minds later, the Arabic-language al-Wasat newspaper reported on Sunday.

The dispute over the burial was likely to increase tensions in the Sunni-ruled Gulf Arab island where a government crackdown on opponents has already angered majority Shi'ite Muslims who have been demanding a bigger share in running the Western-allied country.

Authorities said the five killed were among a group that attacked security forces during a raid in Diraz, the village of Shi'ite Muslim spiritual leader Ayatollah Isa Qassim, and that nearly 300 people were also arrested.

In a statement received by Reuters on Sunday, the families said they had received a call on Friday to send two male members to a local police station. (RTRS)

DUBAI: Descendants of the founding father of Saudi Arabia's Wahabi brand of Islam have sought to distance themselves from Qatar's ruling family, according to a statement published on Sunday, in a further sign of a rift among Gulf Arab states.

In the front-page statement, Saudi
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A picture taken on May 28, 2017 shows the Burj Khalifa Tower in Dubai lit with the colours of the Egyptian flag in solidarity with the victims of the attack on an Egyptian bus carrying Coptic Christians in Minya province on May 26. (AFP)

Copt survivors recount horror

CAIRO, May 28, (Agencies): Video interviews with survivors of a deadly attack by Islamic militants on a bus taking Egyptian Christians to a remote desert monastery are painting a picture of untold horror, with children hiding under their seats to escape gunfire.

The videos surfaced on social media networks on Sunday, two days after 29 were killed in the attack on a desert road south of the capital. The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the attack on Friday. It was the fourth attack against Christians in Egypt since December to be claimed by the IS. The string of attacks have killed more than 100 and injured scores.

One survivor, a small boy who

seemed to be about six, said his mother pushed him under her seat and covered him with a bag. A young woman speaking from her hospital bed said the assailants ordered the women to surrender their jewelry and money before they opened fire, killing the men first and then some of the women.

The woman said the gunmen were masked and wore military uniforms.

Bishop Makarios, the top Coptic Orthodox cleric in Minya, the province where the attack took place, said the assailants told Christian men they ordered off the bus they would spare their lives if they converted to Islam.

"They chose death," said Makarios, who has been an outspoken critic of the

government's handling of anti-Christian violence in Minya, where Christians account for more than 35 percent of the population, the highest anywhere in Egypt.

"We take pride to die while holding on to our faith," he said in a television interview aired late Saturday.

Makarios confirmed that the assailants stole the women's jewelry and his contention that the men were ordered off the bus before being killed was also confirmed by a video clip purportedly in the immediate aftermath of the shooting. This video showed at least four or five bodies of adult men lying on the desert sand next to the bus; women and

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A member of the Iraqi forces advances in Mosul's western al-Saha neighbourhood on May 28. (AFP) — See Page 37

US\$/KD	0.30330/40
Euro/KD	0.3396
Yen/KD	0.0027
British\$/KD	0.3889
KSE	-37.87 pts at closing May 26 See Page 35
DOW	-2.67 pts at closing May 26
Nasdaq	+4.94 pts at closing May 26
FTSE	+29.92 pts at closing May 26
Nikkei	-126.29 pts at closing May 26
Gold	1,265.05 per oz (London)
NYMEX crude	\$49.79 per barrel
Brent crude	\$52.16 per barrel
3-month \$ LIBOR rate	1.20178%



Mai Al-Nakib

Photo credit Omar Nakib

After **Iftar** **بعد الإفطار**

MIGRATORY PASSAGES: HUMAN, LITERARY, PLANETARY

By **Mai Al-Nakib**

Special to the Arab Times

The story of humanity is a story of migration. We are here, all of us, because 100,000 years ago, our homo sapien ancestors migrated out of Africa into the great unknown. That's taking the long view. But even if we take a much nearer view, our lives are, in essence, migrations from birth to death or—to be slightly less dramatic—from childhood to adolescence to adulthood to middle age to old age. And if we are lucky enough to reach old age, even if we have never chosen or been forced to move, our surroundings will have changed enough to make us feel like migrants or foreigners in our own homes. Long view or short, these are migratory passages we all share.

Today, as we well know, migration is a blood-soaked affair with desperate people attempting to escape war, economic hardship, persecution, or injustice. Under such dire conditions, movement isn't about choice, but survival. The passage is difficult, often deadly, and arrival at a destination (not always chosen) is rarely easy, even in the best instances. From Palestine, Lebanon, and Iran to Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, our part of the world has experienced and continues to experience more than its share of forced movement under horrific circumstances.

Kuwait is, and always has been, a country of migratory flows. Kuwait was first settled by migrating nomads from Najd in the eighteenth century. Migrants from Iran arrived in the nineteenth century. In the 1940s, the first wave of Palestinians migrated to Kuwait, helping to prepare the conditions for the establishment of Kuwait as a modern nation-state. 1967 saw a second wave of Palestinians arrive. Until the invasion, 380,000 Palestinians helped to contribute in indispensable ways to the ongoing development of Kuwait and to the vibrant and dynamic composition of its community. Kuwait was and remains a destination for migrant labor from South Asia, the Philippines, and Egypt.

Demographically Kuwait is composed of about seventy percent non-Kuwaiti residents and thirty percent Kuwaiti citizens. This is a number that bothers screeching politicians and some ostensibly patriotic citizens. One reason given for this concern is that the high number of non-Kuwaiti residents puts a strain on public infrastructure—healthcare, roads, and other services. Another familiar

reason we hear is that the high number of non-Kuwaitis dilutes Kuwaiti national identity. A third reason asserted is that the large number is a threat to national security.

These concerns are, of course, completely disingenuous for a number of reasons. It is, after all, the State of Kuwait that allows migrants into the country by issuing visas, and it is the citizens of Kuwait who rely on migrant labor to do the jobs they don't want to. Secondly, Kuwait's kafala system enables the corrupt buying and selling of visas—in effect the buying and selling of human lives and labor. Some citizens are making a lot of money off of this. Thirdly, as a rentier state, Kuwaitis rely on rent income to accrue high profit; they need the seventy percent for that. Kuwaitis alone are allowed to own property; everyone else must rent.

The 70/30 demographic in Kuwait bothers me, too, but for completely different reasons than the ones politicians and their supporters bemoan. It bothers me because it reveals that Kuwait is not—and rarely has been—a home to most of its residents. Migrants arrive in large numbers, but they cannot stay. The post-invasion history of the Palestinians in Kuwait is a tragic case in point. But it is also true of the bidoun, or stateless. It is true for families—Indian, Egyptian, Syrian, among so many others—who come to this country, live and work here for decades, raise their children here, and then, at retirement age, are forced to go. Kuwait's citizenship laws are notoriously exclusionary and selective and have created a situation in which the best of the best and their children are lost to the country that they have contributed to and that has contributed to their development as well. This bizarre, inhumane, unproductive, and uneconomical state of affairs has been the norm since the 1960s. It has never made sense to me.

One of the familiar arguments against naturalizing migrants has to do with the effect they might have on the purity of national identity. We hear this in Europe and the US today against Muslims and Mexicans. On our own terrain, similar rhetoric prevails when it comes to migrant labor, refugees, or the bidoun. Fear, racism, xenophobia, and intolerance color ideological perspectives and, in turn, motivate exclusionary legislation. As we can see globally, this culminates in hatred, violence, and divided societies. The

outcome is brutal and, ultimately, I think—I hope—unsustainable.

Literature and cultural production counter all of this as a matter of course. Some of the most exciting, innovative, and humane literature being created all over the world today is the work of migrants and immigrants or their children. Examples of such writers include Sinan Antoon, Teju Cole, Mohsin Hamid, Salman Rushdie, Rabih Alameddine, Ahdaf Soueif, Jhumpa Lahiri, Edwidge Danticat, among so many others. But literature in general—whether written by immigrants, the children of immigrants, or just good writers—is almost always about the crossing of borders of one kind or another (formal or linguistic, psychological or existential, habitual or societal). The process of writing, like the process of reading, is transformative: You are not the same person at the end of it that you were at the start. Writing is a process of becoming; it is movement, a form of metaphorical migration. This is not to romanticize the process of writing nor that of migration. Nor do I mean to equate the pain and danger involved in forced migration to the sometimes demanding task of writing. However, perhaps it can be illuminating to consider some of the ways in which the things that make writing and reading literature important to so many—the very elements we celebrate and reward in literature—become the very features we fear most when it comes to migrants, refugees, or social outsiders of all stripes. And it might be useful to consider why, in fact, we should think about migrating human beings the same way we do about migrating or, to use Edward Said's term, “traveling” texts—as being full of transformative possibility and wonder, to be embraced and not feared or rejected.

Excellent literature makes us feel out of place, foreigners in our own skin. It challenges our complacency, our normative points of view. It stretches our senses toward unfamiliar perceptions and emotions. This happens in childhood, and, if we continue to cultivate a love of reading, persists into adulthood too. Books are “open-sesame,” to misquote Salman Rushdie, immigrant writer par excellence. They open worlds we might never otherwise have access to. They teach us to imagine otherwise. Because they are texts in our hands, they might seem less threatening than migrants. Yet, as censorship

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Contrary to what governments claim, transformations—in culture, in society—need not be feared. They are happening everywhere, all the time, in small ways we might not be conscious of or in larger ways some might worry about. But such changes are more often than not exciting and inspiring, even if they include problems in need of solving.

and bans demonstrate, books are sometimes registered as threatening by power for many of the same reasons migrants are.

Migrants—like good books—challenge complacencies and attitudes and laws that might not be as tolerant or democratic as they are habitually believed to be by a specific community. Migrants force communities to interrogate exactly what kind of society they are, and whether they might want to transform themselves into something better—more ethical, more considerate, more open to others. For the moment, the official answer to that question is, for the most part, no. However, given the popularity of certain books and writers and the groundswell of grassroots resistance to bigotry visible globally, a degree of social transformation is decipherable. It is not happening fast enough for Syrians, Iraqis, Yemenis, or Palestinians, but it does seem to be occurring nonetheless.

It is a fragile transformation, not sufficiently robust to withstand the overwhelming force of geopolitical determination. It requires protection and cultivation. We have—as a planet—reached a tipping point. It is the planet itself that is at stake. If we continue on the route we are on—climate change be damned—the migration we are witnessing today will seem a mere trickle by comparison with what will unfold. Contrary to what governments claim, transformations—in culture, in society—need not be feared. They are happening everywhere, all the time, in small ways we might not be conscious of or in larger ways some might worry about. But such changes are more often than not exciting and inspiring, even if they include problems in need of solving. As books remind us, with a little imagination, solutions can be found. To sustain our planet, radical transformation is required: a shift in economic values; a modification of ethical practice; a reassessment of what it means to become human in the world. This is no easy task, but it is necessary, and urgently so. And imagine, just imagine, the possibilities.

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Mai Al-Nakib (maialnakib.com) is an associate professor of English and comparative literature at Kuwait University and author of the award-winning short story collection *The Hidden Light of Objects*.