



baseball  
Page 51

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## After Iftar **بعد الافطار**

# Violence in Kuwait: A Sideways Reflection

By Dr Mai Al Nakib

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Special to the Arab Times

Discussions about violence in Kuwait have been on the rise, triggered, perhaps, by the murder of Jaber Samir Yousef at the Avenues Mall in December 2012. Some reacted with shock and sadness; others chose to circulate distasteful jokes about the event by mobile phone. Since then I've heard people



Dr Mai Al Nakib

lament the loss of a more peaceful time, nostalgically looking back to the days when we did not have to lock our front doors. Depending on who you happen to be with, blame shifts onto the *bidoun* (stateless), the *bedu*, the West, members of parliament, the government, the police, *wasta*, the crazies, the sick, the poor, and on and on. However, laying blame on groups or individuals is an inadequate and, frankly, disingenuous response. Disingenuous

because, let's not forget, Jaber Samir Yousef was murdered in a mall surrounded by hundreds of people, yet nothing was done to stop it from happening. Nobody interfered, at least not quick enough. The excuse that people didn't know what was going on does not convince since photos and videos were taken and posted online soon after. In addition, the response is inadequate because it does not account sufficiently for material

history. We are all complicit in the violence of our societies, though given our collective bafflement over recent events, we clearly have no clue how.

Violence does not erupt out of thin air. Violence is constructed, like everything else, through a conjunction of material forces: economic, social, political, and cultural. In *Discourse on Colonialism*, Martiniquean poet and intellectual

Continued on Page 31

## Flyers asked to power up 'cells'

WASHINGTON, July 7. (Agencies): Passengers at some overseas airports that offer US-bound flights will be required to power on their electronic devices in order to board their flights, the Transportation Security Administration said Sunday.

The TSA said it is requiring some overseas airports to have passengers turn on devices such as cellphones before boarding. It says devices that won't power up won't be allowed on planes, and those travelers may have to undergo additional screening.

"As the traveling public knows, all electronic devices are screened by security officers," the TSA said in the release announcing the new steps.

American intelligence officials have been concerned about new al-Qaeda efforts to produce a bomb that would go undetected through airport security. There is no indication that such a bomb has been created or that there's a specific threat to the US.

Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson recently ordered the TSA to call for extra security measures at some international airports with direct flights to the United States. TSA does not conduct screening abroad, but has the ability to set screening criteria and processes for flights flying to the US, according to a Department of Homeland Security official, who was not allowed to discuss the changes publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

### Security

During an interview aired Sunday on NBC'S "Meet The Press," Johnson declined to speculate on whether new security procedures will be required at domestic airports in the future.

"We continue to evaluate things," he said. "The screening we have .... is pretty robust as the American traveling public knows. In this instance we felt that it was important to crank it up some at the last point of departure airports and we'll continually evaluate the situation."

TSA will not disclose which airports will be conducting the additional screening, although it will be at some airports with direct flights to the US. Industry data show that more than 250 foreign airports offer nonstop service to the US.

Aviation remains an attractive target to global terrorists, who are consistently looking for ways to circumvent aviation security measures, the DHS official said. Some details on specific enhancements and locations are sensitive because US officials do not want to give information "to those who would do us harm," the official said.

American intelligence officials said earlier this week that they have picked up indications that bomb makers from Yemen-based al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula have traveled to Syria to link up with affiliates there.

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula has long been fixated on bringing down airplanes with hidden explosives. It was behind failed and thwarted plots involving suicide bombers with explosives designed to be hidden inside underwear and explosives secreted inside printer cartridges shipped on cargo planes.

Over the past year, Americans and others from the West have traveled to Syria to join the fight against the Syrian government. The fear is that fighters with a US or other Western passport, who therefore are subject to less stringent security screening, could carry such a bomb onto an American plane.

US-bound travelers from Europe and the Middle East have faced tighter airport security in recent days over fears

Continued on Page 12

## MP CALLS FOR DECREE ON COLLECTION OF WEAPONS

# Kuwait court bails Barrak

Mol refutes allegations on engaging citizens at Al-Safat Square

By Abubakar A. Ibrahim

Arab Times Staff and Agencies

**KUWAIT CITY, July 7: Opposition leader and former MP Mussallam Al-Barrak was released on KD 5,000 bail after his first court hearing Monday for insulting the Supreme Judicial Council. A large number of his supporters gathered in the court early morning.**

Sources revealed Al-Barrak was brought to the Courts Complex in Reggae in prison clothes, blindfolded and handcuffed. Sources said he voiced objection to the presence of Special Forces at the beginning of the hearing, so the judge ordered them to leave.

Sources quoted Al-Barrak as saying the Criminal Investigation Department did not provide him with medicines and 'suhor' (fasting meal). He also pointed out that Faisal Al-Murshid



Photo by Anwar Daifallah

Former MP Mussallam Al-Barrak is greeted by supporters outside the Courts Complex in Reggae. Al-Barrak was released Monday from detention according to his lawyer Thamer Al-Jadaei.

is no longer a judge as per the law because he already resigned, sources added.

Barrak told the court that before moving to the central jail, he had been detained at the central investigation department "where the treatment was extremely bad."

Barrak's lawyer, Thamer Al-Jadaei told the judge that Barrak's arrest and detention order "were not based on the law and accordingly he must be released by the force of law."

"We cannot accept in Kuwait that the Supreme Judicial Council becomes a police station," said Jadaei. The two lawsuits against Barrak were filed by the judicial council and its chairman.

Monday's ruling comes after

### Ramadan Timings

Iftar ..... Tuesday ..... 18:51  
Imsak ..... Wednesday ... 03:11

five nights of clashes between opposition activists who have been demanding his release and riot police who fired tear-gas and stun grenades and arrested more than 50 people.

Riot police on Sunday fired tear-gas and stun grenades to disperse hundreds of opposition protesters after they started to march toward a Courts Complex in the capital Kuwait City, forcing them to flee.

The interior ministry said a number of protesters had been held while rights activist Mohammad Al-Humaidi said around 30 people were arrested.

Activists said a number of protesters were wounded with at least one of them hospitalised.

They also announced they would keep protesting until all those arrested were released.

Meanwhile, MP Abdul-Hameed Dashti has called for issuance of an emergency decree on the collection of weapons, especially during this critical period. He suggested submission of the decree within 15 days after the opening of the next Parliament.

He also expressed disappointment over the opposition protest actions just because of one person — Al-Barrak. He asserted the country should be the priority, indicating the court will judge Al-Barrak and the opposition can appeal the verdict rather than organizing unauthorized demonstrations.

On another issue, MP Faisal Al-Duwaisan asked Minister of Information Sheikh Salman Al-Hamoud about workers in the overseas offices of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA). He requested the minister to provide him with the following:

■ Copies of decisions on

Continued on Page 12

### Parliament delayed

# General killed ... fightback falters

BAGHDAD, July 7. (Agencies): Shelling west of Baghdad killed the commander of the Iraqi army's 6th division on Monday, Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's security spokesman said.

Staff Major General Najm Abdullah al-Sudani was killed by "hostile shelling" west of the Iraqi capital, Lieutenant General Qassem

Atta told AFP by text message.

Maliki issued a statement offering his condolences on the death of Sudani, who was "martyred on the field of battle".

The premier attended a funeral for Sudani on Monday along with acting defence minister Saadun al-Dulaimi and various senior officers,

the defence ministry said.

Sudani was killed near where security forces have been locked in a months-long standoff with militants who have seized control of the city of Fallujah.

The government lost control of Fallujah and

Continued on Page 12

'Abandoned cylinders contained sarin'

## Govt troops advance in Aleppo

BEIRUT, July 7. (Agencies): Syrian troops advanced in and around the northern city of Aleppo on Monday in what appears to be an attempt to lay siege to rebel-held parts of the country's largest city, activist said Monday.

If successful, it would be the biggest blow to opposition fighters in Syria's largest city since they entered it two years ago. Aleppo, once Syria's commercial center, has been carved up into rebel- and government-controlled areas since an opposition offensive in mid-2012.

The push also comes a month after extremist fighters of the Islamic State group seized territories straddling

Syria and neighboring Iraq where they have declared a self-styled caliphate. Most of the land was seized in June during a push across Iraq.

Rami Abdurrahman, who heads the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, said Monday that reinforcements, including members of the elite Republican Guards and allies from Lebanon's Hezbollah group, had recently arrived in Aleppo.

Abdurrahman and an activist based near the city who goes by the name of Abu al-Hassan said Monday's fighting was concentrated near an army base known as the Infantry Academy that rebels captured two years ago.

Continued on Page 12



Syrians walk amid dust following a reported barrel-bomb attack by Syrian government forces on July 7, in the Tariq al-Bab neighbourhood in the northern city of Aleppo. (AFP)

### Let them fast, Chinese told

BRUSSELS, July 7. (Agencies): Dr Sajjad Karim, in a statement, said he has sent a letter to the EU High Representative Catherine Ashton and China's Ambassador

Continued on Page 12

### NewsWatch

**DUBAI:** The president of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed al-Nahayan, is in good health, his brother, the crown prince of Abu Dhabi, said on Monday, after speculation on social media about his condition.

OPEC member UAE, a key Western ally, is a major oil exporter and a regional financial, trade and tourism hub.

There has been speculation on social media in recent days about the health of the 66-year-old president, who underwent surgery after a stroke in January.

The WAM state news agency quoted Abu Dhabi's crown prince, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahayan, as saying his brother was "well and his health was good". (RTRS)

Continued on Page 12

US\$/KD 0.28200/10
Euro/KD 0.3837
Yen/KD 0.0028
British £/KD 0.4832
KSE -13.95 pts at closing, July 7 See Page 43
Dow -45.85 pts at closing, July 7 See Page 45
Nasdaq -34.40 pts at closing, July 7
FTSE -42.54 pts at closing, July 7
Nikkei -57.69 pts at closing, July 7
Gold \$1,313.00 per oz (London)
NYMEX crude \$103.45 pb
Brent crude \$110.22 pb
3-month \$ LIBOR rate 0.23%



Dr Mai Al Nakib in her study

After **Iftar** بعد الافطار

# Violence in Kuwait: A Sideways Reflection

Violence does not erupt out of thin air. It is constructed, like everything else, through a conjunction of material forces: economic, social, political and cultural. Segregation is systemically violent. Lines of division produce inequality between members of society. This in turn breeds resentment, fuels anger, and over time results in violence.

The way out is to consider how the system might be made less asymmetrical, less unfair.

We need to learn to envision and actively construct a community of difference that thrives on difference toward a cosmopolitan future guaranteed by law and through political and economic practices. This is no humanistic idealism.

It is our ethical responsibility. We are all complicit in the violence of our societies. It is not outside us, someone else's subjective sickness.

Violence is us and it is only through our collective action that it ends.

the evening; or listing deaths in newspapers in two separate columns, one for Kuwaitis, another for non-Kuwaitis, as if even in death differences matter; or denying citizenship to those who may have a right to it (both the murderer, perhaps, and the murdered); or privileging members of one religious sect or ethnicity over another; or protecting the rights of one group of citizens over another; and so on—is systemically violent. The way out of systemic violence is to consider how the system might be made less asymmetrical, less unfair. Kuwait, it seems to me, as a result of its wealth and small size, is in a better position than most to attempt such a transformation.

Opening up our community to difference is not simply a matter of tolerance ("I will tolerate you in my midst even though you are a Hindu or a Bangladeshi or a Filipina or whatever else"). Mere tolerance won't change a thing. We need to learn to envision and actively construct a community of difference that thrives on difference. The dream of identic sameness ("I want my community to be exactly like me") produces rigidity and social stagnation. Since any community will always be multiple, despite dreams, the desire for sameness inevitably produces antagonism. This is where we are today. Where we might head is toward a cosmopolitan future as a society open to difference, not just nominally but really, guaranteed by law and through equitable political and economic practices. This is no humanistic idealism. It is our ethical responsibility. Violence is not outside us, someone else's subjective sickness. Violence is us, and it is only through our collective action that it ends.

## Continued from Page 1

Aimé Césaire argues that the Holocaust should not surprise the West. It was certainly no surprise to the people residing on 85% of the earth's surface, who had suffered a colonial holocaust for hundreds of years. Germany's annihilation of six million Europeans in the 1930s and 40s is not surprising to Césaire. It was, as he put it, a "boomerang effect"—savagery, violence, racism, degradation coming home to Europe, as it were, to roost. He explains, "before [Europeans] were its victims, they were its accomplices." Holocausts were tolerated for hundreds of years because its victims were black, red, yellow, brown; they were not, in other words, white.

Sub-humanizing others for political gain or economic profit cannot persist without repercussions. Hundreds of years of European colonial violence elsewhere generated violence on European soil (two world wars and a Holocaust against European Jews and other marginalized groups). In the United States today, gun violence is a major topic of debate. Dramatic shootings at schools, movie theaters, churches, and of political figures at supermarkets tend to draw more attention than the daily shootings and violence in poor urban areas inhabited mainly by minorities. In the former case, the shooting is blamed on one sick individual with a gun. The latter, inner city violence, is blamed on gangs or drugs. In the mainstream media, the long history of North American violence—from the decimation of the native inhabitants of the land to the 250 years of slavery that financed America's rise to the top—is rarely linked to either. Past violence—

physical, emotional, legal, economic—prepares the conditions for future violence. Violence against North America's native inhabitants and stolen African slave labor helps explain in part the high levels of violence in the US today. European colonial violence against the peoples of the world explains German violence against European Jews, as Césaire argues. German violence against European Jews explains in part ongoing Israeli violence against Palestinians. Césaire makes the case that a civilization which justifies force is "already a sick civilization, a civilization which is morally diseased." In the process of dehumanizing the victims—and using force against another necessitates "seeing the other [person] as an animal," as Césaire asserts—the perpetrators dehumanize, animalize, and objectify themselves.

Given the boomerang effect of violence, we need to consider the conditions of its recent rebound in Kuwait. On the surface, Kuwait does not appear to be a violent place. Kuwaitis rarely die from gunshot wounds. However, newspapers from the last few decades report stories almost daily of stabbings, rapes, and murders of domestic workers and other non-Kuwaiti labor. The key term here is "non-Kuwaiti." Outrage against violence has been muted or non-existent but, rather, because for the most part it happens elsewhere (in Abraq Khaitan or Jileeb Al-Shuyoukh) and to people who, it seems, count less than "we" do.

In his book, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*—to which the title of my article alludes—Slovenian cultural and political theorist Slavoj Žižek

reminds us that violence does not just include direct physical violence, "but also the more subtle forms of coercion that sustain relations of domination and exploitation, including the threat of violence." What appears to explode as "irrational subjective violence" (the murder of Jaber Samir Yousef by a *bidoun* man at the Avenues) is, in fact, as Žižek puts it, a return of "the message that [we ourselves] sent out in its inverted true form." Césaire's boomerang effect. To understand the message of this returned violence, we need to accept that it is not subjective (one individual's act) but rather systemic (objective and collective). In place of bewilderment and quick fix responses (from increased police "security" to capital punishment), we need to spend time thinking about the historical and material components that have shaped it. What, we must ask ourselves, could have produced it and how are we responsible?

Kuwait is a highly segregated community. One of its key historical divisions (between *bedu* and *hathar*) reflects the geographical split between desert hinterland and coast. But this split is only one among many others including: Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti; Arab and non-Arab; Muslim and non-Muslim; Sunni and Shi'i; men and women; citizen and *bidoun*; fundamentalist and secularist; and so on. Such divisions and, in the cases of some of the oppositions mentioned, the laws that maintain them, do not seem inherently violent. They exist everywhere in one form or another. But just because identic divisions exist everywhere in the world doesn't mean we should sanction them here. That Kuwait is a small, rich country exacerbates the prob-

lems such divisive lines of opposition create. Legally sanctioned divisions (between Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis or men and women, for example) buttress other, non-official divisions (between Sunni and Shi'i or *bedu* and *hathar*). Such divisions are not ideologically motivated (that is to say, they do not exist because my beliefs are different than yours, although that's what we tend to think). They exist, rather, to maintain a specific economic reality. Segregation prevents a certain way of life from dissipating. We have only to think of the extreme example of apartheid South Africa to recognize this to be the case. Segregation expresses not only fear of the other, but fear of change and, especially, fear of the loss of economic advantage to others.

It is my contention that violence in Kuwait exists as a result of feelings of frustration, a sense of economic, social, or political injustice, and a lack of recourse to the law, among other key factors that go beyond the scope of this article. Lines of division produce inequality between members of a society (which, let's not forget, include both citizens and non-citizens). This, in turn, breeds resentment, fuels anger, and, over time, results in violence. We act surprised that a *bidoun* murdered Jaber Samir Yousef (himself not a citizen of Kuwait despite his Kuwaiti mother) in cold blood, but we shouldn't be. If we're baffled over it, it's because we're not thinking about the situation adequately, and thinking about what causes violence is, as Žižek insists, something we must do. Segregation—whether it's splitting up the healthcare system so that Kuwaitis get service during the day while non-Kuwaitis are relegated to