

## Local

# Nine human remains identified and returned after 30 years

Martyrs, including Saudi citizen, went missing during Iraqi invasion



KUWAIT: Nine martyrs - eight Kuwaitis and a Saudi - who had been missing since the 1990-1991 Gulf War, were buried yesterday after their remains were identified recently. Interior Minister Sheikh Thamer Al-Ali Al-Sabah and other senior officials attended the funeral ceremony. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAIT: Under the Tripartite Commission's umbrella, nine human remains, including a Saudi citizen, among the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia missing persons list, gone missing during the 1990-1991 Gulf War and whose relatives have remained without news since were officially buried in the State of Kuwait. Finally, after 30 years of painful uncertainty, the families now have clarity on the fate of their loved ones - and our thoughts remain with all those still waiting for answers, hoping that they too

may gain closure in the near future.

This development follows conclusive DNA analyses conducted and matching with Kuwait's database of Prisoners of War (POW) and Missing persons and third-country nationals, led by the General Department of Forensic Evidences in the Ministry of Interior in the State of Kuwait. This enabled the closure of another 20 missing persons' cases among the State of Kuwait missing persons' list earlier this year. The human

remains in question had been found at a burial site in Iraq's Samawa district back in March 2019, thanks to the Iraqi and Kuwaiti authorities' joint efforts assisted by experts from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) within the frame of the Technical Sub-Committee.

The Tripartite Commission and its Technical Sub-Committee were set up in 1991 and 1994, respectively, to help ascertain the fate of people missing in con-

nection with the 1990-1991 Gulf War. They are chaired by the ICRC and composed of representatives of the Republic of Iraq, the State of Kuwait, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, and the Republic of France. The UNAMI joined in 2014 as an observer. The Tripartite Commission members continue to work relentlessly to search for those still unaccounted for in relation to the conflict.

## Pope, Sistani call for...

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in peace and security, and with their full constitutional rights," it said.

His office published an image of the two: Sistani in a black turban with his wispy grey beard reaching down to his black robe and Francis all in white, looking directly at the grand ayatollah. Sistani is extremely reclusive and rarely grants meetings but made an exception to host Francis. The pontiff had landed earlier at Najaf airport, where posters featured a famous saying by Ali, the fourth caliph, who is buried in the holy city. "People are of two kinds, either your brothers in faith or your equals in humanity," read the banners.

Francis then headed straight to the desert site of the ancient city of Ur, where Abraham (PBUH) is believed to have been born in the second millennium BC. "It all started from here," Francis said, after hearing from representatives of Iraq's diverse religious communities. There were Yazidis, whose ancestral heartland of Sinjar was ravaged by the Islamic State (IS) group in 2014, as well as Mandeans, Kakais, Bahais and Zoroastrians.

Shiite and Sunni sheikhs, as well as Christian clerics, were there. Each was wearing their traditional religious garb, with a dozen different types of robe and headdress on display in the red-carpeted pavil-

ion set up for the visit. Iraq is a Muslim-majority country of 40 million whose Christian population has shrunk in the past two decades to just one percent, with minorities still complaining of ostracism and persecution.

During his address, the pope said freedom of conscience and of religion were "fundamental rights" that should be respected everywhere. "We believers cannot be silent when terrorism abuses religion," Francis said, in a message of solidarity with the minorities persecuted under IS rule. He also made an impassioned plea for "unity" after conflict. "Let us ask for this in praying for the whole Middle East. Here I think especially of neighboring war-torn Syria," he said.

Following the prayer service in Ur, the pope headed back to Baghdad to celebrate his first public mass in the country, at the Saint Joseph Cathedral. In front of a sparse gathering of faithful and officials, with attendance limited by coronavirus precautions, he delivered his first-ever liturgy in the Eastern rite.

Francis, a strong proponent of interfaith dialogue, has met top Sunni clerics in several Muslim-majority countries, including Bangladesh, Morocco, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates. Sistani, meanwhile, is followed by most of the world's 200 million Shiites - a minority among Muslims but the majority in Iraq - and is a national figure for Iraqis. In 2019, he stood with Iraqi protesters demanding better public services and rejecting external interference in Iraq's domestic affairs. Pope Francis made a similar plea in Baghdad on Friday. "May partisan interests cease, those outside interests who don't take into account the local population," he said. — AFP

ing in South Surra for the citizen registration office is from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm, expatriate registration office from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm, documentation, private registration and electronic signature from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm and the office to receive cards from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm.

At PACI's Jahra governorate building's citizens registration office, timings are from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm and card collection from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm. At PACI's Ahmadi governorate branch in South Sabahiya, timings are also from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm. Asousi stressed the need to book an appointment to attend personally, which is available on the authority's website.

## Exempting vaccinated...

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from 5:00 pm until 5:00 am. PACI Director General MUSAED AL-ASOUSI said dates have been set to receive the public to record transactions that require personal attendance at the PACI headquarters and cannot be completed through the website.

The working hours at the main head office build-

## Perseverance Mars rover...

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"We're going to do some longer drives," she added. "This is just the beginning."

NASA engineers said they were studying possible routes for longer rover voyages on the surface of Mars. The rover can cover 200 meters per Martian day, which is slightly longer than a day on Earth. And it goes five times faster than Curiosity, its predecessor, which is still functioning eight years after landing on Mars.

Perseverance deputy mission manager Robert Hogg said engineers were also preparing for the first flight of a helicopter drone carried by the rover. Hogg said the rover team was working out flight zones and hoped to conduct the first flight in late spring or early summer. He said the mission had not experienced any major problems so far. "It's all just minor stuff," he said. "Everything we've tried has

worked beautifully."

Perseverance was launched on July 30, 2020 and landed on the surface of Mars on February 18 on a mission to search for signs of past life on the Red Planet. The rover's primary mission will last just over two years but it is likely to remain operational well beyond that. Over the coming years, Perseverance will attempt to collect 30 rock and soil samples in sealed tubes to be sent back to Earth sometime in the 2030s for analysis.

About the size of an SUV, the craft weighs a ton, is equipped with a seven-foot-long robotic arm, has 19 cameras, two microphones and a suite of cutting-edge instruments. So far it has sent back more than 7,000 photographs, including one of a light brown rock that was used to test a device called SuperCam: An ultra-sophisticated French-made camera the size of a shoe box that can shoot a laser beam at rocks up to seven meters away to analyze their makeup.

The rover is only the fifth to set its wheels down on Mars, all of them American. The feat was first accomplished in 1997. The United States is preparing for an eventual human mission to the planet, though planning remains very preliminary. — AFP

## Gaza girl dons mask to heal...

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Jordan and Haiti, around 20 people have been fitted in Gaza, an enclave of two million Palestinians wedged between Israel, Egypt and the Mediterranean Sea. The fitted mask, with adjustable straps to hold onto the face, has to be worn for between six months and a year, depending on the severity of the lesions.

Even though her mask is transparent and fits perfectly with the contours of her soft face, Maram is afraid of being pointed at in the playground. "The mask has made my burns better, but I'm afraid people will laugh at me if I wear it outside the house," the girl shyly confesses, dressed in the black-and-white striped lace uniform of her school, which is run by the

UN agency for Palestinian refugees. "I put it on as soon as I get home from classes."

In fact, she wears it eight hours a day. As for her mother Izdihar Al-Amawi, 31, she keeps her mask on for 16 hours, only removing it during the day to eat. At night, she wears another mask, and she also has special gloves for burns on her hands. "Our wounds have improved thanks to the mask," says Izdihar, who now manages to go about household chores like before the accident. "We were waiting for the taxi after shopping and we suddenly heard a big explosion, then saw fire everywhere," she recalls.

Izdihar and Maram spent two months in hospital undergoing operations. Accepting their disfigured complexions was not easy. "My family refused to look at my face after the accident," says Izdihar. "I only saw my face 50 days after the operation, in the elevator mirror while going to get my mask at the clinic." The mother of four hopes the scars will disappear "in two or three years, as the doctors told us". — AFP