

Headlines:

- **US Withdrawal from Syria Leaves Kurds Backed into a Corner**
- **Saudi Arabia Lets Men & Women Dance Together at a Concert**
- **Pakistan Death-Sentence Courts are Funded by UK**

Details:

US Withdrawal from Syria Leaves Kurds Backed into a Corner

Donald Trump's decision to put an end to the US military operation against the Islamic State (IS) group in Syria has left many observers wondering what might happen to Washington's main partners on the ground, the Kurds, and whether their enemy Turkey offered the president anything in return. Mr Trump's announcement on Wednesday that the 2,000 US troops deployed largely in north-eastern Syria would begin withdrawing immediately was a gift to Turkey, and also to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. By supporting the alliance of Kurdish and Arab militias known as the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), Washington gained indirect control of half of Syria's strategic resources - including many oil fields and dams, and much of its most fertile agricultural land - and leverage in discussions with Mr Assad and his allies Russia and Iran on the country's future. Now the SDF is backed into a corner and the Kurdish militia that dominates the alliance, the People's Protection Units (YPG), faces two probable scenarios. Ankara says the YPG is an extension of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which is banned in Turkey and has fought for Kurdish autonomy there since 1984, and considers it a terrorist organisation. Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan declared last week that the Turkish military was gearing up for a ground incursion into SDF-controlled territory east of the River Euphrates. The Pentagon responded by warning that such unilateral action would be "unacceptable". But on Monday Mr Erdogan said he had discussed his plan with Mr Trump by telephone and that he had given a "positive response". US support for the SDF made the Kurds and their allies into one of the major forces in Syria. However, it also left them with powerful enemies. It was the Washington's announcement in December 2017 that it would help the SDF develop a 30,000-strong "border force" in eastern Syria that led to Russia allowing the Turkish military to attack Afrin. More recently, repeated statements from the Trump administration that the US had decided to stay in Syria until Iranian forces left prompted Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov to level accusations of separatism against the Kurds and their allies. The question of whether Turkey might have offered something in return for the US withdrawal would be relevant to Russia's future position as well. The state department's decision to approve selling the Patriot missile defence system to Turkey, which came on the same day as the withdrawal announcement, suggests that there might have been some co-ordination between Washington and Ankara. However, it is unlikely that Mr Erdogan would cut off all relations with Russia and also come on board with Mr Trump's anti-Iran policies any time soon. [Source: BBC]

Trump has struck a deal with Erdogan to stabilize Syria in exchange for pulling out US troops. The Kurds have once again been betrayed by America. When will Muslims learn foreign powers cannot be trusted when it comes to honour, dignity and Islam.

Saudi Arabia Lets Men & Women Dance Together at a Concert

To hear of Saudi women and men dancing together on the bass line of house music superstar David Guetta is extremely rare. But it now seems like the winds of change have finally swept across the conservative nation. In a video that's now going viral, both men and women are openly dancing to a live DJ set with no fear of an action being taken against

them. The social change taking place in Saudi Arabia has undeniably changed the air of tension and has created an opportunity for many good things to come. But even now it comes at a cost, the leadership must not in any way, be challenged. Despite Prince Mohammad Bin Salman Al Saud's suspicious involvement in Journalist Jamal Khashoggi's death, people are appreciating his effort to open up the kingdom to forms of western entertainment. [Source: Indian Times]

The Saudi regime is working overtime to debase the Islamic moral standards of society and please the West.

Pakistan Death-Sentence Courts are Funded by UK

British taxpayers are funding prosecutions in Pakistan that have led to dozens of death sentences, according to newly disclosed details of a secretive UK aid programme. The documents reveal that the Foreign Office is supporting specialist civilian courts that prosecute terrorist suspects in what the UK government's global security strategy calls a "rule of law" programme in Pakistan. They reveal that the UK government has supported the project since 2016, during which time the courts have handed down 59 death sentences, some of which are likely to be unsafe convictions. A parliamentary response last week said the UK government had spent £10.39m on the Pakistan programme, the bulk of the money – £9.32m – coming from the overseas aid budget. One strand of the project, the "counter terrorism associated prosecutorial reforms initiative" (Capri) "aims to increase Pakistan's civilian capacity to investigate, detain, prosecute and try terrorists in line with international standards and human rights norms". However legal charity Reprieve says it is impossible for the UK support civilian terrorism courts in Pakistan in accordance with international law because the courts do not meet recognised standards. Campaigners for Reprieve say death sentences are imposed for offences such as kidnapping, despite international law prohibiting the death sentence for anything but murder. Pakistan's anti-terrorism act defines terrorism as any crime or threat designed to create a "sense of fear or insecurity in society" – leading to prosecutions of people who have no connection with extremism. The UN Human Rights Committee said last year that it "remains concerned by the very broad definition of terrorism" and "absence of procedural safeguards". Critics also say Pakistan's civilian courts do not meet due-process safeguards for issuing death sentences that are required by international law. Since the Foreign Office began funding Capri, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan's death penalty database shows courts sentenced 31 people to death in 2016, 18 in 2017 and so far 10 this year. "In the last three years, British taxpayers have spent £10m supporting a legal system that convicts and sentences people to death for alleged crimes that often have nothing to do with terrorism." Another UN report, by its Committee against Torture, has criticised Pakistan's anti-terror laws for allowing confessions made in police custody to be admitted as evidence. Analysis by Reprieve and the Islamabad-based Foundation for Fundamental Rights of nearly 300 reported Pakistan Supreme Court judgments handed down between 2010 and 2017 found that death sentences were overturned in 77% of cases. From 2015 to the end of 2017, this increased to 81%. Last year the Supreme Court upheld the death penalty in 8% of its reported capital cases, overturning the capital conviction or ordering a review in 92% of capital cases. [Source: The Guardian]

The sponsorship of Britain in the judicial affairs of Pakistan is further pushing its agenda on stifling any rejection of western backed slogans of war on terror and extremism in Pakistan's mainstream.