**U.N. SLAMS BLEEDING IRAQI PROTESTERS FOR CLOSING ROADS, HARMING OIL SUPPLY**

By: Seth J. Frantzman

Jerusalem Post

November 6, 2019

<https://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/UN-slams-bleeding-Iraqi-protesters-for-closing-roads-harming-oil-supply-607100>

The UN Special Representative for the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq slammed protesters for closing roads and disrupting oil on its way to ports, raising the ire of Iraqis who wonder why the UN cares more about oil and roads than people’s lives. It came days after the UN Secretary General visited Turkey and appeared open to a plan by Turkey to settle Syrian refugees in an area that 200,000 have been forced to flee from due to fighting, leading to questions about the overall UN blindspot on suffering in the region.

Jeanine Hennis, a Dutch politician who serves as a diplomat and Special Representative of the Secretary General in Iraq tweeted on Wednesday that the protests in Iraq, where more than 200 protesters have been shot by security forces, are disrupting critical infrastructure. “Also of grave concern. Responsibility of all to protect public facilities. Threats, closure of roads to oil installations, ports causing billions in losses. Detrimental to Iraq’s economy,” she wrote. It was undermining fulfilling the protesters’ legitimate demands.

“Losses to whom,” wondered the twitter account Mosul Eye, which is run by survivors of the ISIS occupation of Mosul. “Most young Iraqis have no work. The schools are bare. The hospitals are completely unsupplied. No electricity. No assurance of clean water,” the writer responded. Another man named Anas asked if the billions will “return back one innocent boy killed during those protest.” Dozens of other replies said that the UN should send a representative who respects the feelings of the country’s citizens.

Tehany Selah wrote “the Iraqi people have only unemployment.” Another said the UN defends the criminal government of Iraq. “Oil more important than blood,” wrote another. “All you care about is oil, not the people,” wrote Moaed Dawood. Many posted photos of the graphic injuries and deaths of the protesters. One response had a different take, suggesting the UN in Iraq is allied to Iran. “She is one of them,” the writer noted, showing the UN official allegedly meeting with Iranians.

So far her tweet has received 1,500 responses in ten hours. Her tweets usually receive only a few or a dozen replies. The replies did not recall that Hennis wrote on November 4 that she was “appalled by continued bloodshed in Iraq. People’s high frustration not to be underestimated or misread. Violence begets violence, peaceful demonstrators must be protected.” However even that tweet did not seem to be critical of the Iraqi authorities.

Since early October protesters in Iraq have been shot down by security forces and pro-Iranian militias, called the Hashd al-Shaabi. These militias, some linked to the Badr Organization or Asaib Ahl al-Haq are officially part of the government’s security forces but they also have their own leadership structure. Hadi al-Amiri, head of the Fatah Alliance and Badr, has claimed the protesters are supported by the US. Other leaders, such as Qais Khazali of Asaib Ahl al-Haq, have blamed the US and Israel for the protests. They have all claimed the protests are a form of sedition or “fitna.”

Protesters have increased their attempts to target pro-Iranian symbols since October 25. They have attacked and tried to burn the Iranian consulate in Karbala. They have sacked and burned the offices of the Hashd al-Shaabi and various pro-Iranian parties. They have rejected the role of Iran’s Qassem Soleimani, a general of the IRGC’s Quds Force who allegedly has helped guide Iraq’s response and modelled it after Iran’s crackdown on dissent.

Protests this week sough to lay siege to the bridges leading the Green Zone, the government quarter of Baghdad, and the government cut the internet. Dozes more have been shot. Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi appears ready to resign but he may no longer be the guiding hand.

The President, who is Kurdish, flew to the Kurdistan region this week to meet with Kurdistan Regional Government officials. Instability in Iraq is a huge problem for the US anti-ISIS war and a concern to Erbil in the north which faces a deluge of refugees from fighting in Syria. ISIS is threatening areas north of Baghdad.

The international community has been silent on Iraq’s brutal crackdown on the protesters. While the AP and Reuters have documented the role of pro-Iran forces in harming protesters, governments have done little. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has said that Iraqis want their country back and that Iran is behind corruption in the region.

The UN envoy’s comments on Wednesday appeared callous to the protesters. In Europe protesters can close roads and it is considered a right. For some reason in Iraq if one closes a road where oil might be transported it is unacceptable in the UN’s eyes.