

Lebanese government faces first public dispute between Future Movement and Hezbollah

Author:

Fri, 2019-03-01 23:28

BEIRUT: Former Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora has responded to a campaign launched by Hezbollah accusing him of corruption and demanding that he should be brought to justice.

He said: "The campaign aims to demonize all the governments headed by Rafic Hariri and attack him as well as all the prime ministers who followed him, including Saad Hariri."

"This campaign against Siniora, and therefore against Hariri's axis, has commenced before the Special Tribunal for Lebanon issues its ruling on the assassination of former PM Rafic Hariri, which five Hezbollah members are accused of and are escaping from prosecution," a source close to Siniora said.

Siniora broke his silence in a press conference on Friday, during which he attacked Hezbollah: "The biggest corruption is political corruption, and everyone who establishes smaller states within the state, controls the state's facilities, disrupts the constitutional deadline, and denies the course of law is politically corrupt."

He said: "We are looking these days at something similar to what happened during the days of the security regime 20 years ago when I was framed."

Siniora's speech reminded the Lebanese people of a campaign launched by the Lebanese-Syrian security regime against Rafic Hariri in 1998-2000.

This campaign was repeated before the assassination of Rafic Hariri in 2004-2005 and after Israel's aggression against Lebanon in 2006. The decision issued last week by the Constitutional Council to withdraw the Parliament membership of Future MP Dima Jamali was the first attempt to weaken the parliamentary bloc of PM Saad Hariri.

FASTFACT

During the past two weeks, Lebanon saw attempts for preparing files under the slogan of combating corruption in order to settle scores with Hariri's axis, stirring up the political clash between Hezbollah and Hariri's axis.

The campaign against Siniora reached its peak when a Hezbollah MP reopened the file on the \$11 billion spent during Siniora's premiership, a move that the Future Movement described in a statement as paving the way to target Saad

Hariri.

Siniora stressed that “the spending, whether from the budget appropriations or the treasury, was not illegal.” He added: “It was fully legal under the acts of Parliament. The spending was subject to the same mechanisms stipulated in the Public Accountancy Act, beginning with the prior and subsequent monitoring and approval of the expenditure controller and the Audit Court.”

He said: “Every disbursement is recorded, audited and available. Expenditures are fully recorded in the records of their ministries, in addition to being recorded in the Ministry of Finance’s records, published on its website.”

He revealed that the amounts Iran said it had paid to Lebanon had not been disclosed to the Lebanese state, and that when he met with Iran’s ambassador to Lebanon more than once during his premiership, he asked the ambassador, but he had refused to say how much had been paid.

Siniora said: “Those who got involved in regional and international conflicts that jeopardized the interests of Lebanon and its people, took the state hostage and exposed it to risks, disrupted institutions and their constitutional deadlines, and interrupted the economic process have no right to hide in their impasse in dust that does not last and which we have enough light to dispel.”

Hezbollah MP Hassan Fadlallah presented financial documents two days ago to the financial prosecutor, Judge Ali Ibrahim, who initiated an investigation by summoning an employee from the Ministry of Finance to listen to her testimony, even though this file has nothing to do with the fight against corruption or financial waste. This file is associated with “zeroing” the state’s financial accounts to allow the government to begin its work and carry out projects by approving the 2019 budget law.

MP Fadlallah said in a press conference at the time: “We want to hear what the judiciary says about those who have manipulated the state’s finances and its financial restrictions.”

Hariri’s Future TV channel launched an attack on Hezbollah on Thursday evening, referring to the corruption and wasted money linked to Hezbollah, from the smuggling operations carried out through the airport, ports and land borders.

They are estimated at billions of dollars, to being behind the production and trafficking of narcotic drugs such as Captagon, and establishing dummy companies registered with guarantor institutions, leading to the loss of billions of dollars in public money.



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Lebanon marks 14 years since Hariri assassination

[Daesh teenager Shamima Begum moved from Syria camp after death threats](#)

Author:

Fri, 2019-03-01 23:20

LONDON: A British teenager who ran away to join Daesh has been moved from a Syrian refugee camp after she received death threats, according to her family's lawyer.

Shamima Begum, 19, and her new-born son Jerah were moved from the Al-Hawl camp in the north of the country to another site nearer the Iraqi border, The Sun newspaper reported.

Begum, who in 2015 fled east London aged 15 with two other friends to travel to Syria and marry Daesh fighters, resurfaced at a refugee camp in Syria last month. She told reporters she wanted to come home for the health of her then unborn child.

The mother, whose British citizenship has been revoked, has since said she wished she had kept a low profile.

Begum has received death threats since speaking out about her plight. She and her son are said to have been moved to another camp nearer the Iraqi border.

Begum's lawyer, Tasnime Akunjee, told The Sun that "Shamima has been moved from Al-Hawl due to safety concerns around her and her baby. We further understand that indeed she and her child had been threatened by others at the Al-Hawl camp."

Her family have written to Home Secretary Sajid Javid, asking for his help in bringing her baby to Britain and describing him as a "true innocent." They also said they plan to challenge Javid's decision to revoke Begum's British citizenship.

Begum's apparent lack of remorse has triggered criticism in Britain and even shocked her own family.



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Israeli troops shoot 17 Palestinians during protests

Author:

Fri, 2019-03-01 23:22

GAZA CITY: Israeli troops on Friday shot and wounded 17 Palestinians during a protest on the Gaza-Israel border, where rallies have been held for nearly a year, the enclave's Health Ministry said.

A ministry statement reported "17 injuries by the Israeli occupation forces with live ammunition," without giving details on the condition of those shot.

It said that three paramedics and one journalist were hurt by tear gas grenades. The Israeli army told AFP that troops used live fire "according to the rules of engagement" with violent demonstrators.

"There are close to 8,000 rioters who are throwing stones, who are burning tires and throwing explosive devices and grenades at troops and at the (border) fence," a spokeswoman said.

"In response we are using riot dispersal means and also firing, according to the rules of engagement of course," she said.

The conclusions of a UN probe published on Thursday said Israeli forces responding to protests on the Gaza border had committed "violations of international human rights and humanitarian law."

"Some of those violations may constitute war crimes or crimes against humanity," said the report, by a commission of inquiry set up by the UN Human Rights Council. Protests and clashes began along the Gaza border on March 30 last year.

Demonstrators have been calling for Palestinian refugees to be allowed to return to their former homes now inside Israel, which Israeli officials say is akin to calling for their country's destruction.

Israel accuses Gaza's rulers Hamas of using the protests as cover for infiltrations and attacks, while rights groups and Palestinians say protesters posing little threat have been shot by Israeli snipers.

At least 251 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire since March 2018, the majority shot during weekly border protests and others hit by tank fire or air strikes in response to violence from Gaza.

Two Israeli soldiers have been killed over the same period.

Israeli leaders strongly condemned the findings of the UN inquiry, which investigated possible violations from the start of the protests last March

through to Dec. 31.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel “rejects outright the report.”

Foreign Minister Israel Katz called it “hostile, deceitful and biased” and insisted that “no institution can negate Israel’s right to self-defense.”

Israel and Hamas, which has controlled the blockaded Gaza Strip for over a decade, have fought three wars since 2008.



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Palestinians seek prosecution of Israeli leaders for Gaza ‘war crimes’ UN probe finds Israel may have committed ‘crimes against humanity’ against Gaza protests

[British minister urges implementation of Stockholm Agreement on Yemen during](#)

Gulf tour

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LONDON: British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt will meet Yemeni government officials and Houthi leaders during a trip to the Gulf region to urge the immediate implementation of the UN-brokered Stockholm Agreement.

Hunt visited Muscat on Friday where he signed a joint declaration on UK-Omani relations and met Houthi militia spokesman Mohamed Abdul Salem.

He will also visit Saudi Arabia where he will address a global conference on patient safety, and the UAE.

Hunt said his "aim is to build on the UN-backed agreement reached in Stockholm in December," and that he will "urge all sides to accelerate the redeployments they agreed at Stockholm and ensure the flow of humanitarian relief."

British Ambassador to Yemen Michael Aron said Hunt's tour is "very important," and that progress should be made in the coming days.

He told Arab News this week that the international community will react strongly if the Houthis put the peace process at risk.

"It's no coincidence that the number of people in need of aid, now at a staggering 24 million, has increased enormously since the Houthis took over parts of the country," he said.

In an interview with Asharq Al-Awsat published on Friday, Aron also praised the outcomes of the donor conference held for Yemen in Geneva, and said it was a great success for humanitarian relief.

The ambassador added that the Geneva conference "showed that the international community cares about the humanitarian situation in Yemen."

The British ambassador said that the UN regaining access to a grains facility near Yemen's Hodeidah port on Tuesday was a positive step.



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Iranian-backed Houthis responsible for Yemen woes: UK envoy

[Thousands protest president fifth term bid in Algiers](#)

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Fri, 2019-03-01 12:52

ALGIERS: Thousands of people took to the streets of Algeria's capital Friday to protest against ailing President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's bid for a fifth term in power, a AFP journalists reported. "Regime murderers," the demonstrators chanted as police used tear gas to prevent crowds from reaching a central square.



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