

Moroccan king, UAE FM discuss cooperation

Author:

Fri, 2021-01-22 00:51

DUBAI: Morocco's King Mohammed VI received the UAE's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed, who conveyed a message from Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed. During the meeting they discussed bilateral relations, ways to enhance cooperation in all fields, and regional and international issues of common interest, the UAE's official news agency WAM reported.

Moroccan King receives H.H. Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed [#OFMUAE](#)
<https://t.co/oVYacH86Ni> [pic.twitter.com/alP9lNepU2](https://t.co/alP9lNepU2)

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"Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed affirmed that the UAE and Morocco and their leaderships share close brotherly ties and constant keenness to advance the horizons of cooperation in all fields in order to achieve the common interests of the two countries and the benefit of their peoples," WAM said. The UAE minister praised the king's leadership and his constant keenness to strengthen bilateral ties, and met his Moroccan counterpart Nasser Bourita.

H.H. Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed, Moroccan counterpart discuss relations [#OFMUAE](#) <https://t.co/A05vk0yVyG>
[pic.twitter.com/9gPWwR7XJb](https://t.co/9gPWwR7XJb)

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They discussed bilateral relations, global developments, and enhancing cooperation to combat the coronavirus pandemic.

The Emirati minister said the UAE and Morocco share deep historical relations, and are always eager to strengthen them and develop cooperation in all fields. He also affirmed the UAE's full support for Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara.







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US lifts tariffs on aluminum imports from UAE

[British woman dies after surgery in Turkey](#)

Fri, 2021-01-22 00:05

LONDON: A British woman died due to complications resulting from a common surgical procedure she received in Turkey, the UK's Daily Mail newspaper reported on Thursday.

Abimbola Ajoke Bamgbose bought an overseas package deal with Turkish company Mono Cosmetic Surgery, and traveled to the city of Izmir to receive liposuction.

But she experienced stomach pains after the surgery, and was rushed to the hospital then had to undergo further surgery to address the complications. She later died.

An inquest found that Bamgbose suffered perforations to the bowel and multiple organ failure.

A hearing was told that such complications are extremely rare in the UK, having had a maximum of five in the last decade, but that it could be more common in places such as Turkey.

Bamgbose's husband said he was not supportive in the first place of his wife traveling to Turkey for surgery, but rushed there when he was told there had been complications.

"It wasn't until I got there the medical director told me candidly it was serious. The clinic was just telling me everything was fine," he said.

"It was just then he confessed it had been a mistake and there had never been such a mistake before."

He said his wife had paid Mono Cosmetic Surgery \$6,850 for the package, and he is suing the company and the surgeon responsible for \$1.37 million. Proceedings have been issued in Turkish courts.



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British woman left fighting for life after 'nightmare' cosmetic surgery in Turkey
British man dies, two others critically ill during visit to Turkey to get dental whitening treatment

[How Yemen's Houthis' well-deserved terrorist label gives Biden important leverage](#)

Thu, 2021-01-21 23:50

LONDON: Joe Biden, the newly inaugurated US president, is using his first days in office to review many of his predecessor's policies and executive orders. How his administration handles its strategic inheritance, particularly with regard to Iran and its proxies, notably the Yemeni Houthi militia, could well shape the Arab region's opinion of his nascent

presidency.

On Jan. 10, Mike Pompeo, the outgoing secretary of state, announced the State Department would designate the Houthis (also known as Ansar Allah) as a "Foreign Terrorist Organization." Three Houthi leaders – Abdul Malik Al-Houthi, Abdul Khaliq Badr Al-Din Al-Houthi and Abdullah Yahya Al-Hakim – were declared Specially Designated Global Terrorists with effect from Jan. 19.

"The designations are intended to hold Ansar Allah accountable for its terrorist acts, including cross-border attacks threatening civilian populations, infrastructure, and commercial shipping," Pompeo said.

"The designations are also intended to advance efforts to achieve a peaceful, sovereign and united Yemen that is both free from Iranian interference and at peace with its neighbors."



A picture taken on June 19, 2018 shows debris of Iranian-made Ababil drones displayed Abu Dhabi, which the Emirati armed forces say were used by Houthi rebels in Yemen in battles against the coalition forces led by the UAE and Saudi Arabia. (AFP/File Photo)

One reason why the Trump administration was able to achieve a lot in the Middle East was probably its readiness to call a spade a spade. The war in Yemen escalated in 2015 when the Iran-backed Houthis overthrew the UN-recognized government of President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi. A coalition of Arab states, backed by the US, Britain and France, launched a military campaign to restore the legitimate government to power.

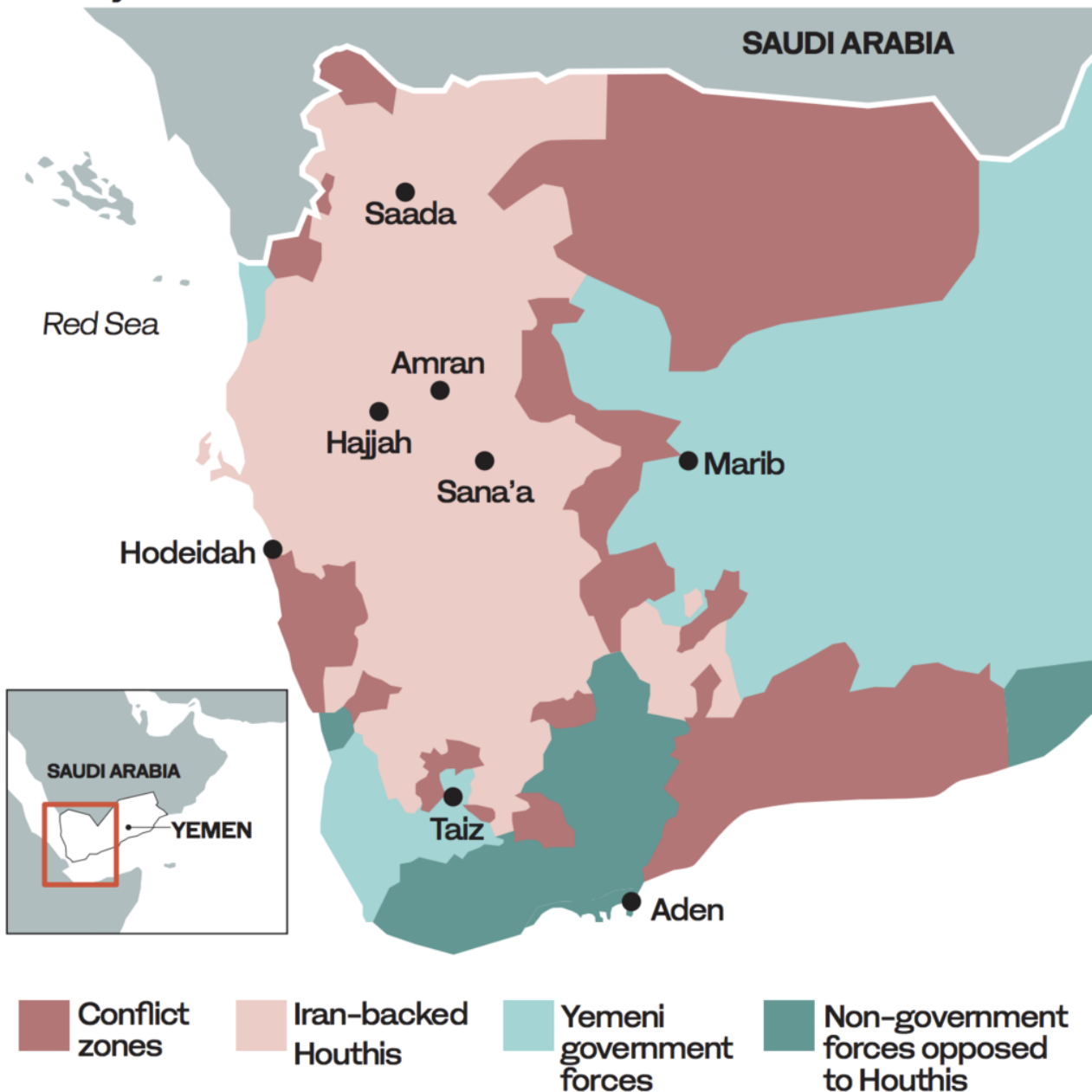
Since then, repeated attempts to reach a peace settlement have foundered,

with the militia's representatives failing to attend UN-brokered talks in Geneva in Sept. 2018 and its combatants willfully ignoring the terms of the Stockholm and Riyadh agreements.

An April 2020 ceasefire announced by the coalition at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic quickly fell apart when the Houthis resumed cross-border drone and missile strikes targeting Saudi Arabia.

WHO CONTROLS WHAT IN YEMEN

Houthis have controlled the capital Sana'a and much of the country since 2014



SOURCE: SANA'A CENTRE FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES, BBC

For the Yemeni government, any peace agreement with the Houthis would be contingent on the militia breaking its ties with Tehran – a development that is highly unlikely at present.

Iran's support for the Houthis has been an open secret since long before the Houthi takeover of Sana'a in 2015. It has caused the brutal war to rage on unabated and one of the world's worst humanitarian crises to fester.

The conflict, now in its sixth year, has left 112,000 dead and 24 million in dire need of humanitarian assistance.

The Houthis have repeatedly targeted civilian population centers in Yemen and Saudi Arabia. Most recently, 27 people were killed when a Houthi missile targeting ministers of the newly established Yemeni government struck Aden's international airport on Dec. 30.



A picture taken March 26, 2018 in Um Al-Hammam district in Riyadh shows the pierced ceiling of a home hit by falling shrapnel from Houthi missiles that were intercepted over the Saudi capital. (AFP/File Photo)

In April last year, five women were killed in a suspected Houthi strike on a prison in the city of Taiz – an act forcefully condemned by aid groups. Houthi missiles have even hit civilian facilities in Riyadh, including its international airport in Nov. 2017.

The group has also routinely targeted Saudi Arabia's oil infrastructure. A July 2018 attack hit two Saudi crude carriers on the Red Sea while a May 2019 strike on two oil-pumping stations near Riyadh damaged a key pipeline.

The most damaging of all Houthi-claimed attacks was a Sept. 2019 drone and missile strike on Saudi Arabia's Abqaiq and Khurais oil facilities, which sent shockwaves through the global crude market.

Although the Houthis claimed responsibility, investigators suggested the strike involving Iranian-supplied hardware may have originated from the north.

CHRONICLE OF HOUTHI CRIMES

Sept. 2014 Houthi militia (Ansar Allah) seizes Sana'a, begins Yemen takeover.

Feb. 2015 Houthis announce dissolution of Yemen's parliament.

March 2015 Yemeni President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi flees Sana'a.

March 2015 Operation Decisive Storm begins against Houthis.

April 2015 UN Security Council votes to sanction Houthis.

Nov. 2017 Houthi ballistic missiles intercepted over Riyadh airport.



Dec. 2017 Deposed Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh killed by Houthis.

March 2018 Casualties reported in Houthi rocket attack on Riyadh.

July 2018 Houthis claim

attack on two Saudi crude carriers in Red Sea.

Jan. 2019 Houthi attack kills Yemeni military intelligence chief.

May 2019 Houthis attack two oil-pumping stations in Saudi Arabia, damaging key pipeline.

Sept. 2019 Drone attacks damage Abqaiq and Khurais oil facilities in Saudi Arabia.

Jan. 2020 Houthis suspected behind military training camp

attack in Marib that kills 111 soldiers.

April 5 2020 Five women killed in Taiz's main prison in suspected Houthi attack.



Jan. 2021 US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo designates Houthi militia as a Foreign Terrorist Organization and declares its leaders Global Terrorists.

Biden's foreign-policy team may also recall three attacks on the US navy in 2016 when he was Barack Obama's vice president – by a militia whose actions matched the notorious words of its slogan "Death to America. Death to Israel. Curse on the Jews."

The USS Mason was targeted on Oct. 9, 2016, by two missiles fired from Houthi-controlled territory while deployed near the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait off the coast of Yemen. The projectiles failed to cause any damage.

Three days later, the Mason was targeted again, with one missile falling short while the other was intercepted. USS Nitze, which was also deployed to the region, retaliated the following day, destroying three radar sites in Houthi-held territory.

On Oct. 15, the Mason was targeted a third time, this time in the Red Sea. All five anti-ship cruise missiles were neutralized or intercepted.



Houthi leader Abdul-Malik Al-Houthi delivers a speech in he Yemeni capital Sanaa on November 9, 2019. (AFP/File Photo)

Given this behavior, it is surprising that the Houthis did not land the terrorist designation then, although historians would probably chalk it up to the Obama administration's wish to preserve the 2015 Iran nuclear accord at any cost.

Foreign military vessels have not been the only targets. The Houthis have launched repeated attacks on ports and ships in recent years, routinely planting marine mines in the southern Red Sea and in the Bab Al-Mandab Strait in the path of commercial shipping.

The militia has also repeatedly rebuffed UN pleas to allow an inspection team to enter the FS0 Safer, a 45-year-old oil tanker abandoned off the port of Hodeidah with 1.1 million barrels of crude on board, to conduct urgent repairs. In an extraordinary session, the UN expressed fears on July 15, 2020, of "catastrophe" if the vessel ruptured into the Red Sea.

Pompeo's boss, Donald Trump, had pursued a policy of "maximum pressure" against Tehran, withdrawing the US from the Obama-era nuclear deal and reimposing sanctions on Iran.



Members of displaced Yemeni families who fled battles between government forces and Houthi fighters near the Hodeidah airport share a meal on the balcony of of a school used as temporary housing inside the city. (AFP/File Photo)

The strategy was matched by a zero-tolerance approach to Iranian influence in Yemen, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine, as well as to its role in harboring leaders and operatives of Al-Qaeda.

Almost all the findings of an Arab News-YouGov pan-Arab survey conducted in late 2020 suggest that Biden would be wise to shed the Obama administration baggage. The most popular response (53 percent) was that Obama left the region worse off, with another 58 percent saying Biden should distance himself from Obama-era policies.

With Houthi attacks on civilian targets triggering condemnations from inside and outside Yemen and prompting calls for more pressure on the leadership, the State Department's "terrorist" designation gives Biden valuable leverage for future negotiations both with the Houthis and their patrons in Tehran.

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The Organization of Islamic Cooperation hails US designation of Houthis as
FT0Yemen's government vows to mitigate effects of Houthi terrorism
designation TWITTER POLL: US right to designate Houthis as terror group

[Months-old baby tests positive for COVID-19 in Lebanon](#)

Author:

Thu, 2021-01-21 22:39

BEIRUT: A four-month-old baby boy has become the youngest person to test positive for coronavirus in Lebanon.

The infant returned the positive test alongside his six-year-old sister and both his parents.

The boy's father, Mazen Al-Muqaddam, revealed the test results, saying that his son's symptoms "are still tolerable" and that the family is receiving treatment while quarantining at home in the southern village of Toul.

"My son Mohammed started showing symptoms three days ago. He was coughing and unable to sleep," the father said.

"Doctors told us that we caught the virus a week ago. We still do not know how. For nine months we have been following all the necessary preventive measures."

Despite eight days of total lockdown, the number of coronavirus cases in Lebanon is still rising, with 64 deaths recorded on Wednesday.

A 24-year-old woman was among the latest victims.

The latest surge in cases has filled public and private hospital emergency wards, and stretched medical and nursing staff to the limit.

A Supreme Defense Council meeting led by President Michel Aoun on Thursday decided to extend the lockdown until Feb. 8.

Lebanon is expected to start receiving the Pfizer vaccine early in February, with Hassan Diab, the country's caretaker prime minister, confirming that "all financial and administrative procedures have been completed to ensure the arrival of the vaccine in the specified period."

Gen. Joseph Aoun, the armed forces commander, visited a military hospital in Beirut on Thursday, including a section dedicated to COVID-19 patients.

The hospital is also struggling due to the large number of infections among military personnel and their families.

Meanwhile, Dr. Abdul-Rahman Al-Bizri, head of the national committee for infectious diseases, outlined the strategy for distribution of the Pfizer vaccine to a meeting of the parliamentary health committee.

Assem Araj, head of the committee, said that Lebanon has agreements to receive 2.2 million vaccines from Pfizer and a further 1.5 million vaccines through the COVAX platform, while talks with AstraZeneca are continuing in order to secure an additional 2 million vaccines.

"This will bring our total to 6 million vaccines, which will allow us to vaccinate around 3 million citizens and residents," he said.

Araj said that Syrian and Palestinian refugees will be among those vaccinated.

"If we do not vaccinate between 70 and 80 percent of the population, we will not be able to contain the pandemic," he added.

"We will start with 250,000 Pfizer vaccines in the first quarter of 2021. We will have 350,000 vaccines for the second quarter and 800,000 for the third

quarter, while we will have 600,000 vaccines available during the last quarter of the year, bringing the total to 2.1 million vaccines.”

Health workers, including doctors, pharmacists, nurses and hospital staff, will be first to receive the vaccine. They will be followed by people over 75.

Individuals under 16 years of age will need parental approval to receive the vaccine, he added.

Araji said a health ministry platform will be launched on Monday allowing people to register for the vaccine. After registration, the platform will direct people to a vaccination center.

Inoculations will take place at 35 centers around the country.



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Lebanon extends lockdown into February as virus numbers riseLebanon lockdown extension recommended as cabbies, soldiers clash at airport

Tunisia rights groups say 1,000 arrested in 6 nights of riots

Author:

Thu, 2021-01-21 20:41

TUNIS: Tunisian security forces have arrested at least 1,000 people during six nights of urban unrest between disaffected youths and riot police, human rights and other non-government groups said Thursday.

The North African country, where the COVID-19 pandemic has deepened already acute economic pain, has seen young people hurl rocks and petrol bombs at police who have deployed teargas and water cannon at the crowds.

Wednesday night was relatively calm compared with previous evenings, although local media reported disturbances in the central town of Sidi Bouzid, where the Arab Spring pro-democracy uprisings started a decade ago.

Authorities said Monday they had made 600 arrests, then reported another 70 over the following two days – but a coalition of Tunisian groups said their own count was now much higher.

“There are 1,000 people arrested” including many minors, said Bassem Trifi of the Tunisian League for Human Rights, who charged that many arrests had been “arbitrary,” including of people inside their homes.

“Some were arrested without having taken part in the demonstrations,” he told a joint press conference of a dozen groups, also including the journalists’ union and young lawyers’ association.

Some activists had been detained for voicing support for the protests on Facebook and other sites, and at least one of them now faces six years prison if convicted, the groups said.

“We are asking the justice system to look closely into the cases,” said Trifi.

“We will not manage to resolve the crisis in this way. It can only deepen the gulf between the people and the government.”

In a joint statement, the groups called on the judicial system to investigate reports of violations by security forces, ill-treatment of detainees and breaches of their personal data privacy.

They warned that “violent security practices would only... aggravate the crisis of the rejection of the state.”

Unrest again shook several towns overnight into Thursday, though the clashes appeared to ease from their earlier peaks when angry groups set fire to tires to blockade streets.

In the central town of Sbeitla, clashes broke out following rumors that a young man had died of injuries he had sustained when he was earlier hit by a tear gas canister.

The interior ministry denied the young man’s death, saying he had been transferred to a hospital in the coastal city of Sousse, and that it had opened an investigation into his case.

Tunisia last week marked one decade since its long-time dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali fled the country amid mass protests, ending 23 years in power.

The demonstrations were sparked by the self-immolation of young fruit seller

Mohamed Bouazizi in Sidi Bouzid, triggering similar revolts across much of North Africa and the Middle East.



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Outreach by Tunisian leaders fails to quell youth unrest
Tunisian premier announces major cabinet reshuffle