

# 'Keep up the fight,' urges Tunisian street vendor's sister

Author:

Tue, 2020-12-08 01:56

MONTREAL: Tunisians should keep up the fight for their rights, believes the sister of a street vendor who set himself alight a decade ago, triggering a string of protests around the Arab world.

But Leila Bouazizi admitted the revolt which flared in late 2010 has done little to solve the economic problems that pushed her brother, Mohamed, over the edge.

"Everyone thought the government would do something," she told AFP in Quebec, where she moved to study in 2013 and has lived ever since.

"Unfortunately, it did nothing," she added, saying she was "very disappointed" in the outcome of the uprising, even though it brought down the north African country's long-time ruler Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali, and installed a fragile system of democracy.

Mohamed Bouazizi and his family lived in modest circumstances in the run-down central rural town of Sidi Bouzid.

Like many young, unemployed Tunisians, Mohamed, then 26, provided for his loved ones with the limited means at hand, selling whatever fruits and vegetables were in season.

On the morning of Dec. 17, 2010, the police seized Mohamed's handcart – which served as a makeshift stall – and his merchandise.

After a series of petty harassments, it was the last straw. Mohamed doused himself in petrol and set himself alight.

"It was an accumulation of things that made him explode," said Leila, now aged 34.

At the time, she was studying in another town, but she recalled hearing that her brother had been slapped by a policewoman during an altercation, although this was never confirmed.

When Mohamed asked local authorities to investigate, "he didn't get a response," she said. "He was really annoyed ... That's why he took petrol and did what he did." The young man succumbed to his wounds in early 2011.

But his act had sparked unprecedented mass demonstrations across Tunisia, super-charged by social media, which then ignited a series of revolts across the Middle East. "When my brother did that act, everyone exploded and protested against the system," Leila said.

"Everyone wanted the situation to change," she added, saying her brother had been in "the same situation" as most young people.

In the wake of his death, the Bouazizi family received "lots of threats" – including death threats – as well as harassment both online and in the streets by people opposed to the revolution. Rumours were rife that they had become rich. "It was dangerous," said Leila. Her mother, surviving brothers and sisters managed to emigrate to Quebec where Leila lives in a residential district and works in the aeronautics industry.

She said they are "well integrated," but continue to follow events in Tunisia. The country has seen some progress in the past decade, she says – it

has a new constitution and has organized several democratic elections. "You can speak, you can demonstrate," she said, noting the lack of political freedoms during the 23-year rule of Ben Ali.

But a succession of governments has not fixed the economic situation, particularly tough for young people, Leila added. "Every time there's a vote, they say 'we're going to do this, things will change,'" she said. "But when they take power, nothing changes."

She criticized the lack of solid measures to reform Tunisia's failing health system or fix its decrepit infrastructure, with deadly floods following every major rainstorm.

And despite some political progress, young people in marginalized regions such as Sidi Bouzid still face unemployment three times the national average. With rising prices, stagnant incomes and few opportunities even for the highly educated, "the situation might even be worse now" than before the revolution, said Leila.

Tragically, dozens of young people still set themselves alight every year in Tunisia, which has also seen a spike in numbers of people, particularly jobless youth, attempting dangerous sea crossings to Europe. "It's not just my brother," she said. "Lots of people have lost their lives." But, she said, "I hope that things will change." "Many people are still protesting, speaking out, for change," she said. "It might take more than 10 years, but young people must carry on protesting, speaking out, to get their rights."



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Tunis](#)

Tunisian charged over fatal French church stabbings Tunisia extends night-time curfew until end of year

---

## Hezbollah loyalists blamed for violent assaults on party opponents

Tue, 2020-12-08 01:39

BEIRUT: Lebanese journalist Maryam Seif Eddine, known for being a strong critic of Hezbollah, on Monday claimed she and her family had been violently attacked and issued with death threats.

The 29-year-old writer told Arab News that Hezbollah loyalists had targeted her family home in Burj El-Barajneh, in the southern suburbs of Beirut, two days ago.

During their ordeal, Eddine alleged her brother's nose was broken, her mother was physically assaulted, and she received death threats.

The reporter said it was the second time her family had been the target of an attack within a month after one of her other brothers received blows to his head from sharp implements during an assault by three people, one of whom she claimed was a member of Hezbollah.

Eddine added that despite promises made weeks ago by a Hezbollah official to investigate the matter nothing had been done and said that an unresolved local family dispute with Hezbollah could have compounded the situation.

"The matter later turned into incitement against us in our area and among our relatives as I was writing more actively against Hezbollah in the newspaper I work for and on social media. I have been receiving threats and insults to oppress me and my family," she added.

Eddine, a journalist since 2016, said: "I oppose the ruling political authority, and Hezbollah is a party to this authority. I criticize the practices of every party. It seems that my family's decision to install surveillance cameras outside our house to protect ourselves from attackers has provoked them, leading to the recent attack under the pretext of destroying the cameras.

"When we found that we might get killed, we decided to speak up, and I was advised to keep a low profile for now and reduce my criticism."

She pointed out that when she called her local police station to ask for protection for her family, her request was turned down due to lack of staffing.

Activist, Ali Al-Amin, who claimed that he had been attacked on more than one occasion by Hezbollah-linked people, told Arab News: "These attacks reflect Hezbollah's dualism and confusion.

### **FASTFACT**

**Lebanese journalist Maryam Seif Eddine alleged that her brother's nose was broken, her mother was physically assaulted, and she received death threats.**

"One minute, the party resorts to the law like it did last week to sue some

opponents on the pretext that they were inciting sedition, and the next moment it is taking the law into its own hands – whether directly or indirectly.

“Hezbollah has always resorted to accusing its opponents of working for Israel, the US, or foreign embassies. It has mobilized its electronic armies to launch (online) campaigns against them over the past 15 years. There is much evidence for this.

“At the same time, the party has been stopping any allegation against any of its members from reaching the Lebanese official courts. It also disparages these allegations, as is the case with the party’s stance toward the Special Tribunal for Lebanon,” he said.

“Hezbollah insists that its environment be cleansed of its opponents, and we cannot forget how it resorts to using the residents (of Hezbollah-controlled areas) to get its messages through. Hezbollah used this method against UNIFIL (UN Interim Force in Lebanon) forces as well as others.

“Hezbollah prohibits its members from entering state police stations if they are summoned in connection with any incident, and police stations themselves do not summon any Hezbollah member. The matter requires prior approval from Hezbollah’s security committee before going to the police station,” Al-Amin added.

Hezbollah last week filed lawsuits against former MP Fares Souaid and the Lebanese Forces party, accusing them of inciting sedition. On Monday, former Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora blamed Hezbollah for exposing Souaid to increased security risks.

The former premier said: “Hezbollah, which is capable of acting on the security and judiciary levels without being held accountable, aims to silence people and act with absolute freedom in all directions – without anyone criticizing it or asking it any question about its influence and control over the state’s departments and apparatus and its control over its line of action and its work.”



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Lebanon](#)

[Hezbollah](#)

Lebanon health crisis looms with drug stocks under threat  
Mob seizes UN peacekeeper equipment in south Lebanon

---

## [Iranians guiding Houthi missiles, says captured spy](#)

Author:

Tue, 2020-12-08 01:08

AL-MUKALLA: A Houthi spy who was captured in the Yemeni city of Marib said he received training on intelligence information gathering and location sharing from Iranian and Iraqi missile experts in Sanaa.

Yemen's Defense Ministry recently announced capturing a Houthi cell of two spies who passed locations of military sites to the group.

State media aired a video showing their confessions. According to the video, they provided the militia with sensitive military information and locations of senior army commanders who were hit by Houthi missiles and drones.

Basim Ali Al-Samet, identified by the ministry as the most dangerous member of the cell, described receiving military training and lessons on gathering information and sending locations of military sites and movements of army commanders from Iranians and Iraqis in the capital.

Houthis recruited Al-Samet in early 2019 and installed him in the Ministry of Defense in Marib with the help of his military officer uncle, who also said he had colluded with the Houthis.

Al-Samet spent months in Marib, collecting information about military camps and meetings of ministry officers before traveling to Sanaa to pass the information to his recruiter Zayed Al-Mouyed, a Houthi military commander.

At a meeting with senior Houthi intelligence officers, Al-Samet saw three masked men along with Gen. Abdul Hakim Al-Khewani, the commander of Houthi intelligence, Al-Mouyed and two Houthi figures who listened to the information he had gathered from Marib.

"He (Al-Khewani) told me that you would be meeting with the missile force (team) who would take the information about locations," he said, adding that the three masked men were from Iran and Iraq and were responsible for launching Houthi missiles. "On their tablet, they showed me a new program with Farsi letters showing locations."

Al-Samet returned to Marib, where he helped the Houthis launch missile attacks that killed soldiers and civilians.

The ministry said that intelligence information from Al-Samet guided two Houthi missile strikes that targeted the Yemeni Defense Minister Lt. Gen. Mohammad Ali Al-Maqdishi and the army's chief of staff Lt. Gen. Sagheer bin Aziz in May.

Al-Samet also said he sent the location of lawmaker Moused Al-Sawadi's house, which the Houthis bombed in January.

Yemeni military experts and officials said the spy's words were consistent with what the internationally recognized Yemeni government had been saying about the role of Iranian and Hezbollah military experts in supplying the Houthis with military know-how and missiles.

"We are not surprised at all," Col. Abdul Basit Al-Baher, a Yemeni army spokesman in the southern city of Taiz, told Arab News. "This confirms what we already know about the Iran Revolutionary Guard's control over Houthi missiles. This shows that people who run the Houthi missile forces from identifying targets to launching missiles are foreign figures from Iran, Iraq and Lebanon. They wear masks during meetings as the Houthis do not trust even their spies."



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Houthis militia](#)

[Yemen](#)

[Iran](#)

Saudi project clears 1,385 more mines in Yemen  
Yemen journalist captives tell of five-year torture ordeal in Houthi prisons

---

## [Israeli guards shoot unarmed Palestinian man at crossing](#)

Author:

Associated Press

ID:

1607375041378946600

Mon, 2020-12-07 19:27

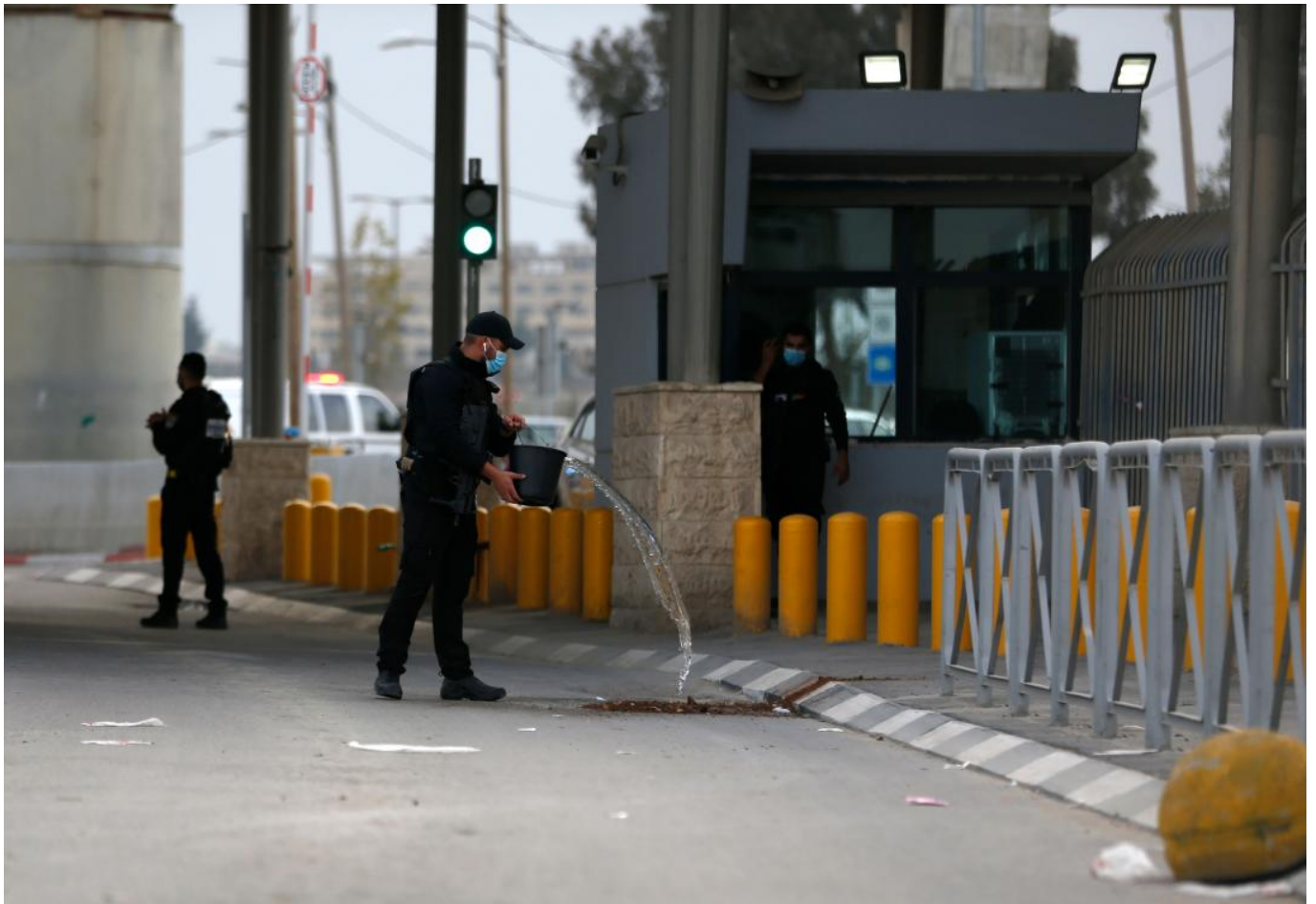
JERUSALEM: Israeli police said Monday that private security guards shot and wounded an unarmed Palestinian man at a checkpoint in the West Bank. In a statement, police said the guards at the Qalandia crossing ordered the man to stop. But when he continued to approach them, they fired warning shots in the air and then shot at his legs. Amateur video captured by a passerby and shown on Israel's Channel 13 TV showed the man falling down after being shot, then hopping toward the

security men and being shot again. Details on his identity were not immediately released.

Police later said the man was found to have been unarmed. He was taken to Jerusalem's Hadassah Medical Center, where he was said to be in moderate to serious condition.

Qalandia is a main crossing point for Palestinians entering Jerusalem from the West Bank. Israel often uses private security companies as contractors at checkpoints.

Palestinians and human rights groups accuse Israeli security forces of often using excessive force against Palestinian suspects. Channel 13 said police were investigating the incident.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Israel](#)

[Palestinians](#)

[CROSSING](#)

[Shooting](#)

Israeli police cleared in shooting of maimed Palestinian boy  
UAE activates tourist visas for Israelis

---

# 31 new assembly members as Kuwaitis vote for reform

Author:

Mon, 2020-12-07 01:34

JEDDAH: Kuwait's national assembly will have 31 new members after the first election since new emir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah took office in September.

Results announced on Sunday showed that opposition candidates won 24 of the assembly's 50 seats, up from 16 in the previous parliament.

None of the 29 female candidates won and the only female assembly member lost her seat, but the election of 30 candidates under the age of 45 sent out a promising signal to young Kuwaitis hoping for change and reform.

"There is a big change in the composition of the new national assembly," Kuwaiti analyst Ayed Al-Manaa said.

"This is an indication of the voters' anger over the performance of the previous parliament and of their desire for change in economics, health, education and public services."

Lulwa Saleh Al-Mulla, head of the Kuwaiti Women's Cultural and Social Society, welcomed the new younger members in the assembly but was disappointed by the lack of women's representation.

Prime Minister Sabah Al-Sabah's Cabinet resigned in a routine procedure after the election.

Sheikh Nawaf will appoint a prime minister to select a new Cabinet and the assembly will meet on Dec. 15.

Kuwait's economy, which is worth nearly \$140 billion, is facing a deficit of \$46 billion this year.

A government priority is to pass deadlocked legislation that would allow Kuwait to tap international debt markets.





Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Kuwaiti Elections 2020](#)

Kuwait emir accepts post-election government resignation  
Kuwaitis vote in first parliamentary election since accession of new emir