

Sudanese in Israel fear being returned after normalization

Thu, 2020-10-29 00:33

TEL AVIV: Sudanese asylum seekers living in Israel fear being kicked out once ties are normalized between the two countries, though some hope their presence will be seen as an advantage.

Technically at war with Israel for decades, Sudan on Friday became the third Arab country this year to announce it is normalizing ties with the Jewish state, following the UAE and Bahrain in August.

But since the announcement, members of the Sudanese community in Israel have been “very afraid” of being sent back, said 26-year-old Barik Saleh, a Sudanese asylum seeker who lives in a suburb of Tel Aviv.

Israel counts a Sudanese population of around 6,000, mostly asylum seekers.

Thousands of others left or were forced to return after Sudan split in 2011 when South Sudan won its independence – only for the fledgling country to plunge into civil war.

Some of the Sudanese – often labeled as “infiltrators” for crossing illegally into Israeli territory before being granted permission to stay – were minors when they arrived.

They are not always allowed to work, and they cannot gain Israeli citizenship.

Saleh, who grew up in West Darfur, was just nine when his family fled war to neighboring Chad.

“My parents are in a refugee camp,” said the young man, who arrived after journeying through Libya and Egypt, and has lived in Israel for 13 years.

“I will be the first one for normalization,” he said.

“But if I will be deported from here, then I will be in 100 percent danger,” he added.

Former President Omar Bashir oversaw Sudan’s civil war in the Darfur region from 2003. Some 300,000 people died in the conflict and 2.5 million were forced from their homes. Bashir, in detention in Khartoum, is wanted by the International Criminal Court over charges of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur.

“We are here because it is not safe to go back to Sudan yet,” said 31-year-old Monim Haroon, who comes from a stronghold region of Darfuri rebel leader Abdelwahid Nour’s Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) faction.

"The reason why we are here in Israel is not because of the lack of a diplomatic relationship between Sudan and Israel, but because of the genocide and ethnic cleansing that we went through," Haroon said.

Sudan's transitional government, in place after the fall of Bashir in 2019, signed a landmark peace deal with an alliance of rebel groups earlier this month.

But Nour's rebel faction was not one of them.

Some of those in power in Sudan today were also in control under Bashir.

They include Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, vice president of Sudan's ruling transitional sovereign council.

He heads the feared Rapid Support Forces, long accused by human rights groups of committing widespread abuses in Sudan's Darfur provinces.

"For me it is very dangerous," said Haroon, who was previously head of Nour's office in Israel.

"Unless Abdelwahid signs a peace agreement, I cannot go back."

In Neve Shaanan, a suburb of Tel Aviv known for its asylum seeker community, stalls and restaurants offer Sudanese food, including a version of the popular bean dish "foul," served with grated cheese.

Usumain Baraka, a smartly dressed 26-year-old who works nearby, has finished a master's degree in public policy at a university in Herzliya, north of Tel Aviv.

Like Saleh, he too was nine when he fled Darfur for Chad, where his mother still lives in a refugee camp.

"They (militiamen) killed my dad and my big brother, and they took everything we had in the village," Baraka said.

"At one point I had two options: To go back to Darfur to fight for a rebel group, or leave the camp and try to have a normal life."

While the young men who AFP spoke to expressed fear that their presence in Israel would be at risk under the normalization agreement, some said they would like the Jewish state to see it as an asset rather than a burden.

Haroon said Sudanese in Israel could be a "bridge" between the countries, not only in the private sector, but also to help build understanding between the two peoples.

"I hope the Israeli government will see this potential asset, the important role that we can bring promoting the interest of the two countries," he said.

Both Sudan and Israel have said in recent days that migration would be one of the issues on the agenda during upcoming meetings on bilateral cooperation.

“Israel is my second home,” said asylum seeker Saleh. “There is no language that I speak better than Hebrew, even my own local language.”

But Jean-Marc Liling, an Israeli lawyer specialized in asylum issues, warned that with the normalization announcement, the return of Sudanese asylum seekers would likely be on the government’s radar.

“The first thing that comes to the government’s mind is: we’ll be able to send back the ‘infiltrators’,” Liling said.



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Sudan says it will discuss trade, migration deals with Israel Israeli envoys will travel to Sudan for normalization deal, Netanyahu says

[Algeria’s president transferred to Germany for treatment](#)

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Associated Press

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Wed, 2020-10-28 19:01

ALGIERS: Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune was transferred to Germany for specialist medical treatment Wednesday, a day after his country's presidency announced he had been hospitalized but did not reveal why. Several senior officials in the 75-year-old president's entourage developed COVID-19 symptoms on Saturday, and the president was placed in what the government called "voluntary preventive confinement." It was unclear if Tebboune's current hospitalization was connected.

The transfer to Germany was made at the request of the presidency staff, according to a press release from the presidency broadcast on national television Wednesday.

The statement announcing the Algerian leader's hospitalization on Tuesday said his condition was stable. It did not reveal the cause of his illness or say when the hospitalization occurred.

The statement said that while Tebboune was admitted to a specialized care unit in Algiers on the recommendation of his doctors, "the state of health of the president of the republic...does not inspire any concern."



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Algeria to inaugurate Bouteflika-era mega mosque
Algeria's president enters specialised treatment unit, his condition is stable – statement

[EU warns Houthis against blocking access to decaying tanker](#)

Wed, 2020-10-28 21:00

AL-MUKALLA: The Houthis will be held accountable for a “regional catastrophe” if they continue to block access to a decaying oil tanker in the Red Sea, the EU has warned.

The Iran-backed militia is under pressure to allow inspection and maintenance of the Safer tanker, amid reports that parts of it have been eroded by rust.

The Houthis insist on sharing the proceeds from the sale of the tanker’s cargo – more than a million barrels of oil – and including engineers from China, Russia and Germany in the UN team of experts that would visit the tanker.

“The EU Heads of Mission call on Ansarallah (Houthis) to fully cooperate with the UN by allowing the team of experts to have unhindered access to the vessel and without preconditions or delay,” the EU delegation to Yemen said on Tuesday. “Unless the UN team is provided unhindered access, Ansarallah would be accountable in the event of a regional catastrophe and must therefore act with a sense of urgency and responsibility.”

The delegation warned that an oil spill would paralyze the port of Hodeidah, where most of the country’s food, fuel and goods pass through, and exacerbate Yemen’s already dire humanitarian situation. “It would heavily affect fisheries in the Red Sea coast as well as the marine ecosystem and may affect maritime trade,” the EU statement added.

The internationally recognized government of Yemen has accused the Houthis of using the decaying tanker as leverage to extract concessions, putting the lives of millions of people at risk and endangering the Red Sea’s entire marine ecosystem.

On Sunday, Information Minister Muammar Al-Aryani told the official news agency Saba that the international community had not been able to convince the Houthis to allow UN experts to board the tanker.

“For years, the Houthi militia has continued to play with this file, using it to achieve political and financial gains,” the minister said.

Earlier this month, a virtual meeting between the UN Yemen envoy’s office and the UN Office for Project Services with the Houthis about access ended in a deadlock after the rebels rejected the request.

On the battlefields, heavy fighting broke out in the northern province of Jouf during the last two days as government forces announced recapturing

areas from the Houthis.

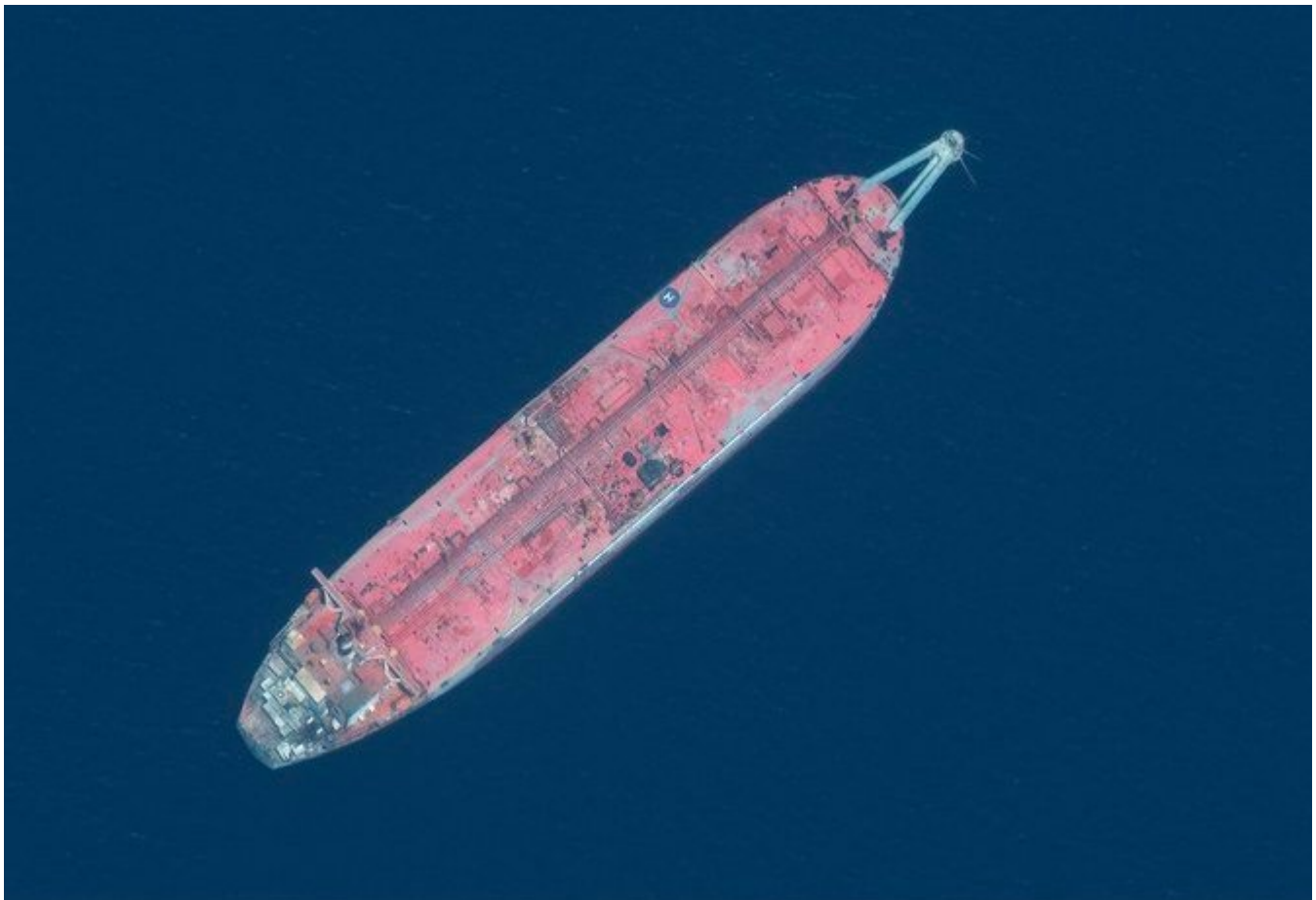
Yemen's Ministry of Defense and local media reports said that army troops and allied tribesmen seized control of mountains near Al-Khanjer military base, east of Jouf, following a fresh assault on the Houthis.

Arab coalition aircraft targeted Houthi military gatherings and equipment east of Hazen, the provincial capital, preventing the Houthis from launching counterattacks on government forces.

At least two dozen Houthis were killed on Tuesday in heavy fighting in the Al-Makhdara region, west of Marib province. Fighting also claimed the lives of dozens of government troops, including high-ranking officers.

State media reported that Yemeni President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi and his deputy Ali Mohsen Al-Ahmer were mourning Brig. Saleh Al-Farja Al-Shanani, a military commander, who was killed in Jouf.

Col. Abdullah Bin Dhaen, the director of Jouf's Al-Matammah District, was killed on Tuesday during an offensive, Rabia Al-Qurashi, the Yemeni army spokesman in the province, tweeted.



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Yemen minister: UN failed to convince Houthis to allow access to decaying oil tanker
UN chief urges Yemen's Houthis to grant access to decaying oil tanker

Women on 10 flights from Qatar invasively examined: Australia

Wed, 2020-10-28 03:33

SYDNEY: Female passengers on 10 planes flying out of Doha were forced to endure invasive physical examinations, Australia's foreign minister said Wednesday, greatly expanding the number of women previously thought affected. It was revealed on Sunday that women were removed from a Sydney-bound Qatar Airways flight in Doha earlier this month and forced to undergo vaginal inspections after a newborn baby was found abandoned in an airport bathroom. Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne told a Senate hearing Wednesday that women on "10 aircraft in total" had been subject to the searches she has described as "grossly disturbing" and "offensive."

"We became aware of that yesterday through advice from our post in Doha," she said.

She said 18 Australian women on the October 2 flight to Sydney were affected, along with "other foreign nationals." AFP understands one French woman on the flight was among them.

Payne did not detail the destinations of the other flights.

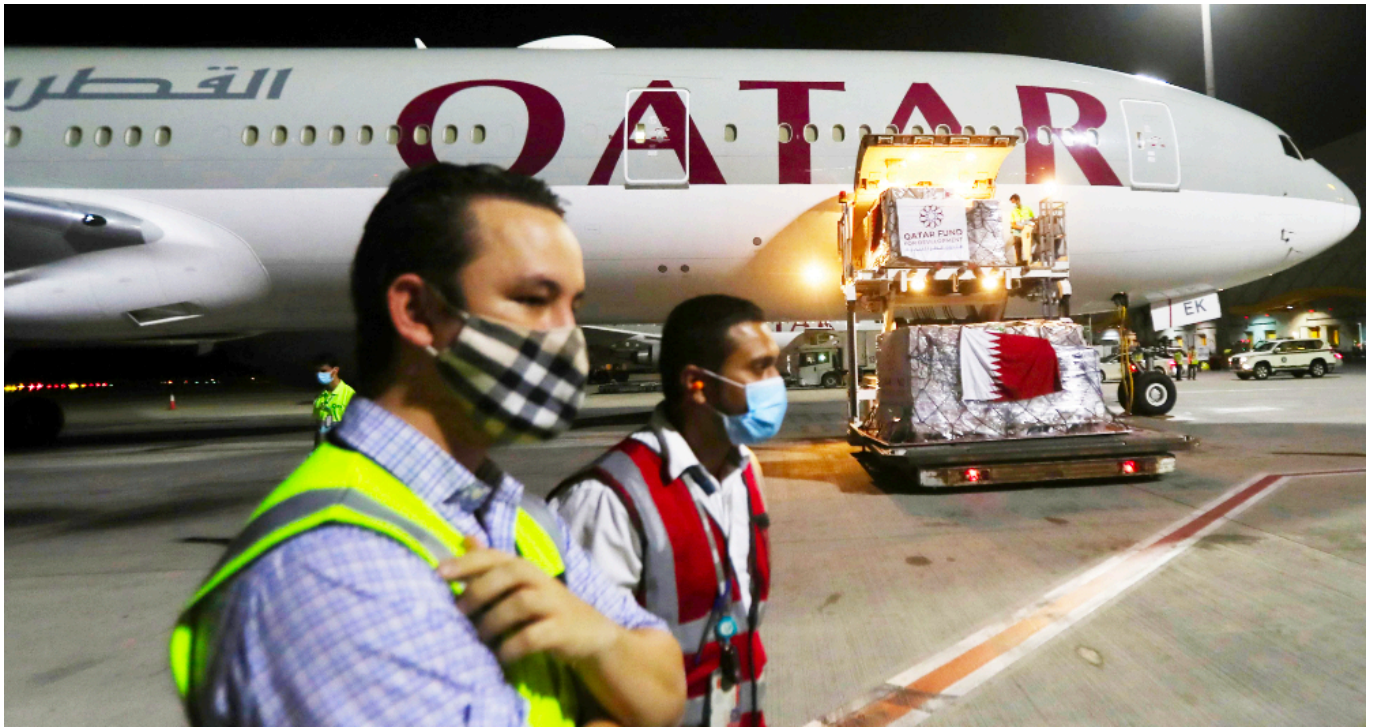
The incident has sparked a diplomatic row between Australia and Qatar, with Canberra lodging protests with the Middle East nation over the treatment of its citizens.

Officials said Australia was also working with other countries to jointly raise concerns with Doha but refused to name those countries, citing privacy concerns.

Payne admitted she had not spoken directly to her Qatari counterpart, saying she was "waiting to see the report" on the incident, which she expected to receive this week.

Doha's Hamad International airport previously confirmed a broad outline of events, without providing details of the procedures, or the number of women and flights involved.

It also launched an appeal Sunday for the child's mother to come forward, saying the baby remains unidentified but is "safe under the professional care of medical and social workers."



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Australian recalls 'terrifying' moment female passengers strip-searched in Qatar
Australia refers invasive search of women at Qatar airport to federal police

[Lethal airstrike is Moscow's 'warning shot' to Turkey](#)

Author:

Wed, 2020-10-28 02:01

ANKARA: A Russian airstrike on a rebel training camp in the Syrian province of Idlib is Moscow's "warning shot" to Turkey over its support for extremism, political analysts say.

The airstrike on Monday – one of the deadliest in nine years of conflict in Syria – killed almost 80 Turkish-backed militia fighters in the Faylaq Al-Sham rebel camp, near Syria's border with Turkey.

In the wake of the attack debate raged about the message Moscow wanted to send Ankara by targeting Turkey's major proxy in the war-torn country.

The attack is considered as a serious breach of Moscow's cease-fire agreement

with Ankara.

Idlib is the focus of a growing dispute between Turkey and Russia, with the former supporting the rebel forces, while Moscow backs the Assad government's offensive to retake the province.

The rebels, ideologically close to the Muslim Brotherhood, have helped Turkish forces secure observation points in contested zones. Militia fighters also make up the largest armed group backed by Ankara.

Observers say the airstrike will lead to an escalation in tensions between Russia and Turkey.

The two countries have already halted joint patrols along Idlib's key M4 highway despite Turkey's decision to test-fire its controversial Russian S-400 air defense system, ignoring warnings from Washington.

Meanwhile, Turkey has stepped up reinforcements at military posts along the M4 to strengthen its foothold in the region.

According to Samuel Ramani, a Middle East analyst at the University of Oxford, Russia is increasingly concerned that Turkey might ramp up support for rebel groups and organizations that Moscow views as extremists.

The latest Russian airstrike shows Moscow is willing to push Turkey on its support for extremism, he told Arab News.

However, Orwa Ajjoub, affiliated researcher at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Lund University in Sweden, said the airstrike on the Turkish-backed rebels should be seen as part of a wider conflict between the two nations.

"Ankara and Moscow have failed three times to maintain a permanent cease-fire in Nagorno-Karabakh, where the two actors are supporting the opposing states of Azerbaijan and Armenia, respectively," he told Arab News.

"In Libya, the UN-brokered 'permanent cease-fire' between Gen. Khalifa Haftar's forces supported by Russia, the UAE and Saudi Arabia, and the government of National Accord supported by Turkey and Qatar, was also met with suspicion and unease since both Ankara and Moscow will have to withdraw their mercenaries from the country before securing a decisive win," Ajjoub said.

Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs is yet to make any statement on the Russian attack.

During a visit to Athens on Monday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov commented on the two countries' relationship, saying: "We have good relations with Turkey, but it is not without problems."

However, Ajjoub believes Russia is hoping to "reshuffle the cards" in Syria in an attempt to pressure Turkey's stances on both Nagorno-Karabakh and Libya.

“Russia’s decision to carry out an attack on Ankara’s primary proxy is designed to change the status quo in Idlib,” he said.

Since the March 5 cease-fire between Turkey and Russia, Idlib has enjoyed relative calm interrupted by attacks mainly by the Syrian regime.

The attacks are aimed at “redrawing the map of northwest Syria,” Ajjoub added.

“Turkey, which has already shown some flexibility by withdrawing its forces from the Morek military post, does not seem interested in offering more concessions to Russia.

“By carrying out such a significant attack on Faylaq Al-Sham’s headquarters, Russia is reminding Turkey that achieving relative success in a multi-front conflict, especially in Nagorno-Karabakh and Libya, can be undermined in Syria, where Moscow’s military might is undisputed.”

Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mevlut Cavusoglu, spoke with Lavrov by telephone on Tuesday, with Russian airstrikes topping the Turkish agenda.



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Turkey-backed fighters retaliate against Syria-allied troops Syrian, Russian airstrikes in Idlib amount to war crimes, as do extremist attacks – UN