

Five civilians killed in Baghdad rocket attack

Mon, 2020-09-28 18:58

BAGHDAD: Iraqi militia groups fired two Katyusha rockets on a house in Baghdad, killing two women and three children and wounding two other children, the Iraqi military said on Monday.

The deaths were the first among Iraqi civilians in the latest outbreak of violence, during which Iran-backed Iraqi Shiite militias have been blamed for targeting US interests in the country. Police sources said Baghdad airport was the target of the attack.

The rocket was launched from the Al-Jihad neighborhood of Baghdad.

The attacks have become a frequent occurrence, often targeting the US Embassy in Baghdad, within the heavily fortified Green Zone, and US troops present in Iraqi bases as well as Baghdad Airport. Roadside bombs have also frequently targeted convoys carrying equipment destined for US-led coalition forces.

Previous attacks have caused minor damage but rarely deaths or injuries.

The frequency of the rockets have strained Iraq-US relations, prompting the Trump administration last week to threaten to close its diplomatic mission in Baghdad if Shiite militia groups believed to be orchestrating them are not reigned in.

The disparate nature of Shiite militias following the US assassination of Iranian Gen. Qassim Soleimani and Iranian militia leader Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis has complicated Iraqi efforts to clamp down on rogue armed elements. A government raid on the powerful Iran-backed Kataib Hezbollah, suspected of launching rocket attacks, backfired when those detained were released for want of evidence.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Iraq](#)

[Baghdad Airport](#)

[Green Zone](#)

Iraqi army: Rocket hits Baghdad's Green Zone; no casualties
Three missiles target Baghdad airport

[UN's Libya mission praises Libyan rivals for holding direct talks in Egypt](#)

Author:

Mon, 2020-09-28 18:50

CAIRO: Military and police teams from Libya's rival administrations held talks in Egypt on Monday as part of attempts to resolve the conflict.

The security and military talks were taking place in Hurgada and were facilitated by the UN's Libya mission, UNSMIL.

France said it welcomed the direct talks between Libyan parties.

The UNSMIL also thanked Egypt for hosting the talks, and the Libyan delegations who "demonstrated a positive and proactive attitude aimed at de-escalation of the situation in central Libya."

The talks are part of the 5+5 Joint Military Commission which started meeting in February. It consists of five senior military officers from each side of the conflict.

Libya split into two rival administrations after the downfall of dictator Muammar Qaddafi in 2011.

The capital Tripoli is controlled by the Government of National Accord, while in the east, a rival government backed by military command Khalifa Haftar holds sway.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Libya](#)

[Egypy](#)

[United Nations support mission in Libya \(UNSML\)](#)

At least 13 people drown in migrant shipwreck off Libya
French ex-president Sarkozy loses challenge to cash-from-Libya case

[Ashrawi urges American Arabs to unify for Palestine](#)

Mon, 2020-09-28 16:42

Hanan Ashrawi, a Ramallah-based member of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) Executive Committee and popular English language voice for the Palestinian cause in the US, urged American Arabs to “mobilize” and set aside their differences to strengthen the voice of the Palestinian diaspora.

During a Zoom discussion Saturday with American Arab leaders, hosted by ArabAmerica.com, Ashrawi said the US Arab community faced many of the same “very difficult conditions and obstacles” that Palestinians face around the world.

But, Ashrawi said, if they could bridge their differences and unite around common principles of justice, they could become an important voice as advocates for the Palestinian cause.

She argued it was especially important as US society becomes more polarized, but argued that Palestinians and Arabs needed to respect each other in order to unify.

"You cannot antagonize others. You can't intimidate others. You cannot insult others. You have to work with them to find common ground," Ashrawi urged.

"Even when you challenge. I challenge a lot. I am known to be very blunt. I don't mince words. But at the same time I don't insult. I don't bring other people down. What you need to do is to be able to challenge in a way that shows you respect yourself so that others will respect you. This is extremely difficult."

Asked about how to bridge the divisions that segment Palestinians in the US and abroad, Ashrawi urged all sides to embrace their differences, saying: "Arabs are not identical and we are not monolithic. We have to celebrate our diversity.

"We are all under attack," she said. "In the US, you are seeing the rise of identity politics ... You cannot be neutral in the face of such racism ... and such distortions. You must embrace your Arab identity and be proud of it. What we have to do is to mobilize to make our space in the public discourse."

Ashrawi criticized the Arab League, calling it "a disaster" in confronting Israel's atrocities and oppression. She acknowledged Palestinians could do a better job of communicating, but said that they were working under oppressive conditions and without major funding or backing.

"It's difficult because what we do, we do voluntarily and there is no funding," Ashrawi said.

"We have a problem, if you want me to be very frank with you. We have a problem with many in the leadership think that they know it all."

Ashrawi also said that rivalries prevented there from being a clear and powerful strategic message.

"They don't think anyone else has the ability to present the cause. We don't have the funds. We don't have the institutions ... we try desperately to face a real assault," Ashrawi said.

She added it was important for Palestinians and Arabs in the US to engage in the political system as a unified voice.

"You need to speak out. You need to stand up and speak out. You need to challenge. You need to make the facts known, to get people to unlearn what they have learned because for a long time Israel was dictating the agenda," she said.

“Work within a group. Work collectively; organize, use the system. Work with other people because it is an intersectional issue. You can work with women. You can work with African Americans. You can work with youth. You can work with indigenous people. You can work with others who feel marginalized, excluded and oppressed. The mentality of oppression is the same everywhere.”

She stressed: “You have natural allies in the state. You have to work together ... Within the system you can influence political decisions. Hold your representatives accountable.”

Ashrawi defended the Palestine National Authority, adding they “do not make political decisions” unlike the PLO.

“It is unfair to say failure, failure, failure ... they did many things. They built many institutions,” she said.

“You have to place it in context. The Palestinian leadership is working under extremely adverse conditions and circumstances. They have no powers. They have no rights like everyone else. Israel controls everything, the lands, the resources, the water, our lives.”

Ashrawi added that while Palestinians continued to push for action from the International Criminal Court, Israel and the US continued to obstruct that legal process.

“They are punishing the individuals who are in charge of the global judicial and accountability system,” Ashrawi said. “This is unconscionable.”



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Hanan Ashrawi](#)

[Palestinian Liberation Organization \(PLO\)](#)

[United States](#)

The many firsts of Hanan Ashrawi, one of Palestine's most notable politicians Saudi Arabia says it stands by Palestinians, supports efforts for just solution

[Czech Republic to resume flights to Egypt](#)

Author:

Zaynab Khojji

ID:

1601236332201460300

Sun, 2020-09-27 23:12

CAIRO: The Czech Republic will resume tourist flights to Egypt from Oct. 1. Jan Fulik, the Czech ambassador to Egypt, confirmed the move during a meeting with Egyptian Tourism Minister Khaled Al-Anani.

Al-Anani is visiting Sharm el-Sheikh with aviation and environment ministers, along with 30 foreign envoys, to celebrate World Tourism Day.

Fulik said this decision to resume tourist flights follows Al-Anani's visit to the Czech capital Prague last August for discussions with government officials on boosting tourism in Egypt.

Flights will operate from Prague to the cities of Sharm El-Sheikh, Hurghada and Marsa Alam, and reservations for trips have begun on online booking sites.

Al-Anani said he appreciated the efforts of Said Hindam, the Egyptian ambassador to Prague, to improve links between the two countries, and offered an assurance that Egypt would take precautionary measures in tourist governorates to protect visitors.

Several countries have relaunched tourist visits to Egypt after a halt due to the coronavirus.

France will resume trips to Egyptian coastal cities from October.

Germany is considering resuming flights, with one official saying Egypt has "special priority" because of the country's popularity with German tourists.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Egypt](#)

[Czech Republic](#)

[Coronavirus](#)

Egyptian ministers, foreign ambassadors participate in bike marathon in Sharm El-Sheikh
Egypt launches campaign to promote nature reserves and ecotourism

[Iranian chess referee seeking asylum reveals second reason she can't go home](#)

Author:

Zaynab Khojji

ID:

1601233480431170400

Sun, 2020-09-27 22:23

LONDON: The Iranian chess referee forced to seek asylum in the UK after letting her hijab slip during a match in Shanghai this year has revealed another reason she may never be able to return to her country – her secret

Jewish heritage.

Shohreh Bayat told [The Daily Telegraph](#) that she had to conceal her family background in her native Iran.

“If they knew I had Jewish background, I would never be general secretary of the Iranian chess federation,” Bayat told the British newspaper.

The leading referee said she had heard anti-Jewish remarks made by chess officials in Iran.

Bayat was declared a public enemy by Iranian hard-liners and received death threats after photos of her emerged from the Women’s World Chess Championship in January with her red headscarf around her neck rather than covering her head.

“All my life was about showing a fake image of myself to society because they wanted me to be an image of a religious Muslim woman, which I wasn’t,” Bayat said, speaking about the Iranian regime.

The 33-year-old said she is not a fan of the hijab, but felt she had to comply – even if that meant covering only a tiny amount of hair.

Women are required to wear the hijab in public in Iran, and those who refuse can face prison.

After being photographed at the world championship match with her hijab around her neck, Bayat said she was warned by family and friends not to return home.

“My mobile was full of messages saying: ‘Please, don’t come back, they will arrest you’,” she told the newspaper.

“I woke up the following day and saw that the (Iranian) federation removed my picture – it was like I didn’t exist,” she said.

Despite death threats, Bayat continued refereeing the second leg of the tournament in Vladivostok, ignoring calls from Iranian officials for a public apology.

At the end of January, she changed her return ticket and traveled to the UK – the only Western country where she held a valid visa – and applied for asylum. She is waiting for her application to be processed.

Bayat’s paternal grandmother was Jewish and moved to Iran from Azeraijan’s capital Baku during the Second World War.

Last week, Bayat celebrated the Jewish New Year for the first time in her life.

“It was amazing. It was a thing I never had a chance to do,” she said.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Iran](#)

[Shohreh Bayat](#)

Iranian chess referee fears government retribution after hijab uproar
Iranian chess referee fears arrest if she returns