

Jailed Iranian rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh hospitalized amid hunger strike

Author:

Sat, 2020-09-19 21:50

TEHRAN: A leading Iranian human rights lawyer has been hospitalized a month after launching a hunger strike seeking better prison conditions and the release of political prisoners amid the pandemic, her husband said Saturday. Reza Khandan said that health care professionals decided to hospitalize his wife, Nasrin Sotoudeh, because of heart and respiratory problems as well as low blood pressure.

Khandan said Sotoudeh was transferred to a hospital in north Tehran from the notorious Evin Prison earlier on Saturday.

Sotoudeh began her hunger strike in mid-August from her prison cell. She was arrested in 2018 on charges of collusion and propaganda against Iran's rulers and eventually was sentenced to 38 years in prison and 148 lashes. Under the law she must serve at least 12 years.

During her prison term, Sotoudeh occasionally visited clinics as she suffered chronic gastrointestinal and foot problems.

Earlier this year, the 57-year-old Sotoudeh – known for defending activists, opposition politicians and women prosecuted for removing their headscarves, – held a five-day hunger strike demanding prisoners be released to protect them from the coronavirus.



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[Reza Khandan](#)

[Nasrin Sotoudeh](#)

[Iran](#)

[hunger strike](#)

Whole of Iran on coronavirus red alert due to rise in deathsIran disregards outcry with wrestler's 'hasty' execution

[Houthi weapon-smuggling cell linked to Iran's revolutionary guards apprehended](#)

Sat, 2020-09-19 19:17

LONDON: A Houthi cell smuggling Iranian weapons into Yemen has been apprehended, the country's Minister of Information Muammar Al-Eryani said on Saturday.

The cell admitted to receiving training in Iran and the confessions were evidence of Iran's involvement, according to Al-Eryani.

"The cell's confessions confirm the Houthis' exploitation of the Stockholm Agreement," he said, referring to an accord signed in Dec. 2018 between opposing factions in the conflict that set out a series of undertakings as a precursor to lasting peace in the country.

He added that Iran's continued arming of the Houthis was a violation of international laws.

He said that the cell used the ports of Hodeidah, Salif, and Ras Issa to smuggle Iranian weapons as well as to target civilians in Saudi Arabia and navigate the Red Sea.

"It is imperative to pressure Tehran to stop its terrorist activities," he said, calling for an extension of the Iranian arms embargo.



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Organization of Islamic Cooperation condemns Houthi attack on Khamis MushaytArab coalition destroys armed Houthi drone targeting Saudi Arabia

[UAE reports 809 new Covid-19 cases, health minister begins vaccine trial](#)

Sat, 2020-09-19 17:46

DUBAI: The UAE on Saturday recorded 809 new cases of COVID-19 and one death. The Ministry of Health and Prevention said the total number of infected cases since the pandemic began has reached 84,242, while the total deaths has reached 404.

A further 722 people recovered from COVID-19 over the past 24 hours, bringing the total to 73,512 recoveries.

آخر الإحصائيات حول إصابات فيروس كوفيد 19 في الإمارات

The latest update of Coronavirus (Covid 19) in the UAE [#نلتزم_لننتصر](#) [#التزامك_حياتك_ملتزمون_با_وطن_#كوفيد19](#) [#وزارة_الصحة_وقاية_المجتمع_الإمارات](#) [#we_commit_until_we_succeed](#) [#covid19#mohap_uae](#) pic.twitter.com/3it0iqcWa4

– وزارة الصحة ووقاية المجتمع الإماراتية – MOHAP UAE (@mohapuae)
[September 19, 2020](#)

The ministry said 103,000 new tests have been conducted on various groups of society, using the best and latest medical examination techniques.

The UAE health minister Abdul Rahman Al-Owais received the first dose of the coronavirus vaccine, after the UAE authorized the use of the vaccine for doctors and frontline workers.

The ministry said in a statement that the minister received the vaccine “in line with the ministry’s plan that was announced last week, which includes providing the coronavirus vaccine to specific groups in the first line of defense,” state news agency WAM reported.

Al-Owais said: “By presenting this vaccine, we seek to provide all safety measures for the heroes of the first line of defense and protect them from any dangers that they may face due to the nature of their work.”



UAE Minister of Health, Abdul Rahman Al-Owais, received the first dose of the coronavirus vaccine, after the UAE authorized its use for doctors and frontline workers. (WAM)

He added that the clinical trials of the vaccine conducted by the country’s health sector “showed positive results, and proved that it is safe and effective and will contribute to reducing the losses caused by the pandemic to preserve lives.”

The UAE began experiments on a vaccine for the novel COVID-19 in mid-July,

which is produced by the Chinese pharmaceutical company Sinopharma, and the experiments were conducted under the supervision of the Department of Health in Abu Dhabi and the UAE's health ministry.

The vaccine is included under the umbrella of the World Health Organization, and the UAE was chosen to conduct the experiments as it includes more than 200 nationalities.

Meanwhile, Dubai Economy, in cooperation with the Dubai Tourism Department, said it had closed one cafe and issued seven violations and five warnings to several other establishments for not abiding by the precautionary measures. The cafe was closed as a performer was not wearing a face mask and the customers were not adhering to social distancing.

Dubai Economy closed a coffee shop in cooperation with the Department of Tourism and Commerce for employees not wearing face masks, and not adhering to the social distancing to limit the spread of COVID-19. pic.twitter.com/BmRgsnYWIr

– اقتصاد دبي (@Dubai_DED) [September 19, 2020](https://twitter.com/Dubai_DED/status/1300000000000000000)

The authority said 660 entities out of the 673 inspected had met the precautionary measures set by the government.

Elsewhere, Kuwait recorded 521 new infected Covid-19 cases and one death during the past 24 hours, bringing the total number to 99,049 and 581 cases respectively.

The ministry of health said 8,970 cases remained active, with 96 in critical condition.

تعلن [#وزارة الصحة](https://twitter.com/KUWAIT_MOH) عن تأكيد إصابة 521 حالة جديدة، وتسجيل 722 حالة شفاء، وحالة وفاة واحدة جديدة بـ [#فيروس كورونا المستجد](https://twitter.com/KUWAIT_MOH) COVID-19 ، ليصبح إجمالي عدد الحالات 99,049 حالة pic.twitter.com/B55XIclKfA

– وزارة الصحة - الكويت (@KUWAIT_MOH) [September 19, 2020](https://twitter.com/KUWAIT_MOH/status/1300000000000000000)

It also 722 cases had recovered from the virus, bringing the total to 89,498. In Bahrain, 690 new cases, three deaths and 613 recoveries were reported.

Out of 12301 COVID-19 tests carried out on 18 September 2020, 690 new cases have been detected among 125 expatriate workers, 544 new cases are contacts of active cases, and 21 are travel related. There were 613 recoveries from [#COVID19](https://twitter.com/COVID19), increasing total recoveries to 56700 pic.twitter.com/lkUA2PTKQs

– مملكة البحرين | وزارة الصحة (@MOH_Bahrain) [September 18, 2020](https://twitter.com/COVID19/status/1300000000000000000)

The ministry said 6,959 cases remained active, while the total death toll had

reached 220 and 56,700 cases had recovered from coronavirus.
Out of the active cases, 6916 were in stable condition and 43 were critical.



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[Abdul Rahman Al-Owais](#)

[Ministry of Health and Prevention](#)
[Sinopharma](#)
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[Bahrain](#)
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[Abdul Rahman Mohammed Al-Owais](#)
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[AbdulRahman Bin Mohammed Al-Owais](#)
[dubai economy](#)
[Dubai Tourism Department](#)

UAE approves COVID-19 vaccine for health workers
UAE grants scholarship to children of coronavirus frontline workers
Saudi Arabia registers 551 new coronavirus cases, 28 deaths
Bahrain crown prince volunteers in Covid-19 vaccine trial

[New Daesh leader was informant for US, says counter terrorism report](#)

Fri, 2020-09-18 21:03

NEW YORK: The man widely believed to be the new leader of Daesh was once an informant for the US, according to a new report from the Combating Terrorism Center (CTC), a research body at the US military academy of West Point in New York.

“Stepping Out from the Shadows: The Interrogation of the Islamic State’s Future Caliph” is based on Tactical Interrogation Reports (TIRs) – the paper trail the US military creates when enemy fighters are detained and interrogated – from Al-Mawla’s time in captivity in the late 2000s.

Before his release in 2009, Al-Mawla named 88 extremists involved in terrorist activities, and the information he divulged during his interrogations led US forces in the region to successfully capture or kill dozens of Al-Qaeda fighters, the report claims.

The CTC said it is “highly confident” Al-Mawla became the new leader of Daesh after the previous leader, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, was killed in a US air raid in Syria in October 2019.

Although Daesh announced that a man called Abu Ibrahim Al-Hashimi Al-Qurashi was Baghdadi’s successor, US officials have also stated that Al-Qurashi’s true identity is actually Al-Mawla – also known as Hajj Abdullah.

Before joining Daesh, Al-Mawla is believed to have been the deputy leader of Al-Qaeda.

While details about the operation resulting in his capture are scarce, the TRIs reveal that he was captured on January 6, 2008.

The following day, US Central Command announced the capture of a wanted individual who “previously served as a judge of an illegal court system involved in ordering and approving abductions and executions.”

In his interrogations, Al-Mawla offered up details of terrorist plots to his interrogators, while minimizing his own involvement. He identified many jihadists by name and offered descriptions of their roles in the terrorist organization and details of their involvement in attacks on US-led coalition forces during the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

Al-Mawla – a former officer in Saddam Hussein’s army and once Baghdadi’s speechwriter – emerges from the TIRs as a mysterious personality with a vague past, whose ethnicity could not be determined with certainty. The statements in the reports are rife with contradictory elements and open to a wide range of interpretations. As the authors point out in their introduction: “It is incredibly difficult to ascertain whether what Al-Mawla divulges regarding himself or ISI (the forerunner of Daesh) as an organization is true.”

Details of the specific demographics of Al Mawla’s birthplace of Al-Muhalabiyah in Iraq’s Tal Afar district are sketchy, but it is generally accepted to have a predominantly Turkmen population. The authors of the report point out that some sources have suggested “this could pose legitimacy problems for him because (Daesh) mostly has Arabs in its senior leadership echelons,” but add that at least two other senior members of the group were reported to have been Turkmen.

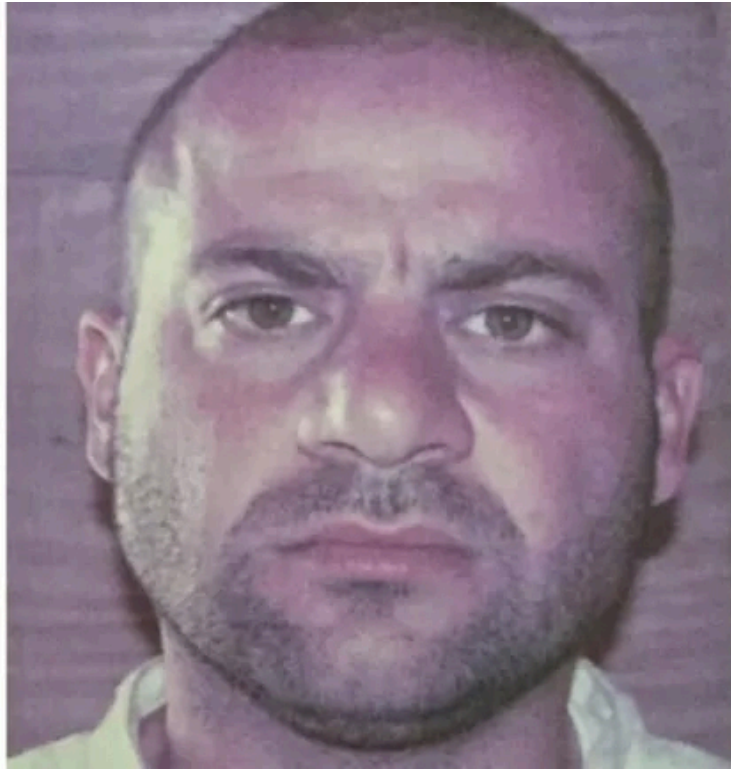
Al-Mawla also claimed to have avoided pledging allegiance to ISI because he was a Sufi. The report’s authors cast doubt on that claim, given his quick rise to prominence in the terrorist group and the fact that ISI and Daesh branded Sufism as heresy.

But the authors do believe the TRIs give some valuable insights into Al-Mawla’s personality.

“The fact that he detailed activities and gave testimony against (fellow jihadists) suggests a willingness to offer up fellow members of the group to suit his own ends,” they wrote. “The amount of detail and seeming willingness to share information about fellow organization members suggests either a degree of nonchalance, strategic calculation, or resignation on the part of Al-Mawla regarding operational security.

“He appears to have named individuals in some capacity across all levels of the organization, while describing some individuals in some detail,” they continued.

The US Department of Justice has offered a \$10million reward for information about Al-Mawla’s identification or location.



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Morocco warns of Sahel 'time bomb' after Daesh-linked cell busted
Daesh women crowdfund smuggler fees to escape SDF detention

[Pressure piles up on Turkey ahead of EU leaders' meeting](#)

Fri, 2020-09-18 20:27

ANKARA: European pressure is piling up on Turkey ahead of a meeting next week about the country's activities in the eastern Mediterranean, with the European Parliament urging the immediate end to "illegal exploration and drilling" in the region.

European Union leaders will meet in Brussels on Sept. 24 and 25 to discuss the single market, industrial policy and digital transformation, as well as external relations, particularly with Turkey and China.

The situation in the eastern Mediterranean and relations with Turkey were raised by some member states during an EU leaders' video conference of Aug. 19. Leaders expressed their concern about the growing tensions and stressed

the urgent need to de-escalate.

A European Parliament resolution on Thursday called for sanctions against Turkey unless it showed “sincere cooperation and concrete progress” in defusing tensions with EU members Greece and Cyprus.

Parliamentarians also want it to “immediately end any further illegal exploration and drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean, by refraining from violating Greek airspace and Greek and Cypriot territorial waters and by distancing itself from nationalistic warmongering rhetoric.”

Opinion

This section contains relevant reference points, placed in (Opinion field)

But Turkey criticized the resolution, saying it was biased, and insisted on the need for completely demilitarizing Greek islands in the zone.

Marc Pierini, a former EU ambassador to Turkey and now analyst at Carnegie Europe, said the resolution reflected the views of a democratically elected parliament from across the bloc.

“This is not ‘country X against country Y,’ it is the aggregated view of the European Parliament,” he told Arab News.

Germany is pushing for mediation efforts, while France is campaigning for punitive measures to stay united with Cyprus and Greece.

Following talks with Cypriot Foreign Minister Nikos Christodoulides in Nicosia, French Minister for European Affairs Clement Beaune said the EU should consider employing sanctions, among other available tools, if Turkey continued to “endanger the security and sovereignty of a member state.”

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said on Wednesday that nothing could justify Turkey’s coercion in the eastern Mediterranean in a dispute over energy resources.

“Turkey is and will always be an important neighbor,” she said, a day after Turkey said the operations of its drilling vessel Oruc Reis were extended until Oct. 12. “But while we are close together on the map, the distance between us appears to be growing.”

Fiona Mullen, director of the Nicosia-based research consultancy Sapienta Economics, said that the European Parliament was less important for the east Mediterranean issue than the European Council heads of government.

“But in the European Council it looks as though momentum is building for serious sanctions,” she told Arab News. “I think this is why we saw the removal of the Oruc Reis vessel for maintenance. Turkey cannot afford big sanctions when the lira is in such a vulnerable state.”

If backstage diplomacy was successful, she said, the removal of vessels around Cyprus would likely be a carrot for Turkey in terms of the customs union. "It is in everyone's interests to find a win-win result out of this," she added.

Pierini anticipated that three elements would stand out in the upcoming European Council debate: EU solidarity with Cyprus and Greece; availability for dialogue but not under threat; and ongoing work on possible graduated sanctions should the need arise.

The parliamentary resolution included the possibility of further restrictive measures to be "sectoral and targeted."

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had a phone call with European Council head Charles Michel on Thursday and urged Brussels to adopt an "impartial stance" toward Turkey.

The US is "deeply concerned" about Turkey's moves in the region, according to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

Ankara told Washington to stay neutral on the row.



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Turkey does not expect EU sanctions over eastern Mediterranean dispute
Turkish President Erdogan blinks first in eastern Mediterranean standoff