

Israel's Mossad spy chief visits UAE for security talks

Tue, 2020-08-18 21:47

DUBAI: Israel's Mossad spy agency chief Yossi Cohen visited the UAE for security talks on Tuesday, only days after the countries agreed to establish diplomatic ties.

The head of Israel's foreign intelligence service discussed "cooperation in the fields of security" with the UAE's national security advisor, Sheikh Tahnoun bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, in Abu Dhabi, Emirates News Agency reported.

The US, Israel and UAE, along with several other Gulf states, have a common foe in Iran, which they accuse of seeking a nuclear bomb, fuelling regional instability and backing militant groups.

Cohen's trip marked the first visit to the UAE by an Israeli official after the announcement last week by US President Donald Trump that the two countries had agreed to normalise relations.

"The two sides discussed prospects for cooperation in the fields of security as well as exchanged points of view on regional developments and on issues of common interest" including efforts to contain the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), the report said.

As part of the landmark deal, the Israel agreed to suspend the annexation of occupied West Bank territories, although Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the plan was not off the table in the long run.

Trump said leaders from the two countries would sign the historic agreement at the White House in the coming weeks.

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Netanyahu last week called Cohen to thank him for the Mossad's assistance "in developing the ties with the Gulf states over the years, which assisted in bringing the peace treaty to fruition," the prime minister's office said.

Palestinians protested the deal which they saw as a betrayal by a major player in the Arab world, which has broadly held that normal ties with Israel are only possible once its dispute with the Palestinians is resolved.

Israel-UAE tensions had run high in 2010 after Mossad was widely blamed for the assassination in a Dubai hotel room of an operative for Hamas, Mahmoud Al-Mabhouh.

The deal is only the third such accord Israel has struck with an Arab country, and raises the prospect of similar deals with other Gulf states.

The Israeli prime minister appeared Monday on Sky News Arabia in his first ever interview with the Abu Dhabi-based network.

“This is a great moment ... we are making history,” he said, adding: “This is a combination of limitless possibilities.”

Meanwhile, Oman’s minister responsible for foreign affairs spoke to his Israeli counterpart on Monday, the first publicised contact since the announcement of the UAE-Israel deal.

Yusuf bin Alawi and Israel’s Gabi Ashkenazi spoke via telephone about “recent developments in the region,” Oman’s foreign ministry said on Twitter.

Oman, along with Bahrain, had already expressed its support for the deal, and Bin Alawi told Ashkenazi that Muscat “clearly reaffirms its position calling for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace” in the Middle East.

Other Gulf countries have so far remained silent on the Israel-UAE agreement.



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[Paws for thought: Egypt's grand mufti rules on purity of dogs](#)

Author:

Tue, 2020-08-18 21:49

CAIRO: Muslims and dogs can coexist, according to Egypt's grand mufti who said that all living creatures were pure and it was the public's belief that dogs were unclean.

Grand Mufti Shawky Allam made the statement on the Sada Al-Balad channel, adding that there was a difference of opinion between scholars.

The public viewed dogs as impure but the Maliki doctrine said they were not. He said that the Malikis came to this conclusion from their logic that every living animal was pure.

"We adopt the Maliki doctrine here in Dar Al-Iftaa (Egypt's Islamic advisory body) and have ruled on this issue based on it," he added. "It is possible to coexist with a dog and still worship God. If you perform wudu (ablution) and there is saliva from the dog on your body or your garment, there is absolutely nothing wrong with praying and there is no need to repeat wudu or wash clothes."

The status of dogs in Egypt is a source of discord, mostly between dog owners and breeders and religious hardliners.

There was controversy when people on social media circulated a picture of the president's religious adviser Osama Al-Azhari shaking hands with a dog. He was subjected to insults. To clarify his position he explained that he followed the Seven Sleepers, a group of youths who hid in a cave to escape religious persecution and emerged hundreds of years later. They were a supreme example of goodness and divineness and had no shame in keeping a dog, he added.

Vocalist Mahmoud Al-Tohamy was subjected to verbal abuse last year. He took to Facebook to defend his position, sharing his pictures with a dog called Costa and accompanying these with evidence about the purity of dogs: "Whoever says a dog is impure, tell them God did not create anything impure."

"If the Seven Sleepers came into contact with the saliva of an unclean dog, the garment would be washed, then they would perform wudu and pray as usual ... The Seven Sleepers' dog died next to them and remained a companion to them all their lives, yet people found no objection to that," Al-Tohamy added.

Ahmed Karima, professor of comparative jurisprudence and Islamic law at Al-Azhar University, said that people should go back to scripture as God permitted hunting-dogs and guard-dogs. He also expressed his admiration for

Imam Malik bin Anas' ruling that every living being was pure.

"In Dar Al-Iftaa, we are trying to make people's lives more sophisticated and, in the current period, people have become very attached to pets. We take the Maliki doctrine because it considers that every living thing is pure," Omar Al-Wardani, secretary general of fatwas at Dar Al-Iftaa, said.

The mufti's statements were welcomed, especially by dog owners and pet associations, but hardliners criticized him.



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Egypt's Grand Mufti slams refusal to bury dead COVID-19 patients as 'religiously rejected' Egypt court asks Grand Mufti for opinion on terror case sentences

[Oman's sultan names new foreign minister](#)

Author:

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Tue, 2020-08-18 16:12

MUSCAT: Oman's Sultan Haitham on Tuesday appointed a new top diplomat, replacing the long-serving Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah in a government reshuffle.

Sultan Haitham, since his accession in January, has vowed to maintain Oman's policy of neutrality and non-interference.

Badr Albusaidi, 60, was named foreign minister, a title held by the late Sultan Qaboos himself but with Alawi responsible for foreign affairs for the past two decades.

Albusaidi has been in the diplomatic service since the 1980s and held a number of posts, including foreign ministry secretary-general.

Sultan bin Salem bin Saeed Al-Habsi was appointed finance minister, a post also held by the sultan, and new faces were named to other key ministries, state media said.

Haitham bin Tariq was sworn in after modern Oman's founding father, Sultan Qaboos, died at the age of 79.

Yusuf bin Alawi played a key role in maintaining Oman's neutrality and as a regional mediator.

On Monday, he spoke with Israeli Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi on the phone to stress Oman's support of "a comprehensive, just and lasting peace," Oman's foreign ministry said on Twitter.

It was the first public contact between Oman and Israel since US President Donald Trump's announcement last week that the Jewish state and the UAE, Oman's neighbor, have agreed to normalize ties.

In October 2018, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu held surprise talks with Qaboos in Muscat, which does not officially recognize the Jewish state but maintains good ties with both Washington and Tehran.



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[Egyptian parliament approves law to protect sexual harassment victims](#)

Author:

Tue, 2020-08-18 21:37

CAIRO: A draft law to protect sexual harassment victims has been approved by Egypt's parliament.

The draft law aims to protect them by not revealing their identities in crimes related to indecent assault, corruption of morals, exposure to others, and harassment.

Egyptian women can be reluctant to share their experience of sexual harassment for fear that they will be attacked if their statements are revealed.

The country has in recent months witnessed several celebrities complain on social media about verbal abuse.

Egyptian actress Rania Youssef shared photos of messages that she had received, threatening to prosecute those responsible for the messages. Last month actress Hana Zahid revealed that she had been harassed, and a writer accused the owner of a famous publishing house of harassing her.

The National Council for Women publishes statistics about women's exposure to harassment. It received 283 complaints about harassment that took place during the Eid al-Adha holidays. Amal Abdel Moneim, director of the Complaints Office at the council, said the complaints were mostly about sexual harassment, blackmail and threats. The office received 149 complaints from girls who had been subjected to these acts and wished to submit reports.

Monemim said that social and legal support was provided to women making the complaints, that they were made aware of the legal measures to be taken, and that there was also the possibility of providing a volunteer lawyer free of charge to file the case according to the case.

Nihad Abu Al-Qumsan, head of the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights, said the draft law was a positive step in the face of harassment.

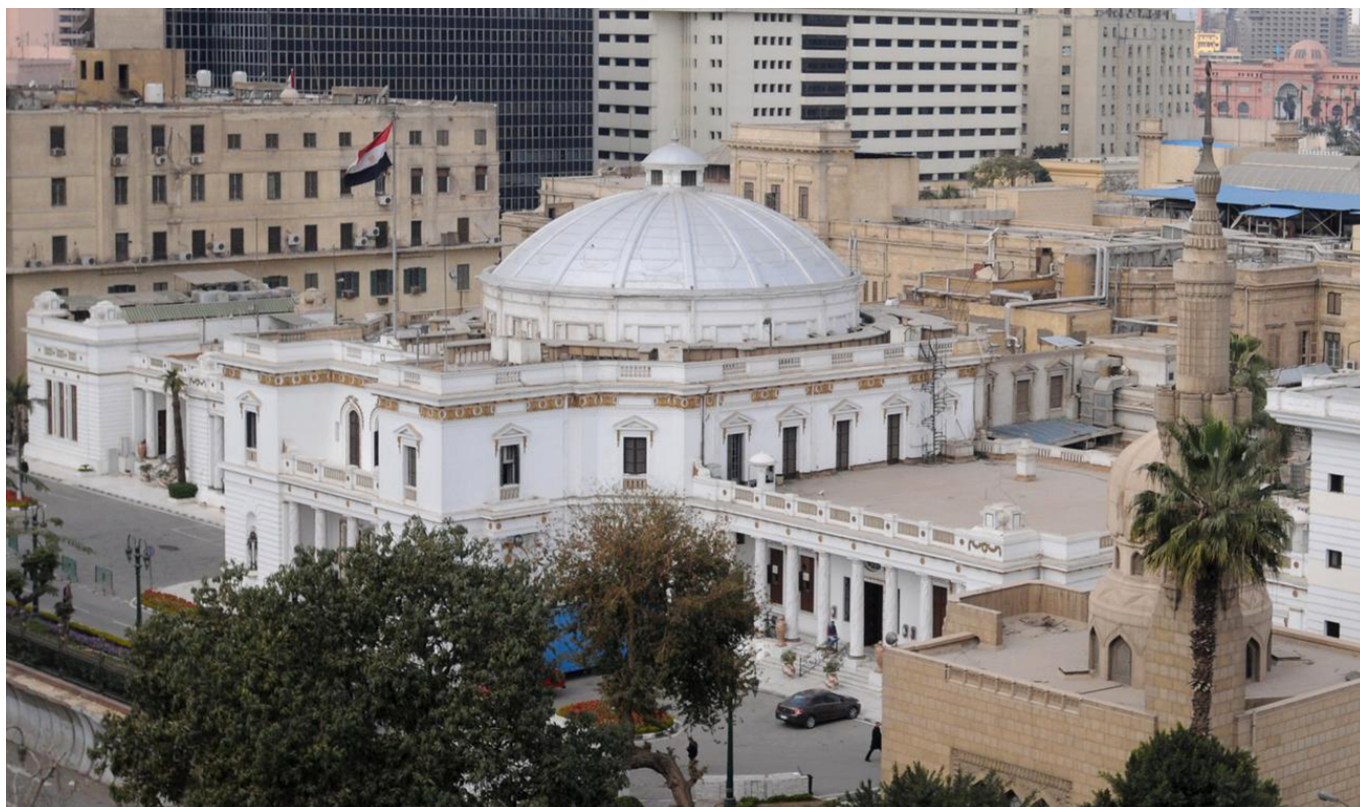
"The law will be an encouraging and motivating factor for girls who are subjected to harassment and are too afraid of having their private information leaked to file reports against harassers," Abu Al-Qumsan said in a press statement.

The draft law authorized the investigating judge not to provide the victim's information, stressing there was a need for a sub-file with the victim's complete data to be presented to the court, the accused and the defence upon request. But this aspect was rejected by the parliament speaker as it had a touch of unconstitutionality.

Ali Abdel-Aal, house of representative speaker, suggested amending the text to read: "It is not permissible for the arrest warrant or investigating authorities to disclose the victim's information in the crimes of indecent assault, corruption of morals, exposure to others and harassment contained in the Penal Code and Child Law, except to those concerned."

According to Abdel-Aal's proposal, the concerned parties are the accused, the victim, and their lawyers.

"We do not need a sub-file," he said.



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Egyptian Parliament approves maritime agreement with Greece

[EU-Italy delegation in Tunisia to discuss slowing migration](#)

Author:

Tue, 2020-08-18 00:55

TUNIS: Top Italian and European Union officials are holding talks in Tunisia on Monday to try to stem the growing numbers of migrants crossing from the North African country to Europe.

Tunisia's president, whose young democracy is struggling economically, said he wants the talks to focus not only on security measures to curb migration but also on broader European aid to fight the poverty and joblessness that fuels it.

The number of migrants leaving Tunisia has grown as much as fivefold this year compared to last year, for a total of about 5,700 people, according to estimates from the Tunisian Forum of Economic and Social Rights, an aid group following migration flows.

More migrants landing in Italy now came from Tunisia than departed from neighboring lawless Libya, according to Italian government figures released Saturday. A total of 16,347 migrants reached Italian shores over the past year, a 149 percent increase compared to the previous 12-month period, but still a number much lower than in several other recent years.

Italian Interior Minister Luciana Lamorgese, Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio, EU Home Affairs Commissioner Ylva Johansson and the EU's commissioner for neighboring countries Oliver Varhelyi were scheduled to meet Monday with Tunisian President Kais Saied and other top Tunisian officials.

Lamorgese, who visited Tunisia just two weeks ago for similar talks, said the trip is aimed at boosting Europe-wide solidarity with Tunisia.

Tunisia's leader said he wants to broaden the migration discussion with Italy to make it more European, according to the official news agency TAP.

"Now is the time to act together to contain the (migratory) pressure and tackle the root causes ... to help change the perception of young people of their reality and of their country and give them hope for a better life in their own country, rather than venturing into an unknown future," Saied said in a statement.

HIGHLIGHTS

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- **Tunisia's unemployment rate stood at 15 percent before the coronavirus pandemic and has since climbed to 21 percent.**

Tunisia's unemployment rate stood at 15 percent before the coronavirus pandemic and has since climbed to 21 percent. The country has struggled to restore prosperity since protesters overthrew a longtime autocrat in 2011, unleashing Arab Spring uprisings around the world.

The Italian and EU delegation is also expected to visit the Bardo Museum in Tunis, to honor victims of a 2015 extremist attack there that killed 21 people of various nationalities. The attack on one of the country's prime tourist sites damaged Tunisia's tourism industry.

Meanwhile in North Macedonia, a major transit point for migrants entering the EU, police said Monday a car carrying a dozen migrants from Syria crashed into a stationary police truck, killing two of the car passengers and injuring the other 10 as well as a police officer.

Police said the accident occurred Sunday night near the town of Radovis, about 100 kilometers (63 miles) southeast of the capital Skopje.

The Greek border with North Macedonia was closed earlier this year due to the coronavirus pandemic. But trafficking networks remain active, ferrying migrants who make their way from Turkey into Greece and then attempt to head north to more prosperous European countries.

Police said that in July alone they had detained a total of 567 migrants attempting to illegally transit North Macedonia.



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