

Pakistan PM: Yemen deal 'crucial step' toward peace

Author:

Thu, 2019-11-07 01:41

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday hailed a new deal on Yemen as "a crucial and important step" toward bringing peace and security to the war-torn country.

In a Twitter post, the premier lauded an agreement signed in Riyadh between the internationally recognized Yemeni government and southern separatists to end a power struggle in the south of Yemen.

"Pakistan welcomes the conclusion of the landmark Riyadh agreement, as a result of the initiative taken by the Saudi leadership and support by the UAE government," Khan said. "We believe it is a crucial and important step forward toward a political solution and durable peace and security in Yemen."

Yemen's President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi and Southern Transitional Council (STC) leader Aidarous Al-Zoubeidi penned the power-sharing accord at a ceremony in the Saudi capital on Tuesday watched by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, the crown prince of Abu Dhabi.

Saudi Arabia's envoy to Yemen told journalists that the deal would allow separatists and other southerners to join a new Yemeni Cabinet and would place southern armed forces under the control of the Yemeni government.

Speaking during the televised signing ceremony, the Saudi crown prince said: "This agreement will open, God willing, broader talks between Yemeni parties to reach a political solution and end the war."

US President Donald Trump praised the treaty on Twitter and said: "A very good start! Please all work hard to get a final deal."

The deal calls for the formation of a new Cabinet of no more than 24 ministers within 30 days that would have equal representation for northerners and southerners. The STC would join any political talks to end Yemen's four-year war.

Yemeni ambassador to Pakistan, Mohammed Motahar Alashabi, told Arab News on Wednesday that the people of Yemen hoped the Riyadh agreement would usher in a new phase of stability, security and development in the country.

"We would like to express our thanks and appreciation to efforts offered and made by the Saudi leadership to patronize this agreement and make it a reality," Alashabi said. "The Yemeni leadership headed by President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi and his government were very keen to make our Saudi brothers' efforts successful."

The envoy added that the deal “empowers the role of state authorities and institutions, codifies equal rights for all Yemenis, renounces all types of discrimination and incorporates military groups outside the state into ministries of defense and interior.

“It (the agreement) will lead to unified and collective efforts to compel Iranian-backed Houthis to end the war, lay down their arms, withdraw their militias from Sanaa and cities they control.

“They (the Houthis) would re-engage in the comprehensive national dialogue toward a new federal Yemen for all Yemenis, including Houthis,” Alashabi said.

Javed Malik, a former Pakistani ambassador who served in the Gulf region, said that as part of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the people and government of Pakistan had always welcomed all efforts to bring peace in the Muslim world.

“Pakistan will continue to support every effort that brings all stakeholders toward reaching a peaceful settlement and prays that this critical landmark leads to a peaceful settlement of the disputes in Yemen and prevents further loss of life,” Malik added.

Former Pakistani diplomat and expert on Middle East affairs, Javed Hafeez, called the agreement a very important development for Pakistan. “Pakistan has always maintained that intra-Yemen reconciliation is a must for peace in that nation.”



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Power-sharing agreement: A new page in the history of Yemen
Yemeni expats thank Saudi Arabia for positive mediation

[Dozens injured as Iraqi security forces clash with protesters in ‘Battle of the Bridges’](#)

Author:

Thu, 2019-11-07 00:53

BAGHDAD: Gunfire erupted again in central Baghdad on Wednesday as Iraqi security forces fought protesters in the "Battle of the Bridges" near Tahrir Square.

At least 27 people were injured in clashes at Al-Jumhuriyah, Al-Ahrar, Al-Shuhada, Al-Sinek and Bab Al-Muatham bridges across the Tigris River.

Protesters have confronted security forces for two weeks on Al-Jumhuriyah bridge, which leads to the fortified Green Zone of government offices and embassies. They also massed at Al-Sinek, which leads to the Iranian Embassy, and Al-Ahrar, which is near other government buildings. The demonstrators tried on Wednesday to cross Al-Shuhada, but were met with live ammunition from security forces.

"The riot police hit us with batons on our heads and we threw rocks at them," said Mahmoud, 20, a protester being treated for injuries after he tried to cross Al-Shuhada. "But then they started firing live rounds at people."

Security forces resumed firing live ammunition in Baghdad on Monday, after nearly two weeks of using only tear gas to repel protesters. Doctors and rights groups said the police now appeared to be firing the canisters directly at protesters, causing most of the injuries.

More than 260 Iraqis have been killed since the beginning of October in protests against corruption, unemployment and nonfunctioning public services. Protesters have been massing in Tahrir Square for weeks in the biggest wave of civil unrest since the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003.

Thousands have also been gathering in the impoverished provinces of the Shiite south. Protesters on Wednesday blocked the entrance to the Nassiriya oil refinery, halting fuel deliveries to retail outlets.

Thousands of demonstrators have also blocked roads leading to Umm Qasr, near Basra, Iraq's main Gulf port. Operations at the port, which receives most of Iraq's imports of grain, vegetable oils and sugar, have been at a standstill for a week. The blockade has already cost Iraq more than \$6 billion, a spokesman for Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi said. In a televised address, he said Iraq could not afford the economic cost of the unrest, and asked protesters to stop damaging property.

The internet monitor NetBlocks said the government's blocking of internet access had cost Iraq about \$1 billion in October. Access remained blocked on Wednesday after being shut down on Monday and restored for a few hours on Tuesday.

The US Embassy in Baghdad condemned the violence against unarmed protesters, and urged Iraq's leaders to engage urgently with them.



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Iraqi security forces use live fire to disperse protesters in Baghdad
Iraqi security forces conducting large-scale arrest campaigns in Baghdad: witnesses

[Iranians plead guilty after arrest for spying on dissidents](#)

Author:

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Wed, 2019-11-06 20:30

WASHINGTON: Two men arrested last year for spying on Iranian dissidents in the United States have pleaded guilty to charges in a Washington court, the Justice Department announced Wednesday.

Iranian-US dual citizen Ahmadreza Mohammadi Doostdar and Majid Ghorbani, an Iranian resident of California, tried to penetrate the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK), a group of Iranian dissidents in exile, in New York and Washington from 2017-2018, according to the department.

Doostdar traveled to the United States from Iran on three occasions to recruit Ghorbani and give him instructions and thousands of dollars in payments, according to the charges.

Ghorbani attended MEK rallies and events, taking pictures of participants and collecting information for Doostdar.

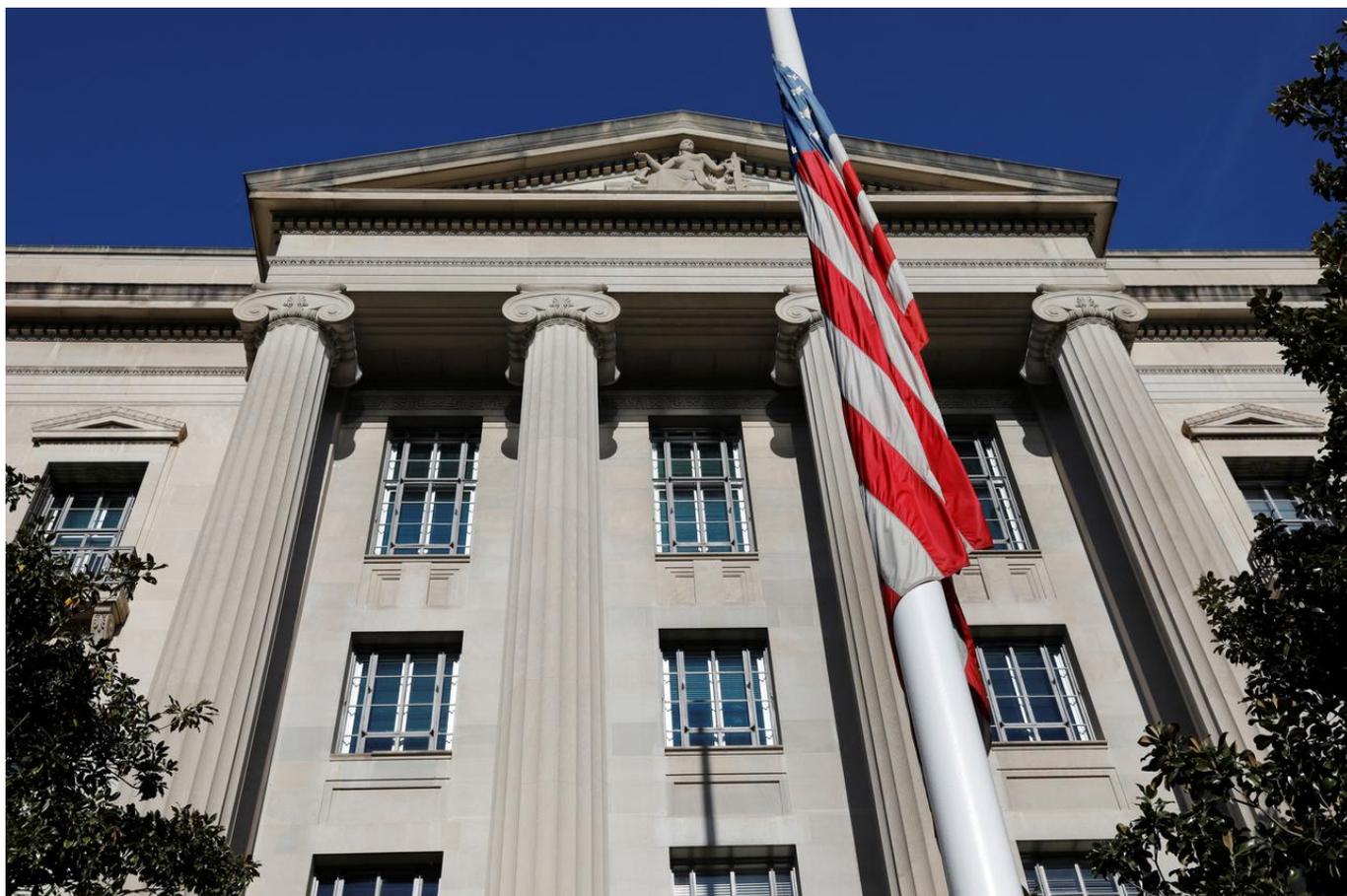
Doostdar pleaded guilty to charges of acting as an unregistered agent of the government of Iran, while Ghorbani pleaded guilty to violating US sanctions laws with respect to Iran.

In announcing their guilty pleas, the Justice Department did not repeat allegations made when the two were arrested that Doostdar had also surveilled Jewish Institutions in Chicago during a 2017 visit.

Doostdar faces up to 15 years in prison while Ghorbar could be jailed for a maximum 20 years.

"The Iranian government thought it could get away with conducting surveillance on individuals in the United States by sending one of its agents here to task a permanent resident with conducting and collecting that surveillance," said Jessie Liu, the US attorney for Washington.

"This case highlights our efforts to pursue those who threaten national security and disrupt foreign governments that target US persons."



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Iran starts enriching uranium at Fordow amid reports UN nuclear inspector detained
US accuses Iran of 'nuclear extortion' with enrichment step

[Houthi militants attack Yemen government forces, 8 killed](#)

Author:

By AHMED AL-HAJ | AP

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Wed, 2019-11-06 19:45

SANAA: Yemen's Houthi militants staged missile and drone attacks Wednesday on forces allied with the country's internationally recognized government in a Red Sea town, killing at least eight people, including three civilians, and

causing large fires, military officials said.

Wadah Dobish, a spokesman for government forces on Yemen's western coast, told The Associated Press at least four missiles fired by the Iran-backed Houthis struck warehouses used by the allied force known as the Giants Bridges in the port town of Mocha. He said their defenses intercepted at least three other missiles.

Dobish said at least three Houthi drones also took part in the attack, which caused huge explosions and fires that spread to residential areas. The media arm of the Giants Bridges force posted footage online showing flames and explosions were heard apparently from the warehouses.

Officials said at least 12 people, mostly fighters, were wounded in the attacks.

A statement from the government forces on the western coast said the attacks also targeted a refugee camp and a hospital run by Doctors Without Borders in the town.

The medical aid group did not immediately respond to an AP request seeking a comment.

Houthi officials, meanwhile, said Giant Bridges fighters fired dozens of shells at the rebel-held town of Durayhimi, just south of the Hodeida port city.

All officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief the media.

The escalation could jeopardize a UN-brokered cease-fire in Hodeidah. The port city is the main entry point for humanitarian aid to Yemen, where more than five years of war have spawned the world's worst humanitarian crisis, with near-famine conditions in some areas.

Last year heavy fighting erupted in Hodeidah after government forces backed by the Saudi-led coalition moved in to wrestle control of the strategic city from the Houthis.

After month of clashes, the two sides reached a cease-fire agreement for the city, and both also agreed to withdraw their forces from the port and the two smaller ports of Salif and Ras Issa.

The conflict in Yemen began with the 2014 takeover of the capital, Sanaa, by the Iranian-backed Houthis. A Saudi-led coalition allied with the government has been fighting the Houthis since March 2015.



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[Trump meets Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan officials over dam dispute](#)

Wed, 2019-11-06 22:17

President Donald Trump said on Wednesday he held talks with officials from Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan over a new dam being built on the Nile River. "The meeting went well and discussions will continue during the day!" Trump said in a Twitter post. Egypt fears its water crisis could worsen as Ethiopia starts filling the reservoir behind a giant dam upriver. Nile-user Sudan also has an interest in the hydropower project.

Just had a meeting with top representatives from Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan to help solve their long running dispute on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, one of the largest in the world, currently being built. The meeting went well and discussions will continue during the day! pic.twitter.com/MsWuEBgZxK

– Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [November 6, 2019](#)



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Egypt, Ethiopia to meet in Washington over Nile dam
Egypt to press for outside mediator in Ethiopia dam dispute