

Lawyers: 3 Egyptian activists detained amid wave of arrests

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ID:

1569415600716513200

Wed, 2019-09-25 12:15

CAIRO: Egyptian lawyers say security forces arrested three political activists known for their outspoken criticism of Egypt's government and the president.

Egypt has seen a wave of arrests following small but rare anti-government protests over the weekend. Police quickly dispersed the protests, but they marked a startling eruption of street unrest.

Demonstrations have been almost completely silenced in recent years under President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi.

The lawyers, Nour Farahat and Khaled el-Masry, say the three detained activists are Hazem Hosny, Hassan Nafaa and Khaled Dawood.

The lawyers said Dawood was arrested Wednesday. He's an opposition leader and former head of the liberal Al-Doustour party.

Hosny and Nafaa are both political science professors at Cairo University, and were arrested Tuesday. El-Masry says security forces have detained over 1,200 people in the last week.



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[First Arab set for ISS says voyage will make 'history'](#)

Tue, 2019-09-24 21:23

MOSCOW: The Emirati astronaut who will make history by becoming the first Arab on the International Space Station said Tuesday he had received support from around the world before his "dream" mission.

Hazzaa Al-Mansoori, 35, is set to blast into space accompanied by Russia's Oleg Skripochka and NASA astronaut Jessica Meir onboard a Soyuz rocket from Baikonur in Kazakhstan on Wednesday.

Mansoori, who will spend eight days on the ISS, will be the first Emirati astronaut and the first Arab on the orbiting laboratory, but not the first Muslim.

"It is really an honor and we are looking forward to make this mission successful and to come back with a lot of knowledge," the pilot told a pre-flight news conference.

He said the trip was a milestone for his country and the Arab world.

"This achievement will be in history and it will be continued," he said. "The dream has come true."

The journey to [#Space](#) begins with a train ride! The [#Rocket](#) that's going to launch the [#Soyuz](#) MS 15 mission to space being transported to the launch site. 2 days to go![#MBRSC](#) [#MBRSpaceCentre](#) [#HazzaaAlMansoori](#) [#FirstEmiratiAstronaut](#) [#UAEInSpace](#) [@astro_hazzaa](#) pic.twitter.com/G1xlcD3Gge

– MBR Space Centre (@MBRSpaceCentre) [September 23, 2019](#)

Mansoori said that he would record his prayer routine on the ISS and broadcast it to people on Earth.

"As a fighter pilot I already prayed in my aircraft," he said, explaining that he had experience of prayers at high speed.

Mansoori also plans to conduct experiments and said he would take Emirati food with him to share with the crew.

I've spoken to Hazza Al Mansouri and Sultan Al Neyadi as they prepare for the space flight. The journey will see the UAE create history and will mark our entry into the world of space exploration, inspiring future generations to aim for greater glory.
pic.twitter.com/us1e0y4RAG

- محمد بن زايد (@MohamedBinZayed) [September 23, 2019](#)

Skripochka, first-time flyer Meir and Mansoori will join a six-member crew on the ISS and for a brief period of time the ISS will be home to nine astronauts.

Meir, 42, said it was "quite an achievement" for the United Arab Emirates to have a man in space, given that its program is so new.

She said the crew communicated by using "Runglish" – a mixture of Russian and English.

"We still need to work on our Arabic," she joked.

Mansoori is set to return to Earth with NASA's Nick Hague and Russian cosmonaut Alexey Ovchinin on October 3. Skripochka and Meir are set to remain on the ISS until the spring of 2020.



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[Hazzaa Al-Mansoori](#)

All eyes on historic UAE space mission
We have lift-off: The Middle East gets with the space program as it marks World Space Week

[Egypt hands life sentence to Egyptian plane hijacker](#)

Author:

Tue, 2019-09-24 20:22

CAIRO: An Egyptian court on Tuesday handed a life sentence to an Egyptian man who hijacked an airliner to Cyprus in 2016 using a fake explosive belt. The charges included using intimidation and threats to seize a plane and abduct its passengers for a terrorist purpose, according to a judicial source.

Seif Eldin Mustafa has the right to appeal within 60 days.

Mustafa commandeered a domestic Alexandria-Cairo flight with 72 passengers and crew on board in March 2016, ordering it to land at Larnaca airport in Cyprus.

Mustafa had taken control of the plane by showing flight attendants what appeared to be a belt stuffed with plastic wires and a remote control. He then asked for the release of all female prisoners held in Egypt, and also to have contact with his Cypriot ex-wife.

He surrendered to Cypriot authorities about six hours after he landed, having gradually released all passengers and crew unharmed.

The Cypriot authorities handed him over to Cairo after a court ruling cleared the way for his extradition.

Cypriot courts had heard appeals since 2016 against the extradition of the 61-year-old to Cairo, rejecting his arguments that he would not receive a fair trial in Egypt.



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Ex-wife in Cyprus denies EgyptAir hijacker's activist claim

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Author:

Reuters

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1569345006339383500

Tue, 2019-09-24 16:50

NEW YORK: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi used his speech at the UN General Assembly to amplify a call to get neighboring Sudan off the US' list of countries deemed sponsors of terrorism.

El-Sisi told world leaders Tuesday that taking Sudan off the list would help the country tackle economic problems and reclaim what he called "the place it deserves among the international family."

Sudan has been on the US list since 1993. Khartoum says getting off it is crucial to rebuilding the country after years of sanctions.

The US administration began a process to take Sudan off the list. The procedure was put on hold when mass protests erupted in December against former ruler Omar Al-Bashir. The military ousted him in April. Sudan's new Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok recently said he'd discussed the issue with the Trump administration.

El-Sisi also said that a concerted effort was needed to stop militias taking control of Libya.

On Monday, US President Donald Trump voiced support to the Egyptian president, saying that El-Sisi "has done (in Egypt) some things that are absolutely amazing in a short period of time."

"When he took over not so long ago, it was in turmoil. And it's not in turmoil now," Trump said in a press conference along with El-Sisi after their meeting. "Egypt has a great leader. He's highly respected. He's brought order. Before he was here, there was very little order. There was chaos. And so I'm not worried about that at all."

El-Sisi, who has been waging a harsh crackdown on militants, blamed "political Islam" for the protests and the turmoil in the Mideast. He stopped short of naming the Muslim Brotherhood directly.

"I want you to rest assured that, especially in Egypt, the public opinion and the people themselves are rejecting this kind of political Islam in Egypt," he said.

"They have demonstrated their rejection before, and they reject those to have control on the country for only one year." Egypt is fighting an insurgency led by a local affiliate of Daesh in the Sinai Peninsula as well as smaller militant groups allegedly belonging to the Brotherhood.

Meanwhile, Egyptian security forces killed six suspected members of the Muslim Brotherhood in a shootout in Cairo, the Interior Ministry said Tuesday.

The six were killed in a firefight when police raided their hideout in the Cairo suburb of Sixth of October, the ministry said in a brief statement.

The ministry oversees police forces. The statement said the suspects were planning militant attacks. It did not say when the raids took place. Egypt branded the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization in 2013 and arrested thousands of its members after the military's ouster of President Mohammed Mursi, who hailed from the group, amid mass protests against his brief rule.



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Trump calls on world to stand up to 'Iran's bloodlust'
LIVE: UN General Assembly General Debate Day One

[Lebanese held in Greece on hijacking suspicion to fly home](#)

Author:

By BASSEM MROUE | AP

ID:

1569344369399320600

Tue, 2019-09-24 09:01

BEIRUT: A Lebanese citizen who was detained in Greece on suspicion of involvement in a 1985 TWA hijacking and set free after it turned out to be a

case of mistaken identity is in good health and expected to fly back to Lebanon, the man and his wife said Tuesday.

Mohammed Saleh's wife, Leila, told The Associated Press by telephone from her home in the southern Lebanese port city of Sidon that she spoke with her husband, who also sent her his photos as proof that he is fine and staying in a hotel while he completes necessary paperwork ahead of his return home.

The 65-year-old man was arrested Thursday on the resort island of Mykonos, where he stopped during a cruise. The name on his passport came up on a European police computer system as that of a man wanted by Germany over the hijacking, in which an American was killed.

The police statement said German authorities were unable to identify the suspect and finally said Monday afternoon that they wouldn't be seeking his extradition because he was not the man they wanted. The Greek police never released the man's name.

On Tuesday morning, Saleh sent the AP a short text message: "I am still working on the release documents. I am free but there are some measures in order to get a visa."

Saleh needs a visa now to be able to go to Athens as those going on cruises don't need one since they only spend a few hours on the island.

Saleh, a long time journalist for Lebanon's daily As-Safir daily that folded in 2016, was released without charges and was being put up at a hotel on the Aegean Sea island of Syros, where he had been detained the past four days, a Greek police statement said.

The Lebanese foreign ministry said authorities in Greece were told by the Germans that Mohammed Saleh is not the wanted man and was released late Monday. It said Saleh will later get his passport and go to Greece although there might be some delays because of a public transport strike in the European country.

TWA Flight 847 was commandeered by hijackers shortly after taking off from Athens on June 14, 1985. It originated in Cairo and had San Diego as a final destination, with stops scheduled in Athens, Rome, Boston and Los Angeles. The hijackers shot and killed US Navy diver Robert Stethem, 23, after beating him unconscious. They released the other 146 passengers and crew members on the plane during an ordeal that included stops in Beirut and Algiers. The last hostage was freed after 17 days.

Several Greek media outlets had identified the Mykonos detainee as Mohammed Ali Hammadi, who was arrested in Frankfurt in 1987 and convicted in Germany for the hijacking and Stethem's slaying.

Hammadi, an alleged Hezbollah member, was sentenced to life in prison but was paroled in 2005 and returned to Lebanon.

Germany resisted pressure to extradite him to the United States after Hezbollah abducted two German citizens in Beirut and threatened to kill them. Hammadi, along with fellow hijacker Hasan Izz-Al-Din and accomplice Ali Atwa, remains on the FBI's list of most wanted terrorists. The FBI offered a reward of up to \$5 million for information leading to each man's capture.



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