

Israeli army raids offices of Palestinian NGO

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Thu, 2019-09-19 16:45

RAMALLAH, Palestinian Territories: Israel's army raided the offices of a prominent Palestinian NGO early Thursday, its director said, in an operation Amnesty International said aimed to "crush peaceful activism."

Israeli soldiers forced their way into the offices of prisoner support group Addameer in the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah at around 2:00 am, the organization's director Sahar Francis said.

No staff were in the office at that time, she said, but Israeli forces seized thousands of dollars worth of equipment, including five computers.

"They searched the whole office," Francis said.

Addameer works to support Palestinian prisoners in both Israeli and Palestinian prisons.

Israeli right-wing activists accuse it of links to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, considered a terrorist organization by Israel, the United States and the European Union.

The Israeli army did not immediately respond to request for comment on the raid.

Amnesty International's Deputy Middle East Director Saleh Higazi condemned the "chilling raid," labelling it an Israeli attempt "to crush peaceful activism and silence NGOs."

"This was a sinister and calculated attack designed to curtail Addameer's vital human rights work," he said in a statement.

The NGO, which documents allegations of abuse in Israeli prisons, has been raided twice before, most recently in 2012.

Francis said that time they had smashed the door and also seized computers.

"We never got back the things they stole in 2012, despite making a request," she said.

An Addameer employee has also been detained without charge since last year under Israel's administrative detention laws, Amnesty said.

Higazi said the raid was part of an intensifying Israeli campaign against civil society organizations.

Human Rights Watch's director for Israel and the Palestinian territories is currently fighting an Israeli expulsion order over allegations he called for a boycott of Israel.

The country in 2017 passed a law banning entry to foreigners supporting a boycott.

Israel has occupied the West Bank since a 1967 war.

The office is in a part of the West Bank nominally under full Palestinian control, but the Israeli army regularly carries out raids in such areas.



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Israeli, Palestinian NGOs seek EU help on hunger strikers
Israel bars hundreds of Arab writers and publishers from book fair in Ramallah

[Arab coalition destroys Houthi boat rigged with explosives](#)

Thu, 2019-09-19 19:08

RIYADH: The Arab coalition intercepted and destroyed a Houthi boat laden with explosives on Thursday.

The boat, that was launched from the governorate of Hodeidah, was destroyed in the southern Red Sea, coalition spokesperson Col. Turki Al-Maliki said.

“The coalition’s naval forces detected an attempt by the terrorist Houthi militia backed by Iran to carry out an imminent act of aggression and terrorism in the southern Red Sea using an unmanned, rigged boat ... launched from Hodeidah province,” coalition spokesman Colonel Turki al-Malki said in a statement.

He did not specify the intended target.

There was no immediate confirmation by the Houthis, who had claimed

responsibility for the Sept. 14 attacks on Saudi oil facilities. Riyadh has rejected the claim and said those strikes did not come from Yemen. The Houthis, who have threatened to widen attacks on Saudi Arabia, have in the past targeted vessels off Yemen, which lies on one side of the Bab Al-Mandeb strait at the southern mouth of the Red Sea, one of the world's most vital oil tanker routes.

Al-Maliki said Thursday's foiled attack represented a threat to regional and international security and the safety of maritime routes and international trade.

The incident comes as the United States and Saudi Arabia consider responses to Saturday's assault on Saudi oil facilities. Iran has been accused of being behind the attacks.



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Saudi Arabia to pay \$500m for Yemen aid next week, says UN aid chief
Saudi aid agency continues projects in Syria, Comoros, Yemen

Third Algerian protest figure detained within a week

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Thu, 2019-09-19 14:14

ALGIERS: An Algerian court on Thursday ordered the pre-trial detention of a leading figure in protests that have gripped Algeria for nearly seven months, one of his lawyers said.

Former state TV journalist Fodil Boumala was arrested on Wednesday evening in front of his home in an eastern suburb of the capital, his lawyer Abdelghani Badi said on Facebook.

Boumala was detained pending trial on accusations of “undermining national unity” after a hearing with an investigative judge at an Algiers court, his lawyer added.

He is the third protest movement figure to be detained on the same charge within a week, following Karim Tabou a week ago and Samir Benlarbi on Tuesday.

The arrests come as the army toughens its line on the demonstrations that have regularly thronged the streets of Algiers and other areas since late February, continuing despite the April resignation of president Abdelaziz Bouteflika after 20 years in power.

On Wednesday, the military ordered police to block protesters from outside the capital entering Algiers, days after a presidential election was announced for December despite pushback from demonstrators.

Army chief General Ahmed Gaid Salah has led the push for polls by the end of the year.

But protesters have demanded political reforms and the removal of the former president’s loyalists – including Gaid Salah himself – before any legitimate vote can be held.

The police have made multiple arrests in Algiers before the start of Friday rallies in recent weeks.

Officially, demonstrations had been banned in Algiers since 2001, but the prohibition had been ignored since the demonstrations started in February against the ailing Bouteflika’s bid for a fifth presidential term.

According to the coordinator of the National Committee for the Release of Prisoners, 22 protesters arrested last Friday were placed in pre-trial detention on Sunday.

In Relizane, 300 kilometers (190 miles) west of Algiers, two people were killed in overnight clashes between security forces and protesters angered by the death of a teenager in an accident involving a police car, the prosecution said Thursday.

The fighting broke out as the demonstrators tried to storm the town’s police station and find the police officer who had been driving the car when it hit the 15-year-old’s motorbike, killing him.

Two people wounded during the clashes later died, the prosecution said.



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[Fallen Tunisian autocrat Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali dies](#)

Thu, 2019-09-19 17:51

TUNIS: Former Tunisian president Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali, the first leader to be toppled by the Arab Spring revolts, died on Thursday in Saudi Arabia. "We had confirmation of his death 30 minutes ago," Tunisia's foreign ministry said, without giving further details.

The 83-year-old's lawyer, Mounir Ben Salha, confirmed the news, citing family members and Ben Ali's doctor.

Ben Ali, who ruled his North African country from 1987 until 2011, was viewed by some as a bulwark against extremism, but faced criticism for muzzling the opposition and his reluctance to embrace democracy.

Eventually, growing frustration over unemployment and high prices snapped. In late 2010, after a young trader died when he set himself on fire, protests erupted across the country and sparked a deadly clampdown. Ben Ali fled Tunisia on Jan. 14, 2011 and sought exile in Saudi Arabia. His rapid departure sparked a string of similar uprisings across the region, toppling Egyptian and Libyan strongmen Hosni Mubarak and Moamer Qaddafi. The turmoil triggered what was to become Syria's devastating eight-year war. In mid-2012, Ben Ali was sentenced in absentia to life in jail for his role in the deaths of protesters during the uprising that ousted him. Ben Ali is survived by six children; three daughters by a first marriage and two daughters and a son by Leila Trabelsi.



















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Tunisia's exiled Ben Ali can return if sick: PM Ben Ali's security chief walks free after sentence cut

[Tunisia presidential candidate to stay in jail](#)

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Wed, 2019-09-18 19:24

TUNIS: A fresh appeal for the release of jailed media mogul Nabil Karoui who has reached a runoff in Tunisia's presidential polls was turned down on Wednesday, his lawyers said.

"The judge has refused to give a ruling, saying it was not in his jurisdiction," lawyer Kamel Ben Messoud said, after requesting his release the previous day.

"We will appeal," he told AFP.

The court did not immediately respond to a request for confirmation.

Karoui, a 56-year-old media magnate, is under investigation for alleged money laundering and has been in pretrial detention since August 23.

Lawyer Nazih Souii said it was the third time a judge had said the matter was beyond his jurisdiction.

The court of appeals refused to pass judgment on September 3, as did the court of cassation on September 13.

Tunisia's electoral commission, ISIE, has confirmed Karoui made it to the presidential runoff along with law professor Kais Saied following Sunday's first round vote.

Karoui remains eligible to run despite his imprisonment, as long as any conviction does not also specifically deprive him of his civil rights, according to ISIE.

He campaigned through the Nessma television channel he founded. ISIE has said it is investigating alleged electoral violations, including by Nessma TV.

Depending on potential appeals, the second round could be staged on October 6, the same day as legislative elections, or on October 13, ISIE said.

Observers from the European Union said the first round has been "transparent."

But it called for the candidates to have the "same opportunities" to campaign, in an apparent allusion to Karoui.



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Makkah, Karachi chambers to ink MoU boosting bilateral trade