

Tunisia media mogul still candidate despite arrest: commission

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TUNIS: Media magnate Nabil Karoui remains in the race for Tunisia's upcoming presidential election despite his arrest for alleged money laundering, the head of the country's electoral commission said on Saturday.

Karoui, one of 26 presidential candidates given preliminary approval this month to run in the September 15 election, was arrested on Friday, his party said.

A judicial official said an arrest warrant had been issued for Karoui and his brother Ghazi for money laundering.

"Nabil Karoui is still a candidate and his name remains on the preliminary and definite list of candidates" who are vying to become Tunisia's next president, electoral commission (ISIE) head Nabil Baffoun said.

"Following his arrest... as long as there are no changes in his legal status... he remains a presidential candidate," Baffoun told the private Mosaique FM radio station.

According to Baffoun, candidatures of individuals who have been convicted in Tunisia are accepted as long as the verdict against them does not specifically say they are banned from running in an election.

The tycoon was charged with money laundering in early July shortly after stating his intention to stand in the polls, but has remained a leading candidate.

His party announced his arrest the same day that authorities declared a ban on three local outlets – including Karoui's Nessma TV – from reporting on the election campaign over unlicensed "illegal" broadcasts.

Karoui has been accused by regulators and some politicians of using Nessma to bolster his political ambitions.

He was nearly removed from the race in June when parliament passed an amended electoral code that would bar any candidate who handed out "favors in cash or in kind" in the year before the vote.

But then-president Beji Caid Essebsi neither rejected nor enacted the bill, leaving the door open for Karoui to run.



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Tunisia electoral commission approves 26 presidential candidates
Authorities ban 3 broadcasters from covering Tunisian poll campaign

[Flights suspended at Libya airport after rocket fire](#)

Author:

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Sat, 2019-08-24 11:25

TRIPOLI: Flights were temporarily suspended Saturday at the Libyan capital's

sole functioning airport after it was hit by a rocket as two civilian flights were landing, airport authorities said.

"Flights are suspended until further notice due to rocket fire," the Mitiga airport said on its Facebook page.

After a pause of several hours flights resumed around midday, airport authorities announced in a later post.

Located east of Tripoli, Mitiga is a former military air base that has been used by civilian traffic since Tripoli international airport suffered severe damage during fighting in 2014.

Authorities said a rocket hit just as two flights were landing – a Buraq Air flight from Istanbul and a Libyan Airlines flight inbound from Medina in Saudi Arabia carrying over 200 passengers, including pilgrims returning from Makkah.

Mitiga has previously been targeted in fighting between the Tripoli-based UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) and forces loyal to eastern Libyan strongman Khalifa Haftar.

Haftar's self-styled Libyan National Army launched an offensive on April 4 to conquer Tripoli.

The two sides have since been embroiled in a stalemate on the capital's southern outskirts and Haftar's forces have allegedly repeatedly targeted Mitiga.

The origin of Saturday's rocket fire was not confirmed but the GNA forces blamed Haftar's forces.

The blast damaged a sidewalk outside the airport terminal and left cars parked nearby riddled with shrapnel, an AFP photographer at the scene said. The UN mission in Libya said it is concerned by the "growing frequency" of these attacks, which have come close to hitting civilian aircraft.

Since April, the fighting has killed at least 1,093 people and wounded 5,752, while some 120,000 others have been displaced, according to the World Health Organization.

Libya has been mired in chaos since a NATO-backed uprising that toppled and killed dictator Muammar Qaddafi in 2011.



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Young Libyans chose danger at sea over peril at home
Libyan navy says more than 300 migrants rescued

[Homemade bomb kills Israeli teen, wounds two others in West Bank](#)

Author:

Fri, 2019-08-23 22:19

JERUSALEM: A rare homemade bomb attack in the occupied West Bank killed an Israeli teen and seriously wounded her father and brother Friday as they visited a spring near a Jewish settlement, officials said.

Israeli security forces deployed throughout the area where the attack took place near the settlement of Dolev, northwest of Ramallah, to search for suspects.

Israeli medics had earlier reported that a 17-year-old had been critically wounded in the attack and officials later announced her death, naming her as Rina Shnerb from the central Israeli city of Lod.

Medics from the Magen David Adom rescue service initially gave the ages of the two wounded as 46 and 20, before amending to 21 in the latter case. The army said the three victims were a father and his two children. The two wounded were taken by helicopter to hospital, the army said. "Three civilians who were in a nearby spring were injured in an IED (improvised explosive device) blast," it said in a statement. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called it a "harsh terrorist attack" and sent condolences to the family, while pledging to continue building settlements.

"The security arms are in pursuit after the abhorrent terrorists," he said in a statement.

"We will apprehend them. The long arm of Israel reaches all those who seek our lives and will settle accounts with them."

United Nations envoy Nickolay Mladenov condemned the "shocking, heinous" attack, saying there was nothing heroic in Shnerb's "murder," calling it a "despicable, cowardly act."

"Terror must be unequivocally condemned by ALL," Mladenov wrote on Twitter. Israeli forces meanwhile entered the Palestinian village of Beitunia, south of the spring, to take footage from surveillance cameras. An AFP reporter said Palestinians clashed there with Israeli soldiers, but no casualties were reported.

Chief of the army, Lt. Gen. Aviv Kohavi visited the site of the attack to understand the incident and oversee the efforts to locate the perpetrators, which he was "confident" would happen quickly, the military said. Later in the day, Shnerb was buried in her hometown Lod, with thousands participating in the funeral.

Shnerb's father Eitan, who was wounded and couldn't attend the funeral, relayed through an uncle his request that people focus on "our strength and love and the wonderful nation and our good land" and avoid sinking into "weakness and anger and strife."

"We should be worthy of the great sacrifice we offered today," Eitan Shnerb was cited by the uncle as saying.

In a speech on Friday, Ismail Haniya, the leader of the Islamist Hamas movement which rules Gaza, praised the attack but did not claim responsibility for it.

He referred to a recent clash between Israeli police and Palestinian worshippers at the highly sensitive Al-Aqsa mosque compound in Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem and sought to draw a link between the two incidents. AFP reporters said thousands of Gazans participated in weekly Friday protests at the Israeli border fence, with some youths using slingshots to launch stones at the barrier and a few approaching it.

The health ministry in the enclave said over 122 Palestinians were wounded in clashes with Israeli forces, dozens of them hit by live fire. Palestinians sporadically clash with Israeli settlers and security forces in the West Bank, occupied by Israel since the Six-Day War of 1967, but bomb blasts have been rare in recent years.

Palestinian attacks have mostly involved guns, knives and car ramming. There have been concerns about a possible increase in violence in the run up to Israel's September 17 general election.

A week ago, a Palestinian carried out a car-ramming attack in the West Bank, wounding two Israelis before being shot dead.

On August 8, an off-duty Israeli soldier's body was found with multiple stab wounds. Two Palestinian suspects were later arrested. Late Thursday, a Palestinian threw grenades at Israeli soldiers while attempting to cross the Gaza border and was shot by Israeli forces, leaving him wounded, the army and the Gaza health ministry said. Gaza militants have also launched six missiles at Israel in the past week; the most recent were on Wednesday. In retaliation, the Israeli army said it struck "a number of military targets in a Hamas naval facility in the northern Gaza Strip."



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Israeli farmer remixes ancient scents near Dead Sea
US officials confirm Israeli strike in Iraq

[Iraq summons US charge d'affaires over military base attacks](#)

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Fri, 2019-08-23 21:26

BAGHDAD: The Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohamed Ali Alhakim summoned the US charge d'affaires Brian McFeeters on Friday evening.

The two discussed the latest developments in Iraq and across the wider region, as well as cooperation on intelligence and military matters and the fight against terrorism.

According to a statement from the foreign ministry, Alhakim stressed that Iraq is committed to maintaining good relations with its neighbors and preserving security within its borders.

The charge d'affaires at the US embassy in Baghdad had been summoned hours after US officials disclosed to the New York Times intelligence that Israel had attacked a military base belonging to an Iraqi armed faction in July and bombed three makeshift warehouses inside the base in northern Baghdad.

Alhakim urged the US to commit to "implementing the terms of the strategic partnership agreement with Iraq in the security and economic spheres and to enhance joint cooperation between the two countries in various sectors," the statement read.

He added that Iraq was not an "arena for conflict and disagreement," but rather for "building and growth."

Alhakim made it clear that Iraq places the "utmost importance on diplomatic and legal options to prevent any external interference in its internal affairs and to safeguard the security and sovereignty of the country," according to the statement.

□ Leaders of armed factions in the country accuse Israel and the US of carrying out attacks using armed drones, but the Iraqi government denies that there is currently any evidence of the involvement of external parties.

US officials earlier this week uncovered intelligence indicating that Israel was involved in at least one of the attacks, which Iraqi officials told Arab News had embarrassed the Iraqi government and increased local and regional pressure on officials to take a clear position on the American forces and their control of Iraqi airspace.



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US officials confirm Israeli strike in Iraq
Head of Iran-backed militia in Iraq walks back US accusation

[Authorities ban 3 broadcasters from covering Tunisian poll campaign](#)

Author:

Fri, 2019-08-23 22:11

TUNIS: Tunisian electoral and media authorities have banned three local outlets from covering the presidential election campaign, including a channel founded by key candidate Nabil Karoui.

The ban targets media mogul Karoui's Nessma TV, alongside Zitouna – a broadcaster close to the Islamist-inspired Ennahdha party – and Radio Qur'an.

“It is not permitted for candidates in the presidential election... (to) conduct their electoral campaigns through these channels, who do not hold licenses and broadcast illegally,” Nouri Lajmi, head of the High Independent Authority of the Audiovisual Commission (HAICA), told AFP on Friday. The ban was agreed jointly by HAIFA and the Independent Higher Authority for Elections (ISIE), Lajmi said.

The campaign is set to take place from September 2 to September 13 and the poll itself is scheduled for September 15.

Established in 2012 to regulate Tunisian media, HAICA has been fighting for months to impose the law on the three outlets.

Nessma TV, one of the leading channels in the country, was banned from broadcasting by HAICA in October 2018 but did not comply and remains on air. HAICA accuses Nessma TV of “positioning itself to influence government bodies,” and rebuked it for not having disclosed its shareholders, reputedly including Italian politician Silvio Berlusconi.

In April, HAICA seized equipment from the channel.

Karoui, a leading candidate in the election, was charged in early July with money laundering.

He says he is being targeted by “attempts to undermine his growing popularity.”

Zitouna and Radio Qur’an are under scrutiny for lack of financial transparency, in particular as they do not report any advertising revenue, according to HAICA.

The popular uprising in 2011 that ousted dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali opened up space for the previously largely muzzled media.

Originally scheduled for November, the elections were brought forward after the death last month of incumbent Beji Caid Essebsi.



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Ennahda make new power quest in Tunisia
Tunisian pavilion at Souk Okaz depicts vibrant street life