

# Iraq says ex-governor embezzled \$10m in aid for displaced

Author:

Tue, 2019-07-30 22:23

BAGHDAD: Around \$10 million in aid for the displaced in northern Iraq's Nineveh province, where the Daesh group was based, has been embezzled by its fugitive ex-governor, the country's anti-corruption commission said Tuesday.

A spokesperson for the Integrity Commission told AFP that its investigators had uncovered "invoices from developers in Iraqi Kurdistan."

But, he added, "no receipt was found" for these debited sums, which were meant for the rehabilitation of two hospitals in the northern metropolis of Mosul, capital of Nineveh.

Many of the province's inhabitants are still displaced as public services have not been fully reestablished.

Currently, 1.6 million Iraqis are still crowded into camps for the displaced, of which 40 percent are originally from Nineveh, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

A total of 11.3 billion Iraqi dinars (\$9.4 million) had been allocated to the Provincial Council by the Ministry of Migration and Displaced, according to the commission.

"It has been debited and doesn't appear in any provincial authorities' bank accounts or in the Provincial Council funds," he said.

"It was transferred to Kurdistan," an autonomous region where the sacked governor of Nineveh, Nawfel Akoub, is thought to be in hiding, along with several other officials wanted by Baghdad.

He has been on the run since a ferry sank in Mosul on Mother's Day in March, killing 150 people.

In April, the commission said that more than \$60 million of public funds were diverted by officials close to Akoub from Nineveh's budget of \$800 million.

Graft is endemic across Iraq, which ranks among the world's worst offenders in Transparency International's annual Corruption Perceptions Index.

Since 2004, a year after the US-led invasion that ousted Saddam Hussein, almost \$250 billion of public funds has vanished into the pockets of shady politicians and businessmen, according to parliament.



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## [Israel jails Palestinian lawyer over shootings](#)

Author:

Tue, 2019-07-30 22:10

JERUSALEM: An Israeli military court jailed a prominent Palestinian lawyer for 13-and-a-half years on Tuesday for shooting at Israeli vehicles in the occupied West Bank, the army said.

Tareq Barghout, a Ramallah-based lawyer who represented Palestinians accused by Israel of security-related offenses, was himself arrested in February, along with Palestinian Authority official Zakaria Zubeidi.

The army said in a statement that Barghout was convicted as part of a plea bargain.

“Barghout fired at Israeli buses and at security forces on a number of occasions,” it said.

Zubeidi, a former head of a militant group who later became an official of the PA commission for Palestinians in Israeli jails, is still awaiting trial.

Both men were charged in May with carrying out shooting attacks in the Ramallah area between November 2016 and January 2019, in which three Israelis were slightly injured.

According to Israel’s Shin Bet domestic security agency the pair used Zubeidi’s official PA vehicle for transport.

Israeli lawyer Leah Tsemel, representing Barghout, said that he alone fired the shots.

“He said in his statement that he opened fire after feeling that Palestinians were being treated very unjustly by Israeli courts,” she told AFP.

She said that he was also distressed by having to accompany bereaved Palestinians to receive from Israeli authorities the bodies of loved ones killed in conflict with Israeli forces.

“Once, Barghout fired from a distance at a settlers’ bus to make them understand that they can never feel secure in the occupied territories,” Tsemel said.

Excluding annexed east Jerusalem, more than 400,000 Israeli settlers live in the West Bank alongside more than 2.5 million Palestinians.

International law considers the settlements to be illegal and a barrier to peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

They are built on land Israel seized in the Six-Day War of 1967, which the Palestinians claim as part of their future state.



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## [Ex-Tehran mayor sentenced to death over wife's murder](#)

Author:

Tue, 2019-07-30 21:53

TEHRAN: Former Tehran mayor Mohammad Ali Najafi was sentenced to death after being convicted of murdering his wife, the judiciary said Tuesday, after a high-profile case that received extensive media coverage.

A prominent reformist, Najafi was found guilty of shooting dead his second wife Mitra Ostad at their home in the capital on May 28, said Iran's judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Esmaili.

According to Iranian media reports, her body was found in a bathtub after Najafi, 67, turned himself in and confessed to killing her.

"The charge sheet included premeditated murder, battery and possession of an

illegal firearm,” Esmaili said, quoted by the judiciary’s official news agency Mizan Online.

“The court has established premeditated murder and passed the execution sentence,” he added.

Najafi was acquitted of the battery charge but received a two-year jail sentence for possessing the illegal firearm, the spokesman said without elaborating.

His lawyer said he would appeal the sentence.

“We hope the supreme court accepts our concerns and helps justice to be served by rejecting the verdict,” ISNA news agency quoted Hamid Goudarzi as saying.

Ostad’s family had appealed for the Islamic law of retribution to be applied – an “eye for an eye” form of punishment which would see the death penalty served in this instance.

Najafi’s trial received detailed coverage in state media where scandals related to politicians rarely appear on television.

A mathematician, professor and veteran politician, Najafi had previously served as President Hassan Rouhani’s economic adviser and education minister. He was elected Tehran mayor in August 2017, but resigned the following April after facing criticism from conservatives for attending a dance performed by schoolgirls.

Najafi married Ostad without divorcing his first wife, unusual in Iran where polygamy is legal but socially frowned upon.

Some of Iran’s ultra-conservatives said the case showed the “moral bankruptcy” of reformists, while reformists accused the conservative-dominated state television of bias in its coverage and highlighting the case for political ends.



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# [Sudan shuts all schools after pupils' killing](#)

Tue, 2019-07-30 22:10

KHARTOUM: Sudanese authorities Tuesday ordered all schools nationwide to suspend classes indefinitely after crowds of students launched demonstrations against the killing of five pupils at a rally in a central town.

"Killing a student is killing a nation," chanted hundreds of schoolchildren, dressed in their uniforms and waving Sudanese flags, as they took to the streets of Khartoum against the killing of five students in Al-Obeid on Monday.

Sporadic protests by schoolchildren were also held in other parts of the capital and in other cities.

Five high school students were shot dead and more than 60 wounded, some by snipers, when they rallied in Al-Obeid against fuel and bread shortages, the protest movement and residents said.

Demonstrators accused feared paramilitaries of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) of shooting dead the teenagers.

Late on Tuesday, the authorities ordered all schools nationwide to suspend classes.

"Orders have been given to governors of all states to shut kindergartens, primary and high schools from tomorrow (Wednesday) until further notice," the official SUNA news agency said, following a directive issued by the ruling military council.

The killings came a day before protest leaders were due to hold talks with generals on remaining aspects of installing civilian rule after the two sides inked a power-sharing deal earlier this month.

But protest leaders called off Tuesday's meeting.

"There will be no negotiation today with the Transitional Military Council as our negotiating team is still in Al-Obeid and will return only tonight," said a negotiator and prominent protest leader, Satea Al-Hajj.

Another protest leader told AFP on condition of anonymity that talks would resume after "calm returns to the streets as dialogue is the only way to break the overall political impasse."

The chairman of Sudan's military council, General Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, condemned the killings.

"What happened in Al-Obeid is sad. Killing peaceful civilians is an unacceptable crime that needs immediate accountability," he told journalists, quoted by state television.

On the streets, crowds of students rallied in Khartoum waving flags and

chanting: "The people want to fight for the rights of martyrs."

"We keep silent all the time and they kill us," said Enas Saifeddine, a 16-year-old high school student.

"The five students of Al-Obeid were killed because they were asking for something basic like food, water and electricity."

The UN children's agency UNICEF called on the authorities "to investigate" the killings and hold the perpetrators accountable.

"No child should be buried in their school uniform," UNICEF said, adding that the pupils killed were between 15 and 17 years old.

Authorities announced a night-time curfew in four towns in North Kordofan following the deaths in the state's Al-Obeid, as the main protest group, the Sudanese Professionals Association, called for nationwide rallies against the "massacre."

"The Janjaweed forces and some snipers, without any mercy, confronted school students with live ammunition," the SPA said, referring to the RSF which has its origins in Arab militias that were originally deployed to suppress an ethnic minority rebellion that erupted in Sudan's western region of Darfur in 2003.

Doctors linked to the protest movement say more than 250 people have been killed nationwide in protest-related violence since December when demonstrations first erupted against now ousted president Omar Al-Bashir.

Tuesday's talks were to cover issues including the powers of the joint civilian-military ruling body, the deployment of security forces and immunity for generals over protest-related violence, according to protest leaders. The power-sharing deal agreed on July 17 calls for the establishment of a new governing body of six civilians and five generals.

But the publication on Saturday of the findings of an investigation commissioned by the military into the deadly dispersal of a Khartoum protest camp in June also triggered angry demonstrations.

Shortly before dawn on June 3, gunmen in military fatigues raided the site of a weeks-long sit-in outside army headquarters, shooting and beating protesters.

Doctors linked to the protests say the raid left 127 people dead and scores wounded.

Protest leaders have rejected the findings of a joint investigation by prosecutors and the military council which concluded that just 17 people were killed on June 3, with a total of 87 deaths between that day and June 10.



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School students shot dead at Sudan rally ahead of talks Sudan says 87 killed when security forces broke up protest in June

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## [Arab coalition accuses Houthis of massacre in northern Yemem](#)

Author:

Mon, 2019-07-29 23:31

JEDDAH: The Arab coalition on Monday accused the Houthi militia of committing a massacre in northern Yemen.

Earlier reports said 13 people were killed in a strike on a market Al-Thabit Al-Shaabi district in Saada province.

The Iran-backed Houthis are committing violations and then accusing coalition forces, Col. Turki Al-Maliki said.



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