

Terror funding has 'new face,' warns Saudi Arabia's attorney general

Author:

Wed, 2019-02-20 22:43

JEDDAH: The changing dynamics of terror financing and money laundering posed a growing problem for countries and organizations seeking to halt their spread, a regional conference in Cairo was warned.

Saudi Arabia's Attorney General Sheikh Saud bin Abdullah Al-Mua'jab told the first Middle East and North Africa conference on countering terrorism that new forms of transnational terror funding and money laundering demanded greater cooperation between states and organizations.

The conference, organized by the Egyptian Public Prosecution Office, aims to bolster international unity in the face of the escalating threat of terrorist financing and money laundering operations.

"Saudi Arabia has spared no effort in combating these two crimes," Al-Mua'jab said.

He said money laundering and terror financing are at the "forefront of global criminal phenomena," and often complemented each other.

"One of the most important steps the world has taken through its international and regional systems is to engage in initiatives and agreements to combat terrorism financing and money laundering as the artery of the criminal body that strikes the global economy," he said.

"Saudi Arabia is a key partner in the international coalition against the so-called Daesh terrorist organization and leads, together with the US and Italy, the Counter Daesh Finance Group. It has also implemented laws and procedures aimed at combating money laundering and terrorist financing," he said.

Al-Mua'jab said the September 2018 report of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) on Saudi Arabia had praised the Kingdom's commitment to the recommendations of the group.

"Saudi Arabia has spared no effort in combating these two crimes," he said. "It was one of the first countries in the world to be affected by terrorist acts. Its experience of combating the crimes has been exemplary."

He said measures taken by the Kingdom included the 2017 "Law of Combating Crime and its Financing," regulation of charities and the establishment of a standing committee to investigate money laundering.

The Kingdom's Public Prosecution Office recently released a manual outlining steps to counter money laundering, including measures for seizure and confiscation, tracking of funds and details of international cooperation.

The Saudi Arabian Monetary Authority has also issued a guidebook for Saudi banks to combat money laundering.

A recent Saudi Cabinet meeting outlined strategic objectives for reducing the risks of the two crimes, he said.



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[Sheikh Saud bin Abdullah Al-Mua'jab](#)

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[Jordan's PM appeals for more aid as most Syrian refugees set to stay](#)

Author:

Reuters

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Wed, 2019-02-20 16:52

AMMAN: Jordan's Prime Minister Omar Al-Razzaz appealed on Wednesday to major donors to continue multi-billion dollar funding for Syrian refugees in the kingdom, saying most of those who had fled the eight-year conflict had no intention of returning any time soon.

Razzaz told representatives of major Western donors, UN agencies and NGOs that relatively few refugees had gone back since Syrian President Bashar al Assad's army last summer regained control of southern Syria, where most had fled from.

"The number of refugees that so far returned voluntarily is low and most have no intention of going back any time soon," Razzaz told a meeting to launch a UN-funded government plan that earmarks \$2.4 billion in funding needs for 2019.

Officials say only around 10,000 refugees out of a total estimated at 1.3 million had left since the two countries opened the vital Nassib-Jaber border crossing last October.

Razzaz echoed the UN view that unstable conditions inside Syria, where large-scale destruction, fear of retribution and military conscription has made many reluctant to return.

"We are now entering a new phase of the Syrian crisis, however the impact is still ongoing. The conditions for their return are not present," Razzaz added.

The prime minister warned against donor fatigue in a protracted crisis where the needs of refugees and vulnerable Jordanians were largely unchanged.

Maintaining funding that covers education, health and crucial services for tens of thousands of Syrian refugees and local communities was crucial to ease rising pressures on the debt-burdened economy, he added.

"Aid helped Jordan in staying resilient in a difficult regional setting," Razzaz said, adding the refugee burden had strained meagre resources such as water and electricity, with a donor shortfall covered from state finances. Jordan is struggling to rein in record public debt of \$40 billion, equivalent to 95 percent of gross domestic product, under a tough International Monetary Fund (IMF) austerity plan.

Major donors say more than \$6 billion had been extended to Jordan since 2015, which economists credit for rejuvenating once sleepy northern border towns, while refugee entrepreneurship brought a pool of cheap labor and new skills, triggering a property boom and higher productivity.

The kingdom received around \$1.6 billion last year alone.

"The level of funding to Jordan that still remains is exceptional in global comparison," said UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Anders Pedersen, adding needs had evolved from the humanitarian aid required early in the conflict to development projects that benefit the economy.



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[Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas will refuse Israeli tax transfers](#)

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Wed, 2019-02-20 15:17

RAMALLAH, West Bank: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas says he will not accept a monthly tax transfer from Israel if it carries out its decision to deduct amounts the Palestinians pay to the families of prisoners and people killed in fighting with Israel.

Abbas on Wednesday accused Israel of trying to put political pressure on him and violating longstanding economic agreements.

He said it would be the “final nail in the coffin” of those agreements and said he would not accept the funds if even “one penny” is deducted.

The monthly tax transfers cover about two-thirds of the Palestinian budget. Without those funds, Abbas' autonomy government will fall into a crisis and not be able to pay full salaries to its tens of thousands of employees.



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Future rabbis plant with Palestinians, sow rift with Israel

[Yemeni government approves UN plan for redeployment in Hodeidah](#)

Wed, 2019-02-20 12:53

DUBAI: The Yemeni government said on Wednesday that it approved a UN plan for redeployment in Hodeidah, Al Arabiya reported.

The withdrawal from Hodeidah will be carried out under the supervision of UN

monitoring committee and will begin in the next 11 days.

The Houthi militia will withdraw by 5 km, while the Yemeni government will withdraw by 3.5 km south of the Red Sea Mills. This aims to secure the passage for relief workers to the Red Sea Mills.

The UN said it had been unable to access the Red Sea Mills – which has enough grain to feed 3.7 million people for a month – in Hodeida since Sept. last year.

Martin Griffiths and Michael Lollesgaard – who heads the monitoring mission – will oversee the implementation of the Stockholm agreement.

Lollesgaard assured the Yemeni government that the Houthis will withdraw 5 km away from Al-Saleef and Ras Eisa ports within the next four days.

Government officials are also expected to return to their official posts in Hodeidah after the Houthi withdrawal.



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Troop withdrawal in Yemen's Hodeidah could start Tuesday, Wednesday: UN envoy Griffiths

Trucks evacuate civilians from last Daesh pocket in Syria: SDF official

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BAGHOUZ, Syria: A convoy of trucks carrying hundreds of civilians, including men, women and children, left the last enclave held by Daesh militants in eastern Syria on Wednesday, signaling a possible end to a standoff that has lasted for more than a week.

An Associated Press team in Baghouz, a village near the Iraqi border where the Daesh group is making its final stand, counted at least 17 trucks that emerged through a humanitarian corridor used in past weeks to evacuate people from the militants' last patch of territory along the Euphrates River.

Women, children and men, some with checkered headscarves, or keffiyehs, could be seen through a flap opening on the flatbed trucks. One man carried a crutch; the women were engulfed in conservative black garments covering their faces known as niqabs.

Mustafa Bali, a spokesman for the Syrian Democratic Forces, the US-backed militia spearheading the fight against Daesh in Syria, confirmed the trucks were carrying civilians out of the enclave.

It was not immediately clear if militants were also on board the trucks. Around 300 militants are believed to be holed up in the enclave, along with several hundred civilians. On Tuesday, Bali said a military operation aimed at ousting the extremists from the area will begin if they don't surrender, adding that such an operation would take place after separating or evacuating the civilians from the militants.

An SDF commander, Zana Amedi, said most of the militants remaining inside the enclave are seriously wounded or sick.

The Daesh group has been reduced from its self-proclaimed "caliphate" that once spread across much of Syria and Iraq at its height in 2014 to a speck of land on the countries' shared border.

The SDF has been encircling the remaining Daesh-held territory for days, waiting to declare the territorial defeat of the extremist group.

Nearly 20,000 civilians had left the shrinking area in recent weeks before the evacuation halted last week when the militants closed all the roads out of the tiny area.



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Daesh terrorists in Syria face two choices: Surrender or death