

Palestinian killed in Gaza despite Hamas-Israel cease-fire

Author:

Wed, 2018-11-14 23:43

JERUSALEM: A Palestinian was killed by Israeli fire along the shore of the northern Gaza Strip on Wednesday despite an Egyptian-brokered cease-fire after the worst escalation between Israel and Hamas since a 2014 war.

The man killed was identified as Nawaf Al-Aatar, 20, and a Gazan security source said he was fishing at the time near the border fence. An Israeli military spokesman said they were looking into the incident.

The truce may have halted violence but the political situation remained volatile and the deal provoked sharp disagreement within the Israeli government.

Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman on Wednesday announced his resignation and called for early elections throwing the government into turmoil.

Lieberman also said his party was quitting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition, leaving the premier with only a one-seat majority in Parliament.

Elections are not due until November 2019, but Lieberman's resignation increases the likelihood of an earlier vote.

The party of another Netanyahu rival, Naftali Bennett, has already announced that if he is not appointed defense minister it will also quit the coalition – a move that would trigger early elections.

Given Bennett's sometimes rocky relationship with Netanyahu, it is far from certain he will be given the powerful defense post. Yair Lapid, head of the opposition Yesh Atid Party, said "the countdown has begun" to the end of Netanyahu's term in office.

The agreement also led to protests by several hundred Israelis living near the border with Gaza who called for further action against Hamas.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu did not comment in detail on the agreement, but defended his strategy and said: "Our enemies begged for a cease-fire.

"In times of emergency, when making decisions crucial to security, the public can't always be privy to the considerations that must be hidden from the enemy," he said at a ceremony on Wednesday morning in honor of Israel's founding father David Ben-Gurion.

Hamas portrayed the cease-fire as a victory and thousands of residents of the

blockaded enclave took to the streets late Tuesday to celebrate.

“The resistance has defended itself and defended its people against Israeli aggression,” Hamas leader Ismail Haniya said.

The truce was announced by Gaza militant groups, including Hamas, on Tuesday.

Hamas said it would abide by the deal, which the UN also helped broker, as long as Israel did the same.

A diplomatic source familiar with the agreement said it involved returning to arrangements put in place following the 2014 war, but warned: “The situation remains very precarious and can blow up again.

“What we have seen in the past 48 hours was very dangerous and no efforts should be spared to avoid similar flare-ups.”

The violence saw seven Gazans killed in 24 hours as Israeli strikes targeted militants and flattened buildings, sending fireballs and plumes of smoke into the sky.

Sirens wailed in southern Israel, as militants unleashed barrages of rocket and mortar fire, sending residents rushing to shelters.

Around 460 rockets and mortar rounds were fired at Israel, the army said.

An anti-tank missile hit a bus near the Gaza border that Hamas says was being used by Israel’s army. An Israeli soldier was severely wounded.

In all, some 27 Israelis were wounded, three of them severely.

A Palestinian laborer from the occupied West Bank was killed when a rocket hit a building in the Israeli city of Ashkelon.

The violence began on Sunday with a botched Israeli special forces operation inside the Gaza Strip that turned deadly and prompted Hamas to vow revenge.

The clash that resulted from the blown operation killed seven Palestinian militants, including a local Hamas military commander, as well as an Israeli army officer.

Militants responded with the rocket barrages and anti-tank missile, prompting Israeli airstrikes across Gaza.

The Israeli army said it struck some 160 targets, including Hamas’ Al-Aqsa TV station and internal security headquarters in Gaza City.

At least five of the dead in Gaza were claimed as members of various militant groups. Some 26 people were wounded, according to territory’s Health Ministry.

The escalation came despite Netanyahu’s decision to allow Qatar to transfer millions of dollars in aid to Gaza for salaries as well as fuel to ease a chronic electricity shortage.

The agreements had led to calmer protests along the border after months of deadly unrest.

Sunday's special forces operation and resulting clash upset those efforts, leading to questions over the timing of the covert Israeli move.

Israel said it was an intelligence-gathering operation and that those efforts must continue to defend the country.

Israel and Palestinian militants in Gaza have fought three wars since 2008, and protests and clashes along the Gaza border since March 30 have repeatedly raised fears of a fourth.

At least 234 Palestinians in Gaza have since been killed by Israeli fire, the majority during protests and clashes.

Two Israeli soldiers have been killed over the same period.



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Netanyahu defends Gaza ceasefire after Israeli criticism
Israel defense minister Lieberman resigns over Gaza ceasefire

Lebanon's Christian rivals shake hands after decades of hostility

Wed, 2018-11-14 21:39

BEIRUT: Christian rivals from the Lebanese civil war, Samir Geagea and Suleiman Frangieh, shook hands with each other on Wednesday, marking a formal reconciliation to end more than four decades of enmity.

Geagea, leader of the Lebanese Forces (LF) political party, and Frangieh, head of the Marada party, have been foes since the early days of the 1975-1990 civil war.

The two parties had armed militias during the conflict that battled against each other. The war, which drew in regional powers, included fighting between the country's main sects and rival factions within those sects.

[#صفحة_جديدة@sleimanfrangieh pic.twitter.com/sL0Fod0dxY](#)

– SAMIR GEAGEA (@DRSAMIRGEAGEA) [November 14, 2018](#)

The men, both Maronite Christians, met to reconcile at the seat of the sect's Patriarch Bechara Al-Rai in Bkerki, north of Beirut. They shook hands with Rai and then with each other after several failed reconciliation attempts over the years.

Geagea has been accused of leading a raid in 1978 on the home of Frangieh's father, Tony Franjeh, a rival Maronite Christian chieftain, who was killed with his wife, daughter and others. Geagea has said he was wounded before reaching Frangieh's house, and did not take part himself.

This is the second rapprochement of recent years between civil war Maronite Christian rivals.

In January 2016 Geagea endorsed then presidential candidate Michel Aoun for the Lebanese presidency, ending his own rival candidacy for the position, which must be held by a Maronite Christian under Lebanon's sectarian power sharing system.

Geagea and Aoun, who fought each other in the 1975-90 civil war, have been on opposite sides of the political divide since Syrian forces withdrew from Lebanon in 2005.

President Aoun is a political ally of the Iran-backed Shiite group Hezbollah, whereas Geagea is a staunch opponent of the group. Frangieh is a close ally of Syrian President and Hezbollah ally Bashar Assad.

Tony Frangieh, Suleiman's son, said the reconciliation was a good thing for all Lebanese and was not connected to any presidential aims.

"We are looking forward to the future by achieving this reconciliation," he told Lebanese broadcaster Al-Jadeed at the ceremony.



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[Christians](#)

Hezbollah 'blocking formation of Lebanon government' Lebanon to form body to probe civil war disappearances

[Amnesty slams Iranian execution of two men charged of financial crimes](#)

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Wed, 2018-11-14 19:52

LONDON: After two men convicted of financial crimes were executed in Iran, Amnesty International has strongly criticized the Iranian regime. Vahid Mazlounin and Mohammad Esmail Ghasemi were put to death after a trial

Amnesty has called "grossly unfair."

Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa Research and Advocacy Director, Philip Luther, said of the case: "With these abhorrent executions the Iranian authorities have flagrantly violated international law and once again displayed their shameless disregard for the right to life.

"Use of the death penalty is appalling under any circumstances but it is even more horrific given that these men were convicted after a grossly unfair show trial that was broadcast on state television. Under international human rights law, the death penalty is absolutely forbidden for non-lethal crimes, such as financial corruption.

"The shocking manner in which their trial was fast-tracked through Iran's judicial system without allowing them the chance of a proper appeal is yet another example of the brazen disregard the Iranian authorities have for defendants' basic due process rights."

The duo were executed after being charged with "manipulating coin and hard currency markets through illegal and unauthorized deals" as well as smuggling. An unspecified number of other accomplices went to prison. Iran detained Mazloumin, 58, in July for hoarding two tons of gold coins. With Iran in the grip of a deepening economic crisis, authorities have carried out mass arrests of individuals whom they accuse of being "financially corrupt" and "saboteurs of the economy."

According to Amnesty, the pair were convicted and sentenced to flogging, lengthy prison terms and eventually the death penalty after "grossly unfair summary trials."

In August, Iran's Supreme Leader approved a request by the Head of Judiciary to set up special courts to deal with crimes involving financial corruption. Since then, these courts have sentenced several people to death.

In a statement, Amnesty said the trials were unfair because defendants were denied access to lawyers of their own choosing, had no right to appeal against sentences of imprisonment during the process and were given only 10 days within which to appeal death sentences.



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Iran must disclose fate and location of hundreds of Ahwazi Arab prisoners:
Amnesty International
Amnesty International strips Myanmar's Suu Kyi of
'conscience' award

[Iraq recovers property worth millions after illegal sale](#)

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1542212093914281900

Wed, 2018-11-14 12:56

BAGHDAD: The Iraqi government said Wednesday it had retaken ownership of a piece of property in Baghdad worth millions of dollars after it was

unlawfully sold to a government official's wife.

In a statement to journalists, the Integrity Commission said it had worked with Baghdad authorities to recover the land in Kadhimiyah district.

"The Baghdad-Karakh appeals court issued a decision to seize the property, which amounts to 12,642 square meters, from the wife of a leading official in the previous government and re-register it in the name of the Mayoralty," the statement said.

"The land registration in the name of the official's wife has been nullified, as well as all subsequent registrations," it added.

The northern neighborhood of Kadhimiyah is home to a revered Shiite shrine, as well as some of the city's most luxurious properties – priced at up to \$10,000 per square meter.

The Integrity Commission said its investigation had revealed the official had sold the property to his wife in violation of laws regulating the lease or sale of state-owned property.

It did not reveal the official's identity, but a parliamentary source told AFP the accused had briefly served as a deputy to Iraq's former prime minister, Haidar Al-Abadi.

In Baghdad, abandoned homes once belonging to Saddam Hussein-era officials or to minorities who have fled abroad are regularly occupied by powerful political parties.

Iraq, according to Transparency International, is the 12th most corrupt country in the world.

The embezzlement of public goods – from land to government funds – is a deeply rooted problem in a country with such a large public sector.

Corruption, shell companies and "phantom" public employees who receive salaries but do not work have cost Iraq the equivalent of \$228 billion dollars since 2003, according to Iraq's parliament.

That figure is more than the country's gross domestic product and nearly three times the annual budget.



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Iraq to exchange food for Iranian gas, seeks US approval
Daesh militants attempting to cross into Iraq from Syria: Iraqi PM

[Dozens of migrants refuse to leave container ship in Libya](#)

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1542208845153991700

Thu, 2018-11-15 (All day)

MISRATA: Dozens of migrants have barricaded themselves in a container ship in the Libyan port city of Misrata for the past five days, after being picked up at sea, and refuse to disembark, saying Libya is too dangerous for them. Loaded with cars, the ship Nivin was already bound for Misrata when it picked

up 93 migrants in a foundering raft in the Mediterranean Sea late on Friday and continued toward its destination. Two of the migrants agreed to leave with the Libyan coast guard, but the others refused, saying Libya was deadly for migrants and they wanted to go to Europe.

They have been in the Misrata port ever since, with the captain and crew taking refuge on the upper decks.

One of the migrants, a man from South Sudan reached by The Associated Press on the ship, vowed on Wednesday to reach Europe or die trying. He said six commercial ships passed his group before the Nivin finally stopped.

Libya's coast guard had no immediate comment on the situation.

With just one rescue ship patrolling the Mediterranean, and European ports refusing to take in rescued migrants, commercial ships have become increasingly leery of picking up people in the sea. Repeatedly in recent months, they have found themselves caught in the middle between governments hostile to new migrants and an obligation under international maritime law to save

The man, who identified himself only by his name, Victor, fearing for his safety, said he himself had already been imprisoned repeatedly in Libya and that his own brother had died there. He had no intention of returning, he said.

"We don't want to go out in Libya," he told The Associated Press. "You can come and take my dead body outside."

Julien Raickman, who is the head of the Doctors Without Borders mission in Libya, said Europe's policy of refusing to take in rescued migrants has led to a spike in deaths. Now one in five who cross perish at sea, he said.

Raickman said the Libyan coast guard has given international organizations access to the migrants, who have food and some degree of medical care now, but no toilets or other sanitary facilities. The ship's cargo of cars was peacefully unloaded, but the migrants remained unmoved.

"We're afraid that this dispute will end in violence. The people who are on board are determined. They know that they went far and could face charges for taking control of a boat," he said. "But these are people motivated by despair."



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Europe, N. Africa ministers seek to curb Libya migrant flowsEU seeks curb for Libya migrant flows