

# Libya's foreign minister slams European migration policy

Author:

Associated Press

ID:

1638560089036740100

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CAIRO: Libya's foreign minister on Friday criticized a system of deterring migrants from reaching European shores that she argued fails to address the root of the problem and has so far only served the interest of EU states. Her comments are the latest stab at EU policies that fund forces such as the Libyan coast guard, which intercepts migrant boats and brings them back onshore and detains them.

Foreign Minister Najla Mangoush spoke via video call at the Mediterranean dialogues, a conference hosted by the Italian government, in a session titled "Dealing with Migration."

"Please do not push the problem in our lap and please do not point your fingers at Libya and portray us as a country which abuses and disrespects refugees," she said. "We are tired of beating around the bush, and all these superficial solutions being offered, it's time to state the problem and face it, instead of ... keep repeating it again and again."

The European Union, which has come under fire for its support of Libya's domestic efforts to stem migrant crossings in the past, has supported the country's coast guard, which regularly intercepts vessels carrying migrants. Many migrants are then placed in brutal detention facilities, held indefinitely in appalling conditions, or held for ransom in exchange for payoffs, according to migrants who have made it out.

The European Union sends funds to the detention centers indirectly through aid agencies.

In her speech, Mangoush did not directly address the abuse accusations. Libya has emerged as the dominant transit point for migrants fleeing war and poverty in Africa and the Middle East, hoping for a better life in Europe. Each year, thousands of migrants and refugees from Africa, the Middle East and South Asia attempt the deadly Mediterranean Sea crossing to Europe on overcrowded and often unseaworthy boats.

More than 1,300 men, women and children have died so far in 2021 trying to cross the Central Mediterranean from Libya and Tunisia to Italy and Malta, according to the UN migration agency.

The EU has sent 455 million euros to Libya since 2015, largely channeled through UN agencies and aimed at beefing up Libya's coast guard, reinforcing its southern border and improving conditions for migrants.

Libya has been at war and split for years between rival administrations in the east and west, each backed by armed groups and foreign governments. After years of UN-led talks, the country is set to hold national elections later this month.

Mangoush said that what Libya needs is better policing system at its southern borders to control the influx of migrants, to address the root of the issue.

She said the solution of simply providing money to Libya would never be enough, calling past initiatives “just for the cause of serving the agenda of the EU and the perspective of the EU.”



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Libya court reinstates Qaddafi presidential bid amid election chaos

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## [Tunisia records first case of omicron variant](#)

Author:

AFP

ID:

1638556294286165800

Fri, 2021-12-03 21:33

TUNIS: Tunisia recorded its first confirmed case of the omicron variant of

the coronavirus in a Congolese man who arrived from Istanbul, the health minister said Friday.

Ali Mrabet said the 23-year-old man tested positive and all fellow travelers on his flight from Turkey were contacted by Tunisian authorities to be tested as well.

The omicron variant was first announced by South Africa but has since been discovered to have been present earlier in Europe.

It has prompted governments around the globe to reimpose travel restrictions, despite warnings from the World Health Organization this could do more harm than good.

On Friday, the WHO said it had not seen any reports of deaths related to the new omicron variant.

The WHO has said it will take several weeks to get a full picture of the transmissibility and severity of omicron, and to assess how vaccines, tests and treatments hold up against the new variant.



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WHO chief scientist says omicron 'quite infectious', must not panic  
Nine confirmed COVID-19 cases of omicron variant currently on mainland France

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## [France's Macron says hoping for progress on Lebanon 'within next hours'](#)

Author:

Reuters

ID:

1638538920214089900

Fri, 2021-12-03 13:38

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron said on Friday he hoped there would be progress on the Lebanon crisis in the next hours.

"We will do all we can to re-engage the Gulf regions for the benefit of Lebanon... I hope the coming hours will allow us to make progress." Macron said during a visit to the United Arab Emirates.

Lebanon is facing a diplomatic crisis with Gulf states, spurred by a minister's critical comments about the Saudi Arabia-led intervention in Yemen that prompted Riyadh, Bahrain and Kuwait to expel Lebanon's top diplomats and recall their own envoys. The UAE withdrew its envoys.



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# US critics of Israel face challenges in redrawn Congress districts

Author:

Fri, 2021-12-03 15:44

CHICAGO: Nine members of Congress who have been vocal critics of Israel's policies towards the Palestinians could face tougher re-election campaigns as a result of their districts being redrawn, an analysis by Arab News shows.

Every 10 years, the dominant political parties in many states re-draw district boundaries based on demographic data provided by the US Census, which does not count Arab and Muslim Americans as a separate category.

Where population shifts have led to proposed boundary changes, incumbents may be forced to stand in new districts. That's the challenge facing Illinois representative Marie Newman, who won election in 2020 in the 3rd Congressional District, which has the largest concentration of Palestinian American voters.

Newman has chosen to face-off with Sean Casten, who is very strong on climate change, in the new 6th District rather than stand against Jesus "Chuy" Garcia, who is one of only two Hispanic congress members in Illinois, in the 4th District. Casten is a strong supporter of Israel and silent on Israeli violence against Palestinians, while Garcia has often joined Newman to support pro-Palestinian legislation, including voting against a bill giving Israel \$1 billion for its Iron Dome defense system last September.

"Rep. Newman was supportive of the push to create a second congressional district of Latino influence and understood that doing so would mean the need to shift boundary lines of existing CDs in the Chicagoland area," Newman campaign spokesperson Ben Hardin said.

Describing the challenges as "inevitable," Hardin said: "Representative Newman is grateful ... to have the support of so many people here in Chicago's southwest side and in the south and west suburbs, including a strong coalition of supporters from the Arab and Muslim American community."

The new Illinois district map was approved by Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker, one of Israel's strongest advocates, in November. Pritzker aroused anger among Arab Americans after refusing to apologize for disparaging remarks he made in a 1998 congressional race in which he accused a rival of accepting money from a Muslim group that Pritzker asserted supported terrorists.

"There is no doubt that the Illinois Democrats are seeking to undermine Newman, who has been a vocal supporter of Palestinian, Arab and Muslim rights," said Hassan Nijem, the president of the American Arab Chamber of Commerce.

“She and Chuy Garcia are the only Illinois Democrats to defend Palestinian rights and recognize our growing community.”

The Illinois primary has been delayed from March until June 28, 2022, because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to Newman and Garcia, seven other members of Congress who voted against the Iron Dome money could be affected by district changes.

They include Cori Bush of Missouri; André Carson of Indiana; Raúl Grijalva of Arizona; Ilhan Omar of Minnesota; Ayanna Pressley of Massachusetts; Rashida Tlaib of Michigan; and Thomas Massie of Kentucky, a Republican Congressman who consistently votes against all foreign aid regardless of the recipient.

Tlaib, Pressley and Omar are members of the “Squad,” a group of progressive Democrats that includes New York Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. Instead of voting against the Iron Dome funding, however, AOC voted “present” not taking a position.

In Michigan, which is holding its primary on Aug. 2 next year, mapmakers are proposing to re-draw Tlaib’s 13th district, increasing the number of African American voters. That could be important even though Tlaib defeated several African American candidates when she first ran and won office in the predominantly African American district in 2018.

Tlaib may be forced into a new district against pro-Arab Democrat Debbie Dingell. However, she could survive as the Michigan process puts remapping in the hands of an independent commission rather than partisan politicians. The final Michigan remap might not be completed until late January.

Also in Michigan, proposed changes would pit Jewish Democratic Congressman Andy Levin, who has been an outspoken supporter of the two-state solution for Palestine and Israel, against Brenda Lawrence.

Minnesota congressional remapping plans have targeted Omar and another pro-Palestinian Congresswoman, Betty McCollum, although maps in those districts have not been finalized.



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UN warned its credibility is at stake over the Palestinian question  
UN marks International Day of Solidarity with Palestinian people

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## [Israeli agents convinced Iranian scientists to blow up their own nuclear facilities](#)

Author:

Fri, 2021-12-03 14:29

LONDON: Agents from the Mossad convinced Iranian scientists to blow up their own nuclear facilities by “posing as dissidents” and smuggling explosives disguised as food into facilities, according to reports.

According to The Jewish Chronicle, Israeli agents convinced up to 10 scientists to destroy the Natanz nuclear facility, wiping out 90 percent of

its centrifuges – crucial for research into nuclear weapons.

They are said to have smuggled some explosives into the plant in food lorries, while others were dropped in via drones and picked up by scientists – who they convinced to use against the nuclear sites by posing as Iranian dissidents.

The attack on the facility is just one of a long line of Israeli sabotages of Iranian nuclear facilities, a strategy that they have engaged in more as Iranian nuclear research has progressed.

The Natanz facility, a critical nuclear research site, has been hit by at least three attacks linked to the Israeli secret service, the Mossad.

In another incident, agents used a quadcopter drone to fire missiles at the Iran Centrifuge Technology Company in an attempt to disrupt its research.

In recent years, following the US withdrawal from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, Iran has increased its atomic energy research, including enriching growing quantities of uranium above the levels required for civilian nuclear activity such as energy production.

In April Iran said that it would start enriching uranium up to 60 percent after the attack on its Natanz plant which it blamed on Israel – that is closing in on the 90 to 95 percent enrichment required for nuclear weapons.

This week – much to the ire of Israel – Iran and the US returned to the negotiating table to try to find a deal to curb Iran's nuclear activity in exchange for relief from crushing economic sanctions imposed on the country by the US and its allies.

But on Thursday, Israeli officials called on the US directly to cease those negotiations.

In a phone call with US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett called for “concrete measures” to be taken against Iran.

He said that Tehran was carrying out “nuclear blackmail” as a negotiation tactic and that “this must be met with an immediate cessation of negotiations and by concrete steps taken by the major powers,” according to a statement released by his office.

The Israeli leader also expressed his concern about a new report from the UN, issued during the US-Iran talks in Vienna, which showed that Iran had “started the process of enriching uranium to the level of 20 percent purity with advanced centrifuges at its Fordo underground facility.”

Israel, the only nuclear-armed state in the Middle East, has pledged never to allow Iran to obtain nuclear weapons.





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Iran names suspect in Natanz nuclear site attack, says he fled country