

Iraq makes it illegal to attempt normalizing ties with Israel

Author:

Reuters

ID:

1653597643751067700

Thu, 2022-05-26 23:42

BAGHDAD: Iraq's parliament approved a law on Thursday that will ban normalizing relations with Israel, at a time when several Arab countries have established formal ties.

The Iraqi parliament has been unable to convene on any other issue including electing a new president and forming its own government, prolonging a political standoff.

Iraq has never recognized the state of Israel since its establishment in 1948 and Iraqi citizens and companies cannot visit Israel, but the new law goes further, specifically criminalizing any attempts to normalize relations with Israel.

The law was proposed by influential Shiite cleric Moqtada Al-Sadr whose party, which opposes close ties with the United States and Israel, won more seats in parliament in elections last October.

"Approving the law is not only a victory for the Iraqi people but to the heroes in Palestine and Hezbollah in Lebanon," said Iraqi shi'ite lawmaker Hassan Salim who represents Iranian-backed militia Asaib Ahl Al-Haq.

Lawmakers from Sadr's party said they proposed the law to curb any claims by Iranian-backed rival parties that Sadr is making coalitions with Sunni and Kurds who may have secret ties with Israel.

Some Gulf states, including the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, are forging ties with Israel against a backdrop of shared concerns about the threat that Iran may pose to the region.

Saudi Arabia, a close US ally, has made it a condition of any eventual normalization with Israel that Palestinians' quest for statehood on territory captured by Israel in the 1967 Middle East war must be addressed.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Iraq](#)

[Israel](#)

[Law](#)

[Muqtada Al-Sadr](#)

[normalizing](#)

Iraqi migrants shot amid people-smuggling gang fight in France
Iraqi boy eludes security to board Iran-bound plane

[UN Security Council in renewed call for Abu Akleh's killers to be brought to justice](#)

Thu, 2022-05-26 22:41

NEW YORK: The killing of Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh in Jenin in the West Bank and the subsequent excessive use of force by Israeli police against mourners at her funeral were again a key focus of a UN Security Council meeting held on Thursday to discuss the latest report on the

situation in the Palestinian territories.

Council members condemned Abu Akleh's killing, and reiterated their calls for an independent and transparent investigation into her death, while Tor Wennesland, the UN special coordinator for the Middle East peace process, said that "those responsible must be held accountable."

US permanent representative to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield described Abu Akleh's "heart-wrenching killing" as a "tragic loss and an affront to press freedoms everywhere."

She strongly condemned the killing, and called for "an immediate, thorough, transparent and impartial investigation," adding: "And upon the conclusion of an investigation, we expect full accountability for those found responsible."

Thomas-Greenfield said that Abu Akleh's death was compounded by the violence at her funeral procession.

"We have directly shared our concern with Israel regarding the troubling footage of Israeli police intruding on the procession," she said.

The US envoy called on all parties to honor Abu Akleh by "redoubling" peace efforts.

Former and current European members of the Security Council also reiterated their call for an investigation into Abu Akleh's killing and expressed shock at "the violence exercised by the Israeli police toward mourners at her funeral."

In a joint statement issued after the Security Council meeting, EU members France, Ireland and Estonia, joined by Albania, deplored the decision by the Israeli Higher Planning Council on May 12 to advance plans for the construction of more than 4,000 housing units in the occupied West Bank.

The statement urged Israel to rescind that decision, as well as abandon planned demolitions and evictions, especially in Masafer Yatta area, which alone could result in the forced transfer of 1,200 people.

Condemning all attacks against journalists, Wennesland said that Abu Akleh's death "brought Palestinians and countless others around the world together in grief and anger, while serving as another reminder of the devastating human cost of this conflict."

The special coordinator also lamented "the familiar pattern of daily violence, including armed clashes, settlement expansion, evictions, demolitions and seizures of Palestinian structures, as well as a deadly terrorist attack in Israel."

The daily violence has left 10 Palestinians, including a woman and three children, dead and 346 Palestinians, including 24 children, injured.

Those deaths and injuries at the hands of Israeli security forces occurred during demonstrations, clashes, and search-and-arrest operations, said

Wennesland.

He said that Israeli settlers and other civilians have carried out 57 attacks against Palestinians, resulting in one Palestinian child being killed, 24 injuries and damage to Palestinian property.

Meanwhile, four Israeli civilians and one Israeli security personnel were killed and 22 civilians and 20 security personnel injured by Palestinians in shooting and stabbing attacks or clashes involving the throwing of stones or homemade incendiary devices.

Wennesland also called for urgent attention to the Palestinian Authority's "dire" financial situation, "compounded by the constraints of the occupation, the absence of serious Palestinian reforms and unclear prospects for donor support."

He said: "Without meaningful policy steps on the part of Israel, bold reforms on the part of the PA and increased donor support, these economic challenges will continue."



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Shireen Abu Akleh](#)

[United Nations Security Council \(UNSC\)](#)

[Palestinians](#)

UN condemns killing of Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh

Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh shot dead in West Bank, channel blames Israeli troops

[Death of US embassy employee in Houthi detention sparks outrage](#)

Thu, 2022-05-26 19:39

AL-MUKALLA: The Iran-backed Houthis have again been criticized for mistreating prisoners after an employee at a US aid organization in Yemen died while being held by the group.

The US embassy in Sanaa said on Thursday that Abdulhameed Al-Ajami, one of its staff members in the Yemeni capital who was abducted by the Houthis late last year, had died in Houthi detention.

In a statement, also calling for the release of the other workers detained by the Houthis, the embassy said: "We grieve for retired USAID (US Agency for International Development) employee Abdulhameed Al-Ajami, who died in Houthi captivity.

"He was an innocent grandfather who should never have died away from his family, a proud Yemeni dedicated to educating Yemeni children.

"We extend our condolences to his loved ones and call on the Houthis to end this injustice and release every single current and former US Embassy employee now."

Al-Ajami was among at least a dozen Yemeni workers at the embassy and USAID who were abducted and later forcibly disappeared after the militia group raided the embassy's compound.

Yemeni activists and local media reports said that Al-Ajami was brutally tortured by the Houthis and was denied life-saving mediation, a move that led to his death.

Al-Ajami's death came as friends of another US embassy abductee, Bassam Al-Mardahi, warned that he could die too, as he was in a critical condition due to torture by his captors.

Yemeni government officials, human rights activists, and former abductees strongly condemned the Houthis for abusing prisoners, stating that the death of Al-Ajami was another clue to the torture methods used by the group against thousands of prisoners.

Yemen's Minister of Information Muammar Al-Eryani offered his condolences to Al-Ajami's family and called for international action to force the Houthis to

stop abusing prisoners and release them immediately.

He expressed his strong condemnation of the group's "psychological and physical torture" of Al-Ajami, treatment, the minister said, that had resulted in his death eight months after being abducted, adding that he had been deprived "of his most basic rights, including medicines."

The French Embassy in Yemen also denounced the death and asked the Houthis to release the remaining abducted US and UN workers.

In a tweet, the embassy said: "It reiterated its demand for the release of all local employees of the US embassy and the UN who have been arbitrarily detained by the Houthis for several months."

The Houthis are also still holding two Yemenis working for the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Sanaa who were abducted in the city in November. The two workers have not been put on trial and the Houthis have prevented them from contacting their families, the UN said.

Similarly, Yemeni human rights activists said that torture was rife inside Houthi prisons and dozens of civilians abducted by the group had died while in detention.

Fuad Al-Mansouri, a Yemeni human rights activist, told Arab News that many detainees inside Houthi prisons may face the same fate as Al-Ajami if the Houthis were not forced to stop abusing prisoners.

"Al-Ajami's death is a very serious indication of the mistreatment of detainees in the prisons of the Houthi militia. This is not the first incident, and it will not be the last," Al-Mansouri said.

Amat Al-Salam Al-Hajj, chairwoman of the Abductees' Mothers Association, an umbrella organization for thousands of female relatives of war prisoners, told Arab News that the Houthis had barred relatives of the detained US embassy employees from speaking to the organization or media, urging the UN Yemen envoy to work on releasing thousands of detainees.

"In Houthi prisons, the dignity of the Yemeni human being is insulted. The file of the abductee is a true humanitarian crisis that must be addressed," she said.

Abdullah Al-Munifi, a Yemeni journalist and former detainee who was released from a Houthi prison in 2018, told Arab News that he was whipped with electrical cables, hung by his arms, deprived of sleep and toilet facilities, electrocuted, and kept in solitary confinement for months.

"I wish I would die due to torture. Sometimes they make wounds on the body and put salt on them," Al-Munifi said.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Yemen](#)

[Houthis](#)

[Abdulhameed Al-Ajami](#)

[US embassy in Yemen](#)

[Sanaa](#)

Houthis abduct two more Yemeni employees of US embassy in Sanaa
Saudi Arabia condemns seizure of closed US Embassy in Sanaa by Yemen's Houthis

[Europe 'silent' on 'deplorable conditions' for migrants in Libya: NGO chief](#)

Thu, 2022-05-26 18:31

LONDON: Europe has failed to note and act on the plight of thousands of migrants in Libya who are being held in "deplorable conditions" and often under arbitrary detention, an international NGO chief has said.

Federico Soda, chief of mission for the International Organization for

Migration's presence in Libya, said too little is being done to have an effect on the country's "environment of arbitrary detention and deplorable conditions" for migrants.

"Most member states are silent on these issues in Libya," Soda told reporters in Brussels. "On a number of issues in the country, we (the IOM) are the only voice. That's problematic. What concerns me is kind of the acquiescence."

He described the attitude prevalent in Europe as: "'It's not a problem on our shore, so let's just keep it there'."

Soda said the international community should dish out "more condemnation" and demand "more calls for law and order for investigations" into the situation in Libya.

A recent IOM report found that a record 32,425 people were returned to Libya after trying to travel to Europe last year.

The majority were intercepted or rescued from the often unsafe small boats they travel in across the Mediterranean Sea.

Soda said the issue is society-wide, with multiple groups guilty of allowing the crisis to continue.

"It's not about elected people; I think the whole of the community has a responsibility here, because when societies becomes as polarized as we've been on migration issues, I think we all have to look in the mirror and maybe put ourselves in the shoes and the conditions of where these people are coming from," he added.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Europe](#)

[Libya](#)

[migrants](#)

[International Organization for Migration \(IOM\)](#)

[Federico Soda](#)

UN experts seek to verify mass graves for migrants in LibyaUN 'extremely worried' about plight of migrants in Libyan detention centers

[US calls for more crossing points for delivery of aid to Syria](#)

Author:

Thu, 2022-05-26 00:04

NEW YORK: The denial of access for humanitarian efforts during armed conflicts is reinforcing a vicious cycle of killings and forced displacements, the US warned on Wednesday.

The result of this can be seen in Syria where, after 11 years of the "Assad

regime's brutal war," 14 million people rely on humanitarian aid to survive and 6.6 million are displaced within their own country, said Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the permanent US representative to the UN.

She called for the renewal and expansion of existing crossing points and addition of new crossings to make it easier to deliver aid to the Syrian people.

"Every month, Syrian civilians are attacked and killed by the Assad regime and others," she said. "And hospitals often don't have the medicine or supplies to help the injured because humanitarian convoys aren't able to reach them."

She was speaking as she convened a meeting of the Security Council, the presidency of which is held by the US this month. It came in the wake of the publication of a report by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on the protection of civilians during armed conflicts, which paints a bleak picture of the difficulties humanitarian operations face in conflict zones such as Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan and Mali.

It highlights grave concerns about attacks on humanitarian workers and assets; 143 such security incidents were recorded in 14 countries and territories during 2021, which resulted in the deaths of 93 aid workers.

In a concept note distributed before the meeting, the US mission stated that although international humanitarian law and other legal frameworks provide the necessary foundation to facilitate humanitarian access and the protection of aid workers, the legal principles are often ignored.

Focusing on Syria in particular, Thomas-Greenfield told her fellow ambassadors that the Security Council has the power to provide paths for humanitarian access where it is most desperately needed.

"We did this last year when we unanimously voted to renew the mandate for UN cross-border assistance in Syria," she said.

"That was an important, lifesaving decision for millions of people. It demonstrated the best of what we can do when we work together."

The UN estimates that 14.6 million Syrians will need humanitarian assistance this year, an increase of almost 10 percent on last year.

"So we have to renew the mandate again," Thomas-Greenfield said. "And we have to expand it and increase the number of crossing points to meet the rising demands for humanitarian aid in Syria."

She will visit Bab Al-Hawa, the only crossing point that currently remains open, in the coming days.

Security Council discussions about the issue often prove difficult, with Russia and China consistently insisting that all humanitarian aid deliveries require the consent of the Syrian authorities.

When deliveries of international aid to Syria began in 2014, the Security Council approved four border crossings. In January 2020, permanent member Russia used its power of veto to force the closure of all but one. Moscow argues that international aid operations violate the Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Vassily Nebenzia, Russia's permanent representative to the UN, said: "Despite notable successes in the fight against international terrorism, the establishment of complete peace and stability in the country is hindered by the illegal occupation by the United States of a significant part of the (Syrian) territory.

"Camps with inhuman living conditions for the civilian population continue to operate in the occupied territories. Devastation and total lawlessness reign."

He accused the "occupying US power" of "openly plundering" Syria's natural and agricultural resources, and of illegally smuggling oil and grain out of the country, describing it as "the American recipe for dealing with the global energy and food crisis."

"Despite the protracted serious humanitarian situation in Syria and the economic crisis, the US and the EU continue to apply illegal, unilateral sanctions against the long-suffering people of Syria, with disastrous consequences," Nebenzia added.

The current mandate for the cross-border mechanism is due to expire in July.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[UN](#)
[Syria](#)
[US](#)

UN Security Council explores pros and cons of new digital technologies