

Chief of Yemen's Presidential Council backs extending UN-brokered truce

Sun, 2022-05-22 21:59

AL-MUKALLA: The president of Yemen's Presidential Leadership Council, Rashad Al-Alimi, vowed on Saturday to support current efforts by international mediators to extend the UN-brokered truce, fight corruption and unify military and security units.

In a televised speech on the eve of the 32nd anniversary of Unification Day, Al-Alimi said the council supports the UN and US Yemen envoy's continuing activities to renew the truce, which is set to expire on June 2. He called upon the world to pressure the Houthis to stop breaking the truce and implement its provisions, including lifting their siege of Taiz city.



Yemenis fill their jerrycans with water from a well at a makeshift camp for displaced people in the province of Hodeidah. (AFP)

"In the name of members of the Leadership Council, we affirm our continuing support to the tireless efforts of the UN and US envoys to extend the humanitarian truce," Al-Alimi said, noting that the truce would pave the way for peace, save lives and rescue the country from starvation.

He stressed that the 2021 Saudi initiative to end the war in Yemen would be the cornerstone of plans to achieve peace in Yemen.

“We also renew our adherence to the initiative of the brothers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, considering it a just basis for a comprehensive peace process.”

Al-Alimi came to power in April when Yemen’s former President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi ceded authority to the eight-man Presidential Leadership Council that would run the country and start peace talks with the Houthis.

On Saturday, the new president pledged to address economic problems in Aden and the other provinces, fight corruption, boost revenues and bring together different armed groups under the council’s command based on the Riyadh Agreement.

“We will firmly move forward to unify the military and security establishment.”

The truce that came into effect on April 2 has largely reduced violence and deaths across the country, despite hundreds of violations by the Houthis and allowed commercial flights to leave Sanaa airport as at least a dozen fuel ships entered Hodeidah port.

The Yemen president’s pledge to support the renewal of the truce came as the Yemeni government and the Houthis are preparing to participate in discussions on opening roads in Taiz and the other provinces.

Houthi media said on Sunday that their delegation left Sanaa for the Jordanian capital on a UN plane.

A government official told Arab News on Saturday that their negotiators were told to get ready to travel to Amman for the meeting.

In the besieged city of Taiz, dozens of people on Sunday arranged a rare protest near a blocked road that links with Hodeidah province, west of the city, to draw attention to the Houthi siege.

The posters stood in a line on the road, carrying posters that called for ending the Houthi assault.

“Taiz has paid a heavy humanitarian bill due to the siege of the Houthi militia,” read one of the posters.

The Houthis have been besieging the city of Taiz since 2015 to force government troops that defend the city to surrender.



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Pressure mounts on Houthis to lift Taiz siege
Saudi deputy defense minister: UN, international pressure needed for Houthis to engage in peace process

[Slow rebuilding frustrates Gaza year after conflict](#)

Author:

Sun, 2022-05-22 21:02

GAZA CITY: Delayed rebuilding efforts in Gaza have frustrated locals, with many still living in temporary accommodation a year after the end of fierce fighting.

Ayman Dahman has lived with his family for more than a year in a rented house after his home was destroyed during the Palestinian-Israel conflict in May last year.

Dahman does not know when his old apartment – which he is still paying installments on – will be reconstructed.

The Gaza Strip has witnessed four conflicts, the last of which was in May 2021. The fighting that year lasted for 11 days, during which about 1,700 housing units were completely destroyed.

“I bought my apartment some years before the war, and I still pay the installments from my monthly salary. Now I live with my wife and two daughters and two sons in an apartment I rented after the war; we don’t know when we will return to our home again,” Dahman said.

Dahman and his family used to live in a five-storey building inhabited by 10 families, in the north of Gaza City.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Refugees paid rent allowance to 154 Palestinian families whose homes were completely demolished during the war, including the Dahman family.

Naji Sarhan, undersecretary at the Ministry of Public Works in Gaza, said that no more than 20 percent of the damaged properties have been reconstructed since the end of the war last year.

“What has been accomplished and what is underway in the housing sector so far does not exceed 20 percent of the completely destroyed houses, and 70 percent of the partially damaged houses,” Sarhan said at a press conference in Gaza on Sunday.

He added: “There are no commitments for the reconstruction of the high-rise and multi-storey residential buildings that were bombed and demolished by the occupation during the aggression of last May.”

Last year, Egypt and Qatar pledged \$1 billion to rebuild the post-war Gaza Strip.

“Many friendly countries began pledging to rebuild Gaza after the aggression on the city last year, led by Egypt with a grant of \$500 million, and Qatar with a grant of \$500 million, in addition to some sporadic grants of limited amounts provided by countries and institutions,” Sarhan said.

Egypt also began construction on Gaza’s 1.8-kilometer-long Corniche Street, three residential communities comprising 117 buildings with a total of more than 2,500 housing units, in addition to a construction plan for a bridge in the Shujaiya area, and an open tunnel in the Saraya neighborhood.

Meanwhile, Qatar has started construction of 200 housing units, in addition to the restoration of 11 residential buildings that were partially damaged. It is also repairing a number of destroyed street intersections with a pledge to continue the reconstruction process, Sarhan said.

Fears over new rounds of fighting between Israel and Hamas have mounted amid tensions over preparations by Israelis to conduct a flag march on May 29 in Jerusalem. A similar move led to the outbreak of violence last year.

Ismail Haniyeh, head of Hamas’ political bureau, said during a conference held in Gaza: “We are following the threats to storm the blessed Al-Aqsa

Mosque on May 29, or organize a march of flags.

“I warn the enemy against committing such crimes and such steps.”

Palestinians in Gaza are divided over support for a new confrontation.

Supporters of Hamas, Islamic Jihad and some supporters of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine express a willingness to confront Israel over flag marches. Others fear that any conflict would only add to the economic woes of the Gaza Strip.



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Israel reopens Gaza crossing after nearly two weeks EU launches €60bn program for investment in Gaza

[Loggerhead turtles freed in Tunisia with tracking monitor](#)

Sun, 2022-05-22 23:20

Sfax, Tunisia: Three rescued loggerhead turtles were released into the Mediterranean off Tunisia on Sunday, one with a tracking beacon glued to its shell to help researchers better protect the threatened species. The main risks to sea turtles in Tunisia are linked to fisheries, since they become entangled in nets – including the three that were released into the wild.

The migratory species, which can live to as old as 45, are listed as “vulnerable” in the Red List of threatened species of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).



A scientist checks a sea turtle before releasing it into the sea on May 21, 2022, in the Tunisian coastal city of Sfax, about 270km southeast of the capital Tunis. (AFP)

The turtles' release was watched by a crowd of some 50 people, many of them children, carried out by a specialized care center in Tunisia's eastern port of Sfax.

Some 35 turtles have been cared for at the center in the past year as part of the Mediterranean-wide Life Med Turtle project.

Environmental activists helped carry the heavy turtles down the beach, before the animals crawled the final distance toward the sea.

All of them were tagged, but one of them also had a phone-sized tracking beacon glued to its hard shell, which will track its progress as it moves across the sea.



A scientist checks an electronic tag placed on the shell of a sea turtle before releasing it into the sea on May 21, 2022, in the Tunisian coastal city of Sfax, about 270km southeast of the capital Tunis. (AFP)

“This beacon, given to us by the University of Primorska in Slovenia, will allow us to follow this turtle in its movements,” said Imed Jribi, a science professor from the University of Sfax and a coordinator of the Life Med Turtle project.

“Identifying wintering, grazing and migration routes plays an important role in protecting this endangered species,” Jribi said.

As well as loggerhead turtles, two other turtle species are found in the Mediterranean, the green and leatherback turtle.



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Turtles dying from eating trash show plastics scourge

[Israeli Arab lawmaker rejoins coalition days after quitting](#)

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Sun, 2022-05-22 15:38

JERUSALEM: An Arab Israeli lawmaker who quit the ruling coalition said Sunday that she was returning to Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's 60-member alliance, ending a crisis that lasted just a few days.

Ghaida Rinawie Zoabi said Thursday that she was quitting Bennett's coalition, leaving it with with just 59 members in Israel's 120-seat parliament. She

cited the government's hard-line policies in Jerusalem and West Bank settlement construction that she said have alienated her constituents, fellow Palestinian citizens of Israel.

Two other legislators from Bennett's own party have already broken ranks and joined the opposition, headed by former leader Benjamin Netanyahu. Rinawie Zoabi's departure had raised the possibility of new parliamentary elections less than a year after Bennett's broad coalition government took office. But even with a 60-member coalition that's deadlocked with the opposition, passing legislation will remain difficult.

Recent Israeli-Palestinian tensions, set off by several deadly Palestinian attacks against Israel and Israeli arrest raids in the occupied West Bank, and fueled by repeated clashes between Israeli police and Palestinian protesters at a flashpoint Jerusalem holy site, have shaken the coalition's stability.

But on Sunday Rinawie Zoabi reversed course, saying that her main concern was securing "achievements for the needs of Arab society" in Israel, and preventing an ultranationalist extremist in the opposition from becoming the next minister in charge of police.

She made the announcement of her return to the coalition's ranks after meeting with Foreign Minister Yair Lapid, who wrote on Twitter that the two had "an open and reasonable conversation about the real needs of Arab society" and put aside their disagreements.

As leader of a small nationalist party Bennett heads an unwieldy coalition of eight diverse parties – from dovish factions supporting Palestinian statehood to ultranationalists and, for the first time in Israel's history, an Islamist Arab party. They joined forces in June after four consecutive deadlocked elections with the aim of ousting longtime prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is on trial for corruption.

As part of their union, the parties agreed to set aside divisive issues, like Palestinian statehood, and focus instead on topics such as the coronavirus pandemic and the economy. Despite its internal divisions, it has managed to pass a budget, navigate the pandemic and strengthen relations with both the Biden administration and Israel's Arab allies.



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Israel PM 'driving a wedge between Arab Israelis' Arab Israelis rally against Jewish nation-state law

[Israel reports monkeypox case as virus spreads to ME](#)

Sat, 2022-05-21 23:36

JERUSALEM: Israel confirmed its first case of monkeypox on Saturday, joining several European and North American countries in detecting the disease endemic to parts of Africa.

A spokesman for Tel Aviv's Ichilov hospital said that a 30-year-old man, who recently returned from western Europe with monkeypox symptoms, had tested positive for the virus.

The virus, which causes distinctive pustules but is rarely fatal, is endemic to parts of central and west Africa.

In recent weeks, cases have been detected in Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Sweden as well as in the US, Canada and Australia, raising fears the virus may be spreading.

Symptoms of the rare disease include fever, muscle aches, swollen lymph nodes, chills, exhaustion and a chickenpox-like rash on the hands and face. The virus can be transmitted through contact with skin lesions or droplets from a contaminated person, as well as through shared items such as bedding or towels.



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Switzerland reports first monkeypox caseWHO working on more monkeypox guidance as cases rise – senior adviser