

UN Yemen envoy in Aden to sustain truce, revive peace talks

Author:

Tue, 2022-05-10 21:10

AL-MUKALLA: Hans Grundberg, UN special envoy for Yemen, on Tuesday landed in Yemen's southern port city of Aden on a two-day visit aimed at salvaging a shaky truce between warring parties and pushing for opening roads in Taiz and resuming flights from the Houthi-held Sanaa.

Grundberg's visit to Aden comes as the internationally recognized government of Yemen and the Iran-backed Houthis traded accusations over breaches to the UN-brokered truce across the country and delays in resuming commercial flights from Sanaa airport.

The UN envoy will discuss sustaining the truce and peace efforts with Rashad Al-Alimi, president of the Presidential Leadership Council, and other government officials, the official news agency SABA reported.

The Yemeni government blamed the Houthis for hundreds of violations of the truce since April 2 and for obstructing the departure of the first commercial flight from Sanaa airport on April 24.

The Houthis also accused their opponents of attacking their forces and impeding fuel shipments to the Hodeidah seaport and the resumption of flights from Sanaa airport.

During a meeting with the UN envoy in Riyadh on Monday, Abdullah Al-Alimi, Yemen's vice president, said the Houthis' reluctance to lift their siege of Taiz and their continuing attacks on government-controlled areas threaten to torpedo the truce and UN efforts to achieve a peace deal to end the war.

"The Yemeni government is keenly committed to what was agreed upon...and it deals positively, flexibly and responsibly with any proposal that would alleviate human suffering," the Yemeni official said, according to SABA.

Before touching down in Aden, the UN Yemen envoy discussed strengthening the truce and peace efforts with Mohammed bin Saeed Al-Jaber, Saudi ambassador to Yemen, and Dr. Nayef Al-Hajraf, secretary-general of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

On Monday, a Houthi sniper stationed on a mountain location outside the city of Taiz shot a 60-year-old shepherdess who was moving her livestock, northwest of the city.

Zafaran Hezam Ahmed was returning to her house with her sheep when the Houthi sniper opened fire at her, wounding her in the left shoulder, residents said.

The Yemeni government on Sunday told Arab News that the Houthis are not

serious about ending the suffering of thousands of besieged people in Taiz since they have not nominated their representatives in the joint meeting on opening roads in Taiz and other provinces.



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Yemeni government vows to uphold UN-brokered truce despite Houthi violations
UN welcomes release of Houthi prisoners by Yemen coalition

[Sunni preachers in 'vote to save Lebanon' plea](#)

Author:

Tue, 2022-05-10 20:53

BEIRUT: Lebanon's Sunni preachers have been told to issue a call in their Friday sermons for people to take part in the country's parliamentary elections on May 15.

Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdel Latif Derian, the Sunnis' supreme religious

authority, instructed preachers to urge Lebanese to head to the polling stations on Sunday, and elect those who would “preserve Lebanon, and the future of its children, its Arab identity and its legitimate institutions.”

Many Sunnis have said they will boycott the elections following a decision by the head of the Future Movement, former prime minister Saad Hariri, to step down from politics and not contest the poll.

Some say that the many electoral lists and numerous candidates in Beirut, Tripoli and Akkar make it difficult to choose Sunni MPs, with most voting only for the Future Movement in previous elections.

Derian has previously declared that “election is a duty and a necessity,” and warned of the “extremely dangerous” effects of a voter boycott on the representation of Sunnis in parliament.

Meanwhile, Saudi Ambassador to Lebanon Walid Bukhari visited several election hopefuls on Tuesday, including the Sunni candidate on the Zahle Sovereignty list, Bilal Hoshaimy. This electoral list includes activists who took part in the Oct. 17 protests.

Bukhari also visited current MP and candidate Michel Daher, who is running with the Independent Sovereigns list, which includes nonpartisan figures.

The incoming parliament will elect a new president to succeed Michel Aoun.

For the second day, Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah addressed party supporters in the southern suburb of Beirut and singled out voters “who support the resistance, but do not want to vote because of the living crisis.”

Nasrallah described the upcoming election as a “political July war” – a reference to the July 2006 conflict with Israel – and said: “You must get out of your homes to exercise political resistance in order for us to have armed military resistance; if the resistance abandons its weapons, who will protect Lebanon?”

Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri also urged his supporters to vote on Sunday. Before Berri’s speech, the Amal Movement candidate Qabalan Qabalan criticized the “clamor, chaos and madness” that accompanies election campaigns.

Qabalan said that his party hopes to renew political life and constitutional institutions in Lebanon in order to get the country out of the “deep pit” it is in.

“There is no need to raise the ceiling in political discourse, nor to provoke sectarian and political fanaticism in the hope of a vote or a seat or a majority here or there. We must admit that the country does not function by a system wherein a majority rules over a minority. A majority cannot subjugate a minority, no matter how powerful it is, because the foundations of this country are based on understanding among all its components and groups,” Qabalan said.

Samir Geagea, head of the Lebanese Forces party – which is engaged in a fierce battle against the Free Patriotic Movement – addressed supporters during an electoral meeting in which he criticized Aoun, saying that the presidency has become “a title for undermining Lebanon’s sovereignty, destroying its institutions and eroding the state; a title of hunger, poverty, humiliation and power cuts.”

The FPM is a Lebanese Christian group founded by Aoun in 2005.

Geagea said that Lebanon witnessed “the biggest lies and fraud undertaken by the FPM. Its goal was only to reach power, and when it achieved that, it forgot its promises.”



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Expats prepare to vote, marking the start of Lebanon elections
Lebanon vote holds little hope for change despite disasters

Israeli security crackdown will not end violence, political solution is needed, experts say

Author:

Tue, 2022-05-10 20:45

RAMALLAH: Israel has significantly escalated its security crackdown on the West Bank and East Jerusalem in an attempt to prevent Palestinian attacks, according to security experts.

It is doing this, they say, by stepping up arrests, using excessive force, demolishing the homes of suspects, and reinforcing its military presence across the West Bank and along the 1,200-kilometer segregation wall that separates the territory from Israel.

However, these measures will not work, the experts told Arab News, without a political process that offers Palestinians hope that the Israeli occupation will end.

Continuing Palestinian attacks have led to a dispute between the Israeli political and military establishments as there is no specific Palestinian culprit to blame and target in response to the attacks. This was also the case during the second Palestinian Intifada and Operation Defensive Shield in 2002.

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett has demanded that Hamas pay the price for incitement, in particular a speech by its leader, Yahya Sinwar, that he blamed for motivating the recent attacks. Meanwhile, military officials proposed the launch of a large-scale military operation against Jenin and surrounding villages on the grounds that most of the attackers came from there.

Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz threatened the Palestinians, saying: "Without security stability, the Palestinian economy will be damaged, the steps we have taken will collapse, and the land from where the perpetrators come will be shaken."

Israeli security officials expect the wave of Palestinian attacks to continue for a several weeks. Security agency Shin Bet is finding it difficult to confront the threat because the attackers are not posting messages on social media before carrying out attacks.

On Tuesday, the first anniversary of the start of last year's war in Gaza, described by Hamas as the 'Sword of Jerusalem Battle,' Palestinian factions confirmed their continued readiness to resist the Israelis.

The Palestinian Islamic Jihad movement said: "The 'Jerusalem Sword' battle constituted an important chapter in the history of the conflict with the

Zionist enemy, who thought that his hand was free in Jerusalem and that his policies and plans had provided the opportunity to impose temporal and spatial division at Al-Aqsa Mosque and to displace our people in Sheikh Jarrah (a neighborhood in Jerusalem).

“The resistance imposed equations and rules of engagement that made Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa its top priorities.”

The Israeli army is preparing for the possibility of escalations in hostilities on upcoming dates that are of special significance to Palestinians, including: May 15, the anniversary of the Palestinian Catastrophe (Nakba); May 29, the anniversary of the occupation of Jerusalem, when settlers organize a march; and June 5, the anniversary of the occupation of the West Bank, Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and the Syrian Golan Heights.

Ghassan Al-Khatib, a Palestinian political analyst, told Arab News that the violent reactions by Palestinians had been provoked by Israeli actions against them that have reached unprecedented levels.

“Provocations by Israeli extremist right-wingers at Al-Aqsa in Jerusalem, and a free hand given to settlers in the West Bank to attack the Palestinians and their properties, have caused Palestinian outrage,” he said.

“The problem is that the current Israeli government is fragile and is forced to make concessions to settlers and Israeli right-wing parties, whether regarding Al-Aqsa Mosque or in the West Bank, in addition to the economic hardships the Palestinians are experiencing.

“The solution to the problem of violent Palestinian reactions is not by using military force, but rather by mitigating provocations against the Palestinians, improving the economic situation and giving them hope for a political future.”

Israeli authorities launched a massive crackdown in East Jerusalem in April. Police arrested 894 Palestinians, imposed home-confinement orders on 37 others, banned 590 people from Al-Aqsa Mosque, injured 463 people, and demolished one house, according to a report issued by Jerusalem Governorate.



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Arab League chief slams Israeli PM's Jerusalem statements
Palestine and Israel on the verge of a new escalation

[Pope Francis extends 'unfailing friendship' to Coptic Christians](#)

Tue, 2022-05-10 19:17

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis has confirmed to all Coptic Christians his "unfailing friendship in Christ," and pledged engagement for "full visible communion" between the two churches.

The leader of the Catholic Church made the commitment in a message on the ninth Coptic-Catholic Friendship Day to Tawadros II, the pope of Alexandria and patriarch of the See of St. Mark, who lives in Egypt.

Francis expressed his "heartfelt gratitude for the spiritual bonds uniting the See of Peter and the See of Mark. May we continue our pilgrimage of Christian fraternity, especially in preparation for next year's celebration

of the 10th anniversary of our memorable meeting in Rome and of the 50th anniversary of the historic encounter between Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III.”

Tawadros II met with Francis in the Vatican on May 8, 2013. That was the second gathering of popes in Italy in 1,500 years.

The last visit of a Coptic pope to the Vatican occurred on May 10, 1973, when then-Pope Shenouda III and then-Pope Paul VI signed a Christological declaration to initiate ecumenical dialogue between the two Christian churches.

Francis told Tawadros II that “friendship is the surest way to achieve unity” between Christians, and wished to continue “the journey towards full visible communion.”

“As we approach the Feast of Pentecost, I pray that the Holy Spirit will unite us ever more and bestow his gifts of consolation upon our suffering human family, especially in these days of pandemic and war.”

Unofficial figures estimate the percentage of Copts in Egypt at 10 to 15 percent of the population. The Coptic Orthodox Church has stated it has 20 to 25 million members.



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Pope expresses 'pain' over attack on Coptic Christians in Egypt
Egypt's Coptic Christians celebrate Assumption of Mary amid pandemic

Outrage over Israeli PM's remarks on sovereignty over Al-Aqsa compound

Mon, 2022-05-09 23:06

RAMALLAH: Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's statements rejecting outside interference in the management of the affairs of Al-Aqsa Mosque on Sunday sparked outrage among Jordanians and Palestinians.

The position was seen as a denial of the 1994 Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty that gave Jordan a role in managing and supervising Islamic and Christian sanctities in Jerusalem.

"We reject any foreign interference," declared Bennett as he retracted agreements between Israel and Jordan on managing Al-Aqsa Mosque's compound and preventing incursions by Jewish settlers into its courtyards.

Bennett said at the beginning of a Cabinet meeting on Sunday that "decisions regarding Al-Aqsa Mosque and Jerusalem will be taken by the Israeli government."

He also claimed Israel would continue to maintain respectful treatment toward people of all religions in Jerusalem.

The Palestine Committee of the Jordanian Parliament denounced the prime minister's statements regarding Israel's sovereignty over Al-Aqsa as "irresponsible" on Sunday, and it called on Bennett "not to test the patience of two billion Muslims."

The committee condemned Bennett's statement as working to ignite the region in religious conflict, calling it a coup against the historic reality of Al-Aqsa Mosque and Jerusalem.

Jordanian MP Mohammed Al-Zahrawi called Israel a colonial occupying power that practices terrorism and criminality against Palestinian people, and which lacks religious, historical or legal legitimacy in Jerusalem.

The Palestine Committee reiterated Jordan's rejection of the temporal and spatial division of Al-Aqsa, and stressed Jerusalem will remain the capital of Palestine.

Jordanian and Israeli officials had agreed to meet after Ramadan to discuss arrangements around Al-Aqsa Mosque, but the Islamic Awqaf in Jerusalem told Arab News that "no structures have taken place regarding such meetings."

Azzam Al-Khatib, the director of the Islamic Awqaf, told Arab News he had not been informed about any meetings or visits.

Foreign tourism visits to Al-Aqsa have been agreed upon between Jordan and Israel, but without permitting religious rituals, as many Jewish settlers have attempted on numerous occasions.

As part of the Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty, it was agreed Jordan would retain its unique role in the mosque complex, with each party providing access to places of religious and historical interest. The two parties also agreed to work together to strengthen relations between the three monotheistic religions, to work for religious understanding, moral commitment, freedom of worship, tolerance and peace.

Palestinians, meanwhile, are demanding Israeli authorities remove a model of a temple, located at the entrance to the Mughrabi Gate, through which extremist Jewish settlers enter the compound, on the basis that it serves as a reminder of their goal to replace the Dome of the Rock.

“Bennett is wrong, and there is an agreement between Israel and Jordan, which gives Jordan a unique role in Al-Aqsa,” prominent Israeli peace activist Gershon Basking told Arab News.

He added the Jordanian Awqaf should be strengthened, enlarged, and empowered, and proper coordination between the Awqaf and the Israeli police should enable a situation whereby the police do not need to enter the compound.

Non-provocative visits by non-Muslims should be allowed and even encouraged, said Baskin, adding that the Awqaf members should facilitate these visits and use them to talk about Islam and the holy places.

Bennett’s statements came in response to the head of the United List, Mansour Abbas, who said on May 7 that his party’s position was dictated by understandings between Israel and Jordan regarding the holy sites in Jerusalem.

The United List had announced earlier on Sunday that its members would not participate in the vote on a bill proposed by the Likud party to dissolve the Knesset next Wednesday.

According to Israeli media, the fear among right-wing parties in Israel is that the Joint List will decide to vote against the dissolution of the Knesset and drop the proposal, making it impossible to present another such proposal for six months.



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Arrests, injuries as baton-wielding police target Palestinian Al-Aqsa protest
Several injured in Al-Aqsa clashes on last Friday of Ramadan