

Anger in Beirut's southern suburbs over increased thefts and shootings

Author:

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BEIRUT: The lack of security in Beirut's southern suburbs has led to an increasing number of complaints and outcries from people, with armed robberies taking place in broad daylight also on the rise.

A security source linked "the poor security conditions in Beirut's southern suburbs to the deepening of the economic crisis."

However, the source told Arab News that the main reason for these crimes was the loss of the state's reputation.

A security source said there were armed robberies of motorcycles every day after robbers previously used to steal them at night.

Saleh said he was going to work in Haret Hreik and had parked his motorcycle on the side of the road due to heavy traffic. Someone pointed a knife at him, forcing him to leave his vehicle, before fleeing the area.

Thieves and gunmen have become bolder in carrying out their armed operations without any concern for security or party officials in Beirut's southern suburbs, which are a Hezbollah stronghold and centers for the Amal Movement.

The suburbs have had security checkpoints since the 2014 attacks by Daesh suicide bombers.

People hear armed clashes every night without knowing the reasons or the identity of the shooters. They only know what happens through unsubstantiated information circulating on social media.

Reports from the Internal Security Forces showed that, after each raid by thieves or gunmen in these suburbs, most perpetrators were "wanted with some of them committing their crime because of dealing or using drugs."

According to unofficial figures, the region is home to more than a million Lebanese citizens. Some migrated from the countryside to the capital in the second half of the 20th century.

Some are residents of towns included in Beirut's southern suburbs, while others moved there due to apartments having cheaper rents than in the capital.

Hayy Al-Sullom is one of the poorest neighborhoods and is home to the marginalized and wanted individuals who use political parties for protection.

But having influence also extends to the owners of electric generators, internet providers, and owners of cable television. In March, armed clashes

between two groups took place in Bi'r al-Abed due to one encroaching on the other's areas of influence.

Two weeks earlier, there were clashes in Laylaki at night due to fights between electric generator owners over clients. A month earlier, there were armed clashes between internet providers in Choueifat.

In the past few days, the drawing and firing of weapons have become easier. A fight broke out between two groups during a suhoor meal and shisha.

Hezbollah and the Amal Movement, concerned by public complaints ahead of upcoming elections, issued a joint statement recently about the increase of thefts, armed robberies, and breaches of security in different areas of Beirut's southern suburbs to the "extent of spiraling out of control and posing a threat to life and safety."

They asked representatives from security and military agencies to "strictly handle all people breaching security," stressing that they would not defend anyone implicated.

The security source stressed: "Official security agencies are present in the southern suburbs, pursuing the wanted people and, in some cases, Hezbollah facilitates our mission and might lead us to the hiding place of a wanted person. While in some others, we do not inform Hezbollah that we will raid a specific place in the southern suburbs."

Political agreements have given Hezbollah's security committees the last word in the southern suburbs in all security-related matters.

On whether this meant that Hezbollah was protecting wanted people when it knew their hiding places, the source said: "Those thugs have reached a level of carelessness. They no longer fear Hezbollah."

"Those thugs do not read or respond to statements," the source added, when asked about the night-time shootings and daytime thefts despite Hezbollah and the Amal Movement's decision to stop covering for anyone involved.

Zeinab, who lives in Al-Mureijah near Hayy Al-Sullom, said she feared her children would be unsafe if they wanted to leave the house at night and come back late.

She said machine guns – and even rockets – were used during clashes that erupted over trivial matters sometimes.

Two weeks ago, two armed robberies took place in the afternoon. The first was in a store for money transfers. Two people on a motorcycle broke into the shop and stole \$8,000 from a client before fleeing. It was revealed they had been previously watching him.

Another gunman entered a smartphone store during the day and stole a client's purse, then shot the shop's owner for trying to stop him, injuring his hand.



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[Jordan launches diplomatic drive to end Al-Aqsa Ramadan tensions](#)

Mon, 2022-04-18 20:10

RAMALLAH: King Abdullah II of Jordan has intensified efforts to end Israeli measures against Palestinian worshipers at Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem during Ramadan.

On Monday, he contacted Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, Egyptian President Abdul-Fattah El-Sisi, European Council President Charles Michel, Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

During the talks, he stressed the need for Israel to end all actions in the mosque.

The king's efforts came amid growing concerns that provocative behavior by Israel around the Al-Aqsa Mosque could undermine the chances of achieving peace.

Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi said that Jordan had summoned the Israeli ambassador to inform him of his Amman's condemnation of Israeli measures, and on Monday said it summoned the Israeli charge d'affaires.

"We summoned the Israeli ambassador, and we will summon the charge d'affaires to inform him of our strict and clear message in which we condemn the Israeli actions," said the minister.

He added that Jordan would host a meeting of the Arab League committee next Thursday to confront "illegal Israeli measures" in Jerusalem's holy sites.

Al-Safadi warned that if Israel did not stop "these illegal measures and their violations," it would bear responsibility for increasing tensions.

Foreign ministry spokesperson Haitham Abul Ful said the Israeli charge d'affaires was handed a letter, carrying Jordan's rejection of the "illegal and provocative" measures in Jerusalem and its assaults against worshippers at Al-Aqsa Mosque – Islam's third holiest shrine.

Abul Ful said that Jordan also demanded Israel respect the freedom of worship and "immediately" cease its assaults and attempts to change the historical and legal status quo at the Al-Aqsa Mosque / Al-Haram Al-Sharif.

"The Israeli actions are a serious escalation and a violation of the international law and Israel's obligations as the occupying power," the spokesperson said.

The decision to summon the Israeli ambassador comes as national groups in Jordan continue their solidarity with worshippers in Al-Aqsa and their massive demonstrations until the end of Ramadan.

Israel reacted with concern to Jordan summoning its ambassador in Amman on Monday.

Palestinians make up a large percentage of Jordan's population. Tens of thousands live in refugees camps on the outskirts of Amman and their protests in solidarity with Al-Aqsa may pose a challenge to security and stability.

Although Egypt and Qatar had mediated between Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Israel to prevent further security escalations, Palestinians still believe that only Jordanian pressure can stop further Israeli restrictions in Al-Aqsa during Ramadan.

Israel had asked King Abdullah to mediate with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas before Ramadan so that there would be no tension in Jerusalem during the holy month.

King Abdullah visited Ramallah on March 28 to meet Abbas. They agreed to work to calm the situation on the eve of the start of Ramadan.

Before the meeting, he received Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid in Amman and in the same week Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz and the Israeli President Isaac Herzog in an attempt to prevent the deterioration of the security situation during the holy month.

Sheikh Azzam Al-Khatib, director of the Islamic Awqaf in Jerusalem, a department affiliated with the Jordanian Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs in Amman that employs 800 people who guard Al-Aqsa, said in an interview with Arab News that the Israeli policy toward Al-Aqsa is "very dangerous."

He added: "Any Israeli violation will be met with a protest and a strong Jordanian stance from King Abdullah II, because the religious and legal position is that Al-Aqsa Mosque does not accept division or partnership and is the property of Muslims, and any prejudice to that means a violation of the principles on which King Abdullah II was brought up, on the importance of preserving Islamic and Christian sanctities in Jerusalem," he told Arab News.

Palestinians are concerned that Israeli authorities will divide Al-Aqsa Mosque between Muslims and Jews, as they did several years ago in the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron.

Israel meanwhile closed the Ibrahimi Mosque on Monday and Tuesday in front of Muslim worshipers, in order to enable Jewish worshipers to perform Passover prayers.

Palestinians angry over the Israeli police actions last Friday appealed to Jordan to intervene and questioned King Abdullah's position on protecting Al-Aqsa.

A number of them wrote posts on social media. One said: "Al-Aqsa Mosque does not need to be carpeted, but rather needs the protection of those who lead it to pray in Ramadan."

The Hashemites have been the guardians of Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem for 100 years. Even after the 1967 war, during which Israel occupied East Jerusalem, the Jordanian guardianship of Al-Aqsa remained in place. The position was consolidated during the 1994 Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty – better known as Wadi Araba – that was signed between the late King Hussein bin Talal and the then Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin.

"It is natural to summon the Israeli ambassador in Amman and protest to him, and it is important for the Israeli people to know that there are extremist right-wing Jewish parties that are working to offend them by leading a religious war against Muslims in this country," said Al-Khattib.

He added: "Any violation of the sanctity of Al-Aqsa Mosque concerns the whole world, especially King Abdullah."

The said added: "We want peace to prevail in this region. It does not harm

the sanctities from any side, and that the specter of religious war is kept away from it.”

The Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly criticized its Israeli counterpart and refuted Israel’s claim to support freedom of worship.

It said in statement that the Israeli Foreign Ministry “continues to manufacture lies and misinformation about the occupation state’s keenness on freedom of worship in occupied Jerusalem.”

It also noted that “hundreds of videos” had documented cases of worshipers being forced to leave the Al-Aqsa Mosque, as well as cases of “repression and abuse.”



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Palestinians on edge as Israeli radicals threaten to storm Al-Aqsa

Houthis sign UN plan to end recruitment of child soldiers

Mon, 2022-04-18 20:05

NEW YORK: Yemen's Houthi militia has signed an action plan with the UN to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, the killing and maiming of boys and girls, attacks on schools and hospitals and other grave violations, a UN spokesman said on Monday.

Stephane Dujarric added that the Houthis have committed to identify and release children from their ranks within six months.

"As of today, the main parties to the conflict have all signed commitments to end and prevent grave violations against children," he said.

Nearly 1,500 children recruited by the Iran-backed militia died in combat in 2020, and over 500 hundred more the following year, a UN report revealed in January. More than 10,000 children have been killed in the war that began in 2015.

UN experts have repeatedly said the Houthis were recruiting children, using summer camps and mosques to indoctrinate them and teach them how to handle weapons.

Virginia Gamba, UN special representative for children in armed conflict, signed the action plan as a witness from New York and welcomed the measure to protect children in Yemen.

She called on all parties to the conflict to "use the opportunity of the current truce to prioritize the rights of children and their needs." She reiterated the UN's willingness to support the Houthis in implementing the agreement.

The truce between the Houthis and the internationally recognized government came into effect on the first day of the holy month of Ramadan. It is meant to last two months, with a possibility for renewal.

The parties had agreed to halt ground, air and cross-border strikes, allow oil tankers to enter Hodeidah port, reopen Sanaa airport for commercial flights and lift the siege of Taiz.





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Yemen calls for international pressure against Houthi recruitment of child soldiers
Yemeni minister slams Houthi militias' recruitment of child soldiers

[UAE issues new system for residency visas, entry permit categories](#)

Mon, 2022-04-18 19:07

LONDON: A new residence visa and entry permits system for the UAE was announced on Monday, the country's media office reported.

The new system offers new types of residence permits for skilled employees, investors, self-employed people, as well as family members of current residents.

According to the UAE Media Office, residents can now sponsor their family

members including spouses and children up to the age of 25 and in the case of an unmarried daughter, her parents will be able to sponsor her visa regardless of age.

[#UAE](#) adopted a new Entry and Residence Scheme including new categories and expanding the scope of beneficiaries. A step that supports the country's competitiveness in the tourism, economic and educational sectors. pic.twitter.com/BKApLKixJz

– UAEGOV (@UAEmediaoffice) [April 18, 2022](#)

Green Residency holders will also now be able to sponsor first-degree relatives, and disabled children will be granted a permit regardless of age.

“The duration of family members residence shall be the same as their sponsor's residence duration,” the media office posted in a tweet on Monday.

The media office also said residence permits would be allowed in some humanitarian cases.

According to the UAE federal government, a female resident whose husband of Emirati nationality passes away in the country and has one child or more will be eligible for a residence permit.

The new Entry and Residence Scheme offers 10 types of entry visas with simplified requirements and more benefits. New visas require no host or sponsor, offer more flexibility, multi entry, 60 days validity and one unified platform to apply at pic.twitter.com/0PsCJYaoyR

– UAEGOV (@UAEmediaoffice) [April 18, 2022](#)

Also included in this category are parents or children of a UAE citizen who holds foreign passports, as well as spouses and children of Gulf Corporation Council (GCC) state citizens who hold foreign passports.

Freelancers and self-employed people will be entitled to Green Residency, as will skilled employees, who will be required to renew their residency every five years but without the need for a sponsor or employer.

The media office added that Standard Employment Residence permits will need to be renewed every two years.

Investors, who are eligible for the Green Residency, will be able to hold a five-year visa and do not need a sponsor.

The new system for residence visas and entry permits offers new types of residence permits for investors, skilled employees, self-employment and family members. The new types provide customized benefits to each category. pic.twitter.com/7JI8qjMsKm

– UAEGOV (@UAEmediaoffice) [April 18, 2022](#)

Students enrolled at educational institutions in the UAE will be eligible to hold a visa for two years and sponsorship (by a licensed educational established in the country) will be required to uphold their residency status.

“The new system for residence visas and entry permits offers new types of residence permits for investors, skilled employees, self-employment and family members. The new types provide customized benefits to each category,” the UAE Media Office said in a tweet.



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Yemen's new leader Abdullah Al-Alimi warns Houthis

Mon, 2022-04-18 01:02

RIYADH: Yemen's new leaders are "ready for war" should the latest push for peace with Houthis fail, but a senior official said they genuinely want the years-long conflict to end soon.

"Our first option is peace, but we are ready for war," Abdullah Al-Alimi said in his first interview since being named to an eight-member leadership council tasked with running the country after President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi stepped down earlier this month.

"We believe the council is in a position, with the coalition support, to score a decisive military victory," Al-Alimi said in Riyadh.

Hadi's April 7 announcement handing power to the council came at the end of talks in Riyadh that brought together all anti-Houthi factions.

The developments followed the start of a renewable two-month truce.

"We hope the dire situation in Yemen will make people have a desire to leave personal and partisan interests behind in pursuit of peace," said Al-Alimi, formerly Hadi's chief of staff.

He said council leaders are due to meet in the coming days with UN special envoy to Yemen Hans Grundberg.

The new council has not yet decided how long it will give the Houthis to join talks, Al-Alimi said.

If the push for peace goes no-where, the newly aligned anti-Houthi forces are positioned to pursue "a concerted multifront campaign" against the militia, said Peter Salisbury, senior Yemen analyst for the International Crisis Group.

"They (the leadership council) have the potential to more aggressively pursue peace and more aggressively pursue war, and the most likely outcome is they do a little bit of one and a little bit of the other," he said.



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