

UN Security Council welcomes transfer of power in Yemen, praises GCC contribution

Wed, 2022-04-13 20:04

NEW YORK: The UN Security Council on Wednesday welcomed the peaceful transfer of power last week from Yemen's President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi to a newly created Presidential Leadership Council that includes a broader array of political representatives.

They applauded the intention of the PLC to form a negotiating team for UN-led talks and expressed hope that the development will enhance stability in the country and the prospects of an inclusive, Yemeni-led political peace settlement under the auspices of the UN, following a truce that was announced at the start of Ramadan.

The members of the Security Council noted the three-day visit to Sanaa by Hans Grundberg, the UN's special envoy for Yemen, that concluded on Wednesday. It was his first since his appointment to the post in August last year.

The Security Council called on the Houthi rebels to work with the envoy and engage with his efforts to achieve a permanent ceasefire and negotiate an inclusive political settlement. It again stressed the importance of a minimum of 30 per cent participation by women as part of any agreement, in line with a resolution adopted this year.

Speaking from Sanaa at the end of his visit, Grundberg said that despite alarming reported violations of the Ramadan truce, which came into effect on April 2, "we have seen a significant overall reduction in hostilities and no confirmed reports of airstrikes or cross-border attacks."

He added: "We have also seen badly needed fuel ships coming into the ports of Hodeidah, which I hope will contribute to resolving the fuel crisis you have been experiencing here in Sanaa. A steady flow of ships should be entering Hodeidah throughout the duration of the truce."

Intense work and preparations continue at Sanaa airport for the first commercial flights in six years, Grundberg said, and consultations on the reopening of roads in Taiz and other governorates have also already begun. However he warned that great challenges remain.

"We are relying on the parties' continued commitment and serious engagement in upholding the truce," he said. "Dialogue in good faith with each other is key and the parties need to make use of the United Nations-facilitated mechanisms we provided to support them in that regard."

Grundberg said that during his meetings with Houthi representatives he

stressed the importance of capitalizing on the “unique potential” of the current truce.

“The truce offers some immediate humanitarian relief and a break from violence (and) an opening for creating a conducive environment for a political process to end the conflict, as well as for more durable measures to improve the humanitarian and economic situation and for ending the violence.”

The Security Council also welcomed the announcement by Saudi Arabia and the UAE last week of a \$3 billion economic support package for Yemen, and an additional commitment by the Kingdom of \$300 million for the UN’s humanitarian response in the country.

Members expressed “deep concern about Yemen’s humanitarian crisis” and encouraged donors “to fully fund the UN humanitarian response plan and support the government of Yemen’s efforts to stabilize the economy.”

They pledged their full support for the new Presidential Leadership Council in its efforts to address the urgent humanitarian and economic needs of the Yemeni people. They also commended the contributions of the Gulf Cooperation Council and its member states in supporting the cause of peace, promoting political dialogue and addressing the humanitarian crisis.



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Saudi Cabinet renews call for global conference to support Yemen's economy
Saudi FM meets with UN humanitarian coordinator for Yemen in Riyadh

[Charities in Morocco report Ramadan slump in public donations](#)

Author:

Wed, 2022-04-13 13:18

CASABLANCA: Ramadan in Morocco has traditionally been a time for increased acts of help and kindness toward the needy.

The distribution of food baskets, clothes, money, meals, and the organization of collective iftars normally abounds.

And while numerous initiatives are already underway in the country, this year charities have noticed a slump in public donations.

Appeals on social media platforms are fewer than usual and associations have witnessed a fall in collections.

Charity activist Ahmed Ghayet told Arab News En Francais: "We have noticed a significant drop in the collection of donations. Moroccans have been generous this year again, but less than before.

"The COVID-19 crisis, its economic repercussions, and the high cost of living have had an impact on charitable actions initiated during Ramadan. In addition, we have many more requests from people who live in precarious conditions and who have lost their jobs."

Ghayet's association, Marocains Pluriels, has launched a special Ramadan operation to hand out food baskets in the cities of Casablanca, Oujda, Rabat, Mohammedia, Fez, Marrakesh, Essaouira, and Agadir.

Twelve other charity groups have partnered in the project, now in its third edition, that distributes packages containing items such as flour, oil, sugar, lentils, chickpeas, dates, and milk.

"We favor donations in kind, in food staples. But donors can also contribute up to 200 Moroccan dirhams (\$20.30), which represents the price of a basket. The food is left in front of the beneficiary's door in order to preserve their dignity, as most beneficiaries do not ask for it. You know, Moroccans are worthy and many refuse to ask for charity," Ghayet said.

He noted that this year there had been increased generosity from Jewish

Moroccans.

“I don’t have a precise explanation, but I feel a closeness that has become greater and a mutual trust that has been consolidated in recent months. I get as many calls from Jews as from Muslims. It’s like breaking down the barriers.

“Overall, Moroccans, whatever their faith, help each other and provide support to the most vulnerable, especially in this period when precariousness is felt more and more,” he added.

And the Ramadan spirit of mutual aid is carried by the north African country’s highest authority. Moroccan King Mohammed VI recently launched the Ramadan 1443 initiative in the old medina of Rabat, a national program run since 1998 by the Mohammed V Foundation for Solidarity.

With a budget of 103 million dirhams, Ramadan 1443 will this year involve giving food parcels to around 3 million people (approximately 600,000 households) living in 83 provinces and prefectures of the country, 77 percent of them from rural areas.

Since its launch, the national food support operation has spent more than 1.5 billion dirhams on providing aid for families.

Backing has also come from other countries, with Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar among nations offering financial and food support to thousands of Moroccans and charities.

Despite this year’s decrease in charity donations, Ramadan has once again seen solidarity, sharing, and mutual aid among Moroccans during difficult times.







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[Tunisia, Italy sign MoU to boost investments](#)

Author:

Wed, 2022-04-13 12:56

ROME: A memorandum of understanding to boost the investments of Italian companies in Tunisia was signed in Milan by the Foreign Investment Promotion Agency and Promos Italia.

FIPA Director General Abdelbasset Ghanmi and Promos Italia President Alessandro Gelli said at a press event attended by Arab News that the MoU seeks to “establish cooperation between the two structures, devise a joint strategy to improve trade relations between Italy and Tunisia, and encourage the exchange of technical competences and training opportunities.”

Tunisia is an attractive investment destination for Italian companies because of “its geographical closeness, its investment promotion regulations and the low cost of production,” said Gelli.

“Furthermore, Tunisia represents for Italy a bridge over the Mediterranean, a natural production platform for Italian companies committed to diversifying their activities and penetrating new markets in North Africa, the Gulf and French-speaking Africa. In this country, the presence of Italian companies is strong and well rooted.”

According to FIPA, more than 800 Italian companies are established in Tunisia, employing more than 60,000 people.

Bilateral trade in 2021 reached €5.5 billion (\$5.95 billion), up 22 percent from €4.5 billion in 2020.



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Tunisian President Kais Saied promises 'free and fair' elections in talks with EU delegation
Olympic sailor from Tunisia, aged 17, dies in training

[Truck hits tourist bus in Egypt, kills 10 including 4 French](#)

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Wed, 2022-04-13 09:24

CAIRO: A tourist bus collided with a truck on a highway in southern Egypt and burst into flames on Wednesday, killing at least 10 people, including four French and a Belgian, authorities said.

The crash happened on a highway about 43 kilometers (27 miles) south of the city of Aswan, provincial authorities said in a statement. The bus was traveling to the Temple of Esna on the west bank of the Nile River, some 55 kilometers (34 miles) south of the ancient city of Luxor.

Along with the foreign tourists, five Egyptians were killed in the crash. At least 14 others were injured, including eight from France and six from

Belgium, they said. The cause of the crash was not immediately clear. Many bodies were charred, and the injured suffered from burns, bruises and fractures, according to a health official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the media. President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi posted on Twitter that he was closely following the crash and had instructed the government to “provide all medical and treatment care for the victims of the tragic accident.” The Health Ministry said 30 ambulances were sent to the scene and took the casualties to hospitals. Aswan Provincial Governor Ashraf Attia said the injured were in stable condition. Footage that circulated online showed a tourist bus in flames with people trying to put out the fire. “A guest is dying inside,” one person was heard screaming. The bus in the video bore the logo of state-owned Misr Travel. The Cairo-based agency did not respond to a request for comment. Wednesday’s accident came five days after a bus crashed on a highway near the Red Sea, killing three people, including two Polish tourists. Deadly traffic accidents claim thousands of lives every year in Egypt, which has a poor transportation safety record. The crashes and collisions are mostly caused by speeding, bad roads or poor enforcement of traffic laws. Egypt’s official statistics agency says there were around 10,000 road accidents in 2019, the most recent year for which statistics are available, leaving over 3,480 dead. In 2018, there were 8,480 car accidents, causing over 3,080 deaths.





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Egypt officials say 13 killed in Aswan road accident

[Palestinians wary of regional food and grain stockpile plan](#)

Tue, 2022-04-12 21:45

RAMALLAH: Authorities in Jordan and Israel are considering setting up a joint regional stockpile for food and wheat reserves against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine, according to Israeli media reports.

The KAN TV channel reported that King Abdullah of Jordan proposed the project during his meeting with Israeli President Isaac Herzog in Amman in late March. It is still in the early planning stages, the channel added, but Israel, Jordan, Egypt and the Palestinian Authority could be part of it and any country suffering from food shortages would be able to draw from the stockpile.

However, some observers have warned that the Palestinian Territories might benefit little from such an arrangement because they do not have the proper infrastructure required for storing wheat flour.

Wheat flour reserves in the Occupied Territories could be exhausted within three weeks, according to the charity Oxfam, and the cost of the food staple has soared by nearly 25 percent as a result of the war in Ukraine.

“Palestinian households are being hit hard by rising global food prices and many are struggling to meet their basic needs,” said Shane Stevenson, Oxfam’s country director in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel.

“The reliance on imports and the constraints forced upon them by Israel’s continuing military occupation, settler violence and land grabs are compounding the food crisis.”

The Palestinian Authority has to import 95 percent of its wheat but owns no food-storage infrastructure and so is forced to rely instead on the Palestinian private sector and Israeli facilities. Meanwhile, Israel imports half of its grain and cereals from Ukraine.

According to the World Food Program, the Ukraine crisis has resulted in increased prices for grain and other food items in the Palestinian Territories. It said that the cost of wheat flour has risen by 23.6 percent, corn oil by 26.3 percent, lentils by 17.6 percent, and table salt by 30 percent, all of which is having a significant effect on Palestinians’

purchasing power.

The organization said that most families in Gaza are buying food on credit and eating lower-quality food in smaller quantities. As prices have risen they have cut back on purchases of more expensive food such as fruit, meat and chicken, which are essential components of a healthy diet.

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Food-insecure Arab countries rely heavily on Black Sea grain imported from Russia and Ukraine, who controlled 30 percent of global wheat exports in 2021, but with the two countries locked in conflict, concerns are growing.

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Meanwhile, an increase in feed prices of about 60 percent has added to the burden on Palestinian livestock breeders, who already face other challenges such as diseases affecting their animals, increasing attacks by settlers on Palestinian pastoral lands, and forced relocation due to Israeli annexation and expansion policies in the West Bank. Breeders have appealed to the Palestinian Authority to abolish the value-added tax on feed to offset rising prices.

Mazen Sinokrot, regional director of the Federation of Arab Food Industries, said that Palestine cannot rely on Israeli food reserves in times of crises.

Samir Hulileh, a Palestinian former deputy minister of economy, told Arab News: "The PA does not import wheat directly from Ukraine because the import is carried out in large quantities. Therefore, the import is carried out

through Israel, which makes the price higher and gives major Israeli importers the ability to control the price.

“And since Palestine does not have ports or suitable storage warehouses for grain, establishing warehouses near the crossings with Israel was proposed to store wheat and all kinds of grain but the project has not been implemented so far.”

He added: “What is stated in the Oxfam report is correct, as wheat and flour that is available for Palestinians is what is there in the stores of Palestinian merchants. As long as there is a stock of grain in Israel, the Palestinians who import from Israel and depend on it will not suffer. But if Israel faced a problem importing wheat and grains, the PA will inevitably suffer.”

Hulileh expressed concern about the Jordanian-Israeli regional stockpile proposal because it refers to the Palestinian Authority as a subordinate to Israel rather than an independent entity. He said it should be a tripartite agreement, not a bilateral deal, because the needs of the Palestinian Authority sometimes differ from the requirements of Israel.

“We must be an independent party to any agreement and not an affiliated party,” he told Arab News.

He urged the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture to encourage Palestinian farmers to grow grain in Area C, which constitutes about 60 percent of the land in the West Bank, to meet at least part of the Palestinian demand at a reasonable price. He also suggested that the ministry buy crops from the farmers at a suitable price.

“The moment that Israel faces a crisis in importing wheat and grain, we will definitely face a crisis in the Palestinian territories,” Hulileh warned.

Oxfam has called on the international community to urgently adopt a joint, coordinated economic and diplomatic position that challenges Israel’s restrictive policies and allows Palestinians to invest in local food production and infrastructure development.

Abbas Melhem, the head of the Palestinian Farmers Union, said the livestock sector is being destroyed and needs support before it collapses entirely. The union has called on Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammed Shtayyeh to take urgent action to save the sector.



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plans to buy wheat outside tenders to ensure food security: Bloomberg