

# Houthi missile hits Marib as Yemen's new leader vows to end war

Sat, 2022-04-09 19:51

RIYADH: The Iran-backed Houthis on Saturday fired a ballistic missile at Yemen's central city of Marib, as the country's new leader pledged to pursue peace with the group and bring stability to war-torn Yemen.

Local authorities and residents in Marib said a large explosion shook the densely populated city after a ballistic missile fired by the Houthis hit it. There has been no information on injuries or loss of life.

Marib hosts more than 2 million internally displaced people who fled war and Houthi repression in their home provinces.

The attack came as fighting between government forces and the Houthis raged on Friday night and Saturday morning at flashpoint sites outside the city of Marib, mainly in Juba district.

"Fighting on Friday was the fiercest. We managed to push back the Houthi attacks and destroyed one of their military vehicles," a military official who spoke on condition of anonymity told Arab News by telephone.

Yemen's army has accused the Houthis of exploiting the UN-brokered humanitarian truce that took effect on April 2, to deploy heavy weapons and new forces as they launch more aggressive attacks on the city of Marib.

The Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen announced a halt in airstrikes on Houthi targets across the country in support of the truce and peace efforts.

The UN Yemen envoy Hans Grundberg on Friday called upon warring factions to stop hostilities in Marib and stick to the truce.

"I am following very closely the latest developments in #Marib and urge all parties to show restraint and their continued commitment to the truce as promised to Yemenis," Grundberg said on Twitter.

The raging fighting is happening as the president of the newly formed Presidential Leadership Council in Yemen, Rashad Al-Alimi, on Friday vowed to work on ending the war and achieving a comprehensive peace deal.

In his first speech to the Yemeni people, Al-Alimi said that the new council would adhere to the 2011 GCC initiative, outcomes of the National Dialogue Conferences, resolutions of GCC-brokered Yemeni consultations in Riyadh, international charters and the UN Security Council resolutions.

"The Presidential Leadership Council promises our Yemeni people to work to end the war and establish peace," he said.

“This council is a peace council, not a war council, but it is also a defense, strength and unity council whose mission is to defend the sovereignty of the nation and protect the citizens.”

He thanked the Saudi-led coalition for its economic, political and humanitarian assistance to Yemen, vowing to fight terrorism and revive and reform state institutions.

He also thanked international mediators, mainly the UN and US Yemen envoys, for their efforts to bring peace to Yemen.

“The Presidential Leadership Council will firmly fight all forms of terrorism and outsider sectarian conflicts.”

On Thursday, Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi transferred his presidential powers to the eight-man council, led by Al-Alimi, his adviser and former interior minister. The council has been tasked with running the country and starting peace talks with the Houthis.



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## [As Lebanon’s pains increase, cancer patients struggle to find morphine](#)

Author:

Sat, 2022-04-09 19:09

BEIRUT: Lebanese hospitals and cancer patients are running out of morphine and its derivatives.

An appeal made by Elsy Aoun through the Al-Nahar newspaper went viral on Friday. The young woman said that her brother, a cancer patient who cannot find the medication he needs anywhere, is running out of the only drug that can relieve some of his pain. “We only have morphine left for 10 days. What are we supposed to do after that?”

According to a March 2021 report by the World Health Organization, Lebanon recorded 28,764 cases of cancer during the last five years, including 11,600 cases in 2020 alone.

Although medicines for incurable and cancerous diseases are still subsidized by the state, most drugs are running out amid the economic collapse that the country has been experiencing over the past couple of years.

The Ministry of Health said on Friday that it had given its approval to subsidize morphine before importing it two months ago, but the next approval to be issued by the central bank was delayed.

“We have contacted the importing company and agreed to start the process without waiting for the central bank’s approval,” the ministry said, adding that morphine should be available in the market within a week.

There are 445 registered cancer drugs in Lebanon. The cost of treating cancer patients “is about \$200 million annually, and it may reach \$400 million,” according to former Health Minister Jamil Jabak.

Dr. Ahmed Ibrahim, president of the Lebanese Society of Hematology and Blood Transfusion, said: “Every year, between 2,500 and 3,000 new cases of blood cancers are registered, in addition to thousands of patients under treatment and periodic monitoring.

“The various treatments are expensive, but they lead to a cure rate ranging from 60 to 80 percent, which is similar to global results. With the scarcity of necessary treatments, we find ourselves facing the possibility of not being able to treat patients, which may, unfortunately, lead to the death of many.”

A pharmacist in a Beirut hospital, who preferred anonymity, told Arab News: “Not all medicines are available in the hospital pharmacy, and morphine is a daily need in the hospital to relieve the pain of patients with stage four cancer. We need around 150 to 200 needles of morphine per month, and the demand may increase or decrease according to the patients’ conditions. Not all alternatives to this drug are as effective.”

She added: “Patients and their families are having a hard time searching for medicine. Some can be found on the black market, but only the wealthy few can afford them. The patients who are treated at the expense of the Ministry of Health face a real tragedy, especially since you can only get access to medication if you know someone inside nowadays.

“Morphine is classified as a high-risk drug, and every needle given to the patient must be signed by the doctor and two nurses, specifying the volume of the substance that was given and each drop wasted.

“Only one company imports morphine, unlike other drugs. Having one importing company makes it easier to negotiate securing this drug.”

The ministry said it is making all efforts to expedite the process of importing morphine and has asked those concerned to make this issue a top

priority.

Doctor and former MP Ismail Sukkarieh, who has been fighting corruption in the health sector through the National Health Authority, which he chairs, said chaos has prevailed in the sector.

“It is true that cancer medicines are still subsidized, but this is rather theoretical now. Medicines are not available, and the key to the solution is with the central bank. It is ridiculous that the bank still subsidizes a type of coffee but cannot provide enough money to subsidize the medicines that people need to recover. Is coffee more important than human life?” Sukkarieh said.

He added: “In addition to the central bank, greedy medicine suppliers are the problem, as these people hide medicines in their warehouses to make illegal profits. No one is confronting them – neither the ministry nor parliament’s health committee.”

Sukkarieh said that doctors see tragic situations every day. “As soon as I enter the hospital, patients or their families stop me to ask for medicine. Even my fellow doctors who treat cancer patients have become helpless in the face of people’s tragedies. What is actually happening is accelerating the death of patients due to irregular treatment. Who has the right to shorten people’s lives like this?”



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In war-torn Syria, a charity offers hope to kids with cancer

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## [Jordan plans electronic tags for detainees to avoid prison overcrowding](#)

Author:

Sat, 2022-04-09 18:42

AMMAN: Jordan will launch an electronic tag program for some detainees in a bid to reduce prison overcrowding and detention costs.

Electronic ankle monitors will be fixed on detainees waiting to receive final court rulings in what the government says is “the first scheme of its kind in the kingdom.”

In recent remarks to the Petra news agency, Minister of Justice Ahmed Ziadat said that about 1,500 detainees will be freed under the new e-tagging scheme.

The minister said that electronic tagging is an alternative to institutional confinement and that tags will be fixed on detainees placed under home arrest.

A total of 1,500 detainees will be freed under the scheme, Ziadat said.

The GPS ankle monitor will send an alert to law enforcement agencies specifying the whereabouts of a person if the device has been tampered with or the tagged person goes outside the permissible geographical area.

Authorities have bought 1,500 tags as part of the first phase of the scheme, which has capacity for 5,000 tags.

“The scheme is designed to reduce prison overcrowding and detention costs alongside ensuring that under-trial detainees are held separately from inmates,” he said.

A security source, who requested anonymity, told Arab News that the country’s 16 rehabilitation centers hold around 20,000 inmates, with prison occupancy rates exceeding 140 percent.

The monthly cost for each prisoner is around 700 Jordanian dinars (\$1,000), with most inmates held on financial and illicit drugs trafficking charges, the source said.



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## [Jordanian king to undergo surgery in Germany for slipped disc](#)

Author:

Sat, 2022-04-09 18:20

AMMAN: Jordan's King Abdullah is scheduled to depart for Germany on Sunday to undergo surgery to treat a thoracic herniated disc.

In a brief statement on Saturday, the Jordanian Royal Court said that the surgery will take place at a specialized hospital in Frankfurt, Germany this week.

The statement said that the decision to undergo surgery was taken upon the professional advice of Jordanian physicians who examined the king.

The Royal Court said that the king had previously been experiencing intermittent pain in the spinal cord after years of parachuting while serving in the Special Forces. The pressure on the nerve due to the herniation had increased lately, which calls for urgent surgery, according to medical advice.

The surgery will be followed by a period of rest for around a week before the king returns to Jordan, the statement added.



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## [Optimism prevails as Saudi, Kuwaiti ambassadors return to Lebanon](#)

Author:

Fri, 2022-04-08 22:32

BEIRUT: The Saudi and Kuwaiti ambassadors to Lebanon, Walid Bukhari and Abdul-Al Sulaiman Al-Qenaei, have returned to Beirut, arriving on Friday afternoon amid a resurgence of hope for a reset in diplomatic relations for the beleaguered country.

They landed at Beirut airport less than 24 hours after the Kingdom and Kuwait announced that their envoys would return to Lebanon, sparking optimism about a fresh start with the Arab Gulf states after a five-month diplomatic boycott.

Lebanon's Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdel Latif Derian said: "This decision establishes a new phase of hope and confidence in Lebanon's Arab future, identity, belonging and cooperation with the Gulf countries and the rest of the brotherly Arab states."

Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and other Gulf states recalled their ambassadors from Lebanon in October 2021 in protest against insulting statements made by former Information Minister George Qordahi regarding the war in Yemen.

On Thursday, the Saudi Foreign Ministry announced Bukhari's return to Beirut. The ministry said the move was made in response to the "calls and appeals of moderate national political forces in Lebanon, and in confirmation of the Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati's statement of the government's commitment to take the necessary and required measures to enhance cooperation with the Kingdom and GCC countries and to stop all political, military and security activities affecting the Kingdom and GCC countries."

The ministry stressed the importance of Lebanon's return to its Arab origins, represented by its national institutions and agencies, in order for the country to enjoy peace and security, and for its people to enjoy stability.

On Friday, the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry announced the return of its ambassador to Beirut in response to "the Lebanese government's commitment to stop all aggressive activities and interventions offensive to Arab countries."

Mikati stressed in a tweet that Lebanon is proud of its Arab affiliation. "Lebanon is committed to the best relations with the Gulf states, which were and will remain a support to us," he noted.

Former Lebanese Prime Minister Tammam Salam telephoned Bukhari, praising "the distinguished brotherly role that the Kingdom has played and continues to play toward Lebanon and the Lebanese."

Interior Minister Bassam Mawlawi said: "Saudi Arabia has proved that Lebanon is in its heart and conscience, and it will never leave it."

The Future Movement said that it hoped that the decision would constitute a step on the way to opening a new page in Lebanese-Gulf relations, stressing the necessity of not using Lebanon as a political, security and media platform to insult the Gulf states and leaders.

The return of Gulf diplomatic ties coincided with the announcement of a staff-level agreement between Lebanon and the International Monetary Fund, which has also contributed to a sudden wave of positivity.

On Friday, the IMF published the full text of the draft agreement with the Lebanese government.

Deputy Prime Minister Saadeh Al-Shami said: "A preliminary agreement has been reached for a four-year extended fund facility. This economic and financial reform program aims to stimulate growth and provide job opportunities and put Lebanon on the path to recovery after the economy shrunk by more than 60 percent during the past two years, the local currency collapsed, inflation reached very high levels, and poverty hit unprecedented rates."

The agreement needs the approval of the IMF, the Lebanese government and parliament, especially with regard to urgent laws that must be approved before obtaining the final approval of the IMF's board of directors for the program.

Al-Shami noted: "This program is based on providing an environment conducive to economic activity by implementing the necessary structural reforms to restore growth and secure job opportunities, restructure the banking sector to be able to restore its role in financing the economy and improve public finances to secure debt sustainability while increasing expenditures on social sectors and infrastructures."

He added: "It also revolves around reforming the public sector and its institutions, especially the electricity sector, to secure better electricity supply, which helps in easing the burdens on citizens and reviving the economic movement, in addition to unifying the exchange rate, improving governance and fighting corruption with technical assistance from the IMF."

"The longer we delay in implementing the required reforms, the higher the cost will be on the national economy and, consequently, on citizens," Al-Shami warned.

"We hope that the prior conditions set by the IMF are met in order to have a program approval," Central Bank Gov. Riad Salameh told Reuters, describing the agreement as "a positive event for Lebanon that will contribute to the unification of the exchange rate," noting that the Central Bank cooperated and facilitated the mission.

Speaking to the Middle East News Agency, Salameh said: "The gold reserves at the Central Bank amounted to \$17.547 billion as of February, so Lebanon maintains its position with the second-largest gold reserves in the Arab region, with a wealth estimated at about 286 tons of gold."

He added: "As of February, the total cash reserves of foreign currencies amounted to \$12.748 billion and the stock portfolio amounted to \$4.197 billion and includes Euro bonds, a slight increase from January."

Salameh said: "The remittances of Lebanese working abroad amounted to about \$6.4 billion in 2021."

He added: "The crisis that hit the financial sector in Lebanon is being addressed in the recovery plan that is being prepared by the Lebanese government in cooperation with the IMF."

Salameh said: "Rumors about the Central Bank going bankrupt are false; the bank is exercising its role entrusted to it under Article 70 of the Code of

Money and Credit and will continue to do so, despite the losses that afflicted the financial sector in Lebanon.”



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Saudi Arabia's foreign ministry announces return of Kingdom's ambassador to Lebanon  
IMF, Lebanon reach staff-level funding deal, subject to reforms