

# Lebanese Cabinet urges judiciary not to fall for populism as banks plan strike

Sat, 2022-03-19 21:49

BEIRUT: A Cabinet meeting was convened on Saturday to address judicial actions against seven banks in Lebanon.

The meeting conducted a review of the conflict between banks and the judiciary. The extraordinary session was held under the title "The higher interest of the state."

The Cabinet concluded with Mikati affirming that the council of ministers had agreed that the law would take its course based on the principle of cooperation between the authorities without any discrimination or discretion.

It also agreed that judicial matters would be resolved according to laws by the staff of the judicial authority.

A ministerial source who took part in the session told Arab News that the ministers saw that it was not allowed for judges to use depositors' money to achieve a certain populism.

The judge should not be a populist and tweet on Twitter, some ministers reportedly felt.

## **BACKGROUND**

**The banking association said the strike was a warning against what it called 'the arbitrariness of some judicial decisions' – a reference to orders that have frozen the assets of seven banks since March 14 and banned six of their executives from travel.**

"The banks are indeed mistaken and there is indeed a major crisis, but it should be addressed in a balanced and non-random manner," they suggested.

In response to what it described as a "judicial attack on banks," the Association of Banks has called for the issuance of the capital control law as soon as possible.

In addition to the strike, the association warned that it might "take other steps that may be necessary to preserve the national economy and the supreme Lebanese interest."

The decision on a set of lawsuits filed by activist groups against some major banks in Lebanon to recover depositors' money coincided with investigations

on charges against the central bank governor on suspicion of illegal enrichment and money laundering.

The judicial procedures resulted in the execution of the seizure of Fransabank's assets, shares, and real estate and of the Creditbank and the branches of Blom Bank in Tripoli.

The Association of Depositors indicated its intention "to file more executive lawsuits against banks in the coming days."

In a related development, the brother of Central Bank Gov. Raja Salameh, was arrested by the appeal public prosecutor in Mount Lebanon, Ghada Aoun, after he appeared before her as a witness.

Salameh's attorney, Marwan Issa El-Khoury, said the allegations of "illicit enrichment and money laundering" were unfounded and the case was "media speculation without any evidence."

The governor of the central bank had refrained from coming to Judge Aoun's office more than a week ago as a witness, as he had filed a lawsuit to respond to Judge Aoun about the case in which he was investigated.

Aoun has also issued a travel ban against Salameh.

She said that the possibility of the political authority putting pressure on the judiciary was an "unacceptable attack on judges who perform their professional duty, if some people did not like this or that prosecution."

Judge Aoun, who is affiliated with the president, in a tweet called on Lebanon's judges to arm themselves with "the truth and the legal text. The hope is in you to save the country from injustice, bullying the weak and diverting influence."

One of the ways out of the current crisis is to refer the confrontation between depositors and banks to the Court of Appeal.

The court may decide on Monday to implement the decision to break the seizure of safes and maintain the seizure of the value of the claimant's deposit.

Also on Saturday, the leader of the Lebanese Forces party, Samir Geagea, said that "some bank owners and their administrators bear part of the responsibility for what happened to depositors' deposits, and therefore they should be prosecuted legally."

But he added: "What is happening now with regard to the issue of banks is a kind of farce and misleading public opinion."

Geagea expressed his fear that "these authoritarian measures that use part of the judiciary as a tool for them, and are covered by law, will destroy the banking sector instead of reforming it."

Geagea said that "the president, the current government, and the parliamentary majority are responsible for the harm that befalls Lebanese

citizens as a result of all their personal maliciousness, continuous blackmail attempts or attempts to change some officials to appoint the most evil crooks in their place.”



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Lawyer for brother of Lebanon central bank gov says evidence against him is 'media speculation' – statement  
Lebanon PM Najib Mikati says some judges stoking tension within country

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## [Yemenis embrace GCC call for peace talks in Riyadh](#)

Sat, 2022-03-19 20:10

AL-MUKALLA: Yemen's internationally recognized government, political parties and journalists have expressed support for invitations sent by the Gulf Cooperation Council to warring factions in Yemen for comprehensive talks in Riyadh to agree to a peace deal to end the conflict.

Yemenis have demanded that the Iran-backed terrorist Houthi militia and the Yemeni government comply with GCC-brokered peace efforts to find a solution to the war.

Nayef Al-Hajraf, the GCC's secretary-general, said on Thursday that the Gulf bloc would host consultations between Yemeni parties at the end of this month in Riyadh to find a settlement.

The office of Yemeni President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi welcomed the GCC's "sincere" offer to host the talks, adding that it would back all peace plans that are based on three references: the GCC's peace initiative in 2011, the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference and UN Security Council Resolution 2216.

"The presidency also called on all Yemeni components to effectively and positively participate in the upcoming consultations, and to combine all efforts to get Yemen out of its crisis, end the suffering of its people and start building the future of its generations," Hadi's office said in a statement carried by the official news agency SABA.

The pro-independence Southern Transitional Council also on Saturday backed the GCC's call for talks, calling for the implementation of the Riyadh Agreement, reforming state's bodies, addressing the crumbling economy and rescuing the falling currency.

The STC said it praised "the efforts and activities of the GCC to achieve peace, security and stability in the south and Yemen."

Yemeni politicians and journalists, meanwhile, have urged the country's warring parties to seriously take part in the conference in Riyadh to help address the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

Abdul Kareem Al-Medi, a Yemeni journalist, said the GCC invitation has revived hopes to end the war and the humanitarian crisis caused by the Houthis military takeover of power in late 2014.

"We pray that the consultations succeed in coming up with a comprehensive vision between the various parties that responded to the invitation," Al-Medi said on Twitter.

Omar Al-Murshed, a Yemeni media consultant, described the planned talks as "the last chance" for reaching a peace deal to end the suffering of Yemenis.

Riyadh Al-Dubai, a Yemeni human rights activist, called upon the Yemenis to "sincerely and effectively" take part in the conference, put aside their differences and personal interests and to work on ending the suffering of 30 million Yemenis who have been impacted by the war.

"Accepting this initiative and having sincere intentions before participating in it may be the lifeline that may pull Yemen out of the clutches of the war that has impacted all Yemenis," he said on Twitter.



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Yemen war turns nature reserve back into waste dump

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## Fears grow over possible removal of Iran's Revolutionary Guard from US terror list

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Sat, 2022-03-19 00:11

JEDDAH: Concerns grew on Friday that the US planned to remove the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps from its blacklist of terrorist organizations as part of a revived nuclear deal with Iran.

The IRGC has been subject to US sanctions since 2007 as part of the US Specially Designated Global Terrorist list, and in 2017 it became the first national military to be designated by the US as a Foreign Terrorist Organization.

"The IRGC is the Iranian government's primary means of directing and implementing its global terrorist campaign," President Donald Trump said at the time.

The Revolutionary Guards control a business empire in Iran, as well as military and intelligence forces responsible for terrorist attacks throughout the world.

Analysts now believe the US plans to remove the terrorist designation in return for Iranian assurances about reining in the IRGC. It is thought to be the last and most troublesome issue in wider indirect talks on reviving the 2015 nuclear deal.

Such a move would be fiercely opposed by the Gulf states, and Israel made its concern known in a joint statement on Friday by Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and Foreign Minister Yair Lapid. "The attempt to delist the IRGC as a terrorist organization is an insult to their victims and would ignore documented reality supported by unequivocal evidence," they said.

"We find it hard to believe that the IRGC's designation as a terrorist organization will be removed in exchange for a promise not to harm Americans. The US will not abandon its closest allies in exchange for empty promises from terrorists."



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## [Sudan group says 187 wounded in latest anti-coup protests](#)

Sat, 2022-03-19 00:02

CAIRO: Nearly 200 people have been wounded in the latest protests to erupt in the Sudanese capital over deteriorating economic conditions following a military take-over, a doctor's union said on Friday.

The Sudan's Doctors Committee issued a statement saying that 187 people were wounded in clashes with police in Khartoum on Thursday, 70 of whom were likely struck by rubber bullets.

Three of the wounded were shot in either the head or chest and are currently in intensive care, it added.

Riot police used tear gas to disperse thousands of protesters who had sought to reach the Republican Palace, seat of the military government.

Videos posted on social media showed police firing tear gas.

Thursday's marches were the latest in near-daily street protests since the military took over on Oct. 25, removing a civilian-led transitional government.

Since then, at least 87 people have been killed and thousands wounded in a bloody crackdown on protesters, according to the doctor's union.

Sudan has been facing a dire economic situation since the October military takeover.

## **FASTFACT**

The inflation rate reached nearly 260 percent in February, according to Sudan's census agency.

On Wednesday, the state-owned news agency SUNA reported that the inflation rate reached nearly 260 percent in February, quoting the country's census agency.

Earlier this month, the country's Central Bank floated the Sudanese pound – a move expected to result in a swift increase in prices.

The ruling generals have been struggling to stabilize the country. Their coup has upended Sudan's democratic transition after a popular uprising forced the military to remove former President Omar Bashir in April 2019.

Following the military takeover, Western governments and world financial institutions suspended their assistance to Sudan in order to pressure the generals to return a civilian-led government.

Sudan has for years struggled with an array of economic woes, including a huge budget deficit and widespread shortages of essential goods and soaring prices of bread and other staples.

The country descended into economic crisis when the south seceded in 2011 after decades of war, taking with it more than half of public revenues and 95 percent of exports.

Thursday's rallies were called by the Sudanese Professionals Association and the Resistance Committees, which have been the backbone of the uprising against Bashir and relentless anti-coup protests in the past three months. Protesters also chanted slogans against Sudan's top military ruler Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan.

"The existing regime has no legitimacy. The Sudanese people want a national, civilian and democratic government," said Hussein Al-Safy, who was at the



protest.



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Two dead as UN, AU warn of 'grave danger' in Sudan

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## [UAE leaders receive Syrian President Assad](#)

Fri, 2022-03-18 23:02

LONDON: Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed on Friday welcomed Syrian President Bashar Assad in the UAE, saying he hoped his visit will be the beginning of good, peace and stability for Syria and the entire region, state news agency WAM reported.

The meeting, which took place at Al-Shati Palace, came within the framework of the common concern to continue consultation and coordination between the two countries on various issues, WAM also said.

Sheikh Mohammed was briefed by the Syrian leader on the latest developments

in his country, WAM said, adding that they also discussed contributing consolidating of security, stability and peace in the Arab and the Middle East region.

“During the meeting, the two sides discussed a number of issues of common concern, emphasizing the preserving the territorial integrity of Syria and the withdrawal of foreign forces, in addition to political and humanitarian support for Syria and its people to reach a peaceful solution to all the challenges it faces,” the WAM report added.

Sheikh Mohammed said that Syria is a fundamental pillar of Arab security, and that the UAE is keen to strengthen bilateral cooperation to achieve the aspirations of Syrian stability and development.

They also exchanged views and the two countries’ positions on all regional and international issues and developments of common interest, before he was seen off at Al-Bateen Airport by the Abu Dhabi crown prince.

Meanwhile, the UAE Vice President and Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid also met with Assad to discuss Syria and other Arab issues,

Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid “affirmed the UAE’s keenness to discover new paths of constructive cooperation with Syria, and to monitor opportunities through which various aspects of cooperation can be pushed forward to achieve the interests of the two peoples.









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