

Yemen's government vows to hunt down kidnappers of aid workers

Mon, 2022-03-14 22:27

AL-MUKALLA: Yemen's military and security authorities have vowed to hunt down the abductors of aid workers in the southeastern province of Hadramout as an international aid organization reduced humanitarian activities due to security concerns.

The government's security committee in Hadramout has ordered army units to remove unofficial checkpoints, intensify security measures throughout the province's fast lands and track down the armed men who are holding two international aid workers.

Security forces across the province also received similar orders from the ministry of interior to capture the abductors.

"We will be catching them sooner or later," a senior official at the ministry of interior, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told Arab News on Monday, adding that the ministry was still unaware of the abductors' identities and demands.

"They are a mix of drug addicts and terrorists," the official said.

Earlier this month, unidentified men kidnapped two foreign workers with the international medical charity Doctors Without Borders in a remote area between the city of Seiyun and Aber in the province of Hadramout.

Local media reports said that the abductors posed as military officers after setting up a fake checkpoint in Khoushem Al-Ain area, asked the German and Mexican workers and their Yemeni associates to board their Toyota pick-up, and quickly drove deeper into the desert.

The abduction prompted the MSF on Sunday into closing some of its humanitarian operations in the central city of Marib, a move that is expected to exacerbate the already dire humanitarian situation in the Yemeni city that hosts more than two million internally displaced people.

"Medecins sans Frontieres announces the closure of some of its humanitarian activities in the Marib project, following the disappearance of two colleagues as they were on their way to the project," the medical charity said in a statement.

"We consider this as an unacceptable act of violence and we are concerned about the current exposure of the MSF teams in the area," it added.

The MSF said that it would shut down five out of eight mobile clinics operating in Marib and would completely withdraw support from Marib General Hospital.

In the southern province of Abyan, local officials said on Monday that talks to secure the release of five UN workers held by suspected Al-Qaeda militants reached a deadlock as the militants refused to free the hostages before the government met their demands.

The militants seek to swap the hostages with prisoners in Aden and have demanded a ransom of more than \$300,000.

Last month, the suspected Al-Qaeda militants abducted the five UN workers in Abyan's Moudia district while heading back to their office in Aden after a field mission.

Local officials told Arab News that the militants are holding the abducted workers in rugged and mountainous areas in Abyan and threaten to execute them if the army or security services use force to release them.

Despite the army and ministry of interior's stern orders for hunting down the abductors, critics have cast doubt over the ability of the country's poor security and military units to apprehend Al-Qaeda militants or drug dealers inside their safe havens in Abyan or Hadramout.

Yemeni officials have signaled they would seek to enlist the help of military officers from the US and Saudi Arabia.

Support for the local security service was discussed last week by the first undersecretary of the interior ministry, Maj. Gen. Mohammed Al-Sharef, with American and Arab coalition counterterrorism officers.

Quoting a Yemeni intelligence officer, Al-Ayyam daily newspaper reported last week that American officers have participated in the current efforts to hunt down the abductors in Abyan and Hadramout.

Despite their attempts to make a comeback in south Yemen provinces, Al-Qaeda in Yemen has suffered decisive blows over the past six years after Yemeni military forces, trained and armed by the Arab coalition, expelled them from their major urban and rural strongholds.



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Fighting rages outside Yemen's Marib as UN envoy meets leaders
Houthi bomb-maker killed in northern Yemen clashes

[Lebanon PM Mikati says he will not run in May parliamentary election](#)

Author:

Reuters

ID:

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Mon, 2022-03-14 15:25

BEIRUT: Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati said on Monday he would not seek re-election in a parliamentary election scheduled for May 15.

The statement, made in a television address, throws Sunni Muslim politics in Lebanon into deeper disarray two months from a vote seen as important for reinvigorating public life in Lebanon in the third year of a financial crisis.

It follows an announcement by ex-Prime Minister Saad Hariri in January that

he would withdraw from politics and that his Future Movement, which now has some 20 members of parliament, would not field candidates. Hariri is the top Sunni politician in a country where a power-sharing agreement dictates the prime minister must always be Sunni, the president a Maronite Christian and the parliament speaker a Shiite Muslim. All seats in Lebanon's 128-member legislature are also allocated by religious sect, with 27 seats set aside for Sunnis – most of which are now up for grabs. While announcing he would not run, Mikati called on Lebanese to turn out to vote and said his move aimed to "provide room for the new generation". Hariri's decision had raised concerns about a potential boycott of the vote by Sunnis that could undermine the electoral process, though a number of other Sunni candidates are in the running.



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Egypt buys 126,000 tons of wheat from Russia, Ukraine as conflict rages on

Mon, 2022-03-14 18:28

CAIRO: Egypt has bought about 126,000 tons of wheat from Russia and Ukraine amid the ongoing conflict between the two countries.

The shipments, comprising about 63,000 tons from each side, are expected to arrive at Egyptian ports in the coming days, the Ministry of Supply and Internal Trade said.

The country has also bought about 63,000 tons of wheat from Romania and recently received a further shipment of the grain from France, it added.

The announcement came after Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi recently met with the government to approve new incentives encouraging local wheat growers to increase their output during the current season.

Following the meeting a presidential spokesman said the talks dealt with “a review of the executive position on a number of national projects in the food security and agriculture sector,” including efforts to increase productivity.

“In this context, the president directed to grant an additional supply incentive to the price of local wheat for the current agricultural season, in order to encourage farmers to supply the largest possible quantity,” the spokesman said.

Egypt’s Minister of Supply Ali Al-Moselhi said the government aimed to purchase more than 6 million tons of local wheat during the current harvest season, which begins in mid-April.

Egyptian Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly said on Wednesday that the country’s strategic reserve of wheat was sufficient to last for four months and that the government would not have to resort to buying further shipments from overseas before the end of the year.

Egypt is the world’s largest importer of wheat and buys most of what it needs from Russia and Ukraine.



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Ukraine crisis: Egypt explores alternative wheat sources, PM warns greedy traders
Egypt imposes export ban on green wheat, cooking oil, corn for 3 months: Ministry of Trade and Industry

[Egypt in talks with US defense company Lockheed Martin](#)

Author:

Mon, 2022-03-14 18:10

CAIRO: Mohamed Ahmed Morsi, Egypt's minister of state for military production, held talks with Raymond Piselli, vice president of Lockheed Martin, and Joseph Rank, CEO of the American defense company in Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Africa, on ways to enhance cooperation.

Morsi stressed the ministry's primary role, which is to meet the needs of the armed forces and police in terms of ammunition, weapons and equipment.

He also reviewed the manufacturing, technological and human capabilities of the military production companies and units that can be a point of cooperation with the American company.

Morsi noted the Ministry of Military Production's interest in benefiting from the expertise of Lockheed Martin, stressing the ministry's eagerness to localize the latest global technologies in military industries and conclude a strategic partnership in advance defense systems that would benefit both sides.

He referenced the recent economic reforms that Egypt implemented, which have contributed to the country's growing presence in the field of security and defense, evident in the organization of Egypt's Defense Exhibition at the end of last year.

Piselli gave a presentation on the American company, currently considered one of the largest military industry companies in the world, manufacturing radars, battle tanks, missiles, aircraft, train operating systems, flight training systems and technology laboratories.

He affirmed the company's interest in cooperating with Egypt in military manufacturing due to the country's significant capabilities in this field, which prompted Lockheed Martin to participate as a golden sponsor for the second edition of EDEX.

Rank stressed that military cooperation between the US and Egypt has been an essential component of their strategic partnership for nearly 40 years.

He added that Lockheed Martin adopts a three-pillar approach in its cooperation with partners, which includes knowledge transfer, localization of industries and human capital development.

He said that the company is keen to contribute to the development of the defense industries sector in partner countries.

Rank expressed his hope that this meeting would play an important role in opening new doors for investment and cooperation.



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Lockheed Martin posts better-than-expected profit, reiterates 2022 sales outlook

[Fighting rages outside Yemen's Marib as UN envoy meets leaders](#)

Author:

Sun, 2022-03-13 23:18

AL-MUKALLA: Heavy fighting has broken out between Yemeni government troops and the Iran-backed Houthis outside the central city of Marib during the past 24 hours, killing and wounding dozens of combatants, a local military

official told Arab News on Sunday.

The fighting took place as the UN Yemen envoy, Hans Grundberg, announced the conclusion of his first week of consultations with key Yemeni parties.

Backed by Arab coalition warplanes, Yemen army troops and allied tribal fighters on Sunday attacked Houthi fighters stationed on mountainous terrain south of Marib city, with the aim of pushing the militia away from the strategic city.

“We set ambushes and attacked the Houthis in Juba district. We managed to advance in the Akada mountain range,” the anonymous Yemeni military official said. The fierce fighting on the ground sparked heavy airstrikes by Arab coalition warplanes that destroyed Houthi military reinforcements and vehicles.

“The Arab coalition has carried out many precision airstrikes that hit the enemy’s locations and military equipment,” the official said.

BACKGROUND

Backed by Arab coalition warplanes, Yemen army troops and allied tribal fighters on Sunday attacked Houthi fighters stationed on mountainous terrain south of Marib city, with the aim of pushing the militia away from the strategic city.

Local media reports also said that the Houthis on Friday and Saturday renewed their attacks on government troops on Al-Balaq mountain range outside Marib city, but largely failed to achieve any territorial gains after government troops repelled their advances.

The strategic Al-Balaq is the closest battlefield to the city of Marib. Houthi seizure of the mountain range would enable artillery strikes over sections of the city. The coalition said on Sunday that 12 air raids by jets killed many Houthis and destroyed eight vehicles in Marib province during the past 24 hours.

For more than a year, the Houthis have relentlessly attacked the city, the government’s last bastion in the northern half of Yemen, rejecting warnings from local and international organizations about the impact of the attacks on the growing humanitarian crisis in Yemen. The Houthi offensive on Marib has claimed the lives of thousands of combatants and civilians, and forced thousands of people to flee their homes across the province.

At the same time, Yemen President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi ordered his government to give urgent attention and financial assistance to army troops battling the Houthis across the country, the official news agency said on Saturday. Hadi told his commanders in Marib city that they should pay soldiers’ salaries on time, provide them financial incentives, treat the wounded and take care of the families of dead soldiers.

Separately, the UN Yemen envoy announced in the Jordanian capital, Amman, the conclusion of his first week of direct consultations with key Yemeni parties.

It comes as part of his efforts to listen to views, ideas and suggestions that will be included in his framework for ending the war in Yemen.

During the first week, the UN envoy met with leaders of the General People's Congress and representatives from Al-Islah Party, the Yemeni Socialist Party and the Nasserist Unionist People's Organization. This week, Grundberg will meet in Amman with representatives of the Southern Transitional Council, the Inclusive Hadramout Conference, the General People's Congress, as well as security experts, economists and civil society leaders.

"The special envoy explained that the intent of the consultations was to gather, in an honest and frank way, ideas, views and suggestions on immediate and long-term priorities for the political, security and economic tracks," Grundberg's office said in a statement.



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Saudi aid agency, UNICEF sign \$5bn deal for safe water supplies in Yemen
Houthi bomb-maker killed in northern Yemen clashes