

Israel accuses Iran of providing munitions for drones supplied to Venezuela

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1645555217682772800

Tue, 2022-02-22 22:00

JERUSALEM: Israel accused Iran on Tuesday of planning to arm drones supplied to Venezuela with precision-guided munitions, remarks that appeared aimed at raising American alarm as world powers try to conclude a new nuclear deal with Tehran.

Venezuela said in 2012 that Iran was helping it build drones for self-defense. The two countries, both OPEC members and long at loggerheads with Washington, also cooperate on oil exports.

Briefing US-Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz showed photographs of what he described as an Iranian MoHajjer UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle) in Venezuela.

"Our assessments show that Iranian PGMs (precision-guided munitions) are being delivered for these UAVs and other similar models," Gantz said.

"I can tell you that in my meetings with partners from around the world, including African and Latin American partners, I heard extreme concern about Iranian support for terrorism."

Iran denies supplying military drones to any of its allies and has denied seeking nuclear arms or supporting terrorism. Venezuela's information ministry did not immediately reply to an email seeking comment on Gantz's remarks.

Israel supported the 2018 withdrawal of the United States from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal and, with Washington now taking part in negotiations to revive the pact, has urged caution.

"A nuclear deal, if signed with Iran, does not mark the end of the road," Gantz told the Conference of Presidents of Major American Organizations. "We need to have offensive capabilities and a set of sanctions ready in our back pockets in case Iran violates a future agreement."



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US expels Venezuelan migrants to Colombia under COVID powersIran hails nuclear talk 'progress' but Raisi insists US sanctions end

[Abbas-led PA strips outspoken critic of diplomatic passport](#)

Author:

Tue, 2022-02-22 21:07

RAMALLAH: The Palestinian Authority has withdrawn the diplomatic passport of Nasser Al-Kidwa, a former senior diplomat, over his opposition to the policies of President Mahmoud Abbas.

Al-Kidwa, 68, nephew of the late president Yasser Arafat, told Arab News from France that the withdrawal of his diplomatic passport took place shortly

after Abbas announced an amendment to the diplomatic law on Feb. 6.

The diplomatic passport had been replaced with an ordinary document, with a change of profession from diplomat to dentist, he said.

Al-Kidwa represented the Palestine Liberation Organization at the UN from 1986 to 1991. He was appointed as permanent observer of the PLO at the UN until 2004, then served as foreign minister of the PA from 2005 to 2006 until Hamas won legislative elections and the Abbas-led Fatah was defeated.

He graduated as a dentist in 1979, but never worked professionally in the field. A "dentist" classification on a passport normally requires membership of Palestine's dental association.

Al-Kidwa expressed concern that the details of his last passport would be lost, leaving him unable to enter the Palestinian territories, which are controlled by Israel.

He warned that the PA move was "part of a series of actions that reflect the current Palestinian leadership's style of work, which violates laws and does not prioritize national interests – and aligns with Israeli desires, that is no logic, no respect for laws, and no public interest."

Critics have warned of the risks of Abbas' "decision by decree" style, which they say has led to an autocratic system in Palestine.

The new amendment to the law allows Abbas to reward loyalists with diplomatic passports, opponents claim. Categories of people eligible for the special passport have been expanded, while critics have been suppressed through the withdrawal of their own diplomatic passports.

In addition to his Palestinian passport, Al-Kidwa has a French passport by virtue of his French wife, but has only used it to enter that country.

"In the last amendment to the law on granting the diplomatic passport, the president gave himself the absolute right to grant the passport to anyone he wants and withdraw it from anyone he wants, even though deciding on it is the work of the Foreign Ministry and not the president, and this cannot be legal," he told Arab News.

Al-Kidwa added that he "does not trust" the Palestinian judicial system to retrieve his withdrawn passport, and believes that the ruling authority "dominates" the judicial system.

Palestinian legal experts told Arab News that there is a vague clause in the new law that is likely to have been used in Al-Kidwa's case, and may further be used against Abbas' opponents.



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Activist fears Palestinian Authority's bid to 'silence' dissent
Squabbling between Palestinian Authority and Hamas holds up Gaza reconstruction work

[Turkish 'foreigners quota' adds to fears of migrant backlash](#)

Tue, 2022-02-22 20:39

ANKARA: A plan by Turkey to limit the number of foreigners living in individual neighborhoods has sparked fears of a rise in anti-immigrant sentiment in a society where anger toward refugees is already high amid growing economic woes.

Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu last week said that Turkey will enforce a 25 percent foreign quota in every district. In areas where Syrians make up one-quarter of the population, no new foreigners will be allowed in.

"If the number of foreigners in a neighborhood exceeds 25 percent, we will send them to other neighborhoods," Soylu said.

Students, broken families and people needing healthcare will be exempt from the new rule.

So far, more than 4,500 Syrians are facing relocation out of the Altindag neighborhood in Ankara where they have faced attacks and harassment by angry mobs following the killing of a local teenager by a Syrian refugee last August.

No official clarification has been provided on where the migrants will be resettled.

The resettlement of Syrians from Altindag will serve as a “pilot project” for Turkish authorities planning to extend the quota system to other districts.

Soylu’s statement came on the same day the Interior Ministry announced that more than 193,000 Syrians, including 84,000 children, had become Turkish citizens by the end of 2021. The number of Syrians registered under temporary protection stands at about 3.7 million.

Sinem Adar, an associate at the Center for Applied Turkey Studies of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, a Berlin-based think tank, said the new regulation comes against the background of growing anti-immigrant attitudes coupled with increasing anger at the ruling AKP over the country’s economic crisis and governance deadlock.

“Since the municipal elections in 2019, we have been observing a shift away from the AKP’s earlier hospitable policies toward refugees,” she told Arab News.

According to Adar, Syrian refugees have become a focal point in Turkey’s long-running identity struggles, leading to a contentious anti-immigration debate.

“The mounting anti-immigrant sentiments have partly unleashed themselves in the shape of violent attacks on refugees, as was the case in Ankara last August and in Istanbul in January this year,” she said.

Police arrested Turkish and Afghan suspects over the killing of a young Syrian refugee, Nail Al-Naif, in Istanbul. The victim was stabbed while he was asleep in his apartment.

Experts also say that migration management has been systematically used in order to gain support ahead of parliamentary and presidential elections due by 2023.

In an interview with Reuters on Monday, Turkey’s main opposition leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu said: “Turkey will send home the millions of Syrian refugees it hosts and re-establish diplomatic ties with President Bashar Assad if the opposition alliance wins the elections.”

He added: “Migration has become one of the main drivers of political competition. The mainstream opposition parties, such as the Republican People’s Party and the Good Party, have recently reoriented their focus to

governmental policy, and they strongly push against Turkey's hosting of a growing number of refugees and irregular migrants."

According to Adar, in the face of fierce criticism by the opposition, the government has also acknowledged the public's burden by leveling up its criticism of the EU for showing insufficient support, ramping up the discussion on repatriating Syrian refugees to northern Syria, and objecting to taking in any Afghan refugees.

"The recent quota regulation is another attempt by the AKP government to contain growing popular discontent against the backdrop of an increasing political competition," she said.

Adar said that in the face of Turkey's growing economic crisis, public support for the AKP and its primary supporter, the Nationalist Movement Party, is in steep decline. Approval ratings for President Recep Tayyip Erdogan are also falling.

Metin Corabatir, president of the Research Center on Asylum and Migration in Ankara, said that Syrians are concentrated in some neighborhoods because it is close to places where they work.

"They are living in the Altindag district of Ankara because it is close to the furniture manufacturing center of the capital where they are working informally," he told Arab News.

Corabatir said that political parties should not use the "refugee card" in such a way as to consolidate their voter base.

"If they want to include the migration management problems in their election campaign, they should concentrate on ways to further integrate these people into society. But so far no one has suggested any solution for local integration," he said.

"These people, both foreigners and refugees, are expected to remain in Turkey even after the elections. The best policy is to suggest new ways of employment, health and education rather than pledging to send them back or giving them only 48 hours to vacate their houses and find a new one in a new district," he added.



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'Fake news' fuels attacks on Syrians in Ankara
The return of Syrian refugees
key topic in Cavusoglu's talks in Lebanon

[UN expert in Sudan to verify rights violations after coup](#)

Author:

Tue, 2022-02-22 00:27

CAIRO: A UN human rights expert was in Sudan on Monday to verify allegations of human rights violations after an October military coup plunged the country into turmoil and triggered nearly daily street protests.

Adama Dieng, the UN's expert on human rights in Sudan, arrived in the capital of Khartoum on Sunday, a month after Sudan's authorities asked for the postponement of his visit, according to the UN Human Rights Council.

Dieng was a UN special adviser on the prevention of genocide and served as an investigator for the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

He was appointed in November to monitor the human rights situation in Sudan after the Oct. 25 military coup.

Dieng met Monday with acting Justice Minister Mohamed Saeed Al-Hilu.

He will also meet with other government officials, activists and civil society groups.

Dieng's mission is to verify allegations of human rights abuses during protests that have been taking place since the takeover, said Gomaa Al-Wakil, head of the human rights department at the Justice Ministry.

The takeover has upended Sudan's transition to democratic rule after three decades of repression and international isolation under former President Omar Bashir.

The African nation has been on a fragile path to democracy since a popular uprising forced the military to remove Bashir and his government in April 2019.

Sudan has been politically paralyzed since the coup, with near-daily street protests. Authorities launched a major crackdown on protesters.

Sudanese security forces have also been accused of using sexual violence against women taking part in the demonstrations. The UN called for an investigation.

Hundreds of activists and protest leaders were also detained complicating UN-led international efforts to find a way out of the stalemate.



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Sudan's fate in the balance as democratic transition hits a road bump
Sudanese man killed in crackdown on anti-coup protests as UN expert arrives

[Iran hails nuclear talk 'progress' but Raisi insists US sanctions end](#)

Author:

Tue, 2022-02-22 00:22

DOHA: Iran has signaled "significant progress" in talks on reviving a stalled accord on its nuclear program but President Ebrahim Raisi, on his first visit to a Gulf state, again insisted that the US must lift its crippling sanctions.

Iran's president, a personal target of the US sanctions, spoke out ahead of a summit of natural gas exporting nations in Qatar.

The summit will take place against the backdrop of mounting tensions in Ukraine and reported advances in resuming a deal limiting Iran's nuclear program.

The US under former President Donald Trump withdrew from the 2015 accord in 2018, saying it was not tough enough in curtailing Iran's weapons ambitions. Tehran has always denied seeking an atomic bomb.

But months of negotiations in Vienna have brought the two sides closer to a new deal.

Iran's Foreign Ministry said on Monday that "significant progress" has been made and the number of outstanding obstacles had been "considerably reduced."

"But the problems that remain are most difficult, the most difficult and most serious to be resolved," it added.

Talks on reviving the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action have been held in the Austrian capital since November, involving Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia directly and the US indirectly.

After arriving in Doha and meeting Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Raisi again took aim at the US sanctions that have ravaged his country's economy.

"The United States must show their desire to lift the main sanctions," he said.



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