

European countries urge Israel to stop construction in East Jerusalem

Author:

Thu, 2022-01-20 02:14

PARIS: The foreign ministries of France, Germany, Italy and Spain urged Israeli authorities on Wednesday evening to stop the construction of new housing units in East Jerusalem.

Earlier in the month, Israeli authorities approved plans for the construction of around 3,500 homes in occupied East Jerusalem, nearly half of which are to be built in the controversial areas of Givat Hamatos and Har Homa.

In a statement, the European countries said that the hundreds of new buildings would “constitute an additional obstacle to the two-state solution,” referring to international peace efforts to create a state for Palestinians.

They said that building in this area would further disconnect the West Bank from East Jerusalem and that these settlements are a violation of international law.

The Israeli ministry of foreign affairs did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment.

Israel captured East Jerusalem including the Old City in a 1967 war and later annexed it, a move not recognized internationally.

Palestinians want East Jerusalem for the capital of a state they seek in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, which abuts the city, and the Gaza Strip. Israel views the entire city as its indivisible capital.

Most world powers deem the Israeli settlements illegal for taking in territory where Palestinians seek statehood.

The four countries also expressed concern about the evictions and demolitions in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah, where residents say they are being displaced.

Earlier Wednesday, Israeli police evicted a Palestinian family from their East Jerusalem home – which they say they had lived in for decades – before a digger tore down the property, prompting criticism from rights activists and diplomats.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[European countries](#)

[East Jerusalem](#)

[Israel](#)

Palestinian shot dead by Israeli troops in occupied West Bank
Israel says sanctions relief for Iran could mean 'terror on steroids'

[Calls grow to restore Houthis to US list of terrorist groups](#)

Thu, 2022-01-20 01:08

AL-MUKALLA: Demands grew on Wednesday for the US to restore the Iran-backed Houthi militia in Yemen to its list of designated terrorist groups.

The government in Yemen joined calls for the reinstatement by authorities in the UAE after Monday's Houthi drone attack on Abu Dhabi in which three people died.

"These criminal acts require designating the Houthis as a terrorist organization," Yemen's Prime Minister Maeen Abdul Malik Saeed said. "The international community has to deal with this group."

More pressure needs to be applied to stop these terrorist crimes that threaten regional and international peace and stability.”

Former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo designated the Houthis a foreign terrorist organization on Jan. 16, 2021, a few hours before the Trump administration handed the White House over to Joe Biden.

The new administration quickly reversed the move, paused a ban on financial transactions in Houthi-controlled areas on Jan. 25, and fully revoked the terrorist designation on Feb. 16.

The revocation was followed by a barrage of drone and missile attacks by the Houthis targeting civilians and energy infrastructure in Saudi Arabia.

On the ground, the Coalition to Restore Legitimacy escalated airstrikes on Houthi military sites and reinforcements on Wednesday as government troops repelled the militia’s attempts to seize control of new areas.

“We are carrying out a large-scale military operation to paralyze the Houthis’ capabilities in a number of governorates,” the Coalition said in a statement carried by El-Akhbariyah TV. “We are monitoring the terrorist leaders responsible for targeting civilians.”

Earlier on Wednesday, Coalition warplanes destroyed military vehicles carrying Houthi fighters in Marib and struck Houthi gatherings and locations in the province. Thick smoke and large balls of fire billowed over targeted locations in southwestern Sanaa, including Attan Mountain, which hosts a ballistic missile depot.

The coalition said it had carried out 19 airstrikes in Marib that killed 90 Houthis and destroyed 11 of their vehicles. There was heavy fighting between government troops and the Houthis south of the strategic central city of Marib. Rashad Al-Mekhlafi, a military official at Yemen’s Armed Forces Guidance Department, told Arab News the Houthis had mounted several counterattacks on government troops around Al-Balaq Al-Sharqi mountain range in a bid to break a siege on pockets of their fighters on the strategic mountain.

The Houthis failed to achieve their goal of reaching the mountain and were forced into stopping their attacks after suffering heavy casualties. “They have to either surrender or die,” Al-Mekhlafi said. Loyalist Giants Brigades troops also engaged in heavy fighting with the Houthis south of Marib.

In the western governorate of Hodeidah, Houthi weapons storages at the naval forces camp were also targeted, the Coalition said early Thursday.

It said the port was being used by the Houthis as a military barracks to threaten regional and international security. Houthis reportedly transferred the weapons from the port to the military camp under commercial cover.

Houthis had also been accused of engaging in sea piracy, attacking civilian ships passing along the Red Sea.

The US special envoy for Yemen, Tim Lenderking, began visits on Wednesday to the Gulf states and the UK. "The special envoy and his team will press the parties to deescalate militarily and...participate fully in an inclusive UN-led peace process," the State Department said.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Houthi terrorism](#)

[Houthi militia](#)

[Yemen](#)

[Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen](#)

UAE embassy calls on Biden administration to support re-designating Houthis as foreign terrorist organization
UAE calls for UN Security Council session over Houthi attack on Abu Dhabi

[US envoy to Yemen on GCC tour to reactivate peace efforts](#)

Author:

Thu, 2022-01-20 00:50

RIYADH: US envoy to Yemen Tim Lenderking held talks with the head of the Gulf Cooperation Council on Wednesday in Saudi Arabia to discuss efforts to reach a political solution to the Yemeni crisis.

Lenderking is on a tour of Gulf states and the British capital, London, to reinvigorate peace efforts in coordination with the UN, senior regional government officials, and other international partners, the State Department said.

During the meeting, GCC Secretary-General Nayef Al-Hajraf stressed the importance of applying international pressure on the Iran-backed Houthi militia to end its terrorist activities and seriously engage in the Yemen peace process.

The two sides discussed regional and international efforts to reach the political solution sought by the bloc, in accordance with the GCC initiative and its Executive Mechanism, the outcomes of the Yemeni National Dialogue Conference and UN Security Council resolution 2216.

Al-Hajraf praised Washington's significant role and the efforts of the US envoy to end the Yemeni war, and the humanitarian and development assistance it provides to the Yemeni people.

He also strongly condemned the continued targeting of civilians and civilian targets with missiles and drones in Saudi Arabia, as well as the cowardly terrorist attack that targeted Abu Dhabi International Airport on Monday, killing three people.

Al-Hajraf said it constitutes a terrorist act, a flagrant violation of international law and a threat to regional security and stability.

During his tour, Lenderking "will press the parties to de-escalate militarily and seize the new year to participate fully in an inclusive UN-led peace process," the State Department said.

He will also call on donors to provide additional funding to mitigate the dire humanitarian and economic crises facing Yemenis, after the UN had said that around \$3.9 billion is needed this year to help millions of people in the war-torn country.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Gulf Cooperation Council \(GCC\)](#)

[Nayef Al-Hajraf](#)

[Tim Lenderking](#)

[Yemen](#)

UN envoy to Yemen in Riyadh for talks with GCC, Saudi officials
Saudi deputy defense minister: Houthis are using false promises to deceive, recruit
Yemenis

[Sudan protester shot dead as US envoys visit](#)

Author:

AFP

ID:

1642628309852871700

Wed, 2022-01-19 00:43

KHARTOUM: Sudanese security forces shot dead an anti-coup protester on Wednesday as American diplomats visited Khartoum seeking to help end a crisis which has claimed dozens of lives and derailed the country's democratic transition.

For two days shops have shuttered and protesters have blockaded streets in a civil disobedience campaign to protest the killing of seven people during a demonstration on Monday, one of the bloodiest days since the October 25 military coup.

The latest killing took place in Khartoum's twin city of Omdurman where protesters opposed to the coup had set up barricades.

Pro-democracy medics from the Doctors' Committee said the protester was shot in the torso "by live bullets of the (security) forces."

Witnesses also reported the use of tear gas by security forces in Omdurman and eastern Khartoum.

The death brings to 72 the number of people killed in a security crackdown against protesters who have taken to the streets – sometimes in the tens of thousands – calling for a return to the country's democratic transition and opposing the latest military putsch.

Protesters have been shot by live rounds and hundreds have been wounded, according to the Doctors' Committee.

The Forces for Freedom and Change, the leading civilian pro-democracy group, called for more protests on Thursday in Khartoum "in tribute to the martyrs," and nationwide on Friday.

Before the latest fatality, US Assistant Secretary of State Molly Phee and special envoy for the Horn of Africa, David Satterfield, held meetings with the bereaved families of people killed during the protests, the US embassy said.

They also met with members of the Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA), an umbrella of unions which were instrumental in protests which ousted president Omar Al-Bashir in April 2019, as well as the mainstream faction of the Forces for Freedom and Change.

Its spokesman Wagdy Saleh said they pleaded for "an end to the systematic violence toward civilians" and a "credible political process."

The diplomats are scheduled to meet with others including military leaders and political figures.

"Their message will be clear: the United States is committed to freedom, peace, and justice for the Sudanese people," the US State Department said ahead of the visit.

The diplomats held earlier talks in Saudi Arabia with the "Friends of Sudan" – a group of Western and Arab countries favoring transition to civilian rule.

In a statement, the group backed a United Nations initiative announced last week to hold intra-Sudanese consultations to break the political impasse.

"We urge all to engage in good faith and reestablish public trust in the inevitable transition to democracy," the group said.

"Ideally this political process will be time-bound and culminate in the formation of a civilian-led government which will prepare for democratic elections."

While the US diplomats visited, coup leader General Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan announced that vice-ministers – some of whom served before the coup and some appointed after – would now become ministers.

A statement from his office called it a "cabinet in charge of current

affairs.”

But it has no prime minister, since the civilian premier Abdalla Hamdok resigned in early January after trying to cooperate with the military. As part of the civil disobedience campaign, judicial workers including prosecutors and judges said they would not work for a state committing “crimes against humanity.”

University professors, corporations and doctors also joined the movement, according to separate statements.

Sudan’s authorities have repeatedly denied using live ammunition against demonstrators, and insist scores of security personnel have been wounded during protests. A police general was stabbed to death last week.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Sudan](#)

[Protests](#)

[Khartoum](#)

[Coups](#)

Sudanese barricade streets, staging rallies in protest against coup
Friends of Sudan convene in Riyadh to discuss ways to assist UN mission

Jailed French tourist to appear in Iran court on spying charges

Author:

Reuters

ID:

1642623920532035000

Wed, 2022-01-19 15:56

DUBAI: A jailed French tourist in Iran, Benjamin Briere, will appear before a Revolutionary Court on Thursday on spying charges, his lawyer said on Wednesday, over a year after his arrest while operating a remote-controlled mini helicopter in a desert area.

“Benjamin will attend the court to be tried for spying and acting against national security charges,” one of his lawyers Saeid Dehghan told Reuters. Briere has been held since May 2020, when he was arrested after flying a helicam – a remote-controlled mini helicopter used to obtain aerial or motion images – in the desert near the Turkmenistan-Iran border. He was charged with espionage and “propaganda against the Islamic Republic.”

His trial comes as the United States and parties to Iran’s 2015 nuclear deal including France are trying to restore the pact, which was abandoned in 2018 by then-US president Donald Trump. Iran’s elite Revolutionary Guards have arrested dozens of dual nationals and foreigners in recent years, mostly on espionage charges.

Rights activists have accused Iran of arresting dual citizens and foreigners to try to win concessions from other countries. Tehran denies holding people for political reasons.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Iran](#)

[France](#)

[Benjamin Briere](#)

Jailed french tourist in Iran, Benjamin Briere, faces spying charges, lawyer saysIran arrested French tourist nine months ago, says his lawyer