

# Eight killed in 'shocking' West Bank road crash

Author:

Sat, 2022-01-08 01:37

RAMALLAH: Eight Palestinians died on Thursday when the van they rode in collided with a cement truck in the occupied West Bank, Palestinian official media said.

The two vehicles slammed into each other at a junction on Route 90, which runs up the Jordan Valley and is under Israeli security control near the northern West Bank village of Fasayil, according to the Wafa news agency. A medic with the Magen David Adom Israeli rescue services said in a statement that the scene at the crash site was "shocking." "We saw a truck and a private vehicle crushed on the side of the road," he said.

The victims were not officially identified but local news outlets reported they were teenagers between 14 and 17 years old.

## **HIGHLIGHT**

**Palestinian police said that the victims were workers from the town of Aqraba, near Nablus.**

Wafa said that Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas declared a day of mourning to be observed on Friday across the Palestinian territories in honor of the victims.

Medics declared seven people dead at the scene, and Wafa later reported an additional victim. Three injured people were evacuated to Israeli hospitals via helicopter.

Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz issued a note of sympathy published in Arabic and Hebrew.

"I would like to convey my heartfelt condolences to the Palestinian families who lost eight of their loved ones today" in the crash, he said.

Neighboring Jordan also expressed condolences.

Palestinian police said that the victims were workers from the town of Aqraba, near Nablus.



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## [Syrians seek word of loved ones missing in regime jails](#)

Author:

AFP

ID:

1641587953819946900

Fri, 2022-01-07 23:42

AZAZ, Syria: More than 70 families gathered in the rebel-held Syrian town of Azaz on Friday to highlight the plight of loved ones missing in the government's feared jail system.

Since civil war broke out in Syria in 2011, nearly one million people have been detained in the network of prisons and camps run by the various security services, according to Britain-based monitoring group the Syrian Observatory

for Human Rights.

Of those, around 105,000 have died in custody, while others have been released, but tens of thousands remain unaccounted for, according to Observatory figures.

Lama Andani said it was nine years since her husband was arrested.

For 18 months, she had received some updates indirectly, but then nothing.

"I know what it's like to be tortured in the jails of the regime," said Andani, who said she spent nine years in prison during a previous outbreak of political unrest in Syria during the 1980s.

"We came here in the hope of getting our message through to the international community... so that it isn't forgotten.

"I dream of seeing my husband... and of knowing what happened to him," she said, as she joined others in posting messages in a square in Azaz.

The northern town, hard by the border with Turkey, was occupied by Turkish troops in 2016 to prevent it falling to US-backed Kurdish forces, which had taken swathes of northern Syria from the Daesh group.

It has since been under the control of rebel groups supported by Ankara.

In 2013, a military defector known as "Caesar" smuggled more than 50,000 photographs out of Syria, many of them documenting the deaths of prisoners in detention centers or military hospitals.

The name went on to be used in the title of US legislation that provides for economic sanctions against Syria.

Despite efforts to open dialogue about the missing on both sides of the conflict, little progress has been made on establishing their fate.



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[Azaz](#)

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## General Labor Union president warns against 'certain catastrophe' in Lebanon amid economic crises

Author:

Fri, 2022-01-07 22:40

BEIRUT: General Labor Union President Bechara Al-Asmar has warned against "a certain catastrophe, since hospitalization is now accessible to the wealthy only."

At a press conference on Friday, he commented on the multitude of crises facing the Lebanese, including "the ongoing madness in the dollar exchange rate, insane increases in fuel prices, electricity bill, the removal of medicine subsidies and the loss of the depositors' savings as a result of bank circulations – viewed as organized robbery."

He warned that "the draft budget included a provision for raising the customs dollar, which would raise the prices of goods by 30 percent, and raise all taxes and duties."

He added: "This is unacceptable because it entails the removal of subsidies on everything in exchange for nothing, which is surrendering to the IMF conditions without any supervision."

The fresh warning came as the ruling elite attempted to resolve its many conflicts that are blocking political and administrative progress.

President Michel Aoun has signed a decree calling on parliament to hold an extraordinary session starting from Monday and ending on March 21.

This will restore the parliamentary immunity of the ministers charged for the crime of the Beirut port blast, including current MPs, one of whom had an arrest warrant issued for him in absentia and that has not yet been executed.

The parliamentary session sets the stage for the transfer of power from a judicial investigator to a parliamentary body for the prosecution of ministers and deputies allegedly to blame for the explosion.

Lawyer and activist Hassan Bazzi said that “the key parties to the settlements are Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, Prime Minister Najib Mikati and President Michel Aoun.”

This follows the intense political discord between Aoun and Berri that reached its peak last week.

Bazzi said the settlement moved Aoun to sign a decree calling on parliament for a special session.

He also said that the parliamentary session’s agenda includes amending the law under review before the constitutional council – approving only six seats for expatriates’ voting instead of letting them participate in nationwide elections.

Bazzi also indicated that parliament was likely to approve the amendment to the code of criminal procedure, setting up a judicial parliamentary panel to look into appealing the decisions of Judge Tarek Bitar who has issued arrest warrants for several ministers.

While Cabinet is called to convene under this basis, Bazzi said the appointments for the panel would be made on a quota basis, where “the diaspora loses the opportunity for change and the political system regains control.”

Berri and Aoun tried to hide the parameters of this settlement by sparking a new debate concerning the special parliamentary session.

Although the main title of the urgent session is the discussion and approval of the two draft budgets, the presidential decree – bearing the signature of Prime Minister Najib Mikati – has on its agenda “the ratified laws that the president may request to be reconsidered and drafts or proposals of urgent and necessary laws related to the parliamentary elections.”

Berri indicated in a statement on Friday that “parliament is independent and is not restricted to any description of projects or proposals that the bureau of the parliament decides to put forward and the president has the right to respond after they are issued by the General Authority.”

The statement added: “This is the constitution’s provision and jurisprudence.”

The president’s team replied indirectly through unidentified sources that “they do not want to get into a debate with Berri.”

They added that article 33 of the constitution “stipulates that the parliament may be convened to extraordinary sessions by a decree setting their opening, end and agenda.”

Parliamentary sources replied to Aoun’s party that “the procedural authority may certainly set for the parliament the agenda it wants to look into in this extraordinary session, provided that parliament’s work is not limited to this agenda only.”

The settlement meant to be followed requires the re-convening of the Cabinet.

However, Hezbollah's bloc of MPs ignored the issues of governance and only supported the opening of an extraordinary parliamentary session extending until the date of the ordinary session, in view of the urgent need to adopt laws relating to "rescue, accountability and state regularity."

Questions remain over whether this settlement will allow the Cabinet to convene.

Political observers indicated that the settlement between Aoun and Berri – which was fostered by Hezbollah – might require the absence of Hezbollah and Amal movement's ministers from the next Cabinet session, except for the minister of finance, because the Cabinet was expected to discuss the general budget.

They added: "This is to further tie the ongoing conflict to the resumption of the Cabinet's work and to the withdrawal of the port's file from Judge Bitar."



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# Iran displays missiles amid nuclear talks with world powers

Author:

AP

ID:

1641557236667456400

Fri, 2022-01-07 12:04

DUBAI: Iran put three ballistic missiles on display at an outdoor prayer esplanade in central Tehran on Friday, as talks in Vienna aimed at reviving Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers flounder.

The missiles, known as Dezful, Qiam and Zolfaghar and with official ranges of up to 1,000 kilometers, were already-known models, the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard said.

Diplomats from countries that remain in the 2015 nuclear deal – Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China – are working with Tehran to revive the accord, which had sought to limit Iran's nuclear ambitions in exchange for trade.

American diplomats are present in Vienna but they are not in direct talks with Iranians. The accord collapsed in 2018 when then-President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the US and re-imposed sanctions on Iran.

A report by state TV said the missiles on display were the same types as those used to strike US bases in Iraq.

The display came on the second anniversary of ballistic missile attacks on American bases in Iraq in retaliation for the US drone strike that killed top Iranian general Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad in 2020.

The Iranian military mistakenly shot down Ukraine International Airlines Flight PS752 with two surface-to-air missiles after the attacks, killing all 176 people on board. After days of denial, the Guard publicly apologized, blaming air defense operator who authorities said mistook the Boeing 737-800 for an American cruise missile.

An Iranian military court in November held a hearing for 10 people suspected of having role in downing the Ukrainian airliner.

State TV said a commemoration ceremony for the victims was held in Tehran's main cemetery with the presence of their families as well as officials.



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Iran's Guard fires cruise missiles in military exerciseUK condemns Iran's launch of ballistic missiles in war games

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## [Kuwait asks citizens in Kazakhstan to leave the country](#)

Author:

Reuters

ID:

1641546821156734900

Fri, 2022-01-07 09:04

CAIRO: The Kuwaiti embassy in Kazakhstan asked Kuwaitis in the Central Asian country to leave "for their safety," state news agency (KUNA) reported on Friday.

It also urged Kuwaitis who wanted to travel to Kazakhstan to postpone their plans "because of the emergency status" continuing in the country.

Demonstrations that began recently in Kazakhstan came as a response to a fuel

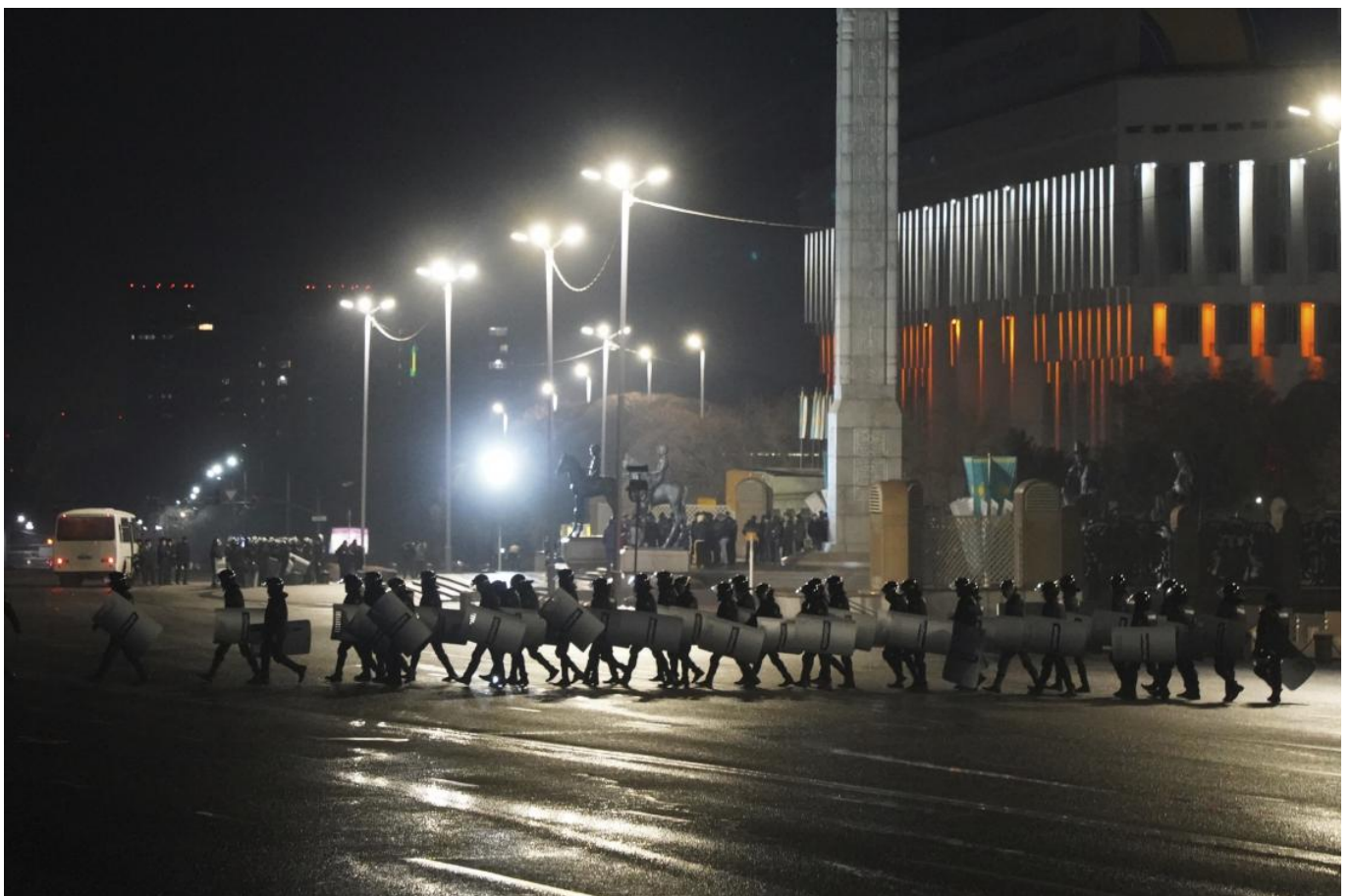
price hike have swelled into a broad movement against the government and ex-leader Nursultan Nazarbayev, 81, the longest-serving ruler of any former Soviet state.



# The forgotten Arabs of Iran

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