

# Algeria drops 'protest' case against teenage girl

Author:

Mon, 2021-12-27 23:50

ALGIERS: Algerian prosecutors have dropped a case against a 14-year-old girl who was facing trial in connection with the country's pro-democracy Hirak protest movement, her lawyer told AFP Monday.

"The prosecution ... recognized that it had been an error (and) dropped the charges," Abdelhalim Khereddine said.

The teenager had been ordered to appear in court in the eastern city of Annaba on Wednesday, alongside 20 other suspects, charged with attending an "unarmed gathering."

According to Algerian law, the age of criminal responsibility is 18 and minors are tried in juvenile courts. Her case had sparked outrage online.

Rights groups condemned what they said would have been the first trial of a minor connected to the Hirak movement. But Khereddine said Monday that prosecutors had realized the girl was a "witness and not a suspect" in the case.

"What's important is that she has her rights restored, as guaranteed by the constitution," he added.

Khereddine told AFP that the girl's father has been in prison for eight months for allegedly belonging to the outlawed Islamist-inspired movement Rachad.

The National Committee for the Release of Detainees (CNLD) says nearly 300 people are currently in jail on charges linked to the Hirak movement, which forced veteran strongman Abdelaziz Bouteflika from office in 2019.

Many of the detainees are being held over publications on social media, it says.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Algeria](#)

[protest](#)

Algeria imposes vaccine pass to boost low inoculation rate  
Algeria lends \$300m to Tunisia

---

## [100 Houthis killed in heavy fighting around Yemen's Marib city](#)

Author:

Mon, 2021-12-27 22:32

AL-MUKALLA: At least 100 Houthis were killed in heavy fighting with government forces outside Yemen's central city of Marib in the past day as the Iran-backed rebels pressed ahead with assaults to recapture the strategic city, local officials and media reports said on Monday.

Backed by massive air support from Arab coalition warplanes, Yemeni government troops and tribal fighters on Sunday mounted counterattacks on Houthi positions south of Marib in a bid to push back the militia from strategic locations outside the city and seize control of new areas.

Fierce fighting raged between the two sides from Sunday to Monday near Al-

Balaq Al-Sharqi mountain range and surrounding areas, claiming the lives of at least 100 Houthi fighters, including a field military leader.

"The national army seized control of three strategic hilly locations near Al-Balaq Al-Sharqi and cut off supply lines to pockets of Houthis," a military official told Arab News by telephone, shortly after he returned from the raging battlefields in Marib.

"What I can say is that we managed to count the bodies of at least 100 Houthis killed during the last 24 hours."

To pave the way for their forces to advance, the Houthis fired about 25 ballistic missiles at government-controlled areas and intensified drone and mortar attacks outside Marib.

"The Houthis hysterically shelled our forces with 25 ballistic missiles. The coalition's warplanes intercepted and destroyed two of the missiles in the air," the official said.

The shelling did not help the Houthis make new gains on the ground as government troops held strong in their positions and killed waves of Houthi fighters.

West of Marib, eight Houthis, including a field leader, were arrested, and many other militia members were killed when government troops repelled attacks.

Local army officials said that warplanes from the Arab coalition on Monday conducted dozens of air sorties in support of government troops on the ground by targeting Houthi military reinforcements and locations outside Marib city.

In February, the Houthis renewed a military offensive to recapture the oil and gas-rich city of Marib, the government's last stronghold in the northern part of the country.

In the neighboring province of Shabwa, hundreds of troops from the Giants Brigades were deployed in the oil-rich province ahead of an expected offensive to dislodge the Houthis from the Bayhan, Al-Aid and Ouselan districts and to alleviate military pressure on government troops in Marib province.

A long convoy of military vehicles carrying fighters and military equipment were seen departing positions along the country's west coast and heading toward Attaq city, Shabwa's provincial capital.

In November, the Arab coalition announced the redeployment troops in Hodeidah province as part of a new strategy to reinforce government troops battling the Houthis.

In Riyadh, Yemen President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi ordered the new governor of Shabwa, Awadh Mohammed Al-Wazer Al-Awlaki, who took the constitutional oath before the president on Monday, to work on unifying political and tribal forces and mobilizing efforts to expel the Houthis from areas in the

province.

Separately, Yemen's government on Monday demanded the Lebanese government contain the military activities of Iran-backed Hezbollah in the war-torn country amid an influx of fighters, military experts and weapons from Lebanon.

"We ask about the position of the presidency, the government, political forces, elites and the brotherly Lebanese people regarding the aggression led by the Hezbollah militia against Yemen," Muammar Al-Eryani, Yemen's minister of information, culture and tourism, said on Twitter.

"We renew the call to the brothers in Lebanon to declare a clear position on the aggression of the Hezbollah militia, to exert real pressure to withdraw its experts and fighters, stop the smuggling of weapons to Yemen, and to prevent the use of the lands and capabilities of the Lebanese state to support the Houthi militia."

The Yemeni government's criticism of Hezbollah activities in Yemen came a day after the Arab coalition revealed to reporters a video showing Hezbollah experts training Houthi fighters in the use of explosive-rigged drones.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Houthis](#)

[Yemen](#)

## [Iran](#)

Iran to announce new ambassador in YemenArab coalition conducts air raids on Houthi targets across Yemen

---

## [Lebanon's president delivers veiled criticism of Hezbollah during televised speech](#)

Mon, 2021-12-27 21:11

BEIRUT: Lebanese President Michel Aoun on Monday night criticized Hezbollah, without mentioning the party by name, for disrupting the work of the government.

"It is true that defending the homeland requires cooperation between the army, the people and the resistance, but the primary responsibility rests with the state," Aoun said during a televised speech.

"Only the state sets the defense strategy and ensures its implementation. Before reaching this point, it must stop deliberate, systematic and unjustified disruption that leads to the dismantling of institutions and the dissolution of the state."

Aoun also affirmed his desire for "the best relations with Arab countries, particularly with the Gulf states," and asked: "What is the justification for straining relations with these countries and interfering in matters that do not concern us?"

The alliance between the president's Free Patriotic Movement party and Hezbollah was strained last week when the Constitutional Council rejected an appeal submitted by the FPM against amendments to electoral laws that were approved by the Lebanese parliament but are opposed by Aoun's team. The appeal would have limited the right of expatriates to vote, by limiting them to voting for six new seats specifically for non-residents rather than existing seats in the 128-member legislature.

In a speech following the council's decision, FPM leader Gibran Bassil denounced Hezbollah. It had been expected that Aoun would be similarly critical of the party and blame it for the disruption of government.

Earlier on Monday, Interior Minister Bassam Mawlawi announced that he had signed a decree to hold parliamentary elections on May 15. Parliament had recommended the election take place on March 27, but Aoun objected to this date and demanded it be moved to May.

In his speech, the president called for “an urgent national dialogue for understanding on three issues: The expanded administrative and financial decentralization, the defense strategy, and the plan for financial and economic recovery.”

While keen to avoid a complete breakdown of relations with Hezbollah, he indirectly accused the party of responsibility for disrupting the operations of the state.

“I do not want to quarrel with anyone, neither people nor parties, and I do not want to dismantle the unity of any sect,” Aoun said.

But he added that he would not “accept to be a witness to the fall of the state and suffocation of people, and I will continue to work until the last day of my tenure and the last day of my life to prevent this.

“The solution lies through dialogue and peaceful means, and its beginning is in the meeting and work of the Council of Ministers and all state institutions.”

He stressed that “it is necessary for the government to meet today ... and the parliament should monitor its work and not contribute to its disruption. The disruption of the government is responsible for the paralysis of the administration.”

The president stressed that “only the state sets and implements the defense strategy, and the deliberate, systematic and unjustified obstruction must stop.”

Aoun criticized the disruption to the state caused by demands by Hezbollah and the Amal movement to halt Judge Tarek Bitar’s investigation into the causes of the Beirut port explosion in August 2020.

“By which Shariah, logic or constitution is the council of ministers suspended and it is asked to take a decision that is not within its powers, and its work is suspended due to an issue that does not constitute a charter dispute?” he asked

He concluded by saying that he was delivering “a frank message and I hope I will not have to say more.”

Aoun’s speech coincided with a campaign on social media and news sites in protest against incidents on the road to Beirut airport, where Hezbollah has raised banners and images in support of Iran’s leaders, in particular former commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps’ Quds Force, Qassem Soleimani, in the run-up to the second anniversary of his assassination by a US drone strike on Jan. 3, 2020.

Activists describe the banners and photos as a “provocative scene for every Lebanese, and specifically for Lebanese expatriates returning to Lebanon for the holidays.”



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Middle East](#)

[Lebanon](#)

[Michel Aoun](#)

Life comes full circle for Lebanese filmmaker with 'Memory Box' Lebanon's young at risk of domestic violence, abuse

---

## [EU diplomat says 'difficult' Iran nuclear talks resume with Tehran focused on sanctions relief](#)

Mon, 2021-12-27 21:10

VIENNA: Negotiators trying to save the landmark Iran nuclear deal resumed discussions on Monday with the EU chair warning of "difficult" work ahead. Negotiations to salvage the 2015 agreement restarted in late November, after a five-month hiatus following the election of ultraconservative Iran President Ebrahim Raisi.

The talks seek to bring back the US, after it left the accord in 2018, and

curtail Iran's nuclear activities, stepped up in response to the US withdrawal and reimposed sanctions.

EU diplomat Enrique Mora, who is chairing the talks, said all sides were showing "a clear will to work toward the successful end of this negotiation." "If we work hard in the days and weeks ahead we should have a positive result... It's going to be very difficult, it's going to be very hard. Difficult political decisions have to be taken both in Tehran and in Washington," the talks' coordinator, Mora told a news conference.

He was speaking shortly after a meeting of the remaining parties to the deal – Iran, Russia, China, France, Britain, Germany and the European Union – formally kicked off the round on Monday evening.

"There is a sense of urgency in all delegations that this negotiation has to be finished in a relatively reasonable period of time. Again, I wouldn't put limits but we are talking about weeks, not about months," Mora said.

He said the talks will discuss US sanctions-lifting and Iran's atomic commitments in parallel despite comments by Tehran and Beijing suggesting sanctions would be the focus.

"We are working on both tracks in parallel ... We are not working on one side and forgetting or neglecting the other. On the contrary, both tracks are mutually reinforcing," Mora added.

Ahead of the resumption, Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said the agenda should be "the issue of guarantees and verification" on the lifting of US sanctions.

"The most important thing for us is to reach a point where we can verify that Iranian oil will be sold easily and without any limits, that the money for this oil will be transferred in foreign currency to Iranian bank accounts, and that we will be able to benefit from all the revenues," he said, quoted by state news agency IRNA.

The talks involve delegations from Iran and the other countries that remain party to the landmark accord – Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia. Washington is participating indirectly, with diplomats shuttling back and forth between the Iranian and the US sides.

Iran has reported progress in the talks, but European diplomats have warned they are "rapidly reaching the end of the road."

US negotiator Rob Malley has said there are only "weeks" left to revive the deal, if Iran continues its current pace of nuclear activities.

The seventh round of talks, the first under Iran's new hard-line President Ebrahim Raisi, ended 10 days ago after adding some new Iranian demands to a working text. Western powers said progress was too slow and negotiators had "weeks not months" left before the 2015 deal becomes meaningless.

The deal offered Iran a lifting of economic sanctions in return for strict curbs on its nuclear program.

The goal was to make it practically impossible for Iran to build an atomic bomb, while allowing it to pursue a civilian nuclear program.

But the deal started to unravel in 2018 when former US president Donald Trump pulled out and began imposing sanctions on the Islamic republic.

US President Joe Biden has said he is willing to return to the deal as long as Iran also resumes the original terms.

Iran, which denies it wants to acquire a nuclear arsenal, has gradually abandoned its commitments to the accord since 2019, including by stepping up its enrichment of uranium.

Iran's arch-rival Israel, which staunchly opposes the nuclear deal, had reportedly warned in November that the Islamic republic had taken the technical steps to prepare to enrich uranium to military-grade levels of around 90 percent.

"Stopping Iran's nuclear program is the primary challenge for Israeli foreign and security policy," Israel's Foreign Minister Yair Lapid said on Monday. "We prefer to act through international cooperation, but if necessary, we will defend ourselves, by ourselves."

On Saturday, Atomic Energy Organization of Iran director Mohammad Eslami said Tehran has no plans to enrich uranium beyond 60 percent, even if the Vienna talks fail.

Eslami said the enrichment levels were related to the needs of the country, in remarks published by the Russian news agency RIA Novosti.

Mora said he decided to reconvene the talks during many officials' holidays between Christmas and the New Year so as not to lose time, but he added that talks would stop for three days as of Friday "because the facilities will not be available," referring to the luxury hotel hosting most meetings. They are expecting to resume Monday next week.

Moscow's ambassador to the UN in Vienna, Mikhail Ulyanov, said on Twitter that negotiators "held businesslike and result-oriented discussions."

"In particular they agreed to intensify the drafting process in order to achieve an agreement ASAP," he said.

Earlier Monday, he said it was the "presumably final round of negotiations."  
*(With AFP and Reuters)*



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Iran](#)

[European Union \(EU\)](#)

[Iran nuclear talks](#)

[Enrique Mora](#)

Frenchman held in Iran begins hunger strikeIran to announce new ambassador in Yemen

---

## [Egyptian, Jordanian, Palestinian officials meet](#)

Mon, 2021-12-27 20:37

CAIRO: A meeting in Cairo between Egyptian, Jordanian and Palestinian officials on Monday discussed ways to enhance relations, developments related to the peace process, and efforts to strengthen Palestinian unity.

The participants were the country's intelligence chiefs, the foreign ministers of Egypt and Jordan, and Hussein Al-Sheikh, a member of the central committee of the Palestinian faction Fatah.

During the meeting, which comes within the framework of existing tripartite coordination, Al-Sheikh reviewed Israeli escalation and violations against the Palestinian people, and the crimes carried out by settlers under the protection of Israel's military.

He said these practices show Israel's deliberate disregard for the decisions of the international community.

The meeting's final statement stressed the need to consolidate calm and reconstruction in the Gaza Strip, and to find a political horizon to achieve a just and comprehensive peace on the basis of the two-state solution between Israel and Palestine.





Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Egypt](#)

[Palestine](#)

[Jordan](#)

Egypt slams Houthi attack on Saudi town Popular Palestinian protest succeeds in stopping settler march