

UN 'cautiously welcomes' Sudan accord amid post-coup erosion of trust

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The UN "cautiously" welcomed the agreement reached on Nov. 21 in Sudan between Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok and the leaders of October's military coup.

During a meeting on Friday to discuss the latest UN report on the situation in the country, Volker Perthes, the UN's special representative for Sudan, told the Security Council that the agreement is "far from perfect" but could help to avoid further bloodshed and provide a first step toward comprehensive dialogue and a return to constitutional order.

But he pointed out that there is strong opposition to the deal from a large segment of Sudanese stakeholders, including parties and associations within the Forces of Freedom and Change coalition, resistance committees, civil society organizations and women's groups, who feel "betrayed" by the coup. "Forthcoming decisions on government formation, high-level appointments and the establishment of transitional institutions will test the will and ability of the stakeholders to seek a common way out of the crisis," said Perthes. The military takeover on Oct. 25, during which Hamdok and other senior officials and activists were arrested, sparked protests across the country in what Perthes described as "the greatest crisis to date" faced by the political transition in the country.

The coup "exposed and deepened the mistrust between the military and civilian components, and within the civilian components" themselves, he told the members of the Security Council.

According to the UN, at least 44 people were killed and hundreds injured when Sudanese security forces used lethal force to crack down on peaceful protesters.

Perthes said this has caused the crisis to escalate as protesters continue to organize mass demonstrations in an effort "to reclaim the revolution and push for civilian rule."

He once again urged military leaders to reverse all unilateral decisions they have made in the wake of the coup, including the appointment of civilian members to the Sovereignty Council.

Referring to the ongoing state of emergency declared on the day of the coup by its leader, Gen. Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, Perthes warned that "a lack of inclusivity and consensus could cause further fragmentation.

Referring to Nov. 21 agreement, which stipulates the formation of technocratic cabinet, Perthes warned that such a move, while potentially a step toward advancing the political transition, could also create "a constitutional challenge if not based on consultations with the Forces for Freedom and Change."

He said: "Sudan's military and political leaders will primarily have to

rebuild trust with their own domestic public, particularly with the young generation,” and added that Sudanese authorities also need to work on regaining financial, economic and political support from the international community.

For this to happen, the envoy reiterated the need to release all political detainees, halt arbitrary arrests, guarantee the right to peaceful protest, and bring to justice those guilty of using violence against protesters.

Other key steps toward rebuilding trust among the international community include allowing the prime minister to freely form his own technocratic cabinet, lifting the state of emergency and restoring freedom of the press. However, Perthes called on the international community to adopt a balanced approach to Sudan and not block aid to the country for too long.

“In the aftermath of the coup, the decision by donors to pause international development assistance is having a significant impact on the livelihoods of the Sudanese people, and risks rolling back the hard-won achievements of the past two years,” he said.

In addition, he urged Sudanese authorities to guarantee meaningful participation by women in the political process. The message from women in the country is clear, he said: “There can be no going back on the hard-earned gains on women’s rights, and they are asking for the international community’s support in this regard.



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Sudan youth radio gagged for six weeks after coup Sudan cut off from \$650 million of international funding after coup

Sudan youth radio gagged for six weeks after coup

Author:

Sat, 2021-12-11 01:43

KHARTOUM: A lively youth-run radio station, Sudan's 96.0 FM was muzzled for 46 days after authorities banished the channel from the airwaves following an Oct. 25 military coup.

"I felt like a person who had the ability to speak and suddenly stopped ... It's a painful feeling," Khaled Yehia, production manager of "Hala 96," told AFP from the station's headquarters overlooking the Nile in Khartoum. Sudan, with a long history of military coups, has undergone a fragile journey toward civilian rule since the 2019 ousting of former President Omar Bashir following mass street protests.

A joint military-civilian transitional government took over, but the troubled alliance was shattered on Oct. 25 when Gen. Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan launched a military coup that sparked international condemnation, mass protests and deadly crackdowns.

Despite the release of Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok from effective house arrest, several radio broadcasts were silenced.

The Information Ministry refused to renew the license of Monte Carlo radio's Arabic service, which broadcasts from Paris, while the BBC's Arabic service was banned.

I felt like a person who had the ability to speak and suddenly stopped ... It's a painful feeling.

Khaled Yehia, Production manager of Hala 96

"All of the other radio channels were back on air two weeks after the coup except for Hala 96, BBC and Monte Carlo (RMC)," said Abiy Abdel Halim, Hala's programming manager.

"When we asked the authorities for the reason, we were referred to a military official who said there were orders from above regarding the editorial line of the station," he added.

Hala 96 was finally allowed to go back on the air on Thursday.

Founded in 2014 under the heavy-handed rule of Bashir, Hala Radio hit the airwaves with daily programs alternating between politics, culture and sports.

"We started playing patriotic songs that would mobilize crowds," when the demonstrations against Bashir in December 2018 began, Abdel Halim said.

"And we weren't even stopped back then save for one time and only for 24 hours."

Boasting a staff of 35 on-air presenters, journalists, technicians and

administrators all under 40, they mirror the demographics of Sudan. Youth represent about 68 percent of the country's 48 million-strong population.

On Wednesday, dozens of journalists protested in front of the radio channel's headquarters carrying banners with the words "Free Hala 96."

Throughout Bashir's dictatorial reign, Sudan ranked 174 out of 180 countries on Reporters Without Borders' Press Freedom Index. Following his ousting, it marginally improved to 159.

"What with propaganda, the internet being disconnected and the crackdown on journalists, this military coup has jeopardized the fragile gains from the revolution," the Paris-based press freedom group said last month.

It described Sudan as a "very hostile environment" for media to operate.

Last week in a report submitted to the Security Council, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urged Sudanese authorities to "respect freedom of speech and of the press."



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Death toll in Sudan's Darfur tribal clashes hits 138: medics
Sudan cut off from \$650 million of international funding after coup

Israeli troops kill Palestinian in West Bank clash

Author:

Sat, 2021-12-11 01:28

RAMALLAH: Israeli troops shot and killed a Palestinian and injured others on Friday during clashes at a protest against Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian Health Ministry and medics said. The Israeli military said that hundreds of Palestinians had gathered in the area, south of the Palestinian city of Nablus, burning tires and throwing rocks toward troops at the scene.

The troops "responded with riot dispersal means to restore order. We are aware of reports that a Palestinian was killed," the military said in a statement.

The Palestinian killed was shot in the head, and died soon after being rushed to hospital, the Palestinian Health Ministry said in a statement. Four other Palestinians were injured by Israeli fire, and over 50 others suffered from tear gas inhalation, medics said.

The West Bank is among territories Israel captured in the 1967 Middle East war where Palestinians seek statehood.

Violence has simmered there since US-sponsored talks between the Palestinians and Israel broke down in 2014.

Palestinians have staged weekly protests in the village of Beita, south of Nablus, to voice anger at a nearby Israeli settler outpost, often leading to violent clashes with Israeli troops.

The settlers agreed to leave the outpost in July under an agreement with Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, following weeks of demonstrations by Palestinians lighting fires that often engulfed the outpost in smoke.

But many of the outpost's buildings have remained, locked and under military guard.

Palestinians, who claim the land the outpost is on, have vowed to continue their demonstrations.

Most countries deem the settlements illegal.

Israel disputes this, citing biblical and political connections to the land, as well as its security needs.



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Israeli foreign minister arrives in Cairo to strengthen relations

[**Around a dozen people injured in explosion at south Lebanon Palestinian camp**](#)

Author:

Reuters

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Fri, 2021-12-10 19:45

BEIRUT: A large explosion rocked a Palestinian camp in the southern Lebanese port city of Tyre on Friday night, injuring about a dozen people, according to rescue workers on scene and a Palestinian source inside the camp.

The state-run National News Agency (NNA) reported an unspecified number of deaths, but local media and civil defense workers on scene said there had been no fatalities. A security source also said fatalities had not been recorded.

The NNA reported that the blast emanated from a Hamas weapons depot in the Burj Al-Shemali camp and a judge had ordered security forces to launch an investigation.

A number of armed Palestinian factions, including Hamas and the Fatah Movement, hold effective control over roughly a dozen Palestinian camps in the country, which Lebanese authorities by custom do not enter.

Shehab News Agency, seen as close to Hamas, quoted a Palestinian source as saying the explosion was caused by the ignition of oxygen canisters stored for use in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.

The security source said the fire had since been brought under control. Hamas has not officially commented.

The area surrounding the blast had been evacuated and rescue crews had deployed, the Palestinian source said.

Videos from the scene shared by local media show a number of small bright red flashes above the southern city, followed by a large explosion and the sound of glass breaking.



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Anger in Lebanon as Palestinian refugees granted work rights
Palestinian teen facing East Jerusalem eviction arrested after stabbing

Anger in Lebanon as Palestinian refugees granted work rights

Author:

Fri, 2021-12-10 22:34

BEIRUT: Labor Minister Mustafa Bayram finalized the decision on Wednesday, but it has been met with criticism, particularly from the Christian right, which has launched a campaign against the minister.

The decision allows Palestinian refugees – many of whom are doctors, lawyers and nurses – to work in the managerial, business, tourism, industrial, information, health, education and service sectors.

It includes “Palestinians born in Lebanese territories, born to a Lebanese mother or married to a Lebanese citizen, and non-registered Palestinians who were born in Lebanon,” but forbids them from joining state security services or free profession syndicates.

Major political parties and figures criticized Palestinian refugees and condemned the decision, warning that it was the beginning of a push for naturalization.

Gebran Bassil, head of the Free Patriotic Movement, said: “The decision violates the labor law and the constitution. It is veiled naturalization and it is rejected.”

In a tweet, he called on labor syndicates to reject the decree and urged the Lebanese public to ignore it. “This is unacceptable and we will not allow the stealing of jobs from Lebanese in such circumstances,” he said.

Former labor minister Sejaan Kazzi said that Bayram’s decision “contradicts the decision issued in 2015,” adding: “This new resolution will increase the Lebanese people’s unemployment rate by 40 percent and open the door to settlement and naturalization.”

The Kataeb Party said: “Instead of Bayram increasing the opportunities for Lebanese people to prevent their state of destitution – with hundreds of them being laid off – he allowed non-Lebanese to compete with them for their livelihoods.”

A source examining the right of Palestinian refugees to work in Lebanon told Arab News that former labor minister Trad Hamadeh tried to push through a similar decree that was canceled by the next prime minister.

The source said: “There is no specific mechanism for the adoption of a ministerial decree.”

"Bayram's decision does not affect Palestinians whose specializations require membership in powerful syndicates. These syndicates also prevent Lebanese who are not members from practicing their professions.

"This decision only allows the use of Palestinian labor in professions that do not require advanced degrees. These are modest craft and manual professions that the Lebanese do not want to work in.

"Simultaneously, this decision prevents a social crisis in the camps as a result of the economic collapse and many unemployed young Palestinians turning to drugs and theft. In other words, it is a decision to defuse the situation.

"Palestinian refugees contribute to Lebanon's economy; thousands of them are paid in dollars by the Palestine Liberation Organization or international organizations and they spend their money in Lebanon."

In a press conference on Friday, Bayram said: "What was prohibited by the constitution and laws is still prohibited for the non-Lebanese. Foreign workers in all sectors work under an exception license issued by the labor minister. However, the Lebanese people have the priority in all professions."

He added: "90 percent of people criticizing us have not read the whole decision. The Lebanese worker holds the priority, and the exception is granted to the foreign worker. Some sectors do not appeal to the Lebanese, such as the construction and agriculture sector, where we gave foreign workers priority.

"The decree gives Palestinians privileges by exempting them from having a work permit and allowing them membership of social security. We are in trouble in the job market and trying to fill the gaps. The Lebanese market needs foreign labor."

On social media, FPM supporters launched a campaign against Bayram. Some activists referred to the employment of "strangers," a term that was used to describe Palestinian refugees during the civil war.

Separately, at the end of his tour in Lebanon to examine the Palestinian refugee situation, UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini said: "The living conditions in the camps continues to deteriorate, and Palestinians, who are some of the most marginalized groups in Lebanon, are now extremely desperate, frustrated and angry."

He added: "I met graduates whose only hope for a better future is to emigrate. I met a young father who has nightmares about how to buy milk for his child. I heard of a man who killed his wife because she shared the family's food basket with neighbors who were hungry. In addition, there is an increased child labor rate, divorce and the collapse of the social fabric."

Lazzarini welcomed any measures that would ease restrictions on the rights of Palestinian refugees and promised to "make an effort to increase the required funding."

He said: "The economic and financial collapse in Lebanon was accompanied by the UNRWA's financial difficulties in maintaining the basic services of refugees, such as education, health and social networking."



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