

# Arab coalition carries out airstrikes on Yemeni capital

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RIYADH: The Arab coalition carried out strikes on targets in Yemen's capital Sanaa, Al Ekhbariya reported on Saturday.

Recently, the coalition has been striking Houthi militia assets in the city in an effort to degrade the Iran-backed group's capabilities to launch attacks toward Saudi Arabia.

The coalition warned civilians from crowding around the targeted areas.

– *More to follow.*



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## How olive trees came to symbolize

# Palestinian national identity

Sat, 2021-11-27 00:32

AMMAN: Few things encapsulate the Palestinian identity quite like the humble olive tree. It roots an entire nation to a land and livelihood lost to occupation, while serving as a potent symbol of resistance against the territorial encroachment of illegal settlements.

In the balmy Mediterranean climate of the Levant, olive trees have for centuries provided a steady source of income from the sale of their fruit and the silky, golden oil derived from it.

To this day, between 80,000 and 100,000 families in the Palestinian territories rely on olives and their oil as primary or secondary sources of income. The industry accounts for about 70 percent of local fruit production and contributes about 14 percent to the local economy.

It is perhaps no surprise, then, that these hardy trees feature so prominently in Palestinian art and literature, even in the far-flung diaspora, as symbols of rootedness in an age of displacement, self-sufficiency in times of hardship, and peace in periods of war.



Olive trees provide Palestinians with a vital part of their diet, but have also become a symbol of hope and unity. (Supplied)

“It represents the steadfastness of the Palestinian people, who are able to live under difficult circumstances,” Sliman Mansour, a Palestinian painter in Jerusalem whose art has long focused on the theme of land, told Arab News.

“In the same way that the trees can survive and have deep roots in their land so, too, do the Palestinian people.”

Mahmoud Darwish, the celebrated Palestinian poet who died in 2008, sprinkled his works with references to olives. In his 1964 poetry collection “Leaves of the Olive Tree,” he wrote: “Olive is an evergreen tree; Olive will stay evergreen; Like a shield for the universe.”

Such is the economic and symbolic power of the olive tree in Palestinian national life that the rural communities that have tended these crops for generations are routinely targeted by illegal settlers attempting to denude families of their land and living.

Since the olive harvest began on Oct. 12 this year, observers in the West Bank have reported Israeli settlers attacking Palestinian villages on an almost daily basis, beating farmers, spraying crops with chemicals and uprooting olive trees by the hundreds.

## **FASTFACTS**

**\* The land around the Sea of Galilee was once the world's most important olive region.**

**\* The area was the site of the earliest olive cultivation, dating back to 5,000 B.C.**

**\* Southern Spain and southeastern Italy are now the biggest olive-oil-producing regions.**

Such violence and vandalism is nothing new. The International Committee of the Red Cross said more than 9,300 trees were destroyed in the West Bank between Aug. 2020 and Aug. 2021 alone, compounding the already damaging effects of climate change.

"For years, the ICRC has observed a seasonal peak in violence by Israeli settlers residing in certain settlements and outposts in the West Bank toward Palestinian farmers and their property in the period leading up to the olive-harvest season, as well as during the harvest season itself in October and November," Els Debuf, head of the ICRC's mission in Jerusalem, said recently.

"Farmers also experience acts of harassment and violence that aim at preventing a successful harvest, not to mention the destruction of farming equipment, or the uprooting and burning of olive trees."

According to independent observers appointed by the UN, the violence attributed to Israeli settlers against Palestinians in the West Bank has worsened in recent months amid "an atmosphere of impunity."

In response to these attacks, Palestinian farmers have been forced to plant about 10,000 new olive trees in the West Bank each year to prevent the region's 5,000-year-old industry from dying out.



The humble plant continues to have a special place in the hearts of the Palestinian people and their quest for statehood. (Supplied)

Nabil Anani, a celebrated Palestinian painter, ceramicist and sculptor, believes the olive tree is a powerful national symbol that must be protected at all costs.

“For me it is both a national and artistic symbol; it reflects the nature and beauty of Palestine,” Anani, who is considered one of the founders of contemporary Palestinian art, told Arab News. “Our traditions, culture, poems and songs are often centered around the tree.”

To the west of Ramallah, the administrative heart of the Palestine government, Anani said the hillsides bristle with olive trees as far as the eye can see.

“They cover entire mountains and it is one of the most pleasant views that anyone can observe,” he added.

## **INNUMBERS**

- \* **48%** – Proportion of agricultural land in the West Bank and Gaza devoted to olive trees.
- \* **70%** – Share of total fruit production in Palestine provided by olives
- \* **14%** – Contribution of olives to the Palestinian economy.
- \* **93%** – Proportion of the olive harvest used to make olive oil.

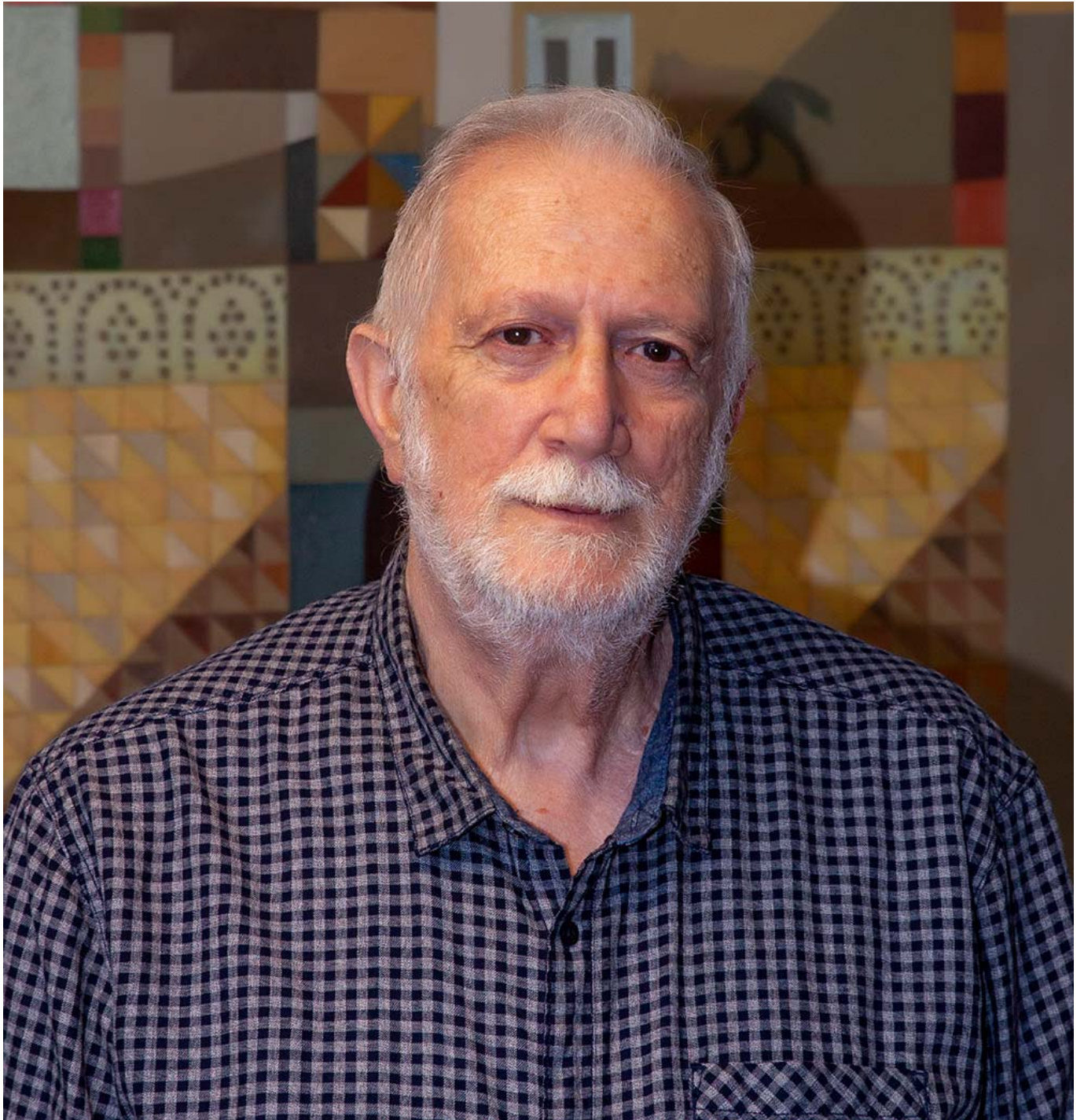
The late Fadwa Touqan, one of the most respected female poets in Palestinian literature, saw olive trees as symbols of unity with nature and of hope for the renewal and rebirth of Palestine.

In a 1993 poem, she wrote: "The roots of the olive tree are from my soil and they are always fresh; Its lights are emitted from my heart and it is inspired; Until my creator filled my nerve, root and body; So, he got up while shaking its leaves due to maturity created within him."

More than just a source of income and artistic inspiration, however, olives also form a vital part of the Palestinian diet and culinary culture. Pickled olives feature in breakfasts, lunches and dinners, providing significant nutritional health benefits.

Olive oil, meanwhile, is used in scores of recipes, the most popular of which is zaatar w zeit: fluffy flatbread dipped in oil and then dabbed liberally in a thyme-based powder that includes sesame seeds and spices.

Beyond the dinner table, olive oil historically has had many other uses: As a source of fuel in oil lamps, a natural treatment for dry hair, nails and skin, and even as an insecticide.



Sliman Mansour, a Palestinian painter in Jerusalem whose art has long focused on the theme of land. (Supplied)

It is not only the fruit and its oil that the olive tree contributes to the cultural and economic life of Palestine. Olive pits, the hard stones in the center of the fruit, have long been repurposed to make strings of prayer beads used by Muslims and Christians alike.

As for the leaves and branches of the trees, they are trimmed during the harvest season to be used as feed for sheep and goats, while the broad canopy of the olive grove provides animals and their shepherds with welcome shade from the relentless afternoon sun.

The wood of felled trees has also been widely used in the carving of religious icons as far back as the 16th century, and as a source of firewood

before the modern profusion of gas. In fact, the glassmakers of Hebron, who are famed for their stained glass, continue to use charcoal derived from olive trees to fire their kilns.

While the quantifiably beneficial uses of the olive tree are many, perhaps what is even more valuable to Palestinians is the inspiration it has provided to poets, painters and prophets down the ages, not to mention the special place it continues to occupy in their culture and quest for statehood.

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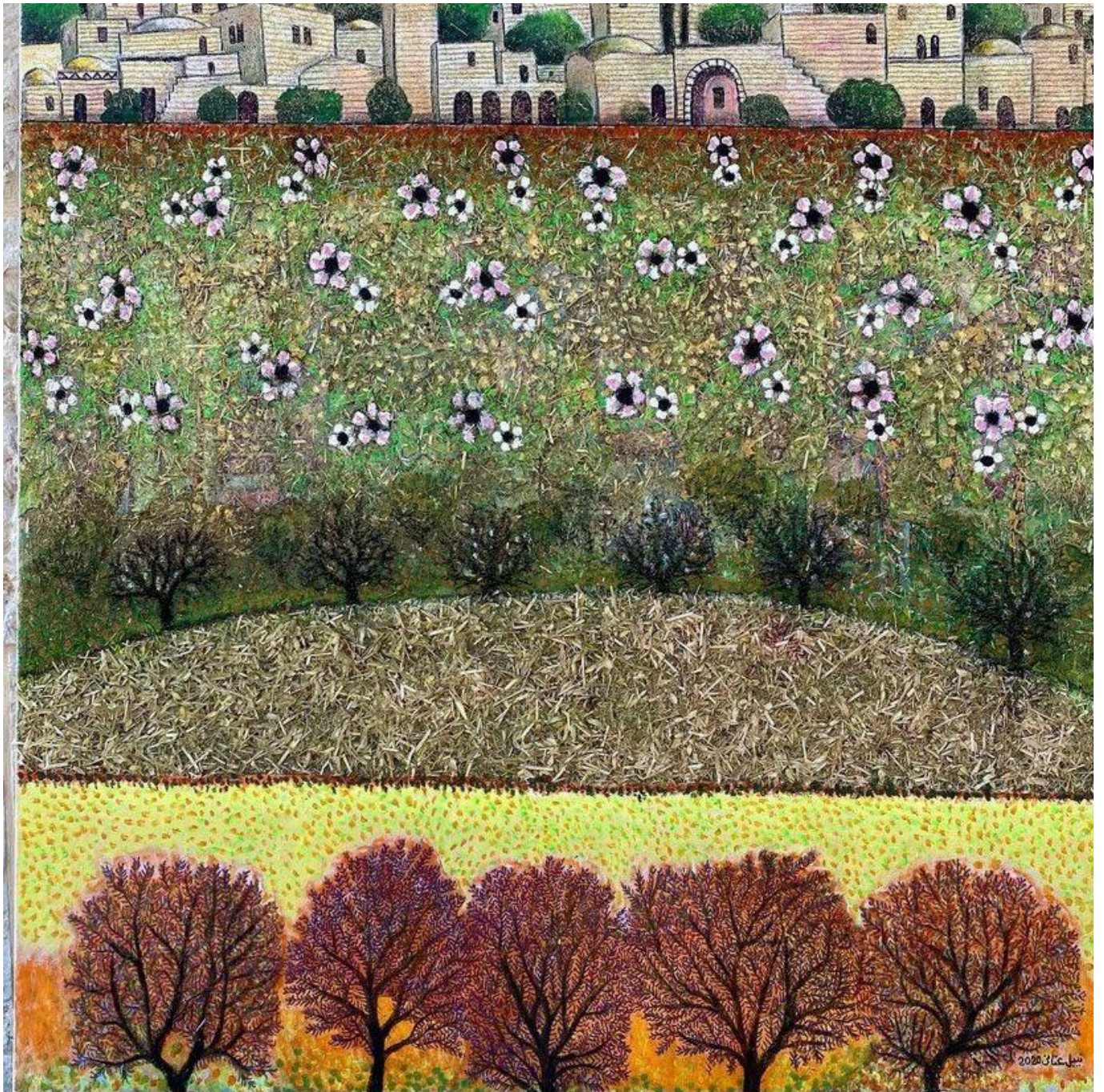


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Jouf, the olive oil capital of Saudi Arabia 18m olive, palm trees planted in Jouf in line with Saudi Green Initiative

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# US threatens escalation with Iran in nuclear row

Author:

Reuters

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Sat, 2021-11-27 00:28

VIENNA: The US has threatened to confront Iran at the International Atomic Energy Agency next month if it does not cooperate more with the watchdog – an escalation that could undermine talks on reviving a 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran.

Tehran is locked in several standoffs with the IAEA, whose 35-nation board of governors is holding a quarterly meeting this week.

Former US President Donald Trump pulled Washington out of the JCPOA, otherwise known as the Iran nuclear deal, that lifted sanctions on Tehran in return for restrictions on its atomic activities.

Trump reimposed debilitating sanctions, after which Tehran expanded its nuclear work and reduced cooperation with the IAEA.

Iran is currently denying the agency access to re-install surveillance cameras at a workshop at the TESA Karaj complex.

The IAEA also wants answers on the origin of uranium particles found at apparently old but undeclared sites, and says Iran continues to subject its inspectors to “excessively invasive physical searches.”

In a statement, it said: “If Iran’s non-cooperation is not immediately remedied ... the board will have no choice but to reconvene in extraordinary session before the end of this year in order to address the crisis.”

It added it was referring “especially” to re-installing IAEA cameras at the Karaj site, which makes parts for advanced centrifuges for enriching uranium. That workshop was struck by apparent sabotage in June, which Iran says was an attack by Israel. Israel has not commented on the incident.

One of four IAEA cameras installed there was destroyed and its footage is missing. Iran removed all the cameras after the incident.

IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi said on Wednesday that he did not know if the workshop was operating again, and that time was running out to reach an agreement, adding no progress had been made on several other disputes.

An extraordinary board meeting would most likely be aimed at passing a resolution against Iran, a diplomatic escalation likely to antagonize Tehran. That could jeopardize indirect talks between Iran and the US on reviving the JCPOA, due to resume on Monday.

Iran wants the lifting of all sanctions in a verifiable process, its Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said on Friday.



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[Iran nuclear deal](#)

Protesters, police clash in central Iran after rally over water shortages  
Israel warns US against 'less-for-less' Iran nuclear deal

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## [UN envoy: Sudan's new deal saved the country from civil war](#)

Author:

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Sat, 2021-11-27 00:18

CAIRO: The deal struck in Sudan to reinstate the prime minister following a military coup is imperfect but has saved the country from sliding into civil strife, the UN envoy to Sudan said on Friday.

Volker Perthes was speaking of the agreement between Sudan's military leaders and Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, who was deposed and put under house arrest

following the coup last month that stirred an international outcry. The military takeover threatened to thwart the process of democratic transition that the country had embarked on since the ouster of longtime autocrat Omar Bashir.

The deal, signed on Sunday, was seen as the biggest concession made by the country's top military leader, Gen. Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, since the coup. However, the country's pro-democracy groups have dismissed it as illegitimate and accused Hamdok of allowing himself to serve as a fig leaf for continued military rule.

"The agreement of course is not perfect," Perthes said.

"But it is better than not having an agreement and continuing on a path where the military in the end will be the sole ruler."

Both signatories felt compelled to make "bitter concessions" in order to spare the country the risk of more violence, chaos and international isolation, he added.

"It would not have been possible to exclude a scenario which would have brought Sudan to something close to what we have seen in Yemen, Libya or Syria," Perthes said. He spoke to the AP via videoconference from Khartoum. Sudan has been struggling with its transition to a democratic government since the military overthrow of Bashir in 2019, following a mass uprising against three decades of his rule.

The deal that Hamdok signed with the military envisions an independent Cabinet of technocrats led by the prime minister until new elections are held.

The government will still remain under military oversight, although Hamdok claims he will have the power to appoint ministers.

The deal also stipulates that all political detainees arrested following the Oct. 25 coup be released. So far, several ministers and politicians have been freed. The number of those still in detention remains unknown.

"We have a situation now where we at least have an important step toward the restoration of the constitutional order," said Perthes.

Since the takeover, protesters have repeatedly taken to the streets in some of the largest demonstrations in recent years.

Sudanese security forces have cracked down on the rallies and have killed more than 40 protesters so far, according to activist groups.

Further measures need to be taken to prove the viability of the deal, said Perthes, including the release of all detainees, the cessation of the use of violence against protesters and Hamdok's full freedom to choose his Cabinet members.

On Thursday, thousands rallied in Khartoum and in several Sudanese provinces to demand a fully civilian government and protest the deal.

Activists had circulated videos on social media showing tear gas canisters being fired at protesters.

However, the Sudanese police said that protesters had thrown Molotov cocktails and hurled stones at two police stations in the capital of Khartoum, and its twin city of Omdurman, wounding more than 30 policemen. In a statement released late Thursday, authorities said they arrested 15 people.



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Thousands of Sudanese protest against deal between PM Hamdok and military35  
killed in clashes in Sudan's restive Darfur – officials

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## [Iraq sends extra planes to Belarus to repatriate migrants](#)

Author:

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Sat, 2021-11-27 00:12

BAGHDAD: Iraq is sending more planes to Belarus to repatriate more than 800 migrants stuck on the border with Poland, adding to around 1,000 already collected since operations started, authorities said on Friday. Hundreds of Iraqis, most of them Kurds, have been flown back since repatriation flights began on Nov. 18 from the ex-Soviet state. Thousands of migrants have been camped on the border there for weeks hoping

to enter the EU, often in bitter conditions – with those returning to Iraq showing injuries from the freezing cold.

Another flight on Friday will bring 431 people, followed by a flight on Saturday to collect 430 more, Foreign Ministry spokesman Ahmed Al-Sahaf said. Most of the thousands of Iraqis stranded on the border say they have spent their savings, sold valuables and even taken loans to escape economic hardship in Iraq and start a new life in the EU.

The West accuses Belarus of bringing in would-be migrants – mostly from the Middle East – under the false pretense they would be to cross into EU members Poland and Lithuania.

Belarus has denied the claim and criticized the EU for not taking in the migrants.

Aid groups say at least 11 migrants have died on the two sides of the border since the crisis began in the summer, and have criticized the Polish government over its policy of pushing migrants back.

Belarus leader Alexander Lukashenko told migrants on the border with Poland on Friday that he would not try to stop them from reaching the EU, urging Germany to take them in.

In footage released by state media, Lukashenko was shown visiting a center near the Polish border hosting hundreds of migrants who traveled to Belarus in the hopes of reaching Europe.

Lukashenko was shown walking among and talking to the migrants in the center, then addressing them outside from a podium in a campaign-style speech.

Dressed in winter coats as they stood in the cold, the migrants appeared confused, though there were scatterings of applause.

“If anybody wants to go West – that is your right. We will not try to catch you, beat you, and hold you behind barbed wire,” Lukashenko said.

“We will work with you to achieve your dream.”

With many of the migrants hoping to reach Germany, Lukashenko said he was asking the German people to welcome them.

“Please take these people in. This number is not very big. They want to live in Germany – 2,000 people is not a big problem for Germany,” he said.

In recent months thousands of migrants from the Middle East have traveled to Belarus in the hopes of getting across the border into EU member Poland.



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Tunisia rescues 487 migrants in crowded boat off its coastUK PM asks France to take back Channel-crossing migrants