

Palestinian PM hopeful that US Consulate will reopen in Jerusalem

Thu, 2021-11-11 02:43

RAMALLAH: Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammed Shtayyeh on Wednesday said he hopes US President Joe Biden will keep promises his administration has made to the Palestinian people, including a pledge to reopen the American Consulate in Jerusalem.

He also talked about the difficulties the Palestinian Authority is facing, politically and financially. He spoke of his hope for change but presented little in the way of practical evidence that this coming, saying only: "There are promises."

Shtayyeh added: "There are American promises related to reopening the American Consulate in Jerusalem, and we hope that they will be implemented." Former US President Donald Trump's administration closed the consulate, Washington's diplomatic mission to the Palestinians, in 2018 when it moved the US Embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv. When he took office in January this year, Biden said he would reopen the consulate but this has yet to happen.

Shtayyeh rejected Israeli proposals to reopen the consulate in Ramallah instead of Jerusalem, saying: "Ramallah is not the capital of Palestine. Ramallah is not Jerusalem and will not be."

Speaking during a briefing of the foreign press, attended by Arab News, Shtayyeh also denied reports of a US initiative to form a Palestinian unity government.

The Israeli i24 news channel had reported that the Biden administration is planning an initiative to assemble a new government that would include ministers from Hamas and Fatah in an attempt to heal divisions.

The prime minister also criticized a recent announcement by Israeli authorities of plans to build more new settlement units in the West Bank, and called on the US and European nations to help preserve the two-state solution by putting pressure on Israel to halt its plans.

"Israel is waging three wars against us: A war against geography, through land confiscation; a war against the population, which is represented in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood; and its war against Palestinian money, through deductions from Palestinian revenues," he said

HIGHLIGHT

Mohammed Shtayyeh said 'there are American promises' to restore the mission 'and we hope that they will be implemented.'

Shtayyeh accused Israel of illegally confiscating between 220 million (\$70.6 million) and 250 million shekels a month without any independent financial audit.

"We are bleeding, financially," he added.

He said the Palestinian Authority is facing a financial deficit as a result of the Israeli actions, a decline in international and Arab funding in the past two years, and the decline in the local economy as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the meantime, spending requirements remain the same despite the lack of finance, he added.

"We are carrying out our obligations, supporting the Gaza Strip and helping Jerusalem, as well as in different areas where the Palestinians are," said Shtayyeh.

Some press reports have suggested that the Palestinian government might reduce the salaries of public-sector workers in an attempt to address the financial crisis.

"We hope that next year will be better," Shtayyeh said. "There are Arab promises to resume support from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar, as well as Algeria."

Regarding the possibility of resuming the political process for negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis, he said that there is no practical progress on this front.

"There is a political vacuum," he added. "There is no political initiative to fill this vacuum and the US administration must abide by its promises that were included in the phone call between President Biden and President Mahmoud Abbas."

Shtayyeh accused the Israeli government of refusing to engage in efforts to achieve peace, after comments by Prime Minister Naftali Bennett dismissing any possibility of a Palestinian state.

Asked about a reported sharp decline in the popularity of the Palestinian Authority among Palestinians, he said: "The failure to achieve any political result on the ground as a result of Israeli policies is undoubtedly limiting popularity."

"We know what tickles the sentiments of the general public but we are not looking for popularity; we have a national political vision that we are striving for."



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Israeli military complicit as settler violence hits record-high, UN experts say
UK funding cuts push UN Palestine aid agency 'close to collapse'

[‘No magic wand’ to resolve Lebanon’s economic crisis](#)

Thu, 2021-11-11 02:37

BEIRUT: The Lebanese government does not have a “magic wand” to resolve the country’s economic crisis, Prime Minister Najib Mikati said Wednesday, as he expressed sympathy for people’s hardships.

He made the remarks after visiting the Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Bishop of Beirut Elias Audi, also speaking about the problems dogging the probe into last year’s deadly port explosion.

There are demands from Hezbollah and the Amal Movement for Judge Tarek Bitar to be removed from the blast investigation, with both boycotting Cabinet sessions until he is dropped. The prime minister has replaced Cabinet sessions with mini-ministerial meetings to address vital issues.

“We have no magic wand,” Mikati said, answering calls to activate the government’s role in saving Lebanon from the economic crisis. “We feel the

citizens' concerns and we seek to alleviate some burdens, especially the living conditions."

He added that the Lebanese judiciary needed to assume its role fairly and adopt unified laws so that a result could be reached. "We support keeping Bitar in charge and we do not interfere in the judiciary."

On Tuesday, a group of female activists stormed the Justice Palace in Beirut and sealed the office of Judge Habib Mezher in protest against his "illegal attempt to remove Bitar from the case and take over the confidential investigations."

The Lebanese Judges Club urged politicians to stop interfering in the judiciary for the country's sake, so that the judicial process could take its course without any abuse. "Otherwise, history will not be merciful," it said. Lebanon is also dealing with the ongoing diplomatic fallout resulting from the information minister's comments about the war in Yemen.

The Arab League's attempt to mend fences between Lebanon and Saudi Arabia has failed, after the body's assistant secretary-general Hossam Zaki tried to mediate.

We have no magic wand. We feel the citizens' concerns and we seek to alleviate some burdens, especially the living conditions.

Najib Mikati

Hezbollah insists that Information Minister George Kordahi should not resign over the remarks.

Mikati reiterated that the brotherly ties between Lebanon and the Gulf states were a priority and he once again called on the minister to resign, stressing that "supreme national interest, in political affairs and in international relations, must prevail over factional and personal interests."

He met Lebanon's ambassadors to Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, Fawzi Kabbara and Miled Nammour, on Wednesday. They returned to Lebanon after the two Gulf countries ordered them to leave.

The two ambassadors expressed their fear of this crisis affecting the future of bilateral relations with the Gulf states and its repercussions on the interests of Lebanese expat communities.

They told Mikati that, upon their departure, Saudi and Bahraini officials had assured them of their deep concern for the close ties with Lebanon and for the solid friendship that bound them to the Lebanese people.

Both stressed it would be harder to restore ties the more time that passed. Al-Qabas newspaper, quoting a Kuwaiti security source on Wednesday, reported: "The Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior has stopped issuing all kinds of visas to the Lebanese, until further notice, against the backdrop of the recent diplomatic crisis between the Gulf Cooperation Council countries and Lebanon."

The source told the newspaper: "Lebanese with Kuwaiti residency are not included in the decision, and they have the right to return to the country. Visitor visas for families, tourists, businessmen and government officials, as well as work visas, will no longer be granted."



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[Houthi missiles hit Mocha as UN Yemen envoy visits city](#)

Thu, 2021-11-11 02:31

AL-MUKALLA: Three missiles fired by the Iran-backed Houthis on Wednesday struck Yemen's Red Sea port city of Mocha during a visit by the UN's special envoy to the country.

Residents claimed three large explosions had rocked areas on the edge of the city, causing damage to private properties.

"The missiles hit areas close to farms and residential areas on the city's outskirts. I think the missiles were aimed at a security facility in Mocha," an official, who wished to remain anonymous, said.

UN Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg was reportedly in Mocha meeting with local officials, political leaders, and civil society representatives when the aerial attacks took place on Wednesday morning.

His discussions had centered around the humanitarian crisis in the Red Sea area, growing displacements, and the impact of Houthi attacks on peace and public facilities. The UN ambassador also held talks with Brig. Gen. Tareq Mohammed Saleh, nephew of former Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh, and commander of the National Resistance in the country's western coast, on efforts to end the war.

In September, the Houthis launched a number of missiles and explosive-rigged drones toward Mocha port as officials were preparing to reopen the strategic dock. The strikes damaged parts of the newly repaired infrastructure, disrupting traffic and the reopening ceremony.

On Tuesday, during a rare visit by a UN official to the besieged city of Taiz, Grundberg met with the governor of Taiz and local political party leaders.

On his trip to Taiz, the envoy said: "We see people that are having their freedom of movement severely restricted; we see people that are affected by the declining economic situation, the frequent interruptions in the delivery of basic services like water and electricity, and a general state of insecurity."

BACKGROUND

UN Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg was reportedly in Mocha meeting with local officials, political leaders, and civil society representatives when the aerial attacks took place on Wednesday morning.

The Houthi missile strikes on Mocha came hours after the group's officials had slammed Grundberg for visiting government-controlled areas, accusing him of giving a morale boost to its opponents.

Abdul Kader Al-Murtadha, head of the Houthi prisoner exchange committee, tweeted that the UN envoy had failed to broker a new prisoner swap between the movement and the Yemeni government. "It is clear that his mission is to conduct some visits to the mercenaries' areas to raise their morale more than anything else," Al-Murtagh said.

The UN Security Council on Tuesday imposed sanctions on three Houthi military leaders, accusing them of undermining peace and stability in Yemen and committing humanitarian abuses.

The council's 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee added Saleh Mesfer Saleh Al-Shaer, Muhammad Abd Al-Karim Al-Ghamari, and commander of the Houthi 5th Military Region, Yusuf Al-Madani, bringing the total number of blacklisted Yemeni figures to nine.

The three leaders were blacklisted for their alleged roles in orchestrating systematic human rights crimes, including the arbitrary abductions of opponents and activists, commanding military units that shelled and attacked Yemeni cities including Marib, and smuggling weapons.

The committee said: "As of 2021, Al-Madani was assigned to the offensive targeting Marib. Persistent Houthi repositioning and other violations of the ceasefire provisions of the Hodeidah Agreement have destabilized a city that serves as a critical thoroughfare for humanitarian and essential commercial commodities."

Al-Shaer, Al-Ghamari, and Al-Madani are included on the Arab coalition's list of most wanted Houthi leaders.

Meanwhile, the killing of a pregnant journalist in the port city of Aden on Tuesday was condemned by local Yemeni officials and foreign envoys who demanded that the perpetrators be brought to justice.

Yemeni writer Rasha Al-Harazi and her husband Mahmoud Al-Atemi, also a journalist, were in their car when a blast ripped through it, killing her and critically wounding Al-Atemi.

The Yemeni Journalists Syndicate described her death as "an unprecedented horrific crime," and called on local authorities in Aden to launch an immediate probe into the incident.

Yemeni Prime Minister Maeen Abdulmalik Saeed said he had ordered an investigation by security authorities, and he vowed to put an end to terrorism.



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Israeli military complicit as settler violence hits record-high, UN experts say
UN Security Council sanctions three leading Houthis

Israeli military complicit as settler violence hits record-high, UN experts say

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Thu, 2021-11-11 01:43

NEW YORK: UN human rights experts on Wednesday condemned the record-high levels of violence carried out by Israeli settlers against Palestinians in the Occupied Territories this year.

They also criticized the Israeli government for its lack of action to curb the attacks and protect Palestinians. Under the Fourth Geneva Convention, Israel, as an occupying power, has an obligation to protect the population under occupation.

Instead of intervening to halt the violence, however, Israeli security forces and private security companies “respond to settler-related violence by ordering Palestinians to leave the area, including Palestinian-owned land, or even actively support the settlers,” the experts said.

According to the UN, 410 attacks by settlers have been recorded so far this year, during which four Palestinians were killed. This compares with 358 recorded attacks last year and 335 in 2019.

“These settler attacks are primarily directed against rural Palestinian families living on small farms or in villages and towns in the occupied West Bank, located in close proximity to Israeli settlements,” the independent experts said.

“Many of these Palestinians reside in the so-called ‘Area C’ of the West Bank, which is under complete Israeli security and civil control, and where Israel’s de facto annexation stratagem is most evident.”

The experts, who include Michael Lynk, the UN’s Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territories occupied since 1967, said that the violence takes various forms, including “physical violence, shooting with live ammunition, torching of fields and livestock, theft and vandalization of property, trees and crops, stone-throwing and tenacious intimidation of herders and their families.”

In the fall, they added, Palestinians farmers harvesting their olive crops are often threatened and attacked by settlers armed with rocks and pipes, and their olives are stolen or destroyed.

The experts also told how settlers set their sheep and cattle grazing on private and public land confiscated from Palestinians “as an initial step to drive Palestinians away from their land. If Palestinians attempt to keep their land, they are frequently met with violence.”

The investigations into most cases involving attacks by settlers between 2005 and 2019 were closed by Israeli authorities with no charges filed, according to Yesh Din, an Israeli human rights organization.

The UN experts warned that the escalating violence is not simply the result

of “a few bad apples” among the settler population.

“The deep-state support provided by Israel to the illegal settlement enterprise, including to the more than 140 settlement outposts established throughout the West Bank in defiance of even Israel’s own laws, has fueled this coercive environment and encouraged violence,” they said.

They appealed to the international community to accept its responsibility to address the situation by imposing measures to end the impunity with which the settlers act, and restore respect for the international rule of law.



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[UN Security Council sanctions three leading Houthis](#)

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Wed, 2021-11-10 23:14

NEW YORK: The UN Security Council imposed sanctions on three leading members of the Houthi militia on Tuesday.

The individuals were targeted for “directly threatening the peace, security

and stability of Yemen” through their roles in the offensive against Marib, attacks against Saudi Arabia, and violations of international law by appropriating public assets to arm the militia.

The council said Saleh Mesfer Saleh Al-Shaer, the Houthis’ assistant minister of defense for logistics, has helped the militia to smuggle weapons to arm itself. It added that in his role as “judicial custodian,” he has also for the past three years been directly involved in the widespread practice of illegally confiscating the assets of people detained in Houthi prisons or forced to flee the country.

He “has used his authority and a Sana’a-based network comprising members of his family, a special criminal court, the national security bureau, the central bank, the registrar services of the Yemeni Ministry of Trade and Industry, and some private banks in order to arbitrarily dispossess selected private individuals and entities of their wealth without any due judicial process or a possibility of redress,” the council added.

Muhammad Abd Al-Karim Al-Ghamari, the Houthi military chief of staff was added to the sanctions list because of the leading role he played in masterminding militia attacks. The Security Council said that in addition to posing a direct threat to peace, security and stability in Yemen, including in Marib, he is involved in cross-border attacks against Saudi Arabia.

The third individual targeted by the sanctions is Yusuf Al-Madani, commander of the Houthi forces in Hodeidah, Hajjah, Al-Mahwit and Raymah, who this year was assigned to the offensive in Marib.

Yemen has been ravaged by civil war since the Iran-backed Houthis took over Sanaa in 2014. They have repeatedly rejected calls for a ceasefire.

The assault on oil-producing Marib began in February and has intensified in recent weeks. It has caused the displacement of millions of people who sought refuge there after fleeing fighting in other parts of the country.

The Yemeni government and Saudi officials have warned that should Marib fall to the Houthis, it could become a launchpad for further strikes against Saudi Arabia’s oil infrastructure and other civilian targets.



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110 Houthis killed in Arab coalition strikes on areas near Marib
Over 130 Houthis killed in Arab coalition strikes on areas near Marib