

On UK visit, Jordan's king calls for strengthening efforts to solve Middle East crises

Author:

Thu, 2021-10-28 22:33

LONDON: Jordan's King Abdullah II on Thursday called for strengthening regional and international efforts to reach political solutions to Middle East crises that bring stability and security for the region.

His comments came during a visit to the UK capital, London, where he met with Prime Minister Boris Johnson to discuss strengthening economic, tourism, trade, and defense cooperation.

King Abdullah praised the UK's efforts in hosting the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26), adding that he is looking forward to participating in it. "The meeting also covered the importance of stepping up regional and international efforts in the war against terrorism, within a holistic approach," Petra News Agency reported.

He called for reaching just and comprehensive peace, based on the two-state solution, which guarantees the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

King Abdullah said it was important to maintain support for the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees to be able to continue its relief services in line with its UN mandate.

He also called for "ending unilateral Israeli measures that could undermine stability and the prospects for achieving peace."

His Majesty King Abdullah II meets with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on the centenary of diplomatic ties between [#Jordan](#) and [#UK](#), discusses strategic bilateral relations and enhancing economic, trade and defence cooperation

Details:<https://t.co/sz9xTv6kzA> pic.twitter.com/Y1FBTk8YTX

– RHC (@RHCJO) [October 28, 2021](#)

Johnson reaffirmed his country's support for regional economic projects, commending Jordan for hosting refugees, including Syrians, and providing them with health and educational services.

"Johnson also lauded Jordan's commitment to reducing carbon emissions, and its efforts in mitigating the impact of climate change," the statement said. Speaking during a meeting with UK Foreign Secretary Liz Truss in London, the king said his country "supports efforts to safeguard Syria's sovereignty, stability, territorial integrity, and the unity of its people."

Truss said the UK was keen on strengthening its historical ties with Jordan and developing them in various fields, adding Britain was committed to

continuing support for Jordan's development efforts, and in providing educational and health service to refugees.

Also on Thursday, the king held a number of meetings in the Parliament with Speaker of the House of Commons Lindsay Hoyle, chairs and members of the House of Commons foreign affairs and defense committees, and the All-Party Parliamentary Jordan Group.

The Jordanian monarch said his country was "keen to enhance cooperation with the UK in addressing global challenges, including climate change and food security, as well as countering the humanitarian and economic implications of the COVID-19 pandemic."







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Prince Charles to visit Jordan and Egypt to follow up on COP26 commitments
Saudi foreign ministers discuss relations with UK, US counterparts

[Lebanese information minister facing legal action over controversial Houthi comments](#)

Author:

Thu, 2021-10-28 21:51

DUBAI: Three lawyers took legal action against Lebanon's information minister on Thursday, wanting him to be charged and tried in a criminal court for inciting strife and disrupting relations with Arab countries for his "libelous and fabricated" comments on the Houthis.

Information Minister George Kordahi on Tuesday triggered diplomatic outrage and a social media frenzy when a video of him saying that the Houthis were defending themselves and describing the Yemeni war as "absurd" surfaced online.

Kordahi was asked in an interview that was recorded on Aug. 5, before he was named information minister, about his position on what was happening in Yemen. He replied: "In my opinion, this Yemeni war is absurd and should stop."

Arab News has learned that Lebanese lawyers Mohammad Ziyad Ja'afil, Abdul Aziz Jumaa and Abeer Bannout lodged a legal notice before the Cassation Prosecution General accusing Kordahi of committing crimes that jeopardized national unity and damaged Lebanon's relations with Arab countries.

Referring to his "controversial comments" in their legal notice, the lawyers said Kordahi's statement had created a diplomatic and political crisis considering he was a member of the current cabinet of Lebanon, "a country that has common interests as well as historic and close relationships with Arab Gulf countries and namely Saudi Arabia and the UAE."

According to the legal notice, the lawyers said: "The relevant minister is not an ordinary person but rather a veteran broadcaster, information minister, represents the head of Lebanese media and a professional academician and diplomat. His comment wasn't just a coincidence or simple reaction as some are trying to propagate."

They said Kordahi's comments had endangered Lebanon's relations with its Arabic counterparts, that he had breached the code of professional and diplomatic conduct, and caused a crisis for his country.

"He endangered the interests of citizens and expats, aside from harming Lebanon's political and economic interests adding up to its isolation. He incited sectarian, religious and racist strife," read the legal notice, a copy of which was obtained by Arab News.

The lawyers deemed Kordahi's comments to be "baseless, libelous and fabricated" and that they remained a figment of his imagination.

"His comments have harmed every patriotic citizen who appreciates and respects Arab countries that have constantly supported and aided Lebanon," read the notice.

Ja'afil, Jumaa and Bannout said they lodged their legal notice to refrain anyone from slandering Arab countries, to punish the wrongdoer, and to set a future precedent for others not to disrespect or libel Arab brothers.

The plaintiffs added that what the minister had said, and the fact that the

Lebanese president and prime minister's office disassociated themselves from his comments, before he repeated what he said and refused to apologize on Wednesday, confirmed that he had committed a crime and breached his duties.

"His behavior is incriminated and punishable by the Penal Code and requires that he be prosecuted and tried before a criminal court and not before the special parliamentary committee that tries presidents and ministers," said the lawyers.

Jumaa said they had lodged the legal notice in their capacity as Lebanese citizens who did not want to be affected or influenced by Kordahi's statements.

"We disagree with his controversial statements that could bring unwanted sufferings and ramifications and inflict damages upon us, as citizens, and on expats living in the Gulf," Jumaa told Arab News.

Asked what punishment Kordahi could face if he were charged and referred to court, the lawyer replied: "If the judicial progress takes its independent course without any political pressure, he could face between one and three years in jail and/or a fine of \$600 as per the Lebanese Penal Code's article 194."

When asked if the Cassation Prosecutor General's decision in the case was irrevocable, Bannout told Arab News that there was no timeframe for the investigating prosecutor to hand out a decision that could not be appealed.

Prosecutors are yet to decide whether to impeach Kordahi and refer him to a criminal court or dismiss the legal action.

The Gulf Cooperation Council on Wednesday condemned the minister's comments, saying it reflected limited knowledge and shallow understanding.

A former TV presenter, Kordahi has stirred controversy in the past with his opinions on matters ranging from Syrian President Bashar Assad to harassment in the workplace.



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[Lebanese Information Minister George Kordahi](#)

Saudi Arabia summons Lebanese envoy over 'offensive' comments made by information minister
Lebanese media minister George Kordahi stirs controversy yet again by defending Houthis

[UN envoy: UAE has important role in supporting a Yemen-led political settlement](#)

Thu, 2021-10-28 20:09

LONDON: The UAE has an important role in supporting a Yemen-led and inclusive political settlement to the conflict, the UN's envoy for the country said.

“In that same spirit, progress in the implementation of the Riyadh Agreement would also contribute to strengthening political partnerships, supporting basic service delivery and stabilizing the economy,” Hans Grundberg added as he ended his visit to the UAE on Thursday.

The envoy held meetings with senior Emirati officials and Yemenis from various political components and the private sector during the visit, his office said.

He met with the diplomatic adviser to the UAE’s president Anwar Gargash and the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Khalifa Shaheen.

The diplomats discussed the latest developments in Yemen and ongoing UN efforts to resume a comprehensive and sustained political dialogue among Yemeni parties.

Grundberg expressed his concern over the rapidly deteriorating situation in Yemen, including intensification of the war, fragmentation of state institutions, the impact of the conflict on the economy, and delivery of basic services.

“It is high time that progress be made toward immediate and longer term political, economic and security priorities in the best interest of Yemenis,” he said.



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Arab coalition says 105 rebels killed in latest Yemen strikes
Lebanese PM distances self from minister's Houthi Yemen 'self-defense' claim

Criticism over Israeli 'terror' label for Palestinian groups

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Thu, 2021-10-28 11:56

JERUSALEM: Israel's surprise "terrorist" designation of six Palestinian civil society groups has divided its ruling coalition and thrown a spotlight on Marxist group the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

The move announced last Friday by Defense Minister Benny Gantz caused shockwaves, including among European donors who support the targeted groups and from Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

Israeli non-government organizations, or NGOs, which partner with the implicated Palestinians also voiced astonishment.

So did some in the media, given the prominence of the groups involved – especially Al-Haq, a rights group founded in 1979 by writer Raja Shehadeh, a New Yorker magazine contributor.

Gantz has also taken fire from within Israel's government, an unwieldy eight-party alliance that includes left-wing politicians.

Health Minister Nitzan Horowitz, leader of the dovish Meretz, warned that as an occupying military power Israel needed to be "very careful in imposing sanctions on Palestinian civil organizations because there are political, diplomatic and, more importantly, human rights consequences."

Transport Minister and Labor leader Merav Michaeli said the way the announcement was made "caused Israel great damage with our greatest and most important friends."

But Gantz's office has not wavered, insisting that a joint security establishment investigation had proved the six groups operated "as an organized network under the leadership of the PFLP," as the Marxist group is known.

The PFLP was founded in 1967 by George Habache – mixing Marxist-Leninism, Arab nationalism and virulent anti-Zionism – ultimately becoming the second most powerful Palestinian armed group after Yasser Arafat's Fatah.

It currently does not have firepower matching the arsenal of rockets held by Gaza's rulers Hamas or Islamic Jihad, but it is active in the international campaign to boycott Israel known as BDS, short for Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions.

The PFLP has been declared a terrorist organization by the United States and the European Union, and Israel says it is responsible for a 2019 bomb attack in the occupied West Bank that killed 17-year-old Israeli Rina Schnerb.

The PFLP leader in Israeli-blockaded Gaza told AFP the designated organizations have “no link” with his group beyond a shared ideology opposing the occupation.

“These NGOs work in complete independence,” Jamil Mazher said.

The PFLP has been a prime target of the Israeli organization NGO Monitor, which tracks funding and activities of non profit groups engaged in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with specific focus on European donors.

Its president Gerald Steinberg told AFP the designations last week “appears to reflect the impact of NGO Monitor’s ongoing research.”

NGO Monitor wrote to the European anti-fraud office OLAF in November 2020 to share what it said was evidence of EU funds being given to Palestinian NGOs with links to terrorist organizations.

OLAF replied in January that it had “dismissed the case on the grounds that there is no sufficient suspicion to open an investigation,” according to a letter seen by AFP.

Israel is not obligated to disclose the evidence it used to support the terrorism designation, with secrecy allowed under the 2016 counter-terrorism act.

The defense ministry has said the groups had hosted PFLP meetings, employed “convicted terrorists” and operated as a “lifeline” for the PFLP through “fundraising, money laundering and recruitment of activists.”

Tel Aviv University law professor Eliav Lieblich, writing on the Just Security website this week, argued that “it simply cannot be accepted that well-known and widely respected Palestinian human rights groups be designated as ‘terrorist organizations’ by executive fiat and on the basis of classified intelligence.”

An Israeli official told AFP that an envoy would soon head to Washington to share evidence after the US said it would be seeking “more information” about the designations.

Meanwhile, pushback persists against the decision.

Representatives from 25 Israeli civil society groups traveled to Ramallah Wednesday to show solidarity with their Palestinian colleagues.

“This attack on Palestinian civil society, on Palestinian organizations, is not new,” Hagai El-Ad, the executive director of Israeli rights group B’Tselem, told AFP at the demonstration.

“What is new,” he added, is that “they’re targeting some of the most respected and oldest civil society organizations in Palestine, like Al-Haq,” and that growing international outrage means Israel may no longer be able to act with “impunity.”



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UN says Israel move designating Palestinian groups as 'terrorist organizations' unjustified
Israel envoy to brief US over ban on Palestinian groups

[Arab coalition says 95 Houthis killed in strikes on Juba and Al-Kasarah](#)

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Thu, 2021-10-28 18:36

RIYADH: The Arab coalition said on Thursday that 95 Houthis were killed during air strikes on two districts near the central Yemeni city of Marib. The coalition added that 11 military vehicles had also been destroyed in the

22 strikes carried out on Juba and Al-Kasarah during the last 24 hours. Juba is some 50 km south of Marib, whilst Al-Kasarah is 30 km northwest of the city. The coalition has reported heavy strikes around Marib in recent weeks. Earlier on Thursday, the Arab coalition intercepted and destroyed five Houthi ballistic missiles fired toward the southwestern Saudi city of Jazan.



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Lebanese PM distances self from minister's Houthi Yemen 'self-defense' claim
Arab coalition says more than 105 Houthis killed near Yemen's Marib