

Israel investigating May barrage that killed 6 civilians in Gaza

Author:

Roma Lota

ID:

1628635531456804900

Wed, 2021-08-11 01:45

JERUSALEM: After initially finding no grounds for disciplinary action, the Israeli military later opened an investigation into an artillery bombardment that killed six Palestinian civilians, including an infant, in the Gaza Strip in May.

To date, no soldiers or senior officers have been punished for the errant fire, which witnesses say came without warning.

Human rights groups have long accused the Israeli military of having a poor record of investigating the conduct of its troops, and the Haaretz daily last week accused the army of covering up the incident.

The shelling during the latest war between Israel and Hamas militants in Gaza took place in the night of May 13. It came ahead of an Israeli bombardment targeting Hamas's underground tunnel network. Ahead of the tunnel strikes, Israeli artillery bombarded the northern Gaza Strip and struck near a cluster of dilapidated homes belonging to a Bedouin community outside the town of Beit Lahia.

Nasser Abu Fares, 50, a local resident, said relatives were visiting to mark the Eid, and he was standing near his home when the shelling began. "The first shell fell on my house in this area, and the dust rose, and we ran until we were 100 meters away," he said.

While the Israeli military often issues warnings to residents ahead of large-scale operations, Abu Fares said: "No one warned us."

The barrage killed six people, including three of his daughters and his nine-month-old grandson.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Palestine](#)

[Gaza](#)

[Israel](#)

Human Rights Watch: Israeli war crimes apparent in Gaza war Israel strikes Gaza after Hamas launches incendiary balloons

[Gunmen in Iraq assassinate mayor of Karbala](#)

Author:

Tue, 2021-08-10 23:41

LONDON: Abeer Salim Al-Khafaji, the mayor of Karbala, a city southwest of the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, has been assassinated on Tuesday after being shot with three bullets to the chest.

Al-Khafaji was killed by gunmen while supervising a municipal campaign accompanied by security forces to stop abuses in the Al-Mamlji area, Iraq News Agency reported.

Earlier, a security source said Al-Khafaji was shot along with two municipality employees by individuals who opposed the removal of abuses, adding that the accident occurred on Al-Hur Road near Al-Safwa College in Al-Zahraa residential neighborhood.

Since the uprising of popular protests in Iraq in October 2019, more than 70 activists have been subjected to assassination attempts, while dozens of others have been kidnapped.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Iraq](#)

[Karbala](#)

[assassination](#)

[Abeer Salim Al-Khafaji](#)

Areas of Iraqi province lose power after attack on pylons
Saudi and Iraqi foreign ministers discuss boosting regional stability

[UN climate report strengthens case for wise management of Middle East groundwater reserves](#)

Tue, 2021-08-10 21:41

NEW YORK CITY: A landmark UN study on climate has sounded a stark warning

about the impending irreversible changes to the natural environment and the catastrophic consequences for humanity that a failure to act could entail.

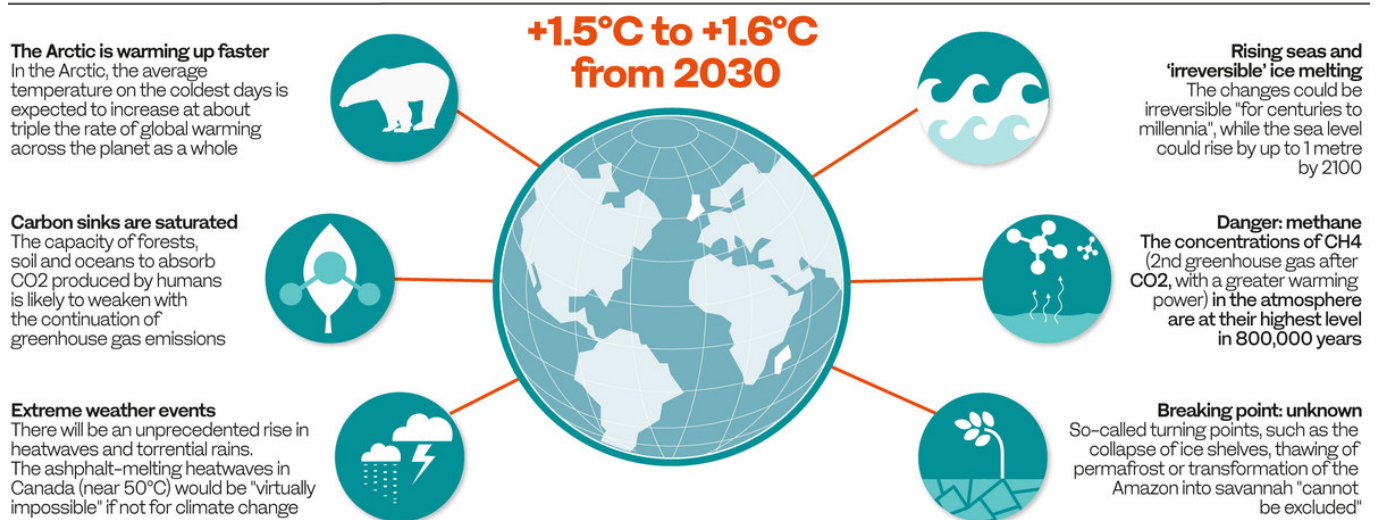
In its report, released on Monday, the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), said: "Climate change is widespread, rapid and intensifying, and some trends are now irreversible."

Among the approaching changes are the well-documented warming of the atmosphere, rising sea levels, severe and unpredictable weather and catastrophic damage to natural life on land and in the sea.

But one less acknowledged, but perhaps equally existential, effect of climate change is the rapid decline in the availability of fresh and drinkable water through groundwater reserves – and for the hot and arid countries of the Middle East, the threat is particularly acute.

CLIMATE: KEY POINTS OF THE UN ASSESSMENT

In all of the scenarios considered, the global temperature should reach +1.5°C or +1.6°C above pre-industrial levels around 2030. That is a decade earlier than projected



Source: IPCC

ARAB NEWS

"Climate change is intensifying the natural production of water – the water cycle. This brings more intense rainfall and associated flooding, as well as more intense drought in many regions," the UN report added.

In the Middle East, mismanagement of groundwater – particularly in Syria, Iraq, Turkey and Iran – could have catastrophic environmental and knock-on political consequences.

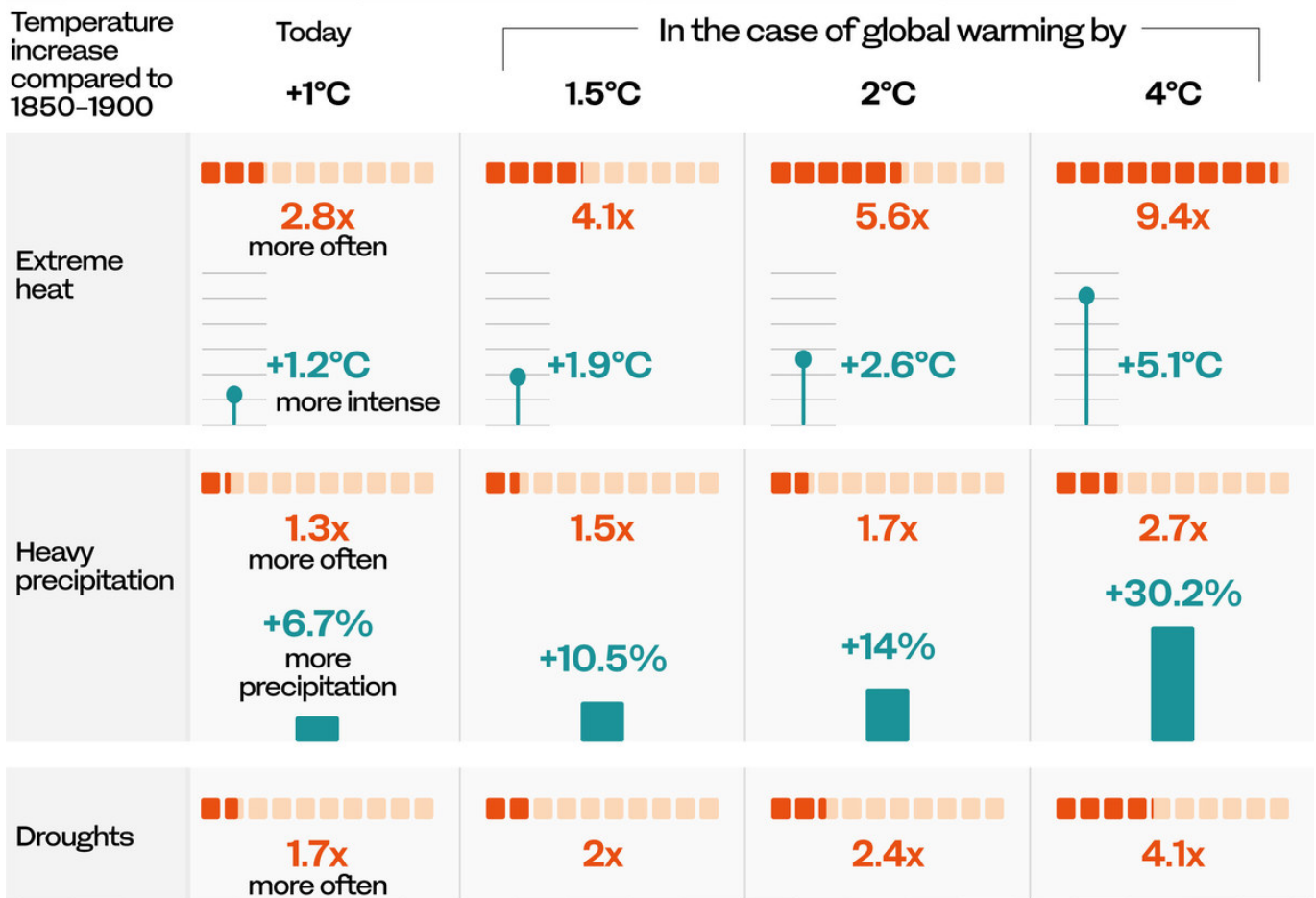
Groundwater is the term used for the massive reservoirs, known as aquifers, of fresh water available beneath the earth's surface, which formed naturally over millions of years. Similar to the reservoirs that are drilled into for the extraction of oil, they are finite – and dwindling fast.

"Increasing global freshwater withdrawals, primarily associated with the expansion of irrigated agriculture in drylands, have led to global groundwater depletion," said the UN report, adding that the massive extraction of groundwater was so severe that it was contributing to rising sea levels – and ushering in all the associated complications that came with

it.

GLOBAL WARMING: FREQUENT AND MORE INTENSE EXTREME EVENTS

For events that had a probability of occurring once every 10 years before the onset of global warming (1850-1900), the increase in the probability and intensity



Source: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

ARAB NEWS

The consequences of groundwater extraction are more immediately obvious on a local level than globally.

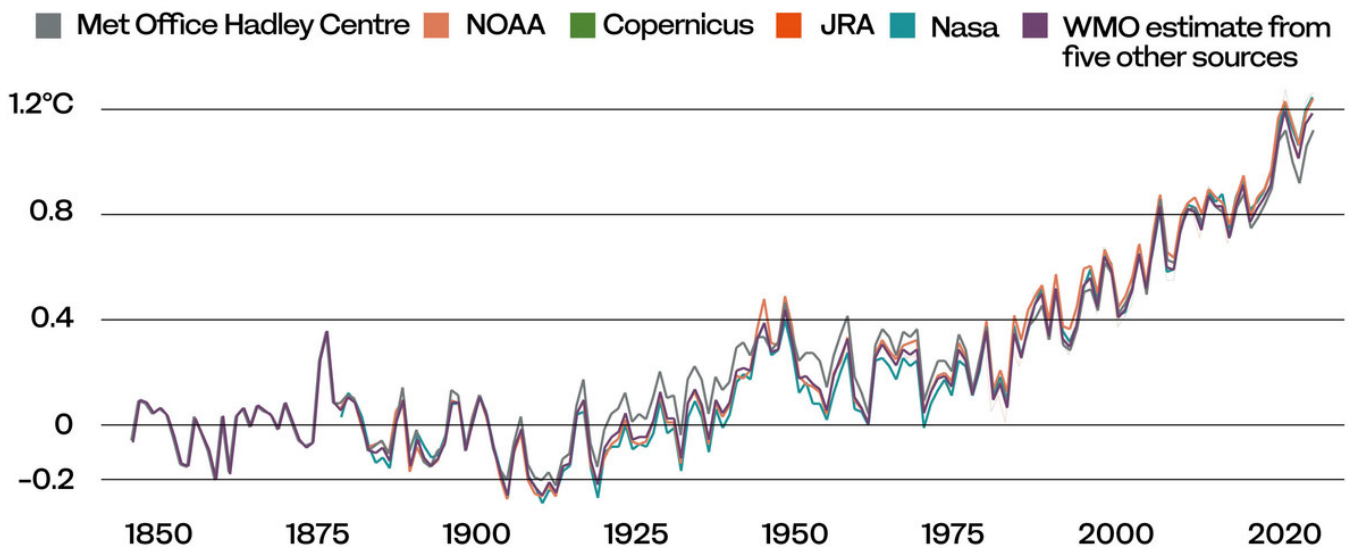
Water scarcity, particularly in the Middle East, is not a new problem, and countries such as Saudi Arabia have been ramping up efforts to produce fresh water, for example through desalination plants that remove salt and other harmful materials from seawater to ultimately process it and make it safe to drink and useful in agriculture and everyday life.

While desalination does not come without its own challenges, it has alleviated reliance on groundwater and reduced the pressure of economic growth and human needs on fragile groundwater systems.

However, Jay Famiglietti, executive director at the Global Institute for Water Security and one of the senior authors of a study that the UN drew on for Monday's report, told Arab News that such forward-thinking water management was scarce at best – or non-existent at worst – in Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey.

2020: ONE OF THREE HOTTEST YEARS ON RECORD

Temperature progression compared to the pre-industrial level average



Source: UN/World Meteorological Organization, data as of Oct 2020

ARAB NEWS

“About a third of the world’s population relies on groundwater as their primary water source,” he said, adding that groundwater usage “depends on your resources.” Where there was less rain and surface water available, such as rivers and lakes, states were more likely to pump it from deep reservoirs, many of which were too deep to be replenished with rainwater.

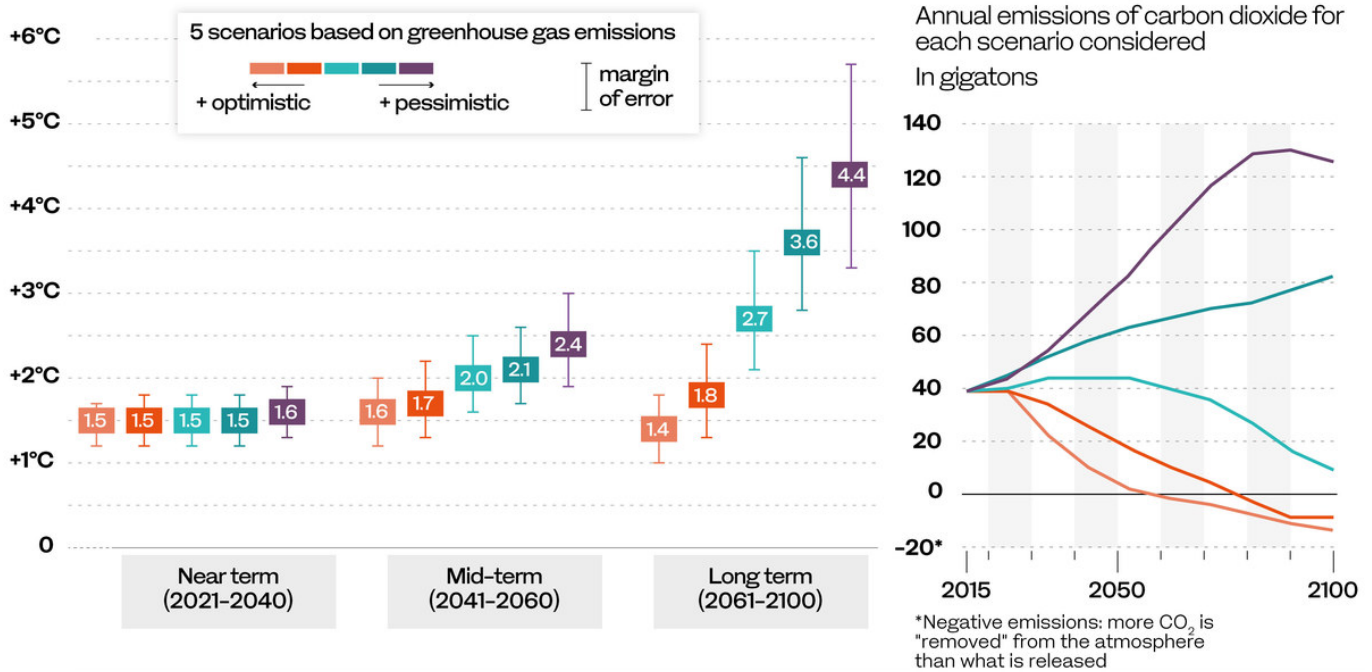
“Regions that have groundwater access – they use it. They should be balancing their surface water use with groundwater, but in fact they pull water out of the ground like it’s free money – literally. But this is the norm,” Famiglietti said.

He noted that a huge amount of groundwater was used for agriculture but pointed out that this should not be condemned. “We need to eat food.”

The only solution to the problem of managing the fast-dwindling supply of groundwater reserves with the need for food and economic growth, he added, was through international cooperation.

GLOBAL WARMING SCENARIOS

Increase in global temperatures, in °C compared to pre-industrial levels (1850–1900)



Source: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

ARAB NEWS

In Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey, this is absolutely critical because of their significant reliance on groundwater as a result of the short supply of surface water.

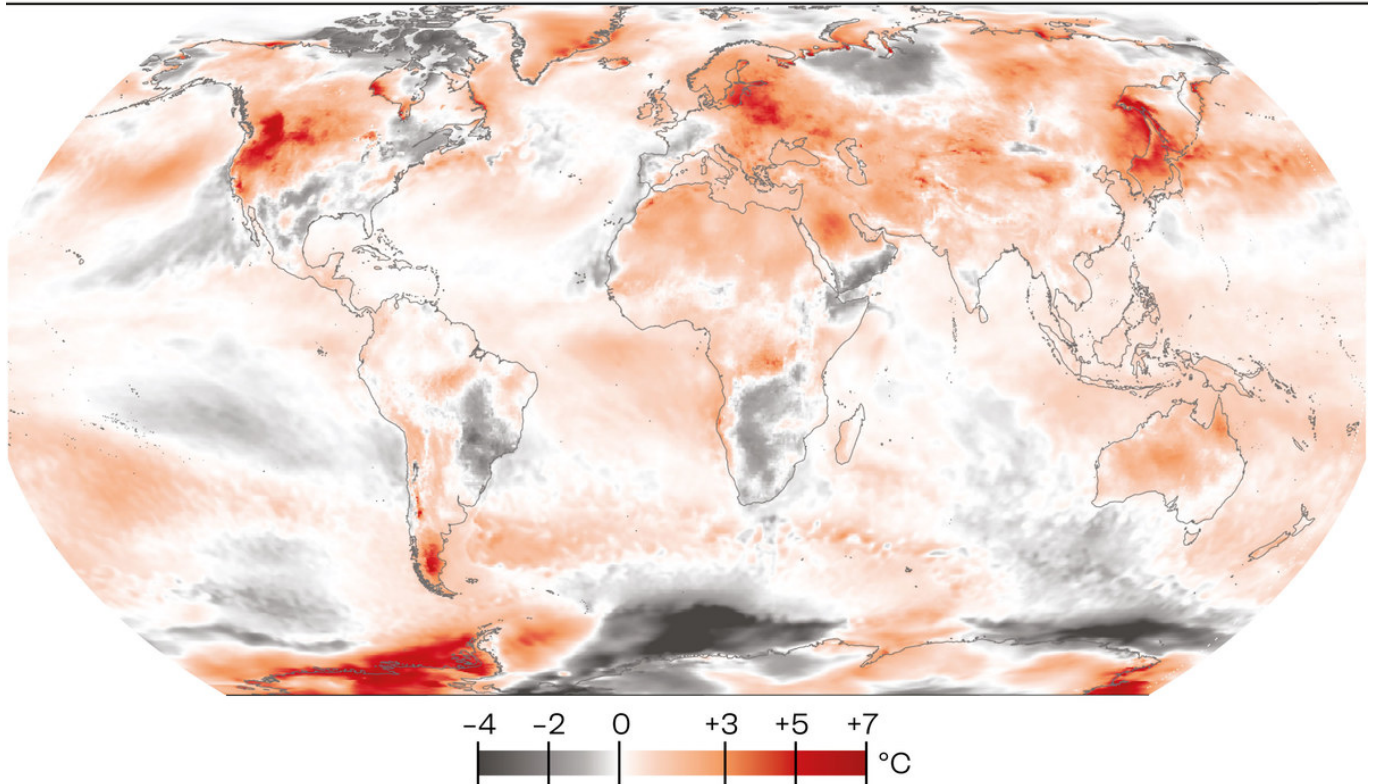
“These aquifers that are running out of water are so big now that they cross over political boundaries – whether they are international or intranational,” Famiglietti said, adding that the issue presented a political challenge as well as an opportunity for progressive cooperation.

“Imagine pulling together a group of Lebanon, Israel, Egypt, and Syria to cooperate – it’s really, really hard. But that is the only way forward. We have to switch what has been a vehicle, a trigger for conflict – water – for something that becomes a vehicle for collaboration and cooperation. Monday’s report makes that crystal clear,” he said.

The political pitfalls of failing to reform water management have recently become abundantly clear in Iran.

WORLD'S THIRD WARMEST JULY

Temperature difference in July compared to the July average from 1981 to 2010



Source: Copernicus C3S/ECMWF

ARAB NEWS

The country's southwestern Khuzestan province was recently convulsed by weeks of violent protests spurred by a lack of clean drinking water. Human rights groups have verified that at least nine people were killed by security forces during the demonstrations.

A police officer was also killed, and the violence prompted a rare admission of guilt by then-President Hassan Rouhani.

People were incensed by the authorities' mismanagement of their water, which pushed the province, the water-wealthiest in Iran in terms of natural resources, into what has now become known as a state of "water bankruptcy."

Those protests that started because of water shortages in Khuzestan province quickly turned into anti-regime chants in Tehran – crystallizing the destabilizing potential of water mismanagement.



An Iraqi man walks past a canoe sitting on dry, cracked earth in the Chibayish marshes near the southern Iraqi city of Nasiriyah. Marsh areas in southern Iraq have been affected since Daesh started closing the gates of a dam on the Euphrates River in the central city of Ramadi, which is under the group's control. (AFP/File Photo)

Ilan Berman, senior vice president of the American Foreign Policy Council, said: "In Iran in particular, the water crisis is a political one, because it is intimately tied to, and exacerbated by, longstanding regime neglect and mismanagement. That's a situation that's unlikely to change in the near future, unfortunately."

Despite repeated warnings from the UN about climate catastrophe, as well as from Iranians who took to the streets in July, Berman said, Tehran did not appear to have taken on board the existential threat posed by water mismanagement.

"In fact, Iran seems to be headed in the opposite direction, because we're now seeing a consolidation of the hardline clerical status quo around new President Ebrahim Raisi.

"All that makes Iran unlikely to pivot toward regional cooperation of the sort that the UN report envisions, or to invest in technologies, like desalination, that have helped other regional states, such as Saudi Arabia, turn the corner on their hydrological issues."

Twitter: [@CHamillStewart](https://twitter.com/CHamillStewart)





Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Middle East](#)

Humans responsible for 'irreversible' climate change, UN warns Saudi Arabia reiterates its commitment to fight climate change

President's 'greed for power' maintains Lebanese stalemate

Tue, 2021-08-10 21:57

BEIRUT: A year has passed since Prime Minister Hassan Diab's government resigned. On Aug. 10, 2020. Diab addressed the Lebanese five days after the Beirut port explosion, saying that he had decided to quit because "the corruption system is greater than the state."

Since then, Diab has been the caretaker prime minister of a government that cannot make decisions in a country that is sliding further every day into the abyss.

It is the longest caretaker period for a government in Lebanon's political history. Three PMs have in vain been assigned to form a government. No new meeting has been set between President Michel Aoun and Prime Minister-designate Najib Mikati.

The information leaked from their previous six meetings indicates that the two parties are growing farther apart and that Aoun's demands now include the Ministry of the Interior as well as the Ministry of Justice.

Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri and his allies in Hezbollah had nominated a Shiite figure, who is the director of financial operations at the Central Bank, to take over the Ministry of Finance, but Aoun rejected this proposal because he is calling for a criminal investigation into the Central Bank's accounts.

Diab, who is in self-quarantine because he came in contact with a coronavirus positive person, addressed the Lebanese on Tuesday saying: "The new government, whose formation is yet to succeed, is supposed to resume negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which is our only way out of this imminent collapse."

Diab warned that "any existing government will not be able to address the structural crisis without external assistance and a practical plan."

Future Bloc MP Mohammed Hajjar told Arab News: "The failure to form a government so far is caused by a team composed of President Aoun and his son-

in-law, MP Gebran Bassil. They want a tailor-made country on their own terms and that serves their personal interests. Aoun wants to control the government, so if there are no parliamentary elections, he wants to stay in power and extend his term with a constitutional fatwa (edict). Aoun does not mind repeating what he did in 1989 when he took over a separatist government.”

Hajjar claimed that during the consultations between Mikati and Aoun, the latter requested 12 of the 24 ministers. “I can assure you that this is true. He will keep coming up with excuses until he gets the government he wants. His criterion is the interest of his son-in-law and himself only; to hell with the country’s interests.”

He said that Hezbollah is Aoun’s ally in what is happening now. “If Hezbollah wanted the government, it would have put pressure on Aoun and his political team, but what we see is the opposite, and no one can convince us that Hezbollah is looking out for Lebanon’s interests. It works for Iran’s interests and keeps the collapsing Lebanon as a card in Iran’s hands.”

Regarding the militant group’s recent rocket attacks on Israel, he said: “The tension Hezbollah stirred on the southern front in response to the tension in the Arabian Sea is nothing but a service to Iran.”

In September 2020, Aoun warned: “We are heading to hell if a government is not formed.” At that time, he insisted on getting the Ministry of Finance and refused to give it to the Shiite community.

The Lebanese have been quoting Aoun’s “hell” comments as the noose around their necks tightens.

On Tuesday, the head of the General Labor Union, Bechara Al-Asmar, said he was informed many mills have stopped operating due to lack of diesel, while the rest will eventually follow suit once they run out of fuel.

Hospitals announced that they only have enough diesel to run their private generators for a few days.

The International Organization for Migration warned on Tuesday that 120,000 migrant workers “are in dire need of humanitarian assistance in Lebanon due to the accelerating economic collapse that is plaguing the country.”

Meanwhile, the gasoline stock in Lebanon is only sufficient for five days. Two ships obtained prior approval from the Central Bank to come to Lebanon, but the date of their arrival has not yet been fixed.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Lebanon](#)

[Michel Aoun](#)

[Najib Mikati](#)

[Hassan Diab](#)

Aoun turns to diplomats in bid to break Lebanon's political deadlock
Aoun shields patriarch after he urged halt to rockets

[Accepting UN-brokered peace initiative would be surrender, says Houthi leader](#)

Tue, 2021-08-10 20:21

ALEXANDRIA: The leader of the Houthis has strongly rejected the current UN-brokered peace plan and ordered his supporters to keep fighting, striking a blow to efforts to end the war in Yemen.

In a televised speech on Monday, Abdul-Malik Al-Houthi said that accepting

the peace plan would mean surrendering to their opponents. He called for an end to the "blockade" and Arab coalition airstrikes on his forces as preconditions for agreeing to peace talks.

"The American perspective on peace means surrender, occupation and the continuation of aggression and siege," he said, ordering his supporters to continue their recruiting and training and to send reinforcements to the battlefields.

Martin Griffiths, the former UN special envoy to Yemen, had pushed Yemeni parties to accept a peace plan that suggested introducing a nationwide truce, reopening Sanaa airport, and lifting restrictions on Hodeidah seaports before commencing peace talks.

The UN mediator believed that stopping military operations across Yemen, including the deadly offensive by the Iran-backed Houthis on Marib city, would alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis.

But the Houthis rejected the plan, replying that the coalition should first stop airstrikes, reopen Hodeidah seaport and Sanaa airport with no restrictions on flights and destinations.

The Yemeni government said that the new peace initiative addresses Houthi concerns about the airport and the movement of goods and fuel through Hodeidah seaport, accusing the rebels of not being interested in ending the war.

On Monday, Houthi spokesman Mohammed Abdul-Salam told Lebanese channel Al-Mayadeen that they would not cease military operations soon, accusing Washington of standing by their opponents.

"Yes, the field in Marib and in the other areas are not linked to any political discussions we are having," he said, referring to the latest international diplomatic activities by UN and Omani mediators to convince them to accept the UN peace deal.

The Houthi snubbing of peace efforts to end the war came days after the UN named Hans Grundberg, a Swedish diplomat, as a new envoy for Yemen.

Yemen political analysts argue that the Houthis are trying to send messages to the international community and the new UN envoy that they would not relinquish their military gains and no one should expect them to make big concessions to make peace.

"There is a firm belief (among the Houthis) that accepting peaceful solutions, ending the coup or abandoning military the gains is considered surrender," Ali Al-Fakih, editor of Al-Masdar Online, told Arab News, adding that the Houthis are seeking to separate the Marib offensive from other issues, as they consider Marib to be an internal affair.

"They want to tell the international community that they only accept a solution that stops the interference of the Arab coalition in Yemen, opens airports and seaports, and accepts them as a legitimate authority."

On Monday, Yemen's Defense Ministry said many Houthi leaders were thought to be killed when the coalition's warplanes hit their meeting in Rahabah district.

The warplanes also destroyed five military vehicles and killed several Houthis in the same district.

Last week, army troops and allied tribesmen made limited advances in Rahabah after seizing control of two mountains.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Yemen](#)

[Houthis](#)

[Martin Griffiths](#)

[Marib](#)

Biden administration slams Houthis, Iran for prolonging Yemen crisis
Houthis snub new UN envoy for Yemen, president welcomes appointment