

Tunisia's president says there is 'no turning back'

Thu, 2021-08-05 23:35

TUNIS: Tunisia's President Kais Saied said on Thursday there was "no turning back" from his decision to freeze parliament and assume executive power, moves his opponents have branded a coup.

Speaking in a video published by his office, Saied also rejected calls for talks over the crisis, saying "there is no dialogue except with the honest" and that no dialogue was possible with "cancer cells."

The biggest party in parliament, the moderate Islamist Ennahda, which has been the most vocal opponent of Saied's moves, had called for dialogue in a statement earlier on Thursday.

Some 11 days after his intervention, Saied has not named a new prime minister, announced any steps to end the emergency or declared his longer-term intentions.

The powerful labor union, as well as both the United States and France, have called on him to quickly appoint a new government. The union is preparing a roadmap to end the crisis that it says it will present to Saied.

US Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Bob Menendez and ranking member Jim Risch said on Thursday they were deeply concerned by the situation.

"President Saied must recommit to the democratic principles that underpin US-Tunisia relations, and the military must observe its role in a constitutional democracy," they said in a joint statement.

Ousted Prime Minister Hichem Mechichi appeared in public for the first time on Thursday since he was dismissed. He was shown in pictures published by the anti-corruption watchdog that it said were taken on Thursday at its office.



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[Amnesty International denounces Iran's 'cruel' secret execution of man arrested at 15](#)

Thu, 2021-08-05 22:48

LONDON: The execution in Iran of a man arrested at 15 is a “cruel assault on child rights,” Amnesty International said on Thursday, which also warned of more imminent executions.

In August 2010, Sajad Sanjari – then 15 – was arrested over the fatal stabbing of a man. He said the man had tried to rape him and claimed he had

acted in self-defense, but in 2012 he was convicted of murder and sentenced to death.

Sanjari was executed in secret on Monday, but his family was only told of the killing after it happened when a prison official asked them to collect the body.

“With the secret execution of Sajad Sanjari, the Iranian authorities have yet again demonstrated the utter cruelty of their juvenile justice system,” Diana Eltahawy, deputy director for the Middle East and North Africa at Amnesty International, said.

“The use of the death penalty against people who were under 18 at the time of the crime is absolutely prohibited under international law and constitutes a cruel assault on child rights.

Eltahawy added: “The fact that Sajad Sanjari was executed in secret, denying him and his family even the chance to say goodbye, consolidates an alarming pattern of the Iranian authorities carrying out executions in secret or at short notice to minimize the chances of public and private interventions to save people’s lives.”

The rights group also warned that two other young men, Hossein Shahbazi and Arman Abdolali – both 17 when arrested – are now at risk of “imminent” execution.

“Their trials were marred by serious violations, including the use of torture-tainted ‘confessions,’” said Amnesty International, which pointed out that Shahbazi would already be dead if it had not been for international outcry in the lead up to his planned execution in July that convinced authorities to postpone the killing.

“His execution could be rescheduled at any moment,” the rights group warned.

Amnesty said it had identified 80 people in Iran currently on death row for crimes committed when they were children, and since 2005, it recorded the executions of “at least 95 individuals” who were children when they committed their crime.

“The real numbers of those at risk and executed are likely to be higher,” Amnesty said.

The rights group also highlighted the unequal laws dictating how girls and boys are treated by the judicial system: “in cases of murder and certain other capital crimes, boys aged above 15 lunar years and girls aged above nine lunar years may be held as culpable as adults.”

As a state party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Iran is legally obliged to treat individuals under the age of 18 as children and ensure they are never subjected to the death penalty or life imprisonment.



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UK foreign minister Dominic Raab says door is 'ajar' for talks with Iran
Iranian ex-deputy vice president slams regime over water crisis

[University professor shot dead in Houthi-held Sanaa](#)

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Thu, 2021-08-05 22:33

ALEXANDRIA: Gunmen shot and killed a Sana'a University professor as he walked out of a friend's house on Wednesday night in a Houthi-controlled part of the city, residents said.

Mohammed Ali Naeem, who worked in the school's engineering and architecture department, was pronounced dead at a local hospital following the attack on Tunisia Street in Sana'a.

The assassination was carried out a few hours after he wrote a post on social media demanding the Houthis and the Yemeni government increase the salaries for employees.

After he complained about the depreciation of the Yemeni riyal and the increased price of essential commodities, the Yemeni professor wrote on Facebook: "We demand the government of Sana'a and Aden increase salaries."

In another post on Wednesday, he wrote: "The revolution is still going on."

Public servants in Sana'a and other Houthi-held areas in Yemen have not received employment compensation since late 2016 when the Iran-backed rebels stopped paying salaries in response to the Yemen president's relocation of the central bank headquarters from Sana'a to Aden.

The killing is the latest in a series of drive-by shootings presumably carried out by senior Houthi officials against dissidents and other opponents. Last year, gunmen assassinated Hassan Zaid, minister of sports and youth in the Houthi cabinet.

Citing the Houthis' handling of the Zaid case, similar assassinations, and the proliferation of armed men in Sanaa, Yemeni activists and critics of the rebels quickly blamed the Houthis on Wednesday for killing the professor.

Sami Noaman, a Yemeni journalist and former Houthi prisoner, told Arab News the rebels are suspected of killing their opponents and critics while only Houthi supporters are given special treatment.

"No one can freely roam around Sana'a carrying weapons other than the Houthi movement's supporters," Noaman said.

More evidence that suggests the Houthis' involvement in the Naeem murder is their handling of the Zaid investigation. In that case, the rebels quickly announced capturing perpetrators in the province of Dhamar, and then the investigation was over.

"In a comical scene, they closed the file within 24 hours," Noaman said. "The alleged killer was a prisoner. They executed people who had nothing to do with the case."

Other critics of the Houthis urged the rebels to focus on capturing and prosecuting armed assailants in Sana'a, instead of incarcerating Yemeni activists, artists, actors, and women.

Ahmed Al-Khibi, a judge in Yemen, said the Houthis should be alarmed by the resurgence of assassinations in the country's capital and divert efforts and attention to securing areas under their control.

"We hold the (Houthi) authority and its security services that are

preoccupied with pursuing (women's) undergarment and artists fully responsible for this crime" and it is their responsibility to arrest the perpetrators and bring them to justice, Al-Khibi posted on Facebook. He was referring to the recent Houthi crackdown against women, singers, and actors who have been arrested for allegedly violating Islamic norms.

Dozens of Sana'a University students took to social media on Wednesday night to mourn the late professor. Students described Naem as a "noble" man and an outstanding lecturer.

"No words can describe the extent of the tragedy and sadness of your death," Ghadir Yahya, a former student, wrote on Facebook.



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US urges Raisi to resume Iran nuclear talks in Vienna 'soon'

Author:

Thu, 2021-08-05 22:15

WASHINGTON: The United States on Thursday urged Iran to return to talks quickly on reviving a nuclear deal after the new ultraconservative president, Ebrahim Raisi, said he would seek a diplomatic way to end sanctions.

"We urge Iran to return to the negotiations soon so that we can seek to conclude our work," State Department spokesman Ned Price told reporters, repeating the US stance that the window for diplomacy would not stay open forever.

"If President Raisi is genuine in his determination to see the sanctions lifted, well that is precisely what's on the table in Vienna," he said. With the rise of Raisi, who took the oath of office on Thursday, all branches of power within the Islamic Republic will be controlled by anti-Western hard-liners loyal to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

"Our message to President Raisi is the same as our message to his predecessors .. the US will defend and advance our national security interests and those of our partners," Price said. "We hope that Iran seizes the opportunity now to advance diplomatic solutions."

He was referring to months of fruitless indirect talks in the Austrian capital on reviving the 2015 nuclear accord trashed by former president Donald Trump.

Iran has been negotiating with six major powers to revive the deal that was abandoned three years ago. The last round of talks in Vienna ended on June 20.

Price reiterated that the Biden administration, despite concerns with Iran, saw the accord as key to securing "permanent and verifiable limits on Iran's nuclear program."

Price said that the proposal to end sweeping sanctions in return for compliance with the deal would not last "indefinitely" and at some point the benefits of reviving the agreement will have been eroded by the advancements of Iran's nuclear program.

"For us, this is an urgent priority, knowing the issues that are at play," Price said. "We hope that the Iranians treat it with the same degree of urgency."

Iran began violating the pact, which gave it sanctions relief in return for curbing its atomic program, in 2019 by conducting nuclear activities that were barred under the deal, formally called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Iran says its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes only.

(With AFP and Reuters)



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Iran swears in new hard-line president amid regional tension
UK foreign minister Dominic Raab says door is 'ajar' for talks with Iran

[Iranian ex-deputy vice president slams regime over water crisis](#)

Author:

Thu, 2021-08-05 22:08

LONDON: The former deputy vice-president of Iran criticized Tehran over its mismanagement of natural resources in the country's Khuzestan province, blaming "excessive manipulation of the natural environment" for the country's

water bankruptcy.

In an op-ed published in The Guardian newspaper, Kaveh Madani said attempts by authorities to shift the blame toward climate change as the “sole cause of terrible (water) shortages let those in authority off the hook.”

Late last month, Iran’s Khuzestan province became the focal point for weeks of violent unrest spurred by a drought that left people without clean and safe drinking water. Those protests quickly spread across the country, including to the capital Tehran, morphing into anti-regime demonstrations.

Madani explained that water-rich Khuzestan should never have been subject to drought, but the construction of huge dams and the transfer of the province’s water to other parts of the country have left it in a state of water bankruptcy.

“Once you drain your checking account (surface water) and exhaust your savings account (groundwater), you are left with a lot of creditors (water rights-holders) whose demands cannot be satisfied,” Madani said. “Then you are water bankrupt and the dissatisfaction of the claimants can trigger major conflicts.”

He also said that this may be related to the institutional racism in Iran that excludes ethnic Ahwazi Arabs from the majority Persian state.

“The Khuzestan protests also have an important social justice element. Ethnic Arab populations are expressing their serious frustration with what they consider a ‘systematic’ or ‘intentional’ discrimination that has resulted in underdevelopment in their rich province,” Madani said.

“Khuzestanis are also questioning why ‘their’ water must be transferred to other regions while they are suffering from thirst.”

Madani warned about the potential consequences of water mismanagement for years, but rather than being listened to he was spied upon and detained.

“What Khuzestan and the rest of Iran are experiencing today is not unexpected,” Madani said. “Lots of experts, including me, have been warning about the national security risks of this situation for years.”

While he served in his role as deputy vice president, Madani was regularly detained by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and after he fled the country, he said he felt “lucky” not to have been imprisoned for a longer stretch.

Now, he is trying to prevent the regime from deflecting responsibility for its actions by invoking global climate change.

Well-intentioned environmental campaigners are correct about the devastating consequences of climate change, Madani said.

But the way that Iran has managed its natural resources means that “even if climate change stopped and Iran cut its carbon emissions by 100 percent right

now, its water bankruptcy and many other environmental problems would not be solved immediately.”

He concluded: “We must remember that local decision-makers are liable for avoidable failures of environmental management that result in the degradation and suffering we are now seeing in Iran.”



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