

Egypt steps up efforts to meet high demand for water from Nile

Author:

Mon, 2021-07-26 22:58

CAIRO: Egyptian authorities have stepped up measures to ensure the country's water needs continue to be met over the coming months.

At a recent meeting of a committee responsible for regulating Nile revenues, members agreed to carry on operating water emergency units in all governorates to monitor river levels.

Mohammed Abdel-Ati, Egypt's minister of water resources and irrigation, presided over the meeting that was also attended by top ministry executives and leading officials from the National Center for Water Research.

The committee reviewed Nile River revenues for the current water year and supply issues during the current period of maximum need. Delegates discussed measures being taken by the ministry to ensure the most efficient management of water resources and contingency plans put in place to meet all water requirements.

Abdel-Ati pointed out the importance of maintaining constant checks on water levels, and the condition of canals, drains, bridges, waterways, and power stations responsible for supplying them.

He noted that the ministry and its agencies had efficiently managed the water system during the current period of high demand while also hitting sustainable development goals.

The minister added that the committee was regularly monitoring rainfall rates at the sources of the Nile and recording quantities of water reaching the lake of the high dam to ensure the most efficient management of water supplies.

He said rainfall levels were at present about average and that it was too early to make accurate predictions for the remainder of this year.



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Egypt vows firm stance on protecting Nile water security: President tells China Battle for the Nile: Why Ethiopia's GERD reservoir filling may be just the start of Egypt's worries

[**Biden, Kadhim**](#) seal agreement to end [**US combat mission in Iraq**](#)

Mon, 2021-07-26 21:27

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden and Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi on Monday sealed an agreement formally ending the US combat mission in Iraq by the end of 2021, more than 18 years after US troops were sent to the country.

Coupled with Biden's withdrawal of the last American forces in Afghanistan by the end of August, the Democratic president is completing US combat missions in the two wars that then-President George W. Bush began under his watch. Biden and Kadhim met in the Oval Office for their first face-to-face talks as part of a strategic dialogue between the United States and Iraq.

"Our role in Iraq will be ... to be available, to continue to train, to assist, to help and to deal with Daesh as it arises but we're not going to be, by the end of the year, in a combat zone," Biden told reporters as he and Kadhim met.

There are currently 2,500 US troops in Iraq focusing on countering the remnants of Daesh. The US role in Iraq will shift entirely to training and advising the Iraqi military to defend itself.

The shift is not expected to have a major impact since the US has already moved toward focusing on training Iraqi forces.

A US-led coalition invaded Iraq in March 2003 based on charges that then-Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein's government possessed weapons of mass destruction. Saddam was ousted from power, but such weapons were never found. In recent years the US mission was dominated by helping defeat Daesh militants in Iraq and Syria.

"Nobody is going to declare mission accomplished. The goal is the enduring defeat of ISIS," a senior administration official told reporters ahead of Kadhim's visit. He was using an alternate acronym for Daesh.

The reference was reminiscent of the large "Mission Accomplished" banner on the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier above where Bush gave a speech declaring major combat operations over in Iraq on May 1, 2003.

"If you look to where we were, where we had Apache helicopters in combat, when we had US special forces doing regular operations, it's a significant evolution. So by the end of the year we think we'll be in a good place to really formally move into an advisory and capacity-building role," the official said.

US diplomats and troops in Iraq and Syria were targeted in three rocket and drone attacks earlier this month. Analysts believed the attacks were part of a campaign by Iranian-backed militias.

The senior administration official would not say how many US troops would remain on the ground in Iraq for advising and training.

Kadhim is seen as friendly to the US and has tried to check the power of Iran-aligned militias. But his government condemned a US air raid against Iran-aligned fighters along its border with Syria in late June, calling it a violation of Iraqi sovereignty.

The US-Iraqi statement is expected to detail a number of non-military agreements related to health, energy and other matters.

The US plans to provide Iraq with 500,000 doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine under the global COVAX vaccine-sharing program. Biden said the doses should arrive in a couple of weeks.

The US will also provide \$5.2 million to help fund a UN mission to monitor October elections in Iraq.

"We're looking forward to seeing an election in October," said Biden.



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Biden, Iraqi PM to announce end of US combat mission in Iraq
Iraq says militants planned other attacks during Muslim holiday

[France says urgent Iran returns to negotiating table for nuclear deal](#)

Mon, 2021-07-26 20:39

PARIS: France's foreign ministry said on Monday that Iran was endangering the chance of concluding an accord with world powers over reviving its 2015 nuclear deal if it did not return to the negotiating table soon.

"If it continues on this path, not only will it continue to delay when an agreement to lift sanctions can be reached, but it risks jeopardising the

very possibility of concluding the Vienna talks and restoring the JCPOA,” or Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, foreign ministry spokeswoman Agnes von der Muhll told reporters in a daily briefing.

Iran’s chief nuclear negotiator, Abbas Araqchi, said last week that the next round of negotiations in Vienna must wait until the new Iranian administration takes office in August.

The US responded by accusing Tehran of an “outrageous” effort to deflect blame for the impasse in the talks.



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US accuses Iran of trying to deflect blame for nuclear talks impasseIran warns it can enrich uranium to nuclear weapons grade

Free and fair Palestinians elections must include East Jerusalem: UN experts

Author:

Mon, 2021-07-26 19:07

NEW YORK: UN human rights experts have urged both the Palestinian Authority and Israel to reschedule the presidential, legislative and municipal elections “in the very near future” and ensure that they are “peaceful and credible.”

In April, Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas issued a presidential decree postponing the elections – originally planned for May and July – “until the participation of our people in Jerusalem is guaranteed.”

He blamed Israel for uncertainty about whether it would allow Palestinians to vote in East Jerusalem.

Expressing concern over the postponement, the UN experts recalled the importance of the elections as a means to “address the long-standing internal political divisions, to strengthen accountable institutions and to take an important step toward achieving the fundamental national and individual rights of the Palestinian people.”

The experts include Martin Lynk, the special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory; Irene Khan, special rapporteur on the protection of the right to freedom of expression; and Clement Nyaletsossi Voule, special rapporteur on rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.

Special rapporteurs are independent experts who serve in individual capacities, and on a voluntary basis, at the UN’s Human Rights Council. They are not members of UN staff and are not paid for their work.

They called on Israel as an occupying power to “clearly state” that it will allow the democratic process to take place unhindered, and to “interfere as little as possible with the rights and daily lives of the Palestinians.”

The 1994 Oslo Accords between the Palestine Liberation Organization and the state of Israel provided for the right of Palestinians in East Jerusalem to participate in elections.

Article XI of the interim agreement explicitly stated that “the two sides view the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as a single territorial unit, the integrity and status of which will be preserved during the interim period.”

It has been 15 years since Palestinians last cast ballots. In previous elections, Palestinians from East Jerusalem had been allowed to cast their ballots, although not without difficulty.

In the lead-up to the 2006 elections, Israel launched a campaign of arrests against members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, revoked their Jerusalem identity cards, banned candidates from holding election campaigns inside Jerusalem and prohibited public meetings and rallies.

Recalling the UN Security Council and General Assembly's statements that any Israeli alterations to East Jerusalem and its political and legal status are "null and void," the experts called the present moment "a golden opportunity for the world to affirm these commitments in the name of democracy and international law."

They called on the Palestinian Authority to reschedule the elections "in the very near future," and demanded that "the democratic rights of voters, candidates, political parties and participants (be) fully respected by all, including the occupying power.

"Arrests and detentions and the disruption of political meetings and campaigning by any governing authority are utterly incompatible with international human rights protections."

The human rights experts said that they were "disturbed" by the eligibility rules established by the Palestinian authority for the upcoming elections, including a requirement that each political list pay a \$20,000 registration fee and that candidates working in civil society resign from their current jobs in order to run.

The experts said these rules "appear to create unjustified obstacles (and) inhibit the full and free participation of Palestinians in the democratic process." They called on the Palestinian leadership to remove these legal barriers.

The human rights experts concluded: "We do not underestimate the challenges of holding free and fair democratic elections while under an entrenched and harsh occupation.

"We welcome the assistance offered by the international community, particularly the European Union and the United Nations, to facilitate these elections. But the elections will only achieve credibility and open the door to political renewal, particularly among younger Palestinians, if all sides respect the values of democracy and human rights."



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Israeli nationalists march in East Jerusalem under heavy police presence
Palestinian teen bears scar of eviction battle in East Jerusalem

[New Houthi demand to agreement before granting access to decaying oil tanker 'disappointing': UN](#)

Mon, 2021-07-26 19:41

LONDON: The UN on Monday called a new Houthi demand for an agreement before allowing access to decaying oil tanker Safer for light maintenance "disappointing."

FSO Safer has been moored in the Red Sea off the coast of Yemen, near the Ras

Isa oil terminal, for more than five years.

“The big point of dispute really is that they (the Houthis) want an agreement in advance to perform light maintenance. And they want the light maintenance activities to be mentioned in the (November 2020) mission plan,” a spokesperson for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told Arab News.

“We’re continuing to negotiate...We can’t provide those advanced guarantees (because of) the lack of safety onboard the ship...If it is safe, we are definitely willing to do light maintenance activities. First, we need to make sure it is safe,” UN spokesperson Farhan Haq said.

Haq told reporters in New York that the “The Safer is a very dangerous site and advanced guarantees before verifying conditions on board are not possible.”

“That is why the November 2020 agreement (between the UN and the Houthis) explicitly conditions the light maintenance activities on the safety environment we find on board,” he explained.

The UN remains eager to help but a safety assessment is necessary to carrying out “some light maintenance that we hope will buy more time for a longer term solution,” Haq added.

“We also remain open-minded regarding any other safe and quick solutions to the problem,” he said.

The tanker’s structure, equipment and operating systems are deteriorating, leaving the tanker at risk of springing a leak, exploding or catching fire.

With 48 million gallons of oil on board, the UN warns a potential leak would be four times bigger than the 1989 Exxon Valdez disaster off the coast of Alaska, considered the world’s worst oil spill in terms of environmental damage.



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Failure of UN talks with Yemen's Houthi militia on Safer tanker 'not surprising' – information minister