

Mother and four daughters killed as they looked for fuel amid Lebanon's petrol shortage

Author:

Tue, 2021-06-22 22:37

BEIRUT: A Lebanese mother and her four daughters were killed when their car was hit by a military vehicle as they searched for fuel amid Lebanon's petrol shortage.

The family were preparing to travel from southern Lebanon to Beirut airport this week to pick up the daughters' father, who was expected to fly home from working abroad.

Fatima Koubeissi, her twins Tia and Lia, 4, and her two other daughters Aya, 13, and Zahra, 17, were killed when the military vehicle hit their car from behind on Monday night. Another relative, Hussein Zein, 22, who was driving their car, died on Tuesday from his injuries.

The sisters had not seen their father, Imad Hawile, since he went looking for a job in Liberia five months ago, their uncle Qassim Hawile told Arab News.

Amid a worsening economic crisis, Lebanon is suffering massive fuel shortages with long queues outside petrol stations leading to traffic jams on nearby roads.

Lebanon's Internal Security Forces [ISF] traffic control section reported a number of recent accidents caused by petrol queues.

The family from Al-Sharqeyye village went searching for petrol on Monday afternoon to prepare for the journey to the airport on Wednesday.

"We have not been able to find petrol across the south," Qassim said.

ISF's traffic control said the accident involved five cars and took place on the Jeyye-Saida highway.

A cousin of Fatima told Arab News that the accident happened because of a "vehicle that came in the opposite direction of the road wanting to bypass a queue outside a petrol station.

"They (the mother and four daughters) died on the spot," he said.

Qassim said his brother contracted malaria during his first month in Liberia and then a second time "so he decided to return for better medication."

"We did not want my brother to know that his family died in the crash but he saw the news and images on Facebook," said Qassim.

He said the funeral was expected to take place on Thursday.

The accident happened when their driver saw two BMWs rammed into each other so he stopped but the military vehicle came and hit them from the back, sending it into a pick-up truck, Qassim said. Civil Defense and Red Cross teams attended the scene and moved the injured and the dead to nearby hospitals.

Petrol stations have been constantly low on subsidized petrol for weeks, but shortages worsened in June as people's fears of rationing and shortages intensified, leading to a large number of petrol stations closing down.

A number of fistfights, heated arguments and shootings have taken place between irritated drivers.

Last week, three people were injured in an accident outside a petrol station where cars were queueing on the highway connecting Beirut to southern.



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Protests erupt after Lebanon bids to curb fuel smuggling

[Sudan asks UN Security Council to meet over Ethiopia's Blue Nile dam – statement](#)

Tue, 2021-06-22 22:17

KHARTOUM: Sudan asked the UN Security Council on Tuesday to meet and discuss the dispute over the giant dam that is being built by Ethiopian on the Blue Nile, a government statement said.

Sudan's foreign minister sent a message to the council head calling him to urge Ethiopia to stop the "unilateral" filling of the dam "which exacerbates the dispute and poses a threat to regional and international peace and security," the statement added.



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Arab League backs calls for UN Security Council intervention in dam dispute
Sudan says it is open to conditional interim deal on Ethiopia dam

Italy is a 'strategic partner,' says interim Libyan leader

Tue, 2021-06-22 19:50

ROME: The chairman of the Libyan Presidential Council, Mohamed Younes Menfi, considers Italy "a strategic partner for Libya." During a meeting with Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi in Rome on Tuesday he also stressed "the importance of partnership and cooperation" with the European nation, according to Italian sources.

Menfi also had a lengthy meeting with Italian President Sergio Mattarella. His visit to the Italian capital, his first official trip to another country since he was appointed in March, came on the eve of the second Berlin Conference on Libya.

German diplomatic sources told Arab News that the main points of final declaration by the conference about the continuing political process should include a call for the immediate withdrawal of foreign mercenaries from Libya, and strong encouragement to Libyan authorities to play their part in ensuring that democratic elections take place in the country by Dec. 24 as scheduled.

According to a press release issued by the Libyan Presidential Council following Menfi's meeting with Draghi, the Italian prime minister "reaffirmed his country's support for the political transition in Libya and to the work of the Presidential Council," and praised the results achieved so far.

Italian sources said that an agreement was reached for greater coordination in matters related to security and to the prevention of illegal immigration from Libya, and Italy has offered to provide further support to help secure Libya's borders.

The Italian Coast Guard has said that Libya is the main point of departure in North Africa for migrants attempting to reach Italy on often fragile vessels.



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EU threatens sanctions over Libya political gridlock

[UK urged to stand with Iranian people, reject new president](#)

Author:

Tue, 2021-06-22 18:48

LONDON: The British Committee for Iran Freedom (BCFIF) on Tuesday urged the UK government to reject newly elected Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and campaign for him to face justice for human rights abuses.

Raisi won the presidential election on June 18, but the BCFIF said in a statement: "Elections in Iran are neither free, fair nor representative. It reflects the will of the unelected Supreme Leader and serves as a process to

further strengthen the theocracy's grip on power to the detriment of the Iranian people."

It added: "This was made clear again on June 18 as the Iranian people rejected the theocracy in its entirety with a widespread national boycott of the presidential election farce."

The BCFIF said Raisi "had an extensive role in the regime's current and past crimes against humanity, including the 1988 massacre of 30,000 political prisoners and PMOI (People's Mujahedin Organization of Iran) members and supporters in Iran as well as the killing of 1,500 protesters and torture of thousands of arrested protesters during and after the nationwide protests in November 2019."

In the week after Raisi's election victory, Sir David Amess, a Conservative MP and co-chairman of the BCFIF, said: "The people of Iran answered the call by the President-elect of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) Mrs Maryam Rajavi and completely boycotted the election farce in Iran."

He added that the BCFIF supports Rajavi's call "for Raisi to be investigated and face justice in an international tribunal. This issue must be a priority for the UK Government during the 47th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council."

Andrew Rosindell, a Conservative MP and member of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, said: "With Raisi as president, the regime is signalling that it will continue its repression, persecution of popular dissent and export of terrorism."

He added: "It is time for our government to follow the recommendations in our report which includes proscribing the IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps) in its entirety and taking steps to end the impunity of Iranian officials by holding the regime to account for its support of terrorism and systematic human rights abuses."



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[EU threatens sanctions over Libya political gridlock](#)

Tue, 2021-06-22 16:53

LONDON: The EU has warned that any country or group that delays Libya's planned elections on Dec. 24 this year will face harsh sanctions.

The warning comes ahead of a meeting of foreign ministers to oversee the withdrawal of foreign forces from the war-torn country.

The Berlin talks will look to outline guidelines for the withdrawal of foreign fighters, and again demand that elections take place at the end of the year. However, previous deadlines set for military withdrawals have been

ignored.

The UN has proposed a meeting in Geneva next week of the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum to discuss election details.

But some groups in Libya's Parliament have engaged in what the EU now views as a delaying tactic, by blocking elections or demanding referendums on a new constitution prior to any nationwide vote.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken is set to attend the Berlin meeting, which follows talks last December that outlined an in-depth roadmap to take Libya toward democracy and end the civil war.

A national unity government was set up in February, but has been hampered by politicians privately seeking election delays.

Many in the country's elite political class, labeled as oligarchs by critics, are said to fear the loss of power and financial clout that could result from an election.

The Berlin meeting has been urged by the group Lawyers for Justice in Libya to protect human rights in the country and punish those breaching the UN arms embargo, including some states that took part in the last conference.

The advocacy group also warned that freedom of expression, assembly and association must be protected in order for free and fair elections to be held.

The House of Representatives, Libya's existing Parliament, has proved to be the main source of delays, despite its Speaker Aguila Saleh claiming that a national election is a prerequisite for reconciliation in the country.

The Parliament was ordered by the UN to agree to the idea of a constitution-based election and adopt legislation by July 1.

But Libya has descended into a political stalemate, with disagreements about the constitution that would control any future elected president.

Former Interior Minister Fathi Bashaga is a favorite to win, but there are rumors that Muammar Gaddafi's son Saif Al-Islam will also stage a bid for the presidency.



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