

Jordan's King Abdullah issues decree to end parliamentary session

Author:

Mon, 2021-06-07 22:21

AMMAN: Jordan's King Abdullah II on Monday ended the current session of parliament, with experts saying the decision was not linked to recent clashes sparked by an MP.

A royal decree was issued, proroguing the non-ordinary session as of Thursday, June 10.

Clashes took place at the weekend between supporters of MP Osama Al-Ajarmeh and police in Amman's Naour suburb.

Al-Ajarmeh was expelled from the lower house on Sunday after he was accused of igniting the riots.

Four police officers were wounded in the clashes.

Naour, a stronghold of the Ajarmeh tribe, was quiet on Monday, with no violence reported.

The lower house held a brief emergency session on Sunday during which a majority of MPs voted in favor of expelling Al-Ajarmeh.

The MP appeared in a number of recent videos insulting King Abdullah II, state institutions and threatening to establish a "radical Jordanian right wing" of tribes and ex-army figures to "purify Amman of the liberal elite" whom he accused of being behind the country's woes.

Of the 130-member lower chamber, 108 MPs voted in favor of expelling Al-Ajarmeh.

Parliamentary experts said the royal decree to prorogue the 19th parliament was merely a procedural constitutional requirement that happened to coincide with the upheaval.

"Under the constitution, the parliament's session should not last for more than six months," Majed Al-Amir, a parliamentary journalist, said. He added that the legislature began the non-ordinary session on Dec. 10 so the six-month deadline fell on June 10.

The remarks were echoed by political commentator Khaled Qudah, who described the king's decision to prorogue parliament as a "routine procedure and a constitutional requirement."



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Jordanian parliament expels MP Osama Al-Ajarmeh for inciting riots
Jordanian security personnel injured in clashes with tribal supporters of MP

[Houthi-run court starts trial of abducted Yemeni model](#)

Author:

Mon, 2021-06-07 21:58

ALEXANDRIA: A Houthi-run court in Sanaa has started the trial of a Yemeni model who was abducted by the Iran-backed militia.

Entesar Al-Hammadi was seized by the Houthis on Feb. 20 along with two other women. Their capture and imprisonment has triggered local and international condemnation.

Legal activist Abdul Wahab Qatran said the court had refused to give her lawyer the case documents, including the charges against her.

Her lawyer, Khaled Mohammed Al-Kamal, declined requests from Arab News to

comment on the trial, citing the court's ban on media coverage of the case.

The Houthis have not officially commented on the case or the charges, but rebel-affiliated media outlets reported that she was taken due to information about her involvement in a drug and prostitution ring.

Local and international right groups said the rebels forced Al-Hammadi into confessing and that the abduction was part of a Houthi crackdown on liberal voices that challenged the group's radical views.

Al-Hammadi had boasted about her dream of becoming an international model and posted images of her in traditional Yemeni dress.

Angered by intense media coverage of the abduction, the Houthis dismissed a prosecutor who ordered Al-Hammadi's release after questioning her, threw the model into solitary confinement and verbally and physically abused her.

They also stepped up their intimidation and harassment of local activists, lawyers, and judges who demanded the women be freed.

Last week the Houthis fired Al-Kamal from his job at the Capital Secretariat, a compound hosting government offices, where he has been working for 20 years to force him to drop the case. Al-Kamal said on social media that his boss told him he was suspended, without giving an explanation.

Qatran and Ahmed Hashed, a member of the Houthi-controlled parliament and an outspoken critic of the militia, have reported receiving death threats.

Yemeni human rights activists have accused the Houthis of using judicial bodies in areas under their control to decriminalize their abduction of activists, artists and critics of the group.

Huda Al-Sarari, a lawyer and the director of the Defense Organization for Rights and Freedoms, has been following the model's case since the outset. She said the Houthis' measures against the model showed that she would not be released soon.

"In light of the repression, the confiscation of rights and freedoms, and the use of the judiciary to legitimize their crimes, it is difficult for the Houthi authorities to release victims with the current local pressure mechanisms," she told Arab News.

She urged international women's organizations to cooperate with their Yemeni counterparts for more aggressive campaigns to ensure the abducted women were released.

The militia did not adhere to international human rights laws, she added, calling for the international community to impose more sanctions on Houthis who abducted and abused Yemenis.

"Unfortunately, delays in securing the release of the model are not due to the weakness of the advocacy. The Houthi authority is not subject to any pressure and is intransigent in these matters. They are first and foremost a

militia that does not respect international agreements, resolutions or advocacy mechanisms.”



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Who is Entesar Al-Hammadi, the Yemeni model kidnapped by the Houthis? Houthis sought to recruit me as spy, abducted Yemeni model says from prison

[Turkey agrees to secure Kabul airport if conditions are met](#)

Author:

Mon, 2021-06-07 21:46

ANKARA: Turkey on Monday pledged to provide security cover at Kabul airport if a number of key conditions were met.

After weeks of uncertainty over whether Ankara would pull its troops from Hamid Karzai International Airport in the Afghan capital, Turkish Defense

Minister Hulusi Akar said the military would stay if its allies committed to certain political, financial, and logistical support.

Turkey's decision about taking over security responsibility at the airport has been the subject of intense talks with Washington and was also discussed during the recent NATO defense ministers' meeting.

Several countries had considered closing their embassies in Afghanistan if the city airport was not secured.

Following last year's February agreement in Doha between the Taliban and the US government, the withdrawal of all American troops from Afghanistan had been due to be completed by May 1. But the deadline was later extended, a decision that angered the group.

US soldiers are now expected to be out of Afghanistan by the 20th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, New York terror attacks.

Akar said that Turkey, which had about 500 soldiers in the country as part of the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission (RSM), was now awaiting a response from allies to its requests.

"We are aiming at restoring peace in Afghanistan. We have a historical brotherhood. We want to be able to stay in Afghanistan as long as the Afghan people want our assistance," he added.

Hamid Karzai international in Kabul is the primary airport of the country and also serves as a large military base but Afghan authorities do not have the capacity to provide full security at the site where air traffic control has been operated by NATO military staff since 2002.

The airport's security was important not only for military flights but also for supporting international organizations and NGOs distributing humanitarian aid.

Magdalena Kirchner, director of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation office in Kabul, told Arab News that the complete withdrawal of foreign forces could theoretically increase the risk of retaliatory attacks against a Turkish residual force.

"But I think the higher risk would be the absence of critical enablers currently provided by US forces should there be a dramatic decline in the overall security situation or if the airport itself should come under attack," she said.

Maintaining a presence at the airport was seen as crucial to ongoing international travel and support reaching the country and because the handover of airfields and airports to the Afghan authorities required more time, capacities, and resources than anticipated, she added.

The much-anticipated Istanbul conference on Afghan peace, due to have taken place in April, has been postponed after the Taliban made a late decision not to attend. The group expected the upcoming conference to be short with an

agenda not touching upon decision-making on critical issues.

Regarding the prerequisites of continued Turkish presence in Afghanistan, Kirchner noted that negotiations may hinge around increasing the amount of a reported \$130 million deal with NATO.

“Politically, maintaining at least a formal NATO umbrella would be an option preferred by Turkey over a unilateral military engagement and lastly, especially between the US and Turkey, logistical discussions over critical enablers and force protection capabilities might continue,” she said.

Last December, the Turkish parliament approved a motion to extend the deployment of Turkish troops in Afghanistan for 18 months as part of NATO’s support mission in the war-torn country. This year marks the 100th anniversary of diplomatic ties between Turkey and Afghanistan.



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Airstrike by Turkey hits school playground in northern Iraq

Houthis should cast aside pride, enter peace talks: Top US general

Author:

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LONDON: The top US military official in the Middle East has urged the Iran-backed Houthis to cast aside their pride and desire for a military solution in Yemen, and instead enter political negotiations with the internationally recognized government and Saudi-led coalition to end the country's crisis.

In a press briefing attended by Arab News, Gen. Kenneth McKenzie Jr., commander of the US Central Command, said it is clear that the Houthis are holding up the peace process in Yemen and thereby prolonging the suffering of millions of people.

"We're at a point in the crisis in Yemen where I'm personally convinced that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia seeks a responsible political end to the conflict. I'm convinced they're willing to take significant steps to make that happen," he told Arab News. "Unfortunately, I don't believe the Houthis are ready to seize the moment."

Earlier this year, Saudi Arabia launched a wide-ranging initiative to bring peace to Yemen, deliver aid to its people and end the country's six-year war.

The plan called for a nationwide ceasefire supervised by the UN, the reopening of Sanaa airport, and new talks to reach a political resolution to the conflict.

However, McKenzie said he believes the Houthis are unwilling to entertain the possibility of a political solution.

They "have an opportunity here to enter good-faith negotiations with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to bring an end to this conflict," he added.

"But their constant bombardment of Saudi Arabia isn't helpful, and their continued pressure to take the town of Marib in northwest Yemen isn't helpful either."

Marib hosts many internally displaced Yemenis, and just days ago dozens of people – including a 5-year-old and a 10-year-old – were killed by a Houthi airstrike on a gas station there.

"I hope (the Houthis') pride and their desire to seek a purely military solution to this conflict isn't going to overcome the opportunity that we now have in front of us," McKenzie said.

One of Washington's priorities, he added, is "deterring Iran's destabilizing activities" because Tehran "remains the biggest threat to stability in the Middle East."

A key focus of that effort is taking place in Iraq, where Tehran is going to increasing lengths to undermine the country's sovereignty.

Much like the Houthis, McKenzie said Iran's Iraq-based proxies are increasingly dismissive of political engagement, and are instead choosing to pursue their objectives with violence.

"The latest manifestation of that has been the use of small unmanned aerial systems, or drones. Some of them are very small, some are larger, but all can be very lethal," he added. "Political pressure hasn't worked for them. Now they're turning to a kinetic approach."



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[**Vote on new Israeli government to be**](#)

held in coming week

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JERUSALEM: Israel's parliament speaker said Monday that a vote to approve a new government that would end Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's 12-year rule will be held in the coming week, without setting a precise date. The announcement by Yariv Levin, a close Netanyahu ally, leaves time for the prime minister's efforts to try to peel away supporters from the fragile coalition arrayed against him, which consists of eight parties and has only a narrow majority in Israel's 120-member Knesset, or parliament. Netanyahu's supporters have launched a blistering campaign against his opponents, including death threats and raucous protests outside their homes that has forced the Knesset to beef up their security details. Netanyahu has accused his erstwhile right-wing allies of betrayal for allying with leftists and a small Arab party that he had also courted. The so-called change coalition appears to be holding together despite the attacks and its ideological differences. Naftali Bennett, an ultranationalist former Netanyahu ally, would serve as prime minister for two years, followed by the centrist Yair Lapid. "This government is being formed because it's the majority," Lapid said Monday, insisting that it would serve all Israelis and be based on "trust, on decency, on goodwill." "These past few days proved how much we need change. If the leadership uses violence and incitement against Knesset members, against their children, against the very essence of the democratic process, then we need change," Lapid said. Israel held four elections in less than two years, the most recent in March. Each time, voters were deeply polarized over whether Netanyahu should remain in office while on trial for corruption. An emergency government formed last year to address the coronavirus pandemic was mired in political infighting and collapsed in December. Netanyahu tried and failed to form a government after the March elections before the mandate was given to Lapid. The political transition, which could yet be derailed, comes amid heightened tensions following weeks of clashes between Palestinian protesters and Israeli police in Jerusalem that ignited a wave of ethnic violence in Israeli cities and triggered an 11-day Gaza war.



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Bennett, Israel's right-wing leader tipped to be prime minister
Netanyahu's grip on power loosens as far-right leader Bennett backs rival coalition