

Jordanian parliament expels MP Osama Al-Ajarmeh for inciting riots

Author:

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AMMAN: Jordanian MPs voted on Sunday to expel Osama Al-Ajarmeh from parliament after he was accused of sparking riots over the weekend.

The emergency session was held after violence erupted in the suburb of Naour, a stronghold of the Ajarmeh tribe in southwest Amman.

Four police officers were wounded in clashes with supporters of the dismissed MP, the Public Security Department (PSD) said.

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

The MP was seen in a video insulting King Abdullah II while carrying a sword and a gun in a shoulder holster.

The injured police officers were taken to hospital after being hit by stones, the PSD said.

During Sunday's session, the house speaker, Abdulmunim Oddat, and several other MPs denounced Al-Ajarmeh's "perverted utterances" and "devious, slanderous" allegations aimed at the king.

"I hereby declare the parliament's support to the king against all attempts targeting his prestige, and rejects any tampering with the kingdom's social fabric, its tribal and family harmony, and social peace, which form the basis for Jordan's security and stability," the Jordan news agency, Petra, reported Oddat as saying.

Last week, MPs voted to freeze Al-Ajarmeh's membership of parliament for a year after he was caught on video cursing the chamber during an emergency session to discuss nationwide power outages.

The outspoken MP had accused the the government of deliberately plunging the country into darkness to prevent a march on Amman organized by Jordan's tribes seeking to have the Israeli ambassador expelled for the recent bombing campaign in Gaza.

With his membership frozen, Al-Ajarmeh submitted a resignation letter to the house in which he expressed dismay over the constitutional provision that gives the king the power to dissolve parliament.

Al-Ajarmeh was then seen in many videos making bold statements while surrounded by his supporters, 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.

The government said on Sunday it would not tolerate any acts threatening the country's stability and security, adding that no one is above the law.

A security source told Arab News that the security agencies were dealing with renewed rioting in suburban Naour involving protests over Al-Ajarmeh's dismissal.





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Jordanian security personnel injured in clashes with tribal supporters of MP
Jordan refers 2 former officials to security court over 'sedition'

Ever Given: Suez authority cites navigation rules in legal dispute

Author:

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CAIRO: The Suez Canal Authority (SCA) has issued a statement on the accountability and ownership dispute surrounding the Ever Given container ship, which ran aground and disrupted global trade in March.

The statement came in response to recent legal claims put forward by UK Protection Ltd.

According to the release, the SCA stated that its negotiating committee had reviewed negotiations of the legal file for the ship, as well as a statement by UK Protection Ltd.

The SCA said it “appreciated” what was stated about the authority’s eligibility to obtain an appropriate and fair compensation that covers the costs of rescue work, the due rescue reward and the losses incurred by the authority during the successful rescue operation of the stranded ship.

It stressed that the canal’s navigation regulation is the legal reference that defines the rights and obligations of the Suez Canal toward its customers.

The regulation includes traffic rules in the canal and all texts specifying the various responsibilities and requirements for ships transiting the canal, including maritime, logistics and rescue vessels.

It was also highlighted that the Navigation Regulations in Clause No. 58 regarding the designation of accompanying tugs states that the authority shall appoint two tugs accompanying container ships weighing 170,000 tons or more. This was done by the authority in the case of Ever Given, the SCA said.

The authority added that the permitted speeds of vessels within the navigational course ranges from 14 to 16 kilometers per hour, depending on the type of ship.

Accordingly, it said ships are obligated to apply the predetermined speeds in accordance with the navigation regulations during their transit through the channel, and the responsibility for exceeding these speeds rests with the ship’s master alone.



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Suez Canal Authority showing 'full flexibility' in Ever Given compensation talks
Egyptian court adjourns Suez Canal ship-block case for further compensation talks

[US secretary of state, Palestinian Americans discuss 'important issues'](#)

Author:

Sun, 2021-06-06 22:14

PHILADELPHIA: US secretary of State Anthony Blinken has met a select group of Palestinian American leaders – signifying the importance of changes in the Democratic Party in recent months.

In the past, Arab Americans and especially Palestinian Americans were shunned while US officials regularly met Jewish American leaders.

Blinken tweeted on June 5 about the importance of the conversation with Palestinian-American leaders regarding violence in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza.

"We are committed to rebuilding our relationship with the Palestinian people. Israelis and Palestinians deserve equal measures of security, freedom, opportunity and dignity," he said on his official Twitter account.

Palestinian Americans who participated told Arab News that the meeting was serious and tackled some of the key issues that need to be talked about.

"We spoke about the importance of conditionality of any aid to Israel and our total opposition to rewarding Israel with the \$735 million military aid package," said the participant, who asked not to be identified.

The meeting follows promises by President Joe Biden's administration, repeated in Ramallah recently during Blinken's meeting with President Mahmoud Abbas, on the need to reopen the US consulate in East Jerusalem and the Palestinian mission to the US.

Complicated legal and legislative laws have hampered the quick reopening of the Palestinian mission to the US.

No names were officially announced and neither was the meeting made public, but Palestinian sources in the US told Arab News that the gathering included a number of well-known political, social and financial leaders.

A source named the following as having participated: Leading Palestinian American nationalist Hanna Hanania; Maysoon Zaideh, a respected comedian and advocate of disability rights; lawyer George Salem; president of the Arab American Institute James Zogby; lawyer and businesswoman Samar Ali; Daniel Harb, president of the American Federation of Ramallah; Taleb Salhab, senior non-profit executive leader; and Ghada Najjar, a Palestinian American academic.

While the list of Palestinian Americans represents traditional and some new leadership, it appears to have avoided extremists and some of the current grassroots leaders who have been igniting demonstrations throughout the US.

A statement signed by more than 500 Palestinian Americans opposed the meeting, considering the closed-door gathering an attempt to circumvent grassroots leaders and to divide the Palestinian American community.

"We call on fellow Palestinians, join us in denouncing Secretary Blinken's opportunistic meeting with 'Palestinian community leaders.' We reject any attempt to undermine the grassroots uprising in Palestine or to divide the powerful coalitions in the US calling for Israel to be held accountable."



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Senior global figures slam 'obstruction' of ICC Palestine probe
Israel arrests Jerusalem activist Muna El-Kurd

[Renewed US assistance won't end UNRWA's financial troubles](#)

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Sun, 2021-06-06 22:12

AMMAN: The UN relief agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, has hailed the US administration's resumption of aid as politically significant but said its longstanding financial crisis will continue during 2021, should no more donations come.

US President Joe Biden's administration has announced the resumption of assistance to Palestinians, including to UNRWA, signaling a U-turn from the policies of President Donald Trump, who cut off assistance to the agency in 2018.

The State Department said it would provide a total of \$235 million in

assistance to projects in the West Bank and Gaza and to UNRWA, which provides aid and other vital services, including education and critical health care services to 5.7 million Palestinian refugees in the occupied territories, Gaza Strip, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.

As detailed by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in April, \$150 million will be go to UNRWA, \$75 million to economic and development assistance and \$10 million to peace-building programs.

UNRWA Spokesperson Sami Mshasha has said that the US's renewed assistance to UNRWA is extremely important but the money pledged is still below Washington's regular donation to the relief agency.

"Despite the announcement of the Biden administration that they will resume the support to the agency, till the end of 2017 the US was our largest donor with a donation of \$260 million, which represented at that time one fourth of our budget. This year they have announced that they will only be giving us \$150 million to our regular services and regular budget, as well as our emergency operations," Mshasha said in an interview with Arab News.

Mshasha explained that UNRWA has entered 2021 with a budget deficit exceeding \$200 million, part of which was a carry-over of liabilities the agency had failed to pay in 2020. "As we speak, we are looking at a budget deficit exceeding \$150 million and this is a serious one with (the agency's) budget of 1.2 billion that covers our regular operations and emergency operations. "The American resumption of aid is extremely important politically as well as financially and it will prompt other donors either to resume the levels of funding that (UNRWA) enjoyed from them in years before or to step up and increase their funding."

The spokesperson said that some of UNRWA's cash crisis has deepened with its longtime donors either cutting off or reducing their donations as a result of the COVID-19 crisis and its accompanying economic hardships. "So the additional money from the US is basically balanced out by the fact that two other major donors have indicated that they will not be able to meet their annual obligations as in past years even though their contributions remain important for us."

Mshasha also said that Washington has announced additional assistance to UNRWA following the recent conflict in Gaza to help an early recovery and meet the needs of the coastal enclave's population. "(It is) not clear how much but it will be an additional money."

"All in all, the financial situation of the agency is very dire," he said, explaining that UNRWA is still applying strict austerity measures on its 28,000 staff members to address the budget deficit, continue delivering its health, education, relief and social services to Palestinian refugees and meet its obligations to external services providers.

The spokesperson explained that UNRWA has launched an emergency appeal of \$232 million to finance its operations in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) in 2020 and another appeal of \$380 million for 2021. "In both these emergency portals, we (are) also envisioning a budget deficit – a huge one in that."

COVID-19

Mshasha explained that the COVID-19 pandemic has been hindering UNRWA's ability to service the population in Gaza, Syria and Lebanon and meet their increasing health and economic needs.

In addition to health services and vaccination, he explained that the relief

agency is struggling to repair the “economic devastation” of the population – most of them are daily-paid workers who ended up unemployed as a result of the pandemic. “Those people are to be added to the number of people who are under the poverty line and thus qualify for our food and in-kind assistance in Gaza, Syria and elsewhere.”

He also said that UNRWA is working with health agencies to vaccinate as many people as possible “but the inoculation rate is still very low” in besieged Gaza, war-hit Syria and crisis-hit Lebanon. “We are now concerned about a third wave (of COVID-19) after the recent conflict in Gaza and this is now on the top of all worries and challenges gripping the Strip.”

UNRWA has launched a \$ 94.6 million COVID-19 appeal to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on Palestine refugees in the Middle East, with a special focus on health, cash assistance and education.

Mshasha explained that the agency is working with its strategic dialogue partners Sweden and Jordan which, he said, have been leading the efforts to solve UNRWA’s financial problems. They plan to organize an international conference to bring together the agency’s donors and supporters to discuss their long-term arrangements for UNRWA. The spokesperson expected to the international conference to take place in October.

“We need a predictable framework for our financial situation, one we can build on and plan upon and one that is multiyear.”



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Gaza receives engineering equipment from Egypt to rebuild stripUN agency withdraws director from Gaza after threats

[Yemenis shocked after girl, 5, killed in Houthi strike on gas station](#)

Sun, 2021-06-06 20:51

ALEXANDRIA: Shocking images showing the charred bodies of a father and daughter killed in a Houthi missile strike in Yemen's central city of Marib have sparked outrage inside and outside the country amid calls to "name and shame" the militia for its brutal attacks on civilians.

The five-year-old girl was among at least 14 people killed when a ballistic missile fired by the Houthis struck a fuel station in densely populated district in Marib on Saturday.

The attack occurred while dozens of cars were waiting at the station to be refueled, onlookers said.

The girl, identified as Lian Taher, was inside her father's car outside the station when the missile hit.

Emergency workers who rushed to the scene were targeted by an explosive-laden drone fired by the Houthis, leaving many civilians bleeding to death.

After footage of the charred remains of the child and her father were widely shared on social media, Yemeni human rights activists, government officials and Western diplomats strongly condemned the Houthi attack and demanded the militia be punished for targeting civilians in Marib.

Marib Gov. Sultan Al-Arada warned that Houthi missile and drone attacks are threatening tens of thousands of internally displaced people who live in the city, and urged local and international organizations to condemn the attacks.

"The local authority calls on all Yemeni people from across the political and social spectrum to stand together in the face of the Houthi militia's terrorism, which was and still is the cause of most of its tragedies," he said.

Ali Al-Lahabi, a Yemeni MP, accused the Houthis of violating religious and tribal norms that forbid the targeting of civilians.

"Today's crime against civilians and children in Marib breaches tribal norms in Yemen and all humanitarian Arab and international norms," he said in a Twitter post.

Angered by images of the dead civilians, Abdul Malik Al-Mekhlafi, an adviser to Yemeni President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, urged those who believe the Houthis can cooperate with peace efforts to change their mind.

"The attack again confirms the ugly face of the Houthi, who has rejected all international efforts to stop the war," Al-Mekhlafi said on Twitter.

On the ground, Yemeni army commanders battling the Houthis in Marib and Hodeidah said that deadly attacks by the militia will continue until military and financial support from Iran is ended.

"War crimes will not stop unless the Iranian regime is deterred, and the Houthis who kill children and women are brought before the International Criminal Court," Sadeq Dewaid, a National Resistance Forces spokesperson in the western province of Hodeidah, said.

Western envoys to Yemen also voiced their grief and anger at the civilian deaths, demanding the Houthis stop attacking civilians and engage with the UN-brokered peace proposals.

The US Embassy in Yemen described the Houthi missile and drone attacks in Marib as "inhumane violence."

Cathy Westley, the embassy's charge d'affaires, said in a statement: "We are horrified by reports that the Houthis used a ballistic missile to destroy a gas station in Marib, killing and wounding civilians. The Houthis reportedly then used a drone to attack an ambulance crew coming to aid the injured. This inhumane violence must end."

The UK's Yemen envoy, Michael Aron, said on Twitter that he was shocked by the reports of the attacks, adding that only a nationwide truce would put an end to human losses.

"The Houthis must stop their Marib offensive and engage seriously with the UN. Agreement on a nationwide cease-fire would prevent such tragic losses and allow humanitarian action," he said.

Yemeni officials and experts warned that the militia attacks could destroy intensive international diplomatic efforts to end the war.

Hooria Mashhour, a former human rights minister, told Arab News that the UN Security Council should impose the peace plan that calls for an immediate end to the fighting in Yemen.

"While the war continues and there are no sincere intentions to achieve a comprehensive cease-fire, we will see tens and even thousands of charred bodies of children and adults," Mashhour said.



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Omani FM, Yemeni counterpart meet to discuss Yemen's state solution