

Israeli army arrests Hamas leader in West Bank

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Wed, 2021-06-02 21:17

JERUSALEM: The Israeli army said Wednesday it has arrested a Hamas leader in the occupied West Bank accused of setting up a base for the Palestinian Islamist group in the territory.

Special forces arrested Sheikh Jamal Al-Tawil in the city of Ramallah late Tuesday, the army said.

It said Tawil "took an active part in organizing violent riots" and "the re-establishment of the Hamas headquarters in Ramallah."

Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem in Gaza confirmed the arrest.

"The occupation forces' arrest of movement leader Jamal Al-Tawil will not quell the voice of resistance in the West Bank," he said.

The arrest came after a May 21 Egyptian-brokered cease-fire halted 11 days of deadly bombardment between Israel and Hamas, following a spike in tensions in Jerusalem.

On Wednesday, Iyad Al-Bozom, spokesman for the Hamas-run interior ministry in Gaza, said two more Hamas combatants died while dismantling Israeli ordnance in the enclave.

Israel has arrested dozens of Hamas members in past weeks in the West Bank, including several who had planned to run in Palestinian elections scheduled for late May but postponed by president Mahmud Abbas.

Hamas controls the Israeli-blockaded Gaza Strip, while Fatah dominates the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank.

Israel, the United States and the European Union consider Hamas a "terrorist" organization.

Palestinian protests have erupted across the West Bank since early May, with 30 Palestinians killed in clashes with Israeli forces and in alleged attacks.



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Egypt invites Hamas, Palestinians, Israel for further talks
UN Gaza relief chief called in by bosses after comments over Israeli air strikes

[Yemeni government continues to provide exceptional permits for ships to deliver fuel: foreign minister](#)

Wed, 2021-06-02 20:59

RIYADH: The Yemeni government said on Wednesday it is continuing to provide exceptional permits for ships to deliver fuel for civilian use in Houthi controlled areas.

During a meeting with US envoy to Yemen Tim Lenderking, Foreign Minister

Ahmed Awad bin Mubarak said his government is issuing the permits “despite the Houthi militia looting the official revenues of fuel shipments to finance its war efforts instead of paying the salaries of employees.”

Bin Mubarak also highlighted the seriousness of the situation of the Safer oil tanker, which is at risk of breaking up and causing an ecological disaster in the Red Sea, Yemen’s Saba news agency reported.

“This is because the Houthi militia rejected all solutions and proposals and have not allowed a UN technical team to access the tanker to assess its condition and maintenance,” he said.

Bin Mubarak and Lenderking discussed efforts to end the six year war.

Bin Mubarak told Lenderking it was important to continue to support the Yemeni government and complete the implementation of the Riyadh Agreement, especially with regard to security and the military.

The US envoy called on the Houthis to stop all military operations in Marib, where the militia launched an offensive in February.

Lenderking said the US will continue to support the legitimate government and the unity, stability and security of Yemen.

I discussed today with [#USEnvoyYemen](#) Linderking the latest developments & efforts to bring peace in Yemen. We agreed that a comprehensive nationwide ceasefire is urgently needed to alleviate humanitarian suffering of all Yemenis. [#Yemen](#)
pic.twitter.com/U80h0d7FWM

– Ahmed A. BinMubarak (@BinmubarakAhmed) [June 2, 2021](#)

Meanwhile, Yemeni Minister of Information Moammar Al-Eryani said there had been a high death toll of child soldiers recruited by the Iran-backed Houthis in recent battles in Marib.

“The field reports and the Houthi militia’s confessions through its media outlets confirm the significant increase in the number of children killed, who were thrust into suicide attacks by the militia on various fronts in the Yemeni province of Marib, since it established camps to lure and recruit them under the guise of ‘summer centers’,” Al-Eryani said.

He warned of “a genocide perpetrated by the Houthi militia against thousands of children aged between 10 and 16, after luring them from their homes and schools and brainwashing them with extremist ideas.

Elsewhere, Oman’s Foreign Minister Sayyed Badr Al-Busaidi held talks on Yemen with his Swedish counterpart Ann Linde, during her visit to the sultanate.





Main category:

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[United States](#)

UN Security Council to discuss Yemen oil tanker impasseGCC and Saudi officials discuss Yemen development projects

[Visiting ICC prosecutor asks Sudan to hand over Bashir ally accused of](#)

Darfur genocide

Author:

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Wed, 2021-06-02 21:05

KHARTOUM: The International Criminal Court has asked Sudan to hand over one of the key people accused of war crimes and genocide in Darfur, the visiting chief ICC prosecutor said Wednesday.

The accused, Ahmed Haroun, is also an ally of ousted President Omar Hassan Al-Bashir.

Haroun, asked in May to be sent to The Hague, the court's headquarters, complaining that he would not receive a fair trial in Sudan.

Chief ICC prosecutor Fatou Bensouda told a news conference that Bashir, in prison in Khartoum, was still wanted by the ICC and that the court was willing to negotiate with the Sudanese government on where his trial should be held.

Bashir had for years resisted ICC warrants against him and four allies, including Haroun, over the conflict in Sudan's western region that killed an estimated 300,000 people and drove 2.5 million from their homes.

They face charges at The Hague of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity for atrocities committed by pro-government forces in Darfur beginning in 2002.

The military-civilian transitional government that replaced Bashir in 2019 has said it will cooperate with the court.

ICC investigators will travel to Darfur to continue speaking with victims of the violence, Bensouda said.

She said she did not sense any opposition from Sudanese officials over handing over Haroun, which she said would need to happen before July so that he could be tried alongside defendant Ali Kushayb, who handed himself over to the court last year.

Darfur, which Bensouda visited this week, has seen a new outbreak of violence, beginning last year.

"One of the (pieces of) information I got during my tour is that crimes are ongoing," she said. "And what I want to say is that the ICC has not stopped working, it has not stopped looking at the situation and it will continue."



Main category:

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Sudan says reviewing naval base deal with Russia
Senior global figures slam 'obstruction' of ICC Palestine probe

[US condemns devastating humanitarian toll of Houthi Marib offensive in Yemen](#)

Tue, 2021-06-01 21:57

RIYADH: The US special envoy to Yemen has again expressed Washington's concern over the "devastating humanitarian consequences" of the Houthi militia's offensive in Marib.

Tim Lenderking was speaking during a meeting with Marib Governor Sultan Al-Arada, that was also attended by Cathy Westley, chargé d'affaires for the US Embassy to Yemen, the State Department said.

Lenderking also called for an increase in "humanitarian aid and other support for the people of Marib."

[#USEnvoyYemen](#) Lenderking & [@USEmbassyYemen](#) Chargé Westley spoke w/Marib Governor Al-Arada to reaffirm the U.S.' concern about the devastating humanitarian consequences of the Houthi Marib offensive & the need to increase humanitarian aid & other support for the

people of Marib. pic.twitter.com/MEgzti5sr1

– U.S. State Dept – Near Eastern Affairs (@StateDept_NEA) [June 1, 2021](#)

The Iran-backed Houthi militia mounted an offensive in February to capture oil and gas-rich Marib from forces loyal to the internationally recognized government.

The campaign has faced international condemnation due to Marib also being a safe haven for thousands who have fled the fighting in other parts of the country since the war started in 2014.

Lenderking also held talks with UN envoy to Yemen Martin Griffiths in the Jordanian capital, Amman, to discuss his trip to the Houthi-held capital Sanaa. “Both expressed an unwavering commitment to the principle that a comprehensive, nationwide cease-fire is needed immediately to bring much needed humanitarian relief to the people of Yemen,” the State Department said.

Lenderking and Griffiths also met with women activists “to discuss the importance of an inclusive peace process” and underlined Washington’s commitment to supporting women’s inclusion in Yemen’s peace process.

[#USEnvoyYemen](#) listened to their concerns about the economic situation, security, the need for diverse voices, & the importance of a transparent peace process. We continue to work w/the intl community to address these concerns as we strive for a ceasefire & political talks.

– U.S. State Dept – Near Eastern Affairs (@StateDept_NEA) [June 1, 2021](#)

“When women play an active role in peace building, resolutions are more durable,” the statement said.

Lenderking “listened to their concerns about the economic situation, security, the need for diverse voices, and the importance of a transparent peace process,” and said that they will continue to work with the international community to address these concerns as they push for a cease-fire and political talks.



Main category:

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UN envoy to Yemen Griffiths says battle for Marib must stopUS Yemen envoy Lenderking to hold talks in Saudi Arabia over Houthi Marib offensive

[Whistleblower or vengeful ex-con?](#)

Mafia boss Sedat Peker stirs up a political storm in Turkey

Tue, 2021-06-01 21:41

DUBAI: Millions of Turks are waiting with bated breath for the next bombshell video from fugitive organized crime boss Sedat Peker – in which he is expected to detail his ties to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Peker, 49, a prominent mafia figure since the 1990s, regularly moves to avoid capture by Turkish authorities, having fled from Turkey last year to avoid a criminal investigation.

On May 26, the chief public prosecutor's office in Ankara issued a new arrest warrant for Peker on suspicion of being in league with Fethullah Gulen, the US-based preacher who Turkey blames for a failed coup against Erdogan in 2016.

In a series of videos, which have reached millions of viewers on YouTube, Peker has unleashed a deluge of accusations of corruption, mismanagement and connections to organized crime within Erdogan's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP).

His allegations, which have rattled the political establishment, include drugs and weapons trafficking, and longtime cooperation between senior Turkish officials and Al-Nusra militants in Syria.



Turkish military vehicles, part of a convoy, drive through the town of Ariha in the rebel-held northwestern Idlib province on October 20, 2020, after vacating the Morek post in Hama's countryside. (AFP/File Photo)

Peker's videos feel like "live reporting from inside the gang" and should be taken seriously, Gokcer Tahincioglu, a Turkish investigative journalist, told Reuters.

"There is a confessor who is not anonymous and who wants to speak of his own accord. Why shouldn't he be heard? He must be heard."

In what appears to be a concerted campaign to blacken the names of his estranged accomplices, Peker's allegations cover corrupt practices, the absence of the rule of law, and rivalries between the security apparatus and the judiciary.

Peker says that his statements are designed to "take revenge" on the Turkish government and especially Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu, who allowed police officers to raid his home in April after he fell out with the regime.

Soylu has rejected accusations against him, which include extending Peker's police protection after he left jail and warning him of a crackdown on his organization.

He has called the claims "disgusting lies" and a plot against the country.



Peker said his statements are designed to “take revenge” on the Turkish government and especially Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu, pictured at a press conference in Ankara. (AFP/File Photo)

Erdogan has vigorously defended his government’s record on tackling organized crime. “We have crushed criminal organizations one by one for 19 years,” he told lawmakers on May 26, insisting he stands “side by side” with Soylu.

Peker resurfaced again on May 30 in his eighth video, this time accusing the country’s rulers of conspiring with a paramilitary force to send weapons to Al-Qaeda-linked terror groups in Syria.

Peker claimed Turkey sent weapons to Al-Nusra Front militants through a paramilitary group named SADAT, formed in 2012 by a retired general and 23 officers who were expelled from the armed forces due to their Islamist allegiances.

Al-Nusra Front, which is now called Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS), retains control of Syria’s rebel-held Idlib province, which hugs Turkey’s southern border.

In his video, Peker alleges that doing “big business” in Syria requires the permission of not only the presidential head of administrative affairs, Metin Kiratli, but also of pro-government businesspeople and a senior Al-Nusra militant, Abu Abdurrahman.

Peker also implied that the money trail could never be tracked back to the Turkish state after it was hidden by a “corrupt network” with the help of the interior minister.

The Turkish YouTube sensation

- * Fugitive mafia boss Sedat Peker has been making headlines with his claims about prominent political figures in Turkey.
- * His tell-all videos aim to seek revenge against those who discredited him in favor of rival mobster Alaattin Cakici.
- * IMDb has listed Peker's videos as a TV mini-series under the topics 'biography,' 'crime' and 'reality TV.'



He claimed to have arranged to send military equipment to Syrian Turkmen and shared the plan with an AKP lawmaker in order to receive permission to dispatch the trucks in 2015.

He also claimed to have opposed sending aid to Al-Nusra Front because the group was fighting Turkmen minorities in Syria. He said that the trucks were diverted and sent to Al-Nusra fighters instead by a group within SADAT.

"They diverted aid trucks for Turkmen to Al-Nusra under my name, but I didn't send them – SADAT did. I was informed about it by one of our Turkmen friends," Peker said in the video.

The paramilitary company is closely linked to the Turkish government and allegedly played a role in recruiting and providing training to militants during the Syrian and Libyan civil wars.

Peker has been in and out of prison since 1998 on charges that include racketeering, forgery, robbery, false imprisonment, incitement to murder, and building and leading a criminal organization.



Turkish-backed Syrian rebel fighters, mask-clad due to the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, take part in a military parade marking the graduation of a new batch of cadets. (AFP/File Photo)

Among the politicians skewered in his videos is Binali Yildirim, another former prime minister and now deputy leader of the AKP. Peker said that Yildirim's son Erkam had made frequent trips to Venezuela to set up a new international drug trafficking route to Turkey.

Yildirim claimed Erkam's trips were to deliver COVID-19 aid, but his defense backfired when Turkish customs data showed that no such medical equipment left Turkey on the dates in question.

Peker's claims have infuriated the Erdogan government.

"Peker showed that he acts under the orders of Turkey's enemies and domestic evil alliances with his ridiculous statements," chief presidential adviser Oktay Saral said. "Our state will do what's needed and all powers will recognize that this country won't be damaged with such acts of nonsense."

Nevertheless, a new survey by the polling company Avrasya suggests that most Turks – 75 percent – believe Peker's claims.

"When the AKP was established in mid-2001, corruption was one of the vices it promised to eradicate, but it has now become even more widespread," Yasar

Yakis, a former Turkish foreign minister and a founding member of the AKP, wrote in a recent column for Arab News.

“Peker’s disclosures have opened a debate in Turkey on whether this could be an opportunity to bring an end to the devastating corruption that ruins all structures of the state.”



Peker claims that the son of former prime minister Binali Yildirim went to Venezuela with the intention to set up a new route for cocaine smuggling in the country. (AP/File Photo)

Peker’s accusations have triggered an in-depth look into the country’s deep-state apparatus. At the center of this scrutiny are the trials of Mehmet Agar, a former interior minister and police chief, and Korkut Eken, a former intelligence official.

Agar and Eken will be retried over 18 extrajudicial killings that occurred in the 1990s after an appeals court decided to reverse their acquittals in a ruling that was adopted on April 5. The court asserted that the evidence was not suitably examined.

Agar and Eken have made fresh headlines following allegations by Peker, who accused them of committing several unlawful acts under the state apparatus, including involvement in an international drug-smuggling scheme and the assassination of investigative journalists Ugur Mumcu and Kutlu Adali.

Journalist and peace advocate Adali was shot dead outside his home in July 1996 in the northern Cyprus administration. The murder has remained unsolved.

Adali’s spouse filed a case with the European Court of Human Rights against Turkey, and in March 2005 the court found that Ankara had not conducted a proper investigation into the murder of the Turkish Cypriot journalist.

Last week, Turkish police detained Atilla Peker, brother of Sedat, after he said that he assigned his brother to a botched mission to kill Adali 25 years ago on the orders of the state.

Mumcu was killed by a car bomb in January 1993 outside his apartment in Ankara. Peker alleged Agar had a hand in the killing.

It remains to be seen how the Turkish government will handle the fallout from the accusations, and whether Soylu, who is at the center of claims over state-mafia relations, will resign.



Turkey-backed Syrian fighters load their weapons at a position on outskirts of the villages of Afis and Salihyah situated near the regime-controlled town of Saraqib. (AFP/File Photo)

The first notable remark in Peker's disclosures came from veteran political figure Cemil Cicek, a former minister of justice and speaker of parliament.

When a few high-level members of the AKP raised their voices against corruption, he said: "If one thousandth of what Peker says turns out to be true, this is already a disaster for the country.

"Public prosecutors who hear or read such scandalous news do not need an instigation to take action. They are expected to prosecute these allegations on their own initiative without being asked or instructed to do so."

If Peker continues blowing the whistle on his past ties with the highest echelons, it could prove a serious litmus test for the Turkish government's popularity and its ability to act against the criminal underworld ahead of

elections scheduled for 2023.

The accusations could undermine the ratings of a government that has already lost considerable public support.

As for the likely implications for voter behavior, the AKP and its far-right ally the Nationalist Movement Party have been steadily losing popular support.

“This decline is not reversible. No doubt about it,” Sinem Adar, associate at the Center for Applied Turkey Studies at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, told Arab News. “Peker’s allegations are, in this sense, another hit to an already losing alliance.

“More than the electoral support, however, the damage reflects itself more in terms of solidifying and accentuating the already existing conflict and competition among different cliques within the ruling alliance.”



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Most Turks believe mob boss's corruption claims, survey shows