

Opposition Turkish lawmaker regains seat after jail

Author:

Fri, 2021-02-12 02:07

ANKARA: Enis Berberoglu, a deputy in Turkey's main opposition party, the Republican People's Party (CHP), officially regained his position as an MP on Thursday after an Istanbul court halted criminal complaints against him. Berberoglu had been convicted of disclosing confidential state documents related to Syria.

The Istanbul 14th High Criminal Court dropped charges against Berberoglu on Monday following a ruling by the country's Constitutional Court which decided unanimously on Jan. 21 that Berberoglu's rights to stand for elections and engage in political activities had been violated by lower courts because legal proceedings against him should have been suspended due to his re-election as a member of parliament during the country's June 2018 elections. Berberoglu, a former journalist, was sentenced by a lower court to five years and 10 months in jail in 2017 for his role in leaking confidential documents about National Intelligence Organization trucks allegedly carrying weapons bound for Syria.

He was found guilty of espionage and providing footage of the trucks to a dissident journalist.

Although he was reelected to parliament in June 2018, he was not released from jail until September that year, when the Court of Cassation postponed his sentence due to his reelection.

In June 2020, the Turkish parliament stripped parliamentary immunity from Berberoglu for the parliamentary term 2015-2018, and he was placed under house arrest to serve the rest of his initial sentence.

But rights activists and lawyers consistently repeated that his reelection in 2018 meant his parliamentary immunity still applied, a claim that has now been upheld by Turkey's highest court.

"While the Constitutional Court's ruling on Enis Berberoglu and his subsequent return to parliament are positive first steps, they should be the rule, not the exception," Gina S. Lentine, senior program officer for Europe and Eurasia at Freedom House, told Arab News.

Freedom House emphasizes that this same precedent should be applied to other politicians who have been jailed for their roles in the opposition, including Leyla Guven and Selahattin Demirtas, former lawmakers from the HDP.



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US State Department says policy on Turkey's S-400 remains unchanged
Turkey's Syria strategy in doubt after US policy shift

[Police in the UAE impose tighter COVID-19 measures](#)

Fri, 2021-02-12 01:51

DUBAI: As the death toll from the coronavirus creeps closer to the 100,000 mark in the UAE, police forces from the different emirates have approved new precautionary measures to combat the disease.

In Abu Dhabi, the country's capital, the police were forced to break up 11 weddings.

Limiting the number of people in social gatherings is just one of the challenges facing Abu Dhabi, where the local police force announced organizers of such events would be fined AED10,000 (\$2,722) while participants would receive a AED5,000 fine.

The financial penalties have not had the effect the police were hoping for. In Abu Dhabi alone, officers reported 1,688 violations as they referred 47 organizers and 1,641 participants to the emirate's Emergency, Crisis and Disasters Prosecution Team.

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<https://t.co/MKY2vJk3M0>
<pic.twitter.com/DJhiWwAIm>

شرطة أبوظبي (@ADPoliceHQ) [February 11, 2021](#)

Dubai Police said anyone who wants to enter a police station or other official buildings within the emirate are now required to present a negative PCR test before entering. Those who have received two doses of the coronavirus vaccine are exempt.

The Ajman Emergency, Crisis and Disaster Management Team approved a new package of preventive measures that include banning concerts, festivals and events, while reducing the capacity at cinemas, gyms, parks and beaches to 50 percent. That emirate's new measures were implemented Thursday and also include the limiting of people attending weddings to 10 and funerals to 20.

فريق إدارة الطوارئ والازمات والكوارث بعجمان يعتمد حزمة من الإجراءات الوقائية الجديدة للحد من انتشار فيروس كورونا اعتمد

Posted by [AjmanPoliceghq](#) on [Thursday, February 11, 2021](#)

Similar measures were introduced in Ras Al-Khaimah, with concerts and events canceled and operating capacities in other public places significantly reduced.

The Sharjah Emergency, Crisis and Disaster Management Team, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and the Sharjah Special Education Authority, said all students in public and private schools, as well as all nurseries, would switch to remote learning until the end of the month.

The Department of Human Resources in Sharjah also instructed all employees within the emirate to work from home starting Sunday, with some exceptions permitted.

The UAE reported 3,525 new cases on Thursday, bringing the national total to 339,667 people infected with COVID-19. The death toll reached 974 after another 18 people died from the virus.

Elsewhere, Kuwait reported 1,048 new cases, raising the country's total to 175,031. The death toll rose to 985 after five deaths were reported in the past 24 hours.

تعلن [#وزارة_الصحة](#) عن تأكيد إصابة 1,048 حالة جديدة، وتسجيل 631 حالة شفاء، و 5 حالات وفاة جديدة بـ [#فيروس_كورونا_المستجد](#) COVID-19 ، ليصبح إجمالي عدد الحالات 175,031 حالة <pic.twitter.com/LhrQswaEwF>

وزارة الصحة - الكويت (@KUWAIT_MOH) [February 11, 2021](#)

Oman's Health Ministry said that its total number of cases reached 136,622 after registering 245 additional cases on Thursday. Two more patients died, raising the death toll to 1,539.

[#Statement](#) No. 287

February 11, 2021 pic.twitter.com/ppqFoyEqZ0

– وزارة الصحة – عُمان (@OmaniMOH) [February 11, 2021](#)

In Bahrain the death toll stands at 393 after two new deaths were reported. The number of confirmed cases in the country increased by 812.

Out of 13727 COVID-19 tests carried out on 11 February 2021, 812 new cases have been detected among 324 expatriate workers, 481 new cases are contacts of active cases, and 7 are travel related. There were 526 recoveries from [#COVID19](#), increasing total recoveries to 103251 pic.twitter.com/tGBa8bIAUM

– مملكة البحرين | وزارة الصحة (@MOH_Bahrain) [February 11, 2021](#)



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Dubai 'surges' health care capacity as virus cases spike Saudi Arabia announces 5 more COVID-19 deaths

[How Houthi war tactics impede vital aid flow to Yemen's needy](#)

Fri, 2021-02-12 00:06

DUBAI: Among the first steps taken by the new US administration was the reversal of the State Department's designation of Yemen's Houthi militias as a foreign terrorist organization.

The argument made by President Joe Biden's advisers and many aid agencies is that not calling the Houthis (Ansar Allah) "terrorists" would facilitate the flow of humanitarian aid into Yemen.

Trouble is, for long the Iran-backed Shiite militia has prevented UN assistance from reaching the needy, regardless of how the US administration chose to label it.

Many see the pleas by the US now to the Houthis to stop behaving like a terrorist organization as too little too late. Backed by a regime (Iran) eager to be wooed by the Biden administration, the Houthis likely think they are on a winning streak and therefore should be dialing up the action, not down.

YEMEN'S DEEPENING FOOD CRISIS

The Iran-backed Houthi militia is accused of impeding the flow of humanitarian aid



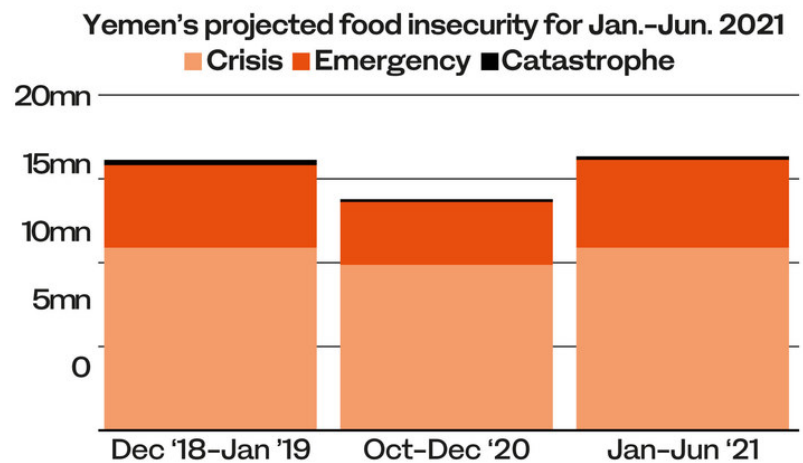
Phase 5: In catastrophe
47,000

Phase 4: In emergency
5,058,000

Phase 3: In crisis
11,042,000

Phase 2: Stressed
8,644,500

Phase 1: Secure
5,258,000



Source: WFP ARAB NEWS

For evidence of this mentality, one need look no further than the near daily drone and missile attacks on civilian facilities in Saudi Arabia, although thanks to the Kingdom's robust air defenses, the casualties have been minimal.

Since they launched an offensive against the UN-recognized government and took control of the capital, Sana'a, and other parts of northern Yemen in 2014 and early 2015, the Houthis have used banned antipersonnel landmines, fired artillery into Yemeni cities, and indiscriminately launched ballistic missiles into Saudi Arabia.

Noting that Wednesday's drone attack on Abha airport in the Kingdom's southwest, which set a civilian aircraft ablaze, happened just days after Martin Griffiths, the UN special envoy for Yemen, visited Tehran, political analyst Hamdan Al-Shehri said Iran is pushing the Houthis to carry out attacks "because Tehran is not looking for any solution to the crisis.



Wreckage of a drone used in the Houthi attack on Abha International Airport in Asir province. (Saudi Ministry of Media photo)

“It would be very strange if the Biden administration keeps the Houthis off the terror list because over the past three weeks, we have seen many attacks from the Houthi side toward Saudi Arabia and also inside Yemen,” he told Arab News.

Indeed, with the surge in Houthi attacks on population centers, one can see a pattern of behavior that undoubtedly constitutes terrorism in its purest form.

Consider the militia’s well-documented tactic of delaying permission for distribution of aid and holding prospective recipients hostage to its demands.

At the beginning of 2020, according to an AP report, the Houthis blocked half of the UN’s aid-delivery programs in Yemen, “a strong-arm tactic to force the agency to give them greater control over the massive humanitarian campaign, along with a cut of billions of dollars in foreign assistance.”

INNUMBER

16.2 million Yemenis facing food insecurity.

With the economy in free fall, the UN aid effort is a major source of foreign currency into Yemen. The UN received about \$3 billion in 2019 in

international donations for its campaign.

The Houthis had made granting access to areas under their control contingent on a number of conditions that would have given them greater sway over who received aid, the AP report said.

The Houthi demand for two percent of that budget would have diverted \$60-\$80 million into the coffers of its so-called aid-coordination agency, SCMCHA. "Harassment, intimidation and suspected embezzling of funds by Houthis have been going on for years, aid workers said, and have gotten worse since the rebels created their aid coordination agency in early 2018," AP reported.

Houthi extortion and interference came under renewed scrutiny toward the end of 2020, in a report titled "Deadly Consequences," in which Human Rights Watch (HRW) blamed the militia in particular for creating numerous obstacles for humanitarian groups operating in Yemen.



Obstacles posed by the Houthi militia has often prevented international food aid from reaching people displaced by the conflict in Yemen. (WFP photo)

"Efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and respond to other urgent health needs in Yemen have been severely hampered by onerous restrictions and obstacles that the Houthi and other authorities have imposed on international aid agencies and humanitarian organizations," the HRW said.

"Since May, the Houthis have blocked 262 containers in Hodeidah port belonging to the World Health Organization as well as a large shipment of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the COVID-19 response.

The Houthis have tried to use some of the shipments as bargaining chips in negotiations relating to the lifting of other aid obstacles and agreed to release 118 of the containers in late August or early September.”

Not mincing words, the HRW said: “The Houthis have a particularly egregious record of obstructing aid agencies from reaching civilians in need, at least in part to divert aid to Houthi officials, their supporters, and Houthi fighters. In 2019 and 2020, aid workers had to push back against Houthi officials insisting that aid groups hand over assets, such as cars, laptop computers, and cellphones to the Houthis at the end of projects.”

Four months after the HRW report came out, when Mike Pompeo, the outgoing US secretary of state, announced on Jan. 10 the designation of the Houthis as a global terrorist entity, the US Treasury Department’s Office of Foreign Asset Control issued several general licenses and exemptions aimed at mitigating the humanitarian and commercial impacts of the decision.

This was important as Yemen depends on imports to bring in 90 percent of its food and 80 percent of the population of 29 million are in need of aid.

However, the challenges for aid agencies remain daunting as the Houthis control areas where most of Yemen’s population lives and the need for aid is greatest.



WFP is aiming to reach 1.7 million children and mothers at more than 3,000 health centers across Yemen. malnutrition rates have increased with each year of war in Yemen. (WFP photo)

As the HRW’s “Deadly Consequences” pointed out: “The Houthi authorities’

onerous bureaucratic aid requirements without justification have blocked millions of Yemenis from life-saving aid. Although not the recognized government of Yemen, the Houthis should nonetheless act to protect the human rights of all people in territory they control.”

In the past, the Houthis have withheld visas and permissions for equipment and supplies and refused to grant clearances for UN missions to move through areas controlled by them.

Agency management’s willingness to concede to some Houthi demands invariably emboldened its leaders to push for more. Now, with the removal by the Biden administration of the militia from the US terrorist list in return for no concessions, the gloves are definitely off.

“I believe, in sum, that it is a message sent by Iran to the US, that Iran controls the militia’s decisions and it doesn’t want any relations between the Houthis and the US,” Badr Al-Qahtani, Yemen editor of Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper, told Arab News, referring to the attack on Abha airport, some 120 kilometers north of the Yemen border.



An estimated 16 million Yemenis are going hungry and almost 50,000 people are projected to be under famine by June this year. (WFP photo)

“When Washington takes positive steps towards the Houthis, even if the Houthis wish to reply positively, they can’t, because they don’t have a say in making decisions.

Al-Qahtani believes Iran wants Yemen to be part of the agenda if it can get the US back to the negotiating table. “I believe that UN envoy (Griffiths) as

well as the US special envoy (Timothy Lenderking) will seek to separate the two issues," he told Arab News, "because they can't ignore the fate of 29 million Yemenis, while they are the main victims of war, conflict and crisis. Or for this fate to be merely a file among many other files."

Al-Qahtani added: "I believe that this is the (real) conflict that we are currently witnessing, a conflict of files, so to speak." Meanwhile, an estimated 16 million Yemenis are going hungry and almost 50,000 people are projected to be under famine by June this year.







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[Domestic violence doubles in Lebanon](#)

Author:

Thu, 2021-02-11 00:55

BEIRUT: The economic and financial crisis in Lebanon is responsible for the country's worsening domestic violence, according to women's rights groups.

Four women have been murdered over the past month by male relatives as Lebanon is in the depths of a dire economic situation, exacerbated by coronavirus lockdowns and a massive explosion that tore through Beirut last August.

"The reason behind this rise in violence is the economic and financial situation," Hayat Mirshad, the co-founder and co-director at FE-MALE, told Arab News.

"But the violence against women during the lockdown is the most dangerous and

most common form of violence. Women are victims of their male relatives: fathers, husbands, or brothers. The lockdown prevents them from leaving their houses or even seeing other people, knowing that violence in Lebanon is the result of a patriarchal culture and mentality that blames women and justifies their aggressors' crimes."

In new figures shared with the Thomson Reuters Foundation on Wednesday, the Internal Security Forces (ISF) said domestic violence reports in Lebanese homes doubled last year, with 1,468 cases received in the past 12 months, up from 747 during the previous year.

An ISF official, who declined to be named because they were not authorized to speak to the media, said the number of women killed by domestic violence in Lebanon also increased but the exact figure has not yet been finalized.

The official figures reflect a similar trend noted by Resource Center for Gender Equality (ABAAD), a women's rights organization, which saw calls to its helpline triple to 4,127 in 2020, up from 1,375 in 2019.

"We have never witnessed this much violence against women," Lawyer Jaafar Mohammed Hashimi told Arab News.

Hashimi is representing a recent victim of domestic violence, Lara Chahine, whose husband was arrested after he allegedly beat her with sharp objects after she returned home from work on Tuesday. Chahine is being treated in the hospital for injuries to her lungs, liver and face.

"The case is classified as an attempted murder, not just an assault," Hashimi said. "The motive behind his crime is that Chahine has been seeking alimony for her and her five-year-old child. Her husband had refused to divorce her and filed an obedience and cohabitation lawsuit against her."

Lebanon outlawed sexual harassment and reformed its domestic violence law in December but it does not criminalize marital rape and personal laws administered by religious courts to discriminate against women in matters like divorce and child custody.

The UN has described a global increase in domestic abuse during coronavirus lockdowns as a "shadow pandemic," with a spiraling economic crisis worsening the violence.

"These kinds of crimes have significantly increased, especially under lockdown," said Ashraf Al-Moussawi, a lawyer representing Zeina Kanjo, who was strangled to death by her husband before he fled to Turkey.

Al-Moussawi stressed that the motives behind the increasing crimes are economic, social and cultural but he also said: "The pattern of crimes has changed and has become more violent."

In another case last month in Akkar, the ISF arrested a teenager after he confessed to stabbing his 52-year-old aunt to death after she had rejected his sexual advances. The teen later admitted to sexually assaulting her after she died. He also stole a gold ring from the victim, which was later

recovered at his house by the ISF.

“Some resort to a certain party or militia to protect them from legal prosecution,” Mirshad said. “And despite all the awareness-raising sessions they receive, police officers still tell the abused women to solve their disputes with their husbands and not to come to them.”

The current infrastructure in Lebanon is fractured, Al-Moussawi said, as solutions to domestic violence need to start high up in the government.

“The disturbing unreadiness of security and judicial bodies and lack of trust in the Lebanese state are all factors that encourage murderers to commit their crimes,” he said. “When prosecutions last for years and the sentences are reduced, aggressors dare to beat their wives and their children as well.”



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Lebanon protesters call on government to resign amid crisis
Lebanese protesters break lockdown: ‘Death by COVID-19 is better than starvation’

Iranian nuclear scientist killed by one-ton automated gun in Israeli hit – Jewish Chronicle

Author:

Reuters

ID:

1612991704960789700

Wed, 2021-02-10 20:55

JERUSALEM: The Iranian nuclear scientist assassinated near Tehran in November was killed by a one-ton gun smuggled into Iran in pieces by the Israeli intelligence agency Mossad, according to a report by [The Jewish Chronicle](#) on Wednesday.

Citing intelligence sources, the British weekly said a team of more than 20 agents, including Israeli and Iranian nationals, carried out the ambush on scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh after eight months of surveillance.

Reuters was not immediately able to confirm the report, which was published on the website of the London-based newspaper.

Iranian media said Fakhrizadeh died in hospital after armed assassins gunned him down in his car. Shortly after his death Iran pointed the finger at Israel, Foreign Minister Javad Zarif writing on Twitter of “serious indications of (an) Israeli role.”

Israel declined to comment in November and on Wednesday night an Israeli government spokesman responded to the latest report by saying: “We never comment on such matters. There has been no change in our position.”

Fakhrizadeh, 59, was long suspected by the West of masterminding a secret nuclear bomb program.

He had been described by Western and Israeli intelligence services for years as the mysterious leader of a covert atomic bomb program halted in 2003, which Israel and the United States accuse Tehran of trying to restore. Iran has long denied seeking to weaponize nuclear energy.

According to the Jewish Chronicle’s report, Iran has “secretly assessed that it will take six years” before a replacement for him is “fully operational” and that his death had “extended the period of time it would take Iran to achieve a bomb from about three-and-a-half months to two years.”

Giving no further details of its sourcing, the world’s oldest Jewish newspaper said the Mossad mounted the automated gun on a Nissan pickup and that “the bespoke weapon, operated remotely by agents on the ground as they observed the target, was so heavy because it included a bomb that destroyed the evidence after the killing.”

It said the attack was carried out “by Israel alone, without American involvement” but that US officials were given some form of notice beforehand.



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Suspected Iranian nuclear mastermind Fakhrizadeh assassinated near TehranIran producing uranium metal, further violating 2015 deal: IAEA