

Three Russians attacked by knifeman in Istanbul

Author:

Mon, 2021-01-25 23:22

LONDON: A man suspected of attacking three Russians with a knife in Istanbul has been detained by police.

According to Russian news service Sputnik, a local garbage collector attacked the man and two women late on Sunday night. They were in hospital but their injuries were not life threatening.

The attack was caught on camera and widely shared online.

Sputnik reported a source as saying: "The suspect has been detained. According to preliminary data, he is mentally ill. The wounded Russians are still in the hospital: these are two women and a man."

Turkey continues to grapple with high rates of violent crime, particularly murder and attempted murder.

According to data from the World Bank, it has a homicide rate of 2.6 per 100,000 people – double that of Saudi Arabia.

Last month, Arab News reported that security concerns meant Saudis were no longer considering Turkey as a tourist destination.

In October, the US Embassy in Turkey said it had received reports of potential terrorist attacks and kidnappings against foreign nationals in Istanbul.

The British Foreign Office, on its website, warns that street robbery is common in parts of Istanbul, and urges tourists to be "extra vigilant" when visiting Turkey.



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Greece, France to sign \$2.8 billion fighter jet deal amid Turkey tensions
Turkey and Greece resume talks to resolve maritime disputes

[New round of talks on Syria's constitution begins in Geneva](#)

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Mon, 2021-01-25 15:16

GENEVA: Delegations from Syria's government, opposition and civil society began a new round of meetings in Geneva on Monday aimed at revising the constitution of the war-torn country.

The fifth round of the so-called Constitutional Committee came days after UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen told the UN Security Council that many subjects have been discussed for more than a year and it's now time for the committee to ensure that "the meetings are better organized and more focused."

Syria's nearly 10-year conflict has killed more than half a million people and displaced half the country's pre-war 23 million population, including

more than 5 million refugees mostly in neighboring countries.

"I believe that we need to ensure that the committee begins to move from `preparing' a constitutional reform to `drafting' one, as it is mandated to do," Pedersen said last week.

The United States and several Western allies have accused Syria's President Bashar Assad of deliberately delaying the drafting of a new constitution to waste time until presidential elections are held this year and avoid UN-supervised voting as called for by the UN Security Council.

According to Syria's elections law, presidential elections are scheduled to take place between April 16 and May 16, at least 90 days before Assad's seven-year term expires. Assad has been in power since 2000.

At a Russian-hosted Syrian peace conference in January 2018, an agreement was reached to form a 150-member committee to draft a new constitution, which took until September 2019. A 45-member committee known as the "Small Body" started its meetings in Geneva on Monday.

Monday's meeting involved 15 people from each delegation and was taking place amid measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus.



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Three Syrian soldiers killed in bus ambush: state media UN envoy calls for

greater sense of urgency in Syrian peace efforts

Houthi, Iranian influence will 'reshape' Yemeni society, warns UK ambassador

Author:

Mon, 2021-01-25 21:46

RIYADH: Yemeni society will be completely changed by Iranian influence and Houthi ideology, the British ambassador to Yemen has warned.

Michael Aron told Asharq Al-Awsat that Iran's grip on the north would become even tighter unless a solution to the war was found soon.

The Houthi militia, which sparked the war in Yemen when it seized the capital Sanaa in 2014, is armed and supported by Iran. It was designated as a foreign terrorist organization by the US earlier this month.

"Houthis are altering Yemeni society and curricula in schools," said Aron, who has held his post since early 2018. "They control and change universities, deploy children to battlefronts, and send students to study in Qom, Iran. The more time passes without a solution to stopping the war and beginning the rebuilding of Yemeni society, the more Iranian influence in the north. After five years, Yemeni society will be completely changed by Iranian influence and Houthi ideology and traditions."

Aron, who leaves his post in July, called for negotiations to resume for a political solution to the war.

Several attempts at UN-brokered talks have failed to bring the war to an end, however discussions between the two sides on a prisoner exchange started in Jordan on Sunday.

"Today there is a choice of continuing the war and this is very difficult, or sitting for negotiations. Even the Houthis, many of them want peace and an end to the war."

He condemned the militia's recent acts of aggression, including an attack on Aden airport last month as members of the newly formed internationally recognised government arrived in the city. The missile strikes killed 25 people.

"It was a failure and a crime, and we strongly condemned this attack," he added.

Aron was previously an ambassador to Sudan, Libya, Iraq and Kuwait.



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UK ambassador to Yemen urges Houthis to cease Marib operations, take UN envoy 'seriously'
Saudi cabinet welcomes US plan to designate Yemen's Houthis a terrorist organization

[Israeli police prevent Dome of the Rock repairs](#)

Author:

Mon, 2021-01-25 03:21

AMMAN: Israeli police have stopped workers from the Jerusalem Islamic Waqf from renovating the Dome of the Rock for two consecutive days, raising tensions in the old city.

Azzam Khatib, director of the Jordanian Waqf department in Jerusalem, informed Jordan's Ambassador in Tel Aviv Ghassan Majali and Minister of Waqf in Amman Mohammed Khalaileh of the news.

Israeli officials claim the decision was made after an individual tried to renovate the ceiling of the Bab Al-Rahmeh mosque, which Israel has demanded Muslims to vacate, without reason.

The Jerusalem Waqf Council is expected to issue a strong statement denouncing the Israeli action, calling it a violation of understandings.

Bassam Hallaq, the Waqf engineer in charge of the renovation, said that Israeli police stopped work on the gold-plated Dome of the Rock on Saturday and Sunday, and prevented urgent electric work, too.

Israel insists that any renovation or repair must be pre-approved. The renovation is not structural.

Arab News has learned that the Israeli actions on Saturday and Sunday followed the efforts of an unknown Palestinian whose face was covered, who climbed the roof of the Bab Al-Rahmeh mosque in order to apply cement to stop leaks.

Israel has forbidden any repair work on the mosque.

Hallaq said that all repair work in the entire Al-Aqsa compound has also been suspended by Israel.

The mosque's engineer insists that the Waqf has no cement materials inside the Al-Aqsa mosque compound and that Friday was a holiday when staff did not work.

Sheikh Omar Kisswani, director of Al-Aqsa Mosque, told reporters that repairs to the entire 144 dunum Haram Al-Sharif/Al-Aqsa mosque compound were the right of the Islamic Waqf and that the Israeli police have no right to interfere in their work.

A spokesman for the Israeli police told Arab News that the "subject isn't under the responsibility of the Israeli police."



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Israel to ban incoming passenger flights to contain COVID-19 spread
US will work with Israel to build on regional normalization agreements: Biden adviser

[Egyptian revolution: A dream unfulfilled](#)

Mon, 2021-01-25 01:19

DUBAI: Abdel Latif El-Menawy had a unique perspective on the events of Jan. 25, 2011, and the tumultuous weeks that followed. As head of news at the state-owned Egyptian Radio and Television Union, he watched the revolutionary upheaval unfold from his newsroom in the Maspero television building on the Nile Corniche. Now, a decade on, El-Menawy looks back at Hosni Mubarak's fall from power and the events that led to this reckoning.

Most narratives of the Arab Spring begin the same way, over 2,000 miles west of Cairo in the Tunisian capital, Tunis, where, on Dec. 17, 2010, a poor street vendor named Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire after police confiscated his fruit cart. His anguished cry for justice set off a chain

reaction, drawing vast crowds onto the streets and forcing Tunisia's ruler of 23 years, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, to step down.

There is no doubt that Jan. 25 is an important chapter in Egypt's modern history, regardless of its results or the security and political turmoil that occurred after it in Egypt.

Abdel Latif El-Menawy

Bouazizi's sacrifice and the "Jasmine Revolution" it inspired were felt across the Middle East and North Africa, where swathes of the population had endured years of economic stagnation, mass unemployment and official corruption, coupled with limited personal freedoms and heavy-handed policing. Emulating the rage of Tunisians, crowds of young Egyptians spilled onto the streets on Jan. 25 to demand change. Tahrir Square in downtown Cairo became the symbolic center of the movement, where protesters camped out under the watchful eye of the world's media. Aggressive police tactics to quell the protests stoked anger further, culminating in calls for the removal of Mubarak.

"Egyptians like to give the impression that they are as calm as the waters on the surface of the Nile, the banks of which we have been living on since the dawn of civilization," Menawy wrote in his 2012 book "Tahrir, the last 18 days of Mubarak" – his account of those remarkable weeks.



“But if you look a little deeper into the water, you will see underneath a plethora of whirlpools and currents. The fatal error committed by former President Mubarak’s regime, and its predecessors, was that they never grasped the true essence of the Egyptians.”

Indeed, Menawy believes several opportunities were missed by the Mubarak government to address the public grievances that ultimately led to its demise. Looking back with a decade’s hindsight, the veteran journalist wonders whether history could have played out differently.

“I felt that there were changes that had taken place in Egypt, and these changes were not born on Jan. 25, but some time before that, as the political situation in Egypt was suffering from great fluidity as a result of mistakes



committed by the Mubarak regime,” Menawy told Arab News. “When the regime couldn’t take advantage of the opportunities to correct the situation, these opportunities were wasted. That is why it was natural for the streets to move to demand change.”

Egypt is the most populous country in the Arab world – home to almost 85 million people at the time of the revolution in 2011. Today the figure is closer to 104 million.

Poverty rates on the eve of the upheaval vary, with some studies estimating almost 40 million Egyptians – roughly half of the population – were living below the poverty line on less than

\$2 a day.

Despite an annual economic growth rate of 7.2 percent during the first decade of the new millennium, the proportion of the population below the poverty line increased from 17.8 percent to 23 percent, according to Egyptian Council of Ministers data in 2010.

TIMELINE

Jan. 25, 2011: Thousands of protesters gather in Cairo’s Tahrir Square.

Feb. 11: Mubarak steps down, transitional military council takes power.

March 19: Egyptians approve constitutional amendments, paving way for elections.

June 24, 2012: Muslim Brotherhood candidate Mohammed Morsi wins presidential election.

June 30, 2013: Egyptians begin days of protests demanding Morsi’s resignation.

July 3: Defense Minister Abdel Fattah El-Sisi announces Morsi’s removal.

Dec. 25: Muslim Brotherhood designated a terrorist organization.

May 28, 2014: El-Sisi wins presidential election.

Moreover, the gap was widening between rich and poor, with a small elite living in luxury while whole segments of society struggled with the spiraling cost of living. Petrol prices were rising and there were even cases of food shortages.

When the years of pent-up frustration found their expression in the Arab Spring, it was almost impossible to the genie back in its bottle. Menawy vividly recalls the moment at 5 a.m. on Jan. 28, 2011, when a republican guard officer walked into his office, flanked by two soldiers, to tell him the Maspero television building was now under military control.

Protesters, angered by the state media's coverage of events, had attempted to storm the television studio. Security forces would now decide who was allowed in or out of the building, as a countrywide crackdown got underway. Another moment seared into Menawy's memory came two weeks later, when Omar Suleiman, then-vice president and head of intelligence, entered the building on Feb. 11 to announce Mubarak's resignation.



"In the name of God the merciful, the compassionate," Suleiman told the nation in a short broadcast.

"Citizens, during these very difficult circumstances Egypt is going through, President Hosni Mubarak has decided to step down from the office of president of the republic and has charged the high council of the armed forces to administer the affairs of the country." A military council was formed to run the country's affairs.

There was jubilation in Tahrir Square, where young Egyptians felt their moment had finally come to create a fairer society. In reality, it was only the beginning of a fresh period of upheaval and uncertainty.

"There is no doubt that Jan. 25 is an important chapter in Egypt's modern history, regardless of its results or the security and political turmoil that occurred after it in Egypt," said Menawy.

"I think all parties are responsible for what happened. Everyone made mistakes. But it was a cornerstone of change in political life in Egypt. I think that we are still in the reform phase and there is no doubt that it will continue for a long time, because change is difficult."

The dreams hatched in Tahrir Square were not fulfilled by Mubarak's exit.

Instead, the country was rocked by new economic calamities and the rise to power of Mohamed Morsi – a leading figure of the now-outlawed Muslim Brotherhood.

“I think that Jan. 25 has not achieved any successes other than throwing a stone into the stagnant political life,” Menawy said.

“Among the failures is also the deterioration of the Egyptian economy after stability. The events also created a state of extreme violence in society, whether physical violence or even at the level of ideas.”

Libya, Syria and Yemen were also swept up in the tumult of the Arab Spring. But rather than emerging as renewed forces, these nations were thrown into a decade of civil wars, the outcomes of which remain undecided.

Tunisia, meanwhile, is “trying to rearrange society through elections,”

Menawy said. “Only Egypt corrected its path with the June 30 revolution.”

The “second Egyptian revolution” came in 2013, a year after Morsi’s inauguration. The resumption of street protests that summer saw Morsi forced from power and his Muslim Brotherhood designated as a terrorist organization. The following year, Morsi’s defense minister, Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, won the presidential election and was sworn into office.

Contemplating why the Egyptian revolution took the path that it did, Menawy says the country is fortunate to have a strong sense of national identity and solid institutions.

“Egypt is a big country. It has its roots in the history of human civilization. It has a diverse, yet harmonious society,” he said. “Egypt also has a strong and united national army, which may not be found in other countries that are full of sectarian, ethnic and tribal conflicts.”

As Egypt looks ahead to the coming decade, Menawy hopes the process of political, social and economic reform will continue in order to reflect the country’s competing visions of the future.

In his view, the most important lesson to take away from the Jan. 25 revolution is that “the majority of Egyptians love their country dearly, but everyone loves it in a different way.”

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Arab Spring weakened many states, benefited Iran and Turkey, says Arab League secretary
Post revolution, Sudanese cinema struggles to find recognition at home