

Turkey drives Muslim Brotherhood campaign against Egyptian and Greek maritime demarcation

Sun, 2020-08-09 22:46

CAIRO: Turkey has sought help from the Muslim Brotherhood in Qatar and Ankara for its campaign against the Egyptian and Greek demarcation of their respective maritime borders.

The campaign began when the Turkish Foreign Ministry announced that it considered the agreement between Cairo and Athens “null,” and that the area covered by it fell within the scope of Turkey’s interests, claiming it “violated Libyan maritime borders.”

It also came amid the backdrop of controversial Turkish energy exploration in the Eastern Mediterranean.

“It is surprising that such statements and allegations were made by a party that does not know the agreement and its details,” Egyptian Foreign Ministry spokesman, Ahmed Hafez, tweeted of Turkey’s stance.

The Turkish statement was followed by a series of attacks from the Muslim Brotherhood on social media, criticizing agreement and accusing Egypt of plotting against Turkey.

Dozens of Brotherhood websites launched from Turkey shared fabricated reports and photos attacking the agreement.

Various experts and officials refuted the allegations made by the sites and social media accounts, which claimed that the agreement between Egypt and Greece to demarcate the borders gave a green light to the Israeli gas pipeline, EastMed, to export gas to Europe through Cyprus and the Greek island of Crete to the mainland.

According to former Egyptian Assistant Foreign Minister Mohamed Hegazy, the reason for Turkey’s anger was that after this deal, as well as the signing of the border demarcation agreement between Greece and Italy, Turkey no longer had a maritime entrance point to Libya in line with the rules of international law.

HIGHLIGHT

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He added that the UN secretary-general had refused to deposit the maritime

agreement that Turkey concluded with the Fayez Al-Sarraj government in Libya, and that Libya's Parliament had not adopted it.

The agreement between Egypt and Greece comes two months after the latter signed its agreement with Italy regarding the demarcation of the exclusive economic zone between the two countries in the Ionian Sea, in a first step that nullified the agreement between Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Al-Sarraj.

Regional security expert Muhammad Jumaa said in statement to the Masrawy website: "The Turkish allegations are based on its non-recognition of Cyprus and consequently the lack of recognition of its maritime borders. It believes that Cyprus is very close to its borders and recognises its limits of influence in the Mediterranean, so Turkey wants to bypass Cyprus as if it does not exist, as it sees that Libya is 2,000 nautical miles away from it."

Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry said that this agreement allowed Egypt and Greece to move forward in maximizing the utilization of the resources available in their exclusive economic zone, especially oil and gas reserves, and opened new horizons for more regional cooperation in the energy field in light of the two countries' membership in the East Mediterranean Gas Forum.

"The demarcation of the maritime border between Egypt and Greece cancels the agreement of Turkey and the Al-Sarraj government, as it covers some of the areas covered by that agreement. Greece respects international law, unlike Turkey, which is acting in hostility with Egypt," Clianeth Kyriakides, a professor of security and strategic studies, said.

Under the agreement, Egypt will be able to explore for oil and gas in the western economic zones located on the maritime borders with those of Greece. It will also give the right to Egypt and Greece to search and explore in the eastern Mediterranean, and strengthen the bilateral relationship between Cairo and Athens.



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Erdogan: Turkey resumes energy exploration in east Mediterranean

[COVID-19 test required for foreigners to enter Egypt](#)

Author:

Sun, 2020-08-09 22:35

CAIRO: The Egyptian government has banned entry into the country without proof of having had a PCR test for the coronavirus from this Saturday.

The test must come back with a negative result no more than 72 hours before entering the country, according to the Egyptian Cabinet announcement.

It said that the decision applies only to non-Egyptian foreigners. The decision excludes Arab and foreign tourists arriving on direct flights to Sharm El-Sheikh, Taba, Hurghada, Marsa Alam and Marsa Matrouh airports, as well as transit passengers to those airports.

Ahmed Mustafa, a journalist who specializes in aviation affairs, said that the decision was not applied as soon as it was issued because of pre-prepared flight schedules with reservations dating back a month. It was necessary to give passengers a grace period and the decision would come into effect from Aug. 15 so that people had time to be tested.

Mustafa said that most countries were dealing with passengers in the same way and following World Health Organization guidelines, especially after the increase in infections in a number of countries such as Spain.

He said that the decision would also not be applied to tourists coming to coastal governorates but it was forbidden for them to travel from their cities to Cairo without the test.

Mustafa added that the PCR analysis would not exempt passengers from the need to take other precautionary measures, including measuring temperatures.

Elizabeth Shaker, a member of the Health Affairs Committee in the Egyptian House of Representatives, praised the government's decision, saying that Egypt had responded to the awareness campaigns, and the indicators of the pandemic's decline confirmed this.

She said that the government's decision preserved the health of citizens in general, and that most countries had taken the same approach by banning all arrivals unless they presented a PCR analysis.

"This decision will also have positive benefits on tourism and the national economy as it will attract a large number of tourists to Egypt because of the safety measures that it applies," she said.

A few days ago, Counselor Nader Saad, a spokesman for the Egyptian Cabinet, said that the health and epidemiological situation was under control. He explained that visitors in tourist governorates would not be allowed to leave them, and visitors to Cairo or any other governorate must obtain a virus-free certificate.

"Egypt is not the first country to implement this decision. The UAE preceded it when it announced that all those coming to its lands must undergo a coronavirus examination, in addition to conducting it at the country's airports," Saad said.

Saudi Arabia had earlier announced that it would not allow the entry of citizens from several countries, including Egypt, unless they were carrying the negative results of test analyzes. The UAE also announced that all arrivals, including citizens, residents, visitors and transit passengers, must undergo a PCR examination before entering the country.

The official spokesperson for the Kuwaiti government, Tariq Al-Mezerm, announced that the Cabinet had decided to compel all airlines flying to Kuwait to request a PCR analysis for each passenger at his own expense, confirming that they were free from the coronavirus before boarding the plane.



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Egypt COVID-19 cases could be '10 times higher' than reported figures
Egypt orders the wearing of face masks in public

[Is France helping Lebanon, or trying to reconquer it?](#)

Author:

Sun, 2020-08-09 01:03

PARIS: It was almost as if Emmanuel Macron forgot that Lebanon is no longer a French protectorate.

Visiting explosion-ravaged Beirut this week, France's leader comforted distraught crowds, promised to rebuild the city and claimed that the blast pierced France's own heart. "France will never let Lebanon go," Macron said. "The heart of the French people still beats to the pulse of Beirut."

His critics denounced the overtures as a neocolonialist foray by a European leader seeking to restore sway over a troubled Middle Eastern land – and distract from mounting problems at home. A meme circulating online dubbed him Macron Bonaparte, a 21st century Emperor Napoleon.

But Macron's defenders – including desperate Beirut residents who called him "our only hope" – praised him for visiting gutted neighborhoods where Lebanese leaders fear to tread, and for trying to hold Lebanon's politicians accountable for the corruption and mismanagement blamed for Tuesday's deadly blast.

Macron's visit exposed France's central challenge as it prepares to host an international donors conference for Lebanon on Sunday: How to help a country in crisis, where French economic ties run deep, without interfering in its internal affairs.

"We are walking on the edge of a precipice. We have to aid, support and encourage the Lebanese people, but at the same time not give the impression that we want to establish a new protectorate, which would be completely stupid," said Jack Lang, a former French government minister who now heads the Arab World Institute in Paris. "We must find new, intelligent solutions to aid the Lebanese."

France's ties with Lebanon reach back at least to the 16th century, when the French monarchy negotiated with Ottoman rulers to protect Christians – and secure influence – in the region. By the time of the 1920-1946 French mandate, Lebanon already had a network of French schools and French speakers that survives to this day – along with France's cozy relationships with Lebanon's power brokers, including some accused of fueling its political and economic crisis.

HIGHLIGHT

Macron's defenders – including desperate Beirut residents who called him 'our only hope' – praised him for visiting gutted neighborhoods where Lebanese leaders fear to tread

A surprising online petition emerged this week asking France to temporarily restore its mandate, saying Lebanon's leaders have shown "total inability to secure and manage the country."

It is widely seen as an absurd idea – Macron himself told Beirut residents on Wednesday that "it's up to you to write your history" – but 60,000 people have signed it, including members of France's 250,000-strong Lebanese diaspora and people in Lebanon who said it is a way to express their desperation and distrust of the political class.

Aside from a show of much-needed international support, many in Lebanon viewed Macron's visit as a way to secure financial assistance for a country wracked with debt.

The French leader also managed to bring the divided political class together, if briefly. In a rare scene, the heads of Lebanon's political factions – some of them still bitter enemies from the 1975-1990 civil war – appeared together at the Palais des Pins, the French Embassy headquarters in Beirut, and filed out after meeting Macron.

But to many, the visit was seen as patronizing. Some lashed out at the petition and those celebrating "France, the tender mother."

One writer, Samer Frangieh, said Macron gathered the politicians as "schoolchildren," reprimanding them for failing to carry out their duties.

There were other, more subtle jabs against France's show of influence. While Macron was touring neighborhoods torn apart by the explosion, the health minister in the Hezbollah-backed government toured field hospitals donated by Iran and Russia, major power players in the region.

"I get the people who want the mandate. They have no hope," said Leah, an engineering student in Beirut who did not want her last name published out of concern for political repercussions. She spoke out strongly against the idea, and against those who see Macron as Lebanon's "savior."

She said that risks worsening Lebanon's divisions, as Maronite Christians and French-educated Muslims embrace Macron while others lean away. "He hasn't resolved his issues with his country, with his people. How is he giving advice to us?" she asked.

In Paris, Macron's domestic political opponents from the far left to the far right warned the centrist leader against creeping neocolonialism, and extracting political concessions from Lebanon in exchange for aid.

"Solidarity with Lebanon should be unconditional," tweeted Julien Bayou, head of the popular Greens party.

Macron himself firmly rejected the idea of reviving the French mandate.

"You can't ask me to substitute for your leaders. It's not possible," he said. "There is no French solution."

But he made a point of noting that he plans to return to Lebanon to verify that promised reforms are being undertaken on Sept. 1, the 100th anniversary of the declaration of Greater Lebanon – and the beginning of French rule.



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Canada launches a Lebanon relief fund after Beirut blast Philippines to

charter flight to bring home citizens from Lebanon

[Angry Lebanese set up mock gallows amid calls for 'revenge' over blast](#)

Sat, 2020-08-08 23:00

BEIRUT: Thousands of protesters set up a mock gallows in Beirut's Martyr's Square on Saturday and demanded "revenge" against politicians widely held responsible for the deadly explosion that devastated large swathes of the Lebanese capital.

At least 60 people are still missing after the massive blast in Beirut port, which killed more than 150 people, injured 5,000 others and left thousands homeless.

As the dust settles from the disaster, the political fallout is intensifying.

Police fired teargas and rubber bullets at thousands of people who gathered in the capital calling for the downfall of the country's political elite, chanting:

"The people want the regime to fall."

More than 100 protesters were injured in the clashes.

After demonstrators set up the mock gallows, effigies of political leaders, including former prime minister Saad Hariri and Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, were displayed in some of the most explicit signs of public anger seen in years.

Police shot live ammunition in the air in an attempt to disperse the protesters, who responded by hurling rocks and charging security cordons.

One of the protesters, who gave her name only as Lina, said: "We came from Hasbaya in solidarity with Beirut. We came to stand together in grief and offer condolence for the loss of sons and daughters.

"We came to tell all the leaders to leave so that we can rebuild what you have destroyed, what happened is because of your negligence and greed," she said.

Meanwhile, the three-member Kataeb party parliamentary bloc resigned on Saturday in protest at the blast, bringing to five the number of MPs to quit since the disaster.

In an emotional speech during a funeral service for a top party official who died in Tuesday's blast, party leader Samy Gemayel announced his resignation and that of the two other MPs.

Independent MP Paula Yacoubian also resigned, while MP Michel Daher announced his withdrawal from the Strong Lebanon bloc led by the Free Patriotic Movement head Gebran Bassil.

FASTFACT

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As international aid flows into shell-shocked Beirut, Arab League Secretary General Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Turkish Vice President Fuad Oktay and European Council President Charles Michel arrived in the city to deliver relief aid and offer support.

After meeting President Michel Aoun and inspecting damage at the Foreign Ministry, near the port, Gheit said he would ask the Economic and Social Council to meet in the next two weeks to "examine the situation in Lebanon and how to help."

He described the situation as "a disaster," and said that "we must recognize that the Lebanese situation is difficult and complex."

The Netherlands Foreign Ministry announced that the wife of Dutch envoy to Lebanon Jan Waltmans died of wounds sustained in the blast.

The Syrian Embassy in Lebanon said that 43 Syrians were among those killed in the explosion.

Military teams working at the blast site carried out tests for chemical, radioactive or biological agents on Saturday, Col. Roger Khoury told Arab News during a media tour.

Rescue teams are working round the clock looking for cell phone signals in the search for those missing after the blast.

However, the teams say they are being hampered by debris from the explosion, including concrete rubble from grain silos destroyed in the blast.

Military divers searching the port and nearby ocean for victims of the blast found a body hurled 500 meters by the force of the blast.

By early Saturday, a total of 61 relief planes had landed at Beirut airport carrying medical and relief supplies as well as food, Ministry of Defense Operations Room Commander Brig. Gen. Jean Nohra told Arab News.

He said that medical supplies are being distributed in coordination with the Ministry of Health.

Supplies are being stored at the headquarters of the Central Military Medical Authority in Beirut before being distributed, he said.



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Lebanon prime minister Diab to call for early polls after deadly Beirut blast
Canada launches a Lebanon relief fund after Beirut blast

[Yemen's attorney general orders probe into Aden ammonium nitrate reports](#)

Author:

Sat, 2020-08-08 22:14

AL-MUKALLA: Yemen's attorney general on Friday ordered prosecutors in the southern port city of Aden to launch a quick probe into reports about tons of ammonium nitrate abandoned in the city's seaport for several years.

In a letter addressed to Aden province's chief appeal prosecutor, Ali Ahmed Al-Awash ordered an investigation to determine the veracity of media reports that 130 containers of ammonium nitrate, the same explosive materials that

devastated Beirut last week, had been abandoned in the seaport for some time.

Yemeni journalist Fatehi Ben Lazerg, the editor of the Aden Al-Ghad news site and newspaper, published a story on Friday saying that roughly 4,900 tons of ammonium nitrate stored in 130 containers had been gathering dust at the port for the last three years.

The story prompted Yemen Gulf of Aden Ports Corporation, a government body that runs Aden seaport, to strongly deny storing ammonium nitrate at the site, saying the reporter was referring to old seized shipments of 140 containers of the organic compound urea, which, like ammonium nitrate, is used as an agricultural fertilizer.

The corporation claimed the material was not “explosive or radioactive”. Urea nitrate, however, has been used in making bombs across the world, including those detonated in the 1993 World Trade Center bombings.

Ben Lazerg later fleshed out the story by publishing a letter from Brig. Abdul Salam Al-Ameri, the chief of Aden Free Zone police, from April 12, 2012 and addressed to the Saudi-led coalition leadership, complaining that the confiscated containers were due to expire and might “cause great harm” to the seaport infrastructures and workers.

“The ball is in their court now,” Ben Lazerg told Arab News, referring to the government officials, saying that he published the story to alert the public about the hazardous materials.

On Friday, Yemeni lawmakers joined voices that demanded an immediate investigation into allegations of stranded containers of ammonium nitrate. Ali Hussein Ashal, a member of the Parliament of Yemen, sent a letter to the government requesting clarifications about the presence of 130 40-foot containers of fertilizer abandoned in Aden seaport, and the reasons for importing the materials.

Mohammed Alawi Amzrabeh, the chairman of Yemen Gulf of Aden Ports Corporation, told Arab News they kept the containers of “safe” agricultural fertilizers in the port after the Saudi-led coalition rejected the shipment’s entry into the country. Despite the corporation’s assurance that the materials in question do not pose a risk, several government officials told Arab News that the Saudi-led coalition and the internationally recognized government had classified urea fertilizer as an explosive material that could be used by the Iran-backed Houthis for military purposes, banning Yemeni seaports from importing it without prior permission.

In February, Arab News reported that the Yemeni coast guard seized a ship carrying 20 tons of urea fertilizer off the country’s west coast. State media outlets have also reported multiple confiscations of urea shipments on land in Yemen, destined for the Houthi-controlled territories in the north of the country.



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Yemenis fear decaying oil tanker could cause major disaster
Yemen asks UNESCO to help save heritage sites