

# Israel detains Palestinian journalists for 'illegal activity'

Author:

Fri, 2019-12-06 22:18

JERUSALEM: Israeli police on Friday detained four journalists from Palestine's official television station in Jerusalem, drawing protest from Palestinians who say their activities in the holy city are increasingly restricted.

The Palestine TV crew was filming a talk show outside of Jerusalem's walled Old City when Israeli officers detained them and took their equipment, the Authority's Wafa news service said.

The journalists with the daily "Good Morning Jerusalem" program were held for four hours at a police station in Jerusalem and later released, said Mohammad Barghouti, Palestine TV's general manager for news.

Israeli police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld said: "The journalists were detained in connection with illegal activity by (the) Palestinian Authority in Jerusalem."

Israel forbids any official activity in Jerusalem by the Western-backed PA, saying it breaches Israel's sovereignty over the city and violates interim peace agreements.

The Palestinians want East Jerusalem, which includes the Old City, as capital of a future state. Israel annexed the area after capturing it in the 1967 Middle East war and says the entire city is its eternal and indivisible capital.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas condemned the journalists' detention as "part of the Israeli government's scheme to entrench Israeli control over the occupied city of Jerusalem and its holy sites."

In November, Israel ordered the closure of Palestine TV's Jerusalem office for six months on the grounds that it was planning to stage activities for the PA, which exercises limited self-rule in the occupied West Bank adjacent to Jerusalem.

An office of the PA's Education Ministry in Jerusalem was also given a six-month closure notice in November, which Israeli Strategic Affairs Minister Gilad Erdan said at the time was "part of a firm policy against any attempt by the (PA) to violate our sovereignty in the capital."

The last round of peace talks between the two sides broke down in 2014. Palestinians have boycotted US President Donald Trump's mediation efforts, partly over his recognition in 2017 of Jerusalem as Israel's capital.



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## [UN: Iranian forces were 'shooting to kill' protesters](#)

Author:

Fri, 2019-12-06 21:59

GENEVA: Iranian security forces were “shooting to kill” in their deadly crackdown against protesters in recent weeks, according to credible video footage, the UN human rights chief said on Friday.

It had obtained “verified video footage” showing security forces firing on protesters, apparently with intent to kill, the UN human rights office said in a statement.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet said the unrest left at least 208 people dead nationwide, supporting a toll previously given by

Amnesty International.

"There are also reports, which the UN Human Rights Office has so far been unable to verify, suggesting more than twice that number killed," the statement added.

Iran disputes death toll figures released by foreign organizations but has so far refused to any countrywide casualty or arrest figures.

Bachelet said footage received by her office appears to show demonstrators were gunned down while running away, or being shot "directly in the face and vital organs."

It also said that at least 7,000 people have "reportedly" been arrested in Iran since mass demonstrations erupted last month, and called for the immediate release of those arbitrarily detained.

Such actions amounted to "serious violations of human rights," Bachelet said.

She urged Iran to allow independent investigations into the violations, and release of all protesters who were unfairly stripped of their liberty during the crackdown.

"Verified video footage indicates severe violence was used against protesters, including armed members of security forces shooting from the roof of a justice department building in one city, and from helicopters in another," Bachelet said.

Bachelet's office said it had received many reports of ill-treatment against people arrested, "including with the apparent aim of extracting forced confessions."

The demonstrations began in mid-November after the government raised minimum gasoline prices. Cheap gasoline is practically considered a birthright in Iran, home to the world's fourth-largest crude oil reserves despite decades of economic woes. That disparity, especially given Iran's oil wealth, fueled the anger felt by demonstrators.

Additional video material shows "armed members of security forces shooting from the roof of a justice department building" in the city of Javanrud, west of Tehran in Kermanshah province, as well as gunfire from helicopters in Sadra, in Fars province.

The toll of at least 208 makes it the bloodiest unrest in Iran since the time of the Islamic revolution.

Iran has yet to give overall figures for the number of people killed or arrested when security forces moved in to quell the unrest that saw buildings torched and shops looted.

Bachelet charged that "many of the arrested protesters have not had access to a lawyer," while raising alarm over "reports of severe overcrowding and harsh

conditions in detention centers, which in some cities include military barracks, sports venues and schools.”

“I urge the authorities to immediately release from detention all protesters who have been arbitrarily deprived of their liberty,” she further said.

The 2009 Green Movement protests that followed a disputed presidential election drew millions to the streets but saw far less killing.

The demonstrations show the widespread economic discontent gripping Iran since May 2018, when President Donald Trump imposed crushing sanctions after unilaterally withdrawing the US from the nuclear deal that Tehran struck with world powers. That decision has seen Iran begin to break limits of the deal, as well as a series of attacks across the Mideast that America has blamed on Tehran.



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Washington blacklists Iran-backed Iraqi militia leaders over protestsUS envoy: US has 'other tools' if Iran's bad actions go on

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# 12 killed in Baghdad square as assailants fire live rounds

Fri, 2019-12-06 21:39

BAGHDAD: Iraqi officials say 12 people have been killed in Baghdad's Khilani Square after unknown assailants fired live ammunition from cars. Security and medical officials say at least two of the dead were policeman.

Protesters fearing for their lives ran from the plaza to nearby Tahrir Square and mosques to take cover. Protesters are occupying part of Jumhuriya, Sinak and Ahar bridges in a standoff with security forces. All bridges lead to or near the heavily-fortified Green Zone, the seat of Iraq's government.

The attacks come one day after a string of suspicious stabbing incidents left at least 13 wounded in Baghdad's Tahrir Square, the epicenter of Iraq's leaderless protest movement.

The attacks by unknown perpetrators occurred as demonstrators supporting political parties and Iran-backed militias withdrew from the Square on Thursday evening.

The incidents fueled paranoia among protesters, who immediately implemented self security measures to uncover saboteurs within the square.



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Iraq revolution will be dramatized, written, read, and painted  
Mortars hit Iraq's Balad air base

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## Huge protest days ahead of contentious Algeria vote

Author:

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1575652212363894900

Fri, 2019-12-06 17:07

ALGIERS: A vast crowd rallied in Algiers on the final Friday before a contentious presidential election many see as an elite attempt to cling to power despite months of protests, an AFP journalist said.

"No to voting, we swear we will not stop!" protesters chanted. "No retreat!" The poll set for next Thursday will see five candidates linked to ex-president Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who was forced out of office by huge rallies in April, compete for his job.

Two of the approved runners even served as prime ministers during the ex-strongman's two-decade tenure.

In the absence of an official tally, it was impossible to estimate the size of Friday's mobilization.

But it appeared to be the biggest rally since November 1, when citizens took to the streets and demanded a second "liberation" on the 65th anniversary of the start of the war for independence from France.

Protesters on Friday also shouted their support for a general strike set for Sunday and demanded civilian – rather than "military" – rule.

Since Bouteflika stepped down, army chief Ahmed Gaid Salah has emerged as the country's de facto ruler.

A firm and consistent proponent of elections, the army chief on Tuesday called for a massive turnout in the poll, slamming what he dubbed detractors' "plotting against the fatherland."

But the crowds on Friday shouted a sharp rebuke: "Gaid Salah, forget the vote!"

Friday marks the 42nd consecutive week the "Hirak" protest movement has organized marches across the country.

"I am not against voting (per se), I am against this election because it is only serving to recycle Bouteflika figures," said Fatiha Bendahmane.

Former prime ministers Ali Benflis, 75, and Abdelmadjid Tebboune, 73, are considered the frontrunners in the presidential vote.

Three other figures who either participated in Bouteflika-era governments or supported the former strongman have also been cleared to run.

“We will have a new name but the same policies that destroyed the economy of this country,” said Bendamane, a 55-year-old teacher preparing to demonstrate in Algiers.

“I will march today to say no to voting with this regime.”

Checkpoints outside the capital were only letting in vehicles registered in Algiers, an AFP correspondent reported on Friday morning.

Busloads of plain-clothed and anti-riot police were deployed to the city center, equipped with water cannons.

According to Amnesty International, Algerian authorities have “escalated their pre-election crackdown on protests” in recent weeks, “carrying out waves of arbitrary arrests.”



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Algerian protesters scuffle with police as election nears  
Algeria tries top figures for corruption as opposed election looms

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# Washington blacklists Iran-backed Iraqi militia leaders over protests

Fri, 2019-12-06 19:43

WASHINGTON: The United States on Friday blacklisted three Iran-backed Iraqi paramilitary leaders over their alleged role in killings of anti-government protesters in Iraq, the US Treasury Department said.

They are the latest US sanctions to target Iraqi individuals or armed groups with close links to Tehran as Washington ramps up economic pressure to try to counter Iranian influence in the Middle East.

The sanctions target Qais Al-Khazali, leader of the Asaib Ahl Al-Haq Iran-backed militia and his brother Laith Al-Khazali, another leader of the group.

They also target Hussein Falih Al-Lami, security chief for the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), Iraq's state umbrella group of paramilitary factions, which is dominated by groups backed by Iran, including Asaib.

The Treasury Department said in a statement that groups led by the three paramilitary leaders "opened fire on peaceful protests, killing dozens of innocent civilians." Reuters reported last month that Lami, known also as Abu Zainab Al-Lami, had directed fighters to open fire on protesters.

Iraqi paramilitary groups deny any role in the deaths of protesters, who have demonstrated against the government for more than two months. Security forces have killed more than 400 mostly unarmed protesters, police and medics say.

The new sanctions also targeted Iraqi businessman Khamis al-Khanjar for alleged corruption, the statement said.

The sanctions freeze any US assets held by the leaders and prohibit Americans from doing business with them.

Senior US Treasury officials said the violent crackdown on protests was "causing even more political instability."

"Iraqis have a fundamental right to a political process that is free from foreign malign influence and the corruption that both comes with it and fuels it," one of the officials said.

They said the militia leaders had been involved in forced disappearances and abductions of activists.

Iran-backed armed groups and politicians have dominated Iraq's state institutions since a US-led invasion in 2003 that toppled dictator Saddam Hussein, plunged the country into years of civil war and destroyed infrastructure.

Iraqi protesters say the groups that dominate the government have kept people poor and jobless through corruption and failed to repair the country despite two years of relative calm after the defeat of Daesh.

Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi said last week he would quit.

Asked about whether sanctions were designed to distance the militia leaders from the process of forming a new government, one of the Treasury officials said: "The timing is quite deliberate... Iraq's people are demanding a government that is free and clear of foreign interference."

Tension between Washington and Tehran has ramped up as US President Donald Trump's administration blames Iran for a series of attacks on oil infrastructure in the Gulf and bases hosting US troops in Iraq. Iran denies



involvement in the attacks.

Iraqi paramilitaries have in turn accused the United States and Israel of attacks on their own installations.



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Iraq's Sistani says new PM must be chosen without foreign interference