

Palestinian chief negotiator urges Arabs to reconsider attending Bahrain workshop

Author:

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AMMAN: The secretary of the PLO's executive committee, Saeb Erekat, called on Arab states that have committed to attend the Bahrain economic "workshop" to revisit their decision.

In an interview with Arab News, Erekat praised Saudi Arabia's commitment to the cause of Palestine. "In every important decision, Saudi Arabia stood with the people of Palestine," Erekat said.

The chief Palestinian negotiator noted that all Arabs have made a commitment that they will accept whatever Palestinians accept. "We call on the countries that have agreed to attend the Bahrain workshop to reevaluate their decision," he said.

Erekat noted that Saudi Arabia has been the most diligent country in supporting the Palestinian government. "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia doesn't miss its monthly support to the Palestinian government. Saudi Arabia doesn't need an economic conference to financially support Palestinians," he told Arab news.

Erekat spoke forcefully on this issue in an exclusive interview on the Saudi-owned Al Arabiya satellite TV.

The Palestinian position is that the US-backed economic workshop is aimed at circumventing Palestinian national aspirations. "We started with land for peace and now we are talking about prosperity for peace," Erekat was quoted as saying by various Qatari owned media outlets.

Despite this, Qatar is confirmed to attend the Bahrain conference according to exclusive information obtained by Israeli newspaper, Haaretz.

The US-Bahraini economic workshop is scheduled in Manama, Bahrain June 25 and 26.

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar have publicly declared that they will attend, along with the Bahraini hosts. Finance ministers from Arab and foreign countries have been invited. Palestinian officials and leading Palestinian business have said they will not attend.

The Trump peace team, headed by the president's son-in-law Jared Kushner and chief Middle East advisor Jason Greenblatt, were expected to announce their joint political and economic plans after the holy month of Ramadan but the plan was replaced by an economic workshop in Bahrain.



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PalestiniansPalestinians cold-shouldered from major US-Bahraini economic
'peace' workshop

[Syrian journalist claims torture, humiliation at hands of Turkish forces while crossing border](#)

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Sat, 2019-05-25 23:26

LONDON: A Syrian journalist has claimed on his YouTube channel that he has been assaulted and beaten by Turkish forces on the Syria-Turkey border. Mazen Al-Shami posted a video to the social media network and also posted on Facebook, saying: "After nine years of the revolution, that is how my family and I are treated. "A Turkish officer tortured me in front of my family and tortured my children on the Syria-Turkey border, it was his reaction when he found out I was a Syrian journalist."



Mazen Al-Shami was visibly distraught in the video. (Screenshot/YouTube)

Al-Shami ended the post with the hashtags #Thank_You_Turkey and #Thank_You_Hotel_Opposition with a number of photos containing the injuries sustained by him and his son as a result of the assault. According to Al-Shami in his video, he was arrested with two of his children along with other civilians as they tried to cross the border into Turkey from the Syrian Idlib region.



Al-Shami proceeds to show wounds he says he received at the hands of Turkish forces while trying to cross the Syria-Turkey border. (Screenshot/YouTube)

The Association of Syrian Journalists, which represents journalists opposed to the Bashar Assad regime, quoted Al-Shami as saying: "The opposition did not respond to my request to enter Turkey for a follow-up to my medical treatment."

The association added that Al-Shami was beaten and severely tortured with "metal rods, iron chains and agricultural hand tools."



According to the Association of Syrian Journalists, Al-Shami was tortured with metal rods, iron chains and agricultural hand tools.

(Screenshot/YouTube)

Hundreds of Syrian activists have responded to the incident, saying the officer responsible must be held accountable and that the Turkish army is constantly targeting civilians trying to cross the border from Syria. In a recent report, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights confirmed that 419 Syrian civilians – among them 75 children and 38 women – have been killed trying to cross the border since the start of the country's ongoing conflict.



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Syrian journalist dies of wounds Washington says observation posts in place on Syria-Turkey border

Sudan interim military council chief Al-Burhan meets with Egypt's President El-Sisi

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Sat, 2019-05-25 14:56

CAIRO: Gen. Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, head of Sudan's ruling interim military council, arrived in Cairo on Saturday and met with President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi in the capital's Ittihadia Palace, the Egyptian presidency said.

Al-Burhan is on his first trip abroad since taking power following the ouster in April of Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir after months of protests.

El-Sisi and Burhan "agreed on the priority of supporting the free will of the Sudanese people and its choices," Egyptian presidency spokesman Bassam Rady said.

El-Sisi also said Egypt was ready to "provide all means of support to the brothers in Sudan to overcome this stage in line with the aspirations of the Sudanese people, away from external interventions," according to the spokesman.

The visit comes a few hours after a visit paid by the vice chairman of the Sudanese Interim Military Council, Mohammad Hamdan Duklu, to Saudi Arabia to meet with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Al-Burhan's visit comes after Sudanese protest leaders announced a two-day strike from Tuesday, as talks with the military over installing civilian rule remain suspended.

At odds

The Alliance for Freedom and Change umbrella movement is at odds with the military council over whether the transitional body to rule Sudan should be headed by a military or civilian figure. The negotiations have been on hold since Monday.

Egypt, whose president currently chairs the African Union, has voiced support for Sudan's military council.

Last month, El-Sisi hosted a summit where African nations urged the regional bloc to allow Khartoum "more time" for a handover to civilian rule.

Protest leaders were set to hold meetings with demonstrators at a sit-in

outside the army headquarters in Khartoum on Saturday to discuss how to resolve the deadlock.

On Friday, they said their strike at “public and private institutions and companies,” accompanied by civil disobedience, was “an act of peaceful resistance with which we have been forced to proceed.”

Thousands of protesters remain at the sit-in to demand the departure of the generals, who seized power after ousting Al-Bashir.

Protest leaders have called for people to march on Sunday from residential areas of Khartoum toward the sit-in.

Several rounds of talks have so far failed to finalize the makeup of the new ruling body, although the two sides have agreed it will hold power for a transitional period of three years.

Western nations have called on the generals to hand power to a civilian administration, while the ruling army council has received support from regional powers.

Al-Burhan thanked Gulf states – including Saudi Arabia and the UAE – and Egypt for their support during the current tumultuous times.

(With Reuters)



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Sudanese protesters call for strike amid divisions with army
Sudan's transitional council vows to back Saudi Arabia against Iran threat

[Iranian FM meets Iraqi PM as part of regional tour](#)

Sat, 2019-05-25 18:11

BAGHDAD: Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdulmahdi met with the Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif who arrived in Baghdad on Saturday.

Abdulmahdi and Zarif have agreed on the importance of the stability of the region and how to revive the US-Iran nuclear deal to maintain the interests of the two countries and the region.

Zarif earlier on in the day held talks with his Iraqi counterpart.

The two sides have discussed the bilateral relationships and the latest regional developments and the impacts of the US imposed sanctions on Iran and the region.

During his his two-day visit, Zarif will also meet the Iraqi president. On Sunday morning, Zarif will meet several senior politicians before he heads to Najaf to meet some clerics, sources told Arab News.

The discussions will mainly focus on the current crisis and its impacts on the two countries in addition to possible options to reinforce the attempts to start dialogues with the related sides to reach a compromise or solutions for the current standoff between Iran and US.

The Iranian official will leave Iraq on Monday. Zarif's tour also includes trips to Turkey, India and Pakistan.

Meanwhile, Iran's deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi will begin a separate tour on Sunday which will see him visit Qatar, Oman and Kuwait, according to Iranian news sources.



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[Lebanon denies forcing Syrians home from Beirut airport](#)

Author:

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Sat, 2019-05-25 13:35

BEIRUT: Lebanese security forces on Saturday denied accusations by rights groups that they had coerced Syrians who had landed at Beirut airport into signing forms to return to their war-torn country.

Human Rights Watch and four other groups Friday accused Lebanon of "summarily deporting" at least 16 Syrians on April 26, after forcing them to sign "voluntary repatriation forms."

Most of them had been sent back to Lebanon after they were barred from entering northern Cyprus via Turkey, quashing their plans to seek asylum, HRW said.

But Lebanon's General Security agency "categorically denies it forced any Syrian to sign any form," it said in a statement carried by state-run news agency NNA on Saturday.

"Any Syrian who arrives in Lebanon and does not meet entry requirements, and... wants to go to Syria because they do not wish to remain in their country of residence for a number of reasons, signs a declaration of responsibility for choosing to return voluntarily," it said.

Lebanon hosts almost one million Syrian refugees, a significant burden for a country that had 4.5 million inhabitants before the Syrian civil war erupted in 2011.

The latest deportees said they were "pressured" by General Security officers at the airport, the rights group said.

Around 30 Syrians have been deported from Beirut airport this year by the General Security agency, the rights group said, citing local refugee organizations.

General Security estimates that over 170,000 Syrians returned home from Lebanon between December 2017 and March 2019.

The conflict has wound down in Syria, after a string of victories by the regime and its Russian ally since 2015, but the United Nations has stressed all returns should be voluntary.

The rights groups say some 74 percent of Syrians in Lebanon lack legal residency and are at risk of detention.

Local media in Lebanon have reported that the Supreme Defense Council, whose decisions are not made public, recently instructed General Security to deport all Syrians who have entered the country illegally.

The official NNA news agency, quoting a "security report," said Friday that Lebanese authorities had deported 301 Syrians between May 7 and May 20.

Syria's war has killed more than 370,000 people and displaced millions inside the country and abroad.

The war was triggered in March 2011 by a violent crackdown on anti-government demonstrations.



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