

Radio Free Palestine broadcasts global Nakba Day marathon

Author:

Wed, 2019-05-15 22:41

AMMAN: Radio producer Hadeel Al-Biss wanted to make her work make a difference. "We were asked to participate in a radio marathon for Nakba Day, and I figured that the best way to do that was to carry as many voices of Palestinian refugees as possible," she told Arab News.

Al-Biss, the producer of the "Talet Sobh" morning show on Amman's Radio Al-Bald, asked her team to report from various Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan. "People spoke freely and honestly about their desire to return, and the fact that hardships will not deter them from pursuing their rights."

In Washington DC, Katea Stitt told Arab News that the WPFW and WBAI stations were carrying the marathon on Nakba Day across DC and New York. "We got involved, two years ago on the 69th anniversary of the Nakba, carrying three hours of programming about Palestinian refugees and the right of return. The next year we carried the entire 12-hour multilingual broadcast. Washington is an international city with people from different backgrounds, so we made sure that people heard in Arabic, English, Spanish and French," she said.

Stitt, the interim program director of WPFW, part of the Pacifica Network, said that she was involved in the broadcast in order to support justice in Palestine. "Lewis Hill, the founder of Pacifica Radio, was a conscientious objector, and founded the network because he believed that he could create media that spoke truth and justice through the media arts. WPFW carries that mission."

The radio marathon is taking place over a 24-hour period on May 15, and is being broadcast over 28 stations in Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan, Tunis, Morocco, the US, Canada and over Pacifica Network stations.

Laith Marouf, Radio Free Palestine's international coordinator, who began the idea of a radio marathon back in 2006, says that the project has grown a lot in recent years. "This year we were able to transmit Palestinian voices from Lebanon and Jordan, and bridge them with Palestinians in Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Gaza."

Marouf says that he hopes that next year, the 24-hour broadcast will be available in four languages. "If Palestine is not free by next May 15, we will be able to broadcast the marathon live in Arabic, English, Spanish and French," he told Arab News from Beirut.

George Rishmawi, head of the Rapprochement Center in Bethlehem, told Arab News that they have been involved in this project for 10 years, and it has been gradually gaining importance. "It is important that we can get Arab and international voices all on the same day because it shows the solidarity with

the Palestinian people,” he said.

Rawan Jayyousi, anchor on “Talet Soboh,” told Arab News that the reaction of the program was huge. “I felt from the reaction I got on social media and personal contacts that despite the difficulties facing Palestinians, there is a hidden strength that came out and a feeling that Palestinians are not surrendering but are strong and resilient.”



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Nakba Day](#)

[Nakba 71](#)

[Palestine](#)

Nakba: Images of Palestine before and after 1948
Thousands of Palestinians demonstrate to mark 'Nakba'

[US Embassy in Lebanon advises citizens to keep low profile](#)

Author:

Wed, 2019-05-15 21:51

BEIRUT: The US Embassy in Lebanon on Wednesday advised Americans to “maintain a high level of vigilance and practice good situational awareness” in view of

“heightened tensions in the region.”

In a statement published on its website, the embassy urged US citizens to keep a low profile, be aware of their surroundings, review their personal security plans, and ensure that their travel documents are up to date.

The embassy called on US citizens to contact it for help, follow its Facebook and Twitter accounts, and visit the State Department’s travel website travel.state.gov.

Diplomatic sources told Arab News that the warning has nothing to do with Lebanon, but is related to what is happening in the region.

The embassy had issued a warning to US citizens on March 20 following reports that organizations in Lebanon had called for a demonstration near the embassy to protest the secretary of state’s visit to the region.

Wednesday’s warning came as the acting assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, David Satterfield, continued his meetings in Lebanon.

He met with President Michel Aoun, Prime Minister Saad Hariri, Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri and Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil.

Lebanon’s National News Agency (NNA) reported that the meeting between Bassil and Satterfield was very positive, and that they discussed developments in the region.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[US Embassy](#)

[Lebanon](#)

[Beirut](#)

US official in Lebanon to discuss border dispute with Israel
Protests return to Lebanon as government discusses austerity

[Allies fear US-Iran tensions could spark accidental conflict](#)

Author:

Wed, 2019-05-15 21:38

WASHINGTON: International worries that the Trump administration is sliding toward war with Iran flared into the open amid skepticism about its claims that the Islamic republic poses a growing threat to the US and its allies in the Arabian Gulf and beyond.

The US military on Tuesday rebutted doubts expressed by a British general about such a threat. President Donald Trump denied a report that the administration has updated plans to send up to 120,000 troops to counter Iran if necessary. But Trump then stirred the controversy further by saying: "Would I do that? Absolutely."

Underscoring what the US says is heightened risk to US personnel, the US Embassy in Baghdad on Wednesday ordered all non-essential, non-emergency government staff to leave Iraq immediately.

Still, the general's remarks exposed international skepticism over the American military buildup in the Middle East, a legacy of the 2003 invasion of Iraq that was predicated on false intelligence. US officials have not publicly provided any evidence to back up claims of an increased Iranian threat amid other signs of allied unease.

As tensions in the region started to surge, British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said his nation was worried about the risk of accidental conflict "with an escalation that is unintended really on either side."

On Tuesday, Spain temporarily pulled one of its frigates from the US-led combat fleet heading toward the Strait of Hormuz. That was followed by the unusual public challenge to the Trump administration by the general.

"No, there's been no increased threat from Iranian-backed forces in Iraq and Syria," said Maj. Gen. Chris Ghika, a senior officer in the US-backed coalition fighting Daesh.

Ghika, speaking in a video conference from coalition headquarters in Baghdad, told reporters at the Pentagon that the coalition monitors the presence of Iranian-backed forces "along with a whole range of others because that's the environment we're in."

But he added: "There are a substantial number of militia groups in Iraq and Syria, and we don't see any increased threat from any of them at this stage."

Late in the day, in a rare public rebuttal of an allied military officer, US Central Command said Ghika's remarks "run counter to the identified credible threats" from Iranian-backed forces in the Mideast.

In a statement, Central Command said the coalition in Baghdad has increased the alert level for all service members in Iraq and Syria.

"As a result, (the coalition) is now at a high level of alert as we continue to closely monitor credible and possibly imminent threats to US forces in Iraq," the statement said.

Trump, who has repeatedly argued for avoiding long-term conflicts in the Mideast, discounted a New York Times report that the US has updated plans that could send up to 120,000 troops to counter Iran if it attacked American forces.

"Would I do that? Absolutely," he told reporters Tuesday at the White House.

“But we have not planned for that. Hopefully we’re not going to have to plan for that. If we did that, we’d send a hell of a lot more troops than that.”

Reinforcing Trump’s denial, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said at a joint news conference in Sochi with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov: “We fundamentally do not seek war with Iran.”

A Trump administration official said a recent small meeting of national security officials was not focused on a military response to Iran, but instead concentrated on a range of other policy options, including diplomacy and economic sanctions. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

Lavrov said Pompeo told him that a potential deployment of 120,000 US troops to the Mideast was only a “rumor.”

Lavrov said the international community needs to focus on diplomacy with Iran, including on the potentially explosive issue of Iran’s nuclear program, which is constrained by a US-brokered deal in 2015 that Trump has abandoned.

US Iran envoy Brian Hook told reporters traveling with Pompeo in Brussels that the secretary of state shared intelligence on Iran with allies since “Europe shares our concerns about stability in the Gulf and the Middle East.” What the Europeans do not share, however, is Washington’s more aggressive approach to Iran.

“We are very worried about the risk of a conflict happening by accident, with an escalation that is unintended really on either side but ends with some kind of conflict,” British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt told reporters in Brussels.

“What we need is a period of calm to make sure that everyone understands what the other side is thinking,” Hunt said.

Last week, US officials said they had detected signs of Iranian preparations for potential attacks on US forces and interests in the Mideast, but Washington has not spelled out that threat.

The US has about 5,000 troops in Iraq and about 2,000 in Syria as part of the coalition campaign to defeat the Daesh group there. It also has long had a variety of air and naval forces stationed in Bahrain, Qatar and elsewhere in the Gulf, partly to support military operations against IS and partly as a counter to Iranian influence.

Gen. Ghika’s comments came amid dramatically heightened tensions in the Middle East. The US in recent days has ordered the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier strike group to the Gulf region, plus four B-52 bombers. It also is moving a Patriot air-defense missile battery to an undisclosed country in the area. As of Tuesday, the Lincoln and its strike group had passed through the Bab El-Mandeb Strait in the Red Sea, but officials would not disclose their exact location.

Tensions rose another notch with reports o Sunday that four commercial

vessels anchored off the UAE had been damaged by sabotage.

A US military team was sent to the UAE to investigate, and one US official said the initial assessment is that each ship has a 5- to 10-foot hole in it, near or just below the water line. The official, who was not authorized to publicly discuss details of the investigation, said the early interpretation is that the holes were caused by explosive charges.

An initial assessment is that the damage was done by Iranian or Iranian-backed proxies, but they are still going through the evidence and have not yet reached a final conclusion, the official said.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[US-Iran](#)

[Washington](#)

US and European countries scale back presence in Iraq amid Iran tensionsUS, Iran argue over inspections at nuclear watchdog meeting

[UAE court jails six for setting up Hezbollah-linked terror cell](#)

Author:

Wed, 2019-05-15 21:11

DUBAI: Four men were sentenced to life in prison on Wednesday for setting up a terrorist cell with links to Hezbollah.

The Federal Court of Appeal sentenced another two men to 10 years each in jail and acquitted five others, the state news agency WAM reported.

The men, described as Arab, were convicted on charges of planning to commit terrorist crimes and acts of vandalism against vital installations in the country.

The 11 defendants, all of whom have lived and worked in the UAE for more than 15 years, were arrested in late 2017 and early 2018.

They were charged in February with establishing a cell linked to the Iran-backed Hezbollah group.

The court ordered them to be deported from the country after their sentences end, confiscated all their communications equipment, computers and mobile phones and charged them with all the judicial expenses.

The UAE, along with Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman and Kuwait, classified Hezbollah as a terrorist organization in 2016 and warned its citizens and resident expatriates against any links to it.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

US targets two individuals, three entities in Hezbollah-related sanctions program
US puts up \$10m reward for Hezbollah information

[UAE slams Iranian aggression but calls for calm amid oil tanker attack investigation](#)

Wed, 2019-05-15 20:28

DUBAI: The UAE is “very committed to de-escalation” after the sabotage of four oil tankers off the coast of Fujairah on Sunday, a senior minister said Wednesday.

An investigation is underway and due to be completed within days, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash said, refusing to state who was responsible. But speaking in Dubai, he added that “Iranian behavior” was at the center of regional problems.

Though declining to name a suspect in the sabotage, Gargash says “Iranian behavior” is at the center of regional problems.

“We need to emphasize caution and good judgment. It is easy to throw accusations but it is a difficult situation, there are serious issues and among them is Iranian behavior,” he said. “We have been bullied by Iran, we

have seen aggressive Iranian action in the region.”

He added that the UAE has handed a letter to the security council on the sabotage of the oil tankers.

Gargash also talked about the threat from Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen, where the UAE is part of a coalition supporting the government against the militants.

On Tuesday, drones attacked two pumping stations on a pipeline running between the country’s east and west coasts.

“We will also retaliate and retaliate hard when we see the Houthis hit civilian targets within Saudi Arabia,” Gargash said.

His comments come as tensions escalate in the region, with the US deploying an aircraft carrier and B-52 bombers in response to Iran-related threats. The US and other European countries on Wednesday announced they were scaling back their presence in Iraq where powerful Iran-backed armed groups hold sway.

Ratcheting up the rhetoric, the commander of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, Major Gen.Hossein Salami, said on Wednesday they were “on the cusp of a full-scale confrontation with the enemy.”





Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Anwar Gargash](#)

[UAE](#)

[Fujairah](#)

[Saudi Arabia](#)

Saudi Aramco resumes pumping oil through pipeline hit by drone attack Attacks on Saudi Arabia, UAE energy facilities likely coordinated, analysts say