

UN confirms Hodeidah truce is holding

Author:

Wed, 2019-05-15 00:57

HODEIDAH: The Houthis in Yemen have handed over security of key Red Sea ports to the coast guard but work remains to remove military equipment, the UN said on Tuesday.

The Iran-backed militia's withdrawal is part of a hard-won truce agreement in Sweden in December between the Houthis and the legitimate government, supported by a Saudi-led coalition.

The UN has been monitoring the Houthi pullout from Hodeidah, Saleef and Ras Isa ports and a UN team was there on Tuesday to verify the redeployment.

Its head, Gen. Michael Lollesgaard, welcomed the handover "of the security of the ports to the coast guard," the UN said.

"There is still a lot of work to be done ... but cooperation has been very good.

"UN teams will continue to monitor these initial steps in an impartial and transparent manner."

Hodeidah port is a lifeline for the import of food, medicines and other vital humanitarian supplies for millions in Yemen, but the Houthis also use it to smuggle arms and ammunition from Iran.



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UN monitors Houthi withdrawal from Yemen's Hodeidah
Houthis start withdrawal from Hodeidah port, Yemeni minister dismisses pullout as a 'show'

[Palestinian refugees: The state of statelessness](#)

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Tue, 2019-05-14 23:46

DUBAI: Nakba Day is meant to remind the world of the tragedy of 1948, when more than 700,000 Palestinian Arabs were uprooted from their homes by the war that accompanied the Israeli declaration of independence and triggered a refugee crisis that is still not resolved. Seventy-one years on, for millions of Palestinians, every checkpoint and

every airport is a reminder of the time their families fled or were evicted from their ancestral lands in historical Palestine, leaving their properties and belongings behind.

"They were issued a Palestinian wathiqah (travel document), which by the way is not supposed to be a permanent thing. A travel document should be temporary," Osama Sarhan, a Palestinian refugee with a Lebanese travel document, told Arab News.

Amid the chaos in 1948, Palestinians in Tarshiha were learning from newspapers and neighbors they needed to leave the place for about two weeks. So Sarhan's family left the village before it was captured by Israeli troops during the war.

After spending two months in Lebanon, they had not heard anything about when they could return to Tarshiha. This is when the Lebanese government issued the refugees travel documents, which do not have the cachet of a passport. Passports are an official document issued by a government, certifying the holder's identity and citizenship and entitling them to travel under its protection to and from foreign countries.

Egypt and Syria were two other Arab countries that issued travel documents to Palestinian refugees. For its part, Iraq issued Palestinians who fled the war in 1948 a one-year travel document. In September 1956, the Arab League came up with the Casablanca Protocol for the Treatment of Palestinians in Arab States, which laid down clear guidelines for host countries. The travel documents were meant to preserve the Palestinian identity of the refugees while granting them the same rights as the local population.

"A travel document connotes you live in a certain area, that you are resident of that area, but does not necessarily give you rights to citizenship or nationality," Oroub El-Abed, a postdoctoral research fellow at the British Academy, told Arab News.

The living conditions, requirements and rights differ for Palestinians from country to country. For instance, Palestinians in Lebanon, like other non-citizens, are unable to buy property. In Egypt, there are five different types of residency permits. How often a Palestinian needs to renew the document depends on the permit type. For instance, some Palestinian travel document holders are required to either return to Egypt every six months or submit proof of employment or student status abroad to be allowed to re-enter the country.

"In the host Arab countries, they were not treated well. Syria was the only country that agreed to give Palestinian refugees social and economic rights," Palestinian academic Abbas Shiblak told Arab News.

Arab News approached the Lebanese, Syrian and Egyptian embassies for clarity on the matter, but failed to elicit any responses. A major handicap of travel documents is that they make traveling outside of host countries hard. "Most countries need a visa. I got asked a couple of times by airport officials what passport I held. Most did not understand when I tried to explain the nature of my travel documents," Sarhan told Arab News.

El-Abed said this happens because Palestinian refugees have "no official proof of citizenship." Another form of travel document that some Palestinians possess is the Jordanian temporary passport. The document was mostly given to Palestinian refugees after the Six Day War of 1967. Before that, Jordan used to grant Palestinians citizenship. A Palestinian in Jordan receives an ID card, which determines the status of the passport as well.

"The ID card is needed when one is crossing over the borders between Palestine and Jordan. If it is green, this means the Jordanian passport is a temporary one. If the card is yellow, then the passport is the permanent kind," Haya Nasrallah told Arab News.

Nasrallah's parents moved from Palestine to Jordan to receive their bachelor's degrees, and applied for temporary Jordanian passports. "People do that because it's a bit easier to get a visa using this passport compared with the Palestinian one," she told Arab News. Nasrallah is able to travel back to Palestine because she has the Palestinian ID card, which she uses at the borders. However, not everyone is able to obtain it.

"In order to allow your kids to get it, you need to travel to Palestine when they are younger than 16 years and register their names in your ID. But to avoid problems with the Israelis, people try to register their kids way before they turn 16," she said.

After the Oslo Accords of 1993, the Palestinian Authority (PA) began issuing a passport-like document to residents of the Palestinian territories. Trouble was, only individuals who were physically present in those territories during a census conducted by Israel in 1967 used to create the Palestinian Population Registry.

Still, the PA wanted the document to be given a status almost equal to a passport instead of just a travel document. However, the Israelis vetoed the plan. "It was the only document that could be described as a passport and a travel document," Shiblak told Arab News. Today, anyone who was unavailable in Palestine during the Israeli census of 1967 cannot "enter or live in the West Bank or Gaza," he told Arab News.

Despite the daunting problems millions of Palestinians face due to their stateless status, some embrace the wathiqah they possess as part of their identity. "There is still proof that I am Palestinian" Sarhan told Arab News.



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Farah Nabulsi: Palestinian investment banker turned activist filmmaker shines light on Nakba Jewish groups protest after French town renames street 'Nakba'

[Sudan talks resume after shootings mar breakthrough](#)

Author:

Tue, 2019-05-14 23:13

KHARTOUM: Protest leaders resumed talks with Sudan's military rulers Tuesday seeking to build on a political breakthrough overshadowed by deadly shootings.

The protest movement is demanding a civilian-led transition following 30 years of rule by President Omar Al-Bashir, but the generals who toppled him have been holding onto a leadership role.

An army major and five protesters were killed by unidentified gunmen at a long-running sit-in outside military headquarters in Khartoum late on Monday, just hours after the two sides announced they had reached agreement on the structure and powers of bodies that will oversee a transition.

The Alliance for Freedom and Change – the protest movement umbrella group negotiating with the ruling military council – said the shootings were an attempt to “disturb the breakthrough.”

The military council said it had “noticed some armed infiltrators among the protesters” at the sit-in, but did not identify them.

Protest leaders changed their stand on Tuesday. “It’s their (military) direct responsibility to guard and protect the citizens,” Mohamed Naji Al-Assam, a prominent figure in the movement, told reporters.

On the political track, protest leaders remained locked in talks with council representatives expected to focus on the composition of transitional bodies to run the country. The protest movement has demanded they have civilian majorities.

The military is ready to accept a mainly civilian Cabinet but has been demanding a military majority in a proposed sovereign council that will have the final say on matters of state.

Also on the agenda was the duration of the transition, with the military calling for a two-year timeframe, while the protesters want four years to allow time for preparatory reforms.

The latest round of talks which opened on Monday come after a break in negotiations that saw protest leaders threaten “escalatory measures” to secure their central demand of civilian rule. The issue has kept protesters camped outside army headquarters around the clock ever since Bashir’s overthrow.

The sit-in has become the focal point for the protest movement, overtaking the near-daily protests that had been held across Sudan while the veteran president remained in power.

But on Tuesday, following the previous night’s violence at the Khartoum sit-in, protesters held demonstrations in the Abbassiya and Al-Arbaa regions.

In Al-Arbaa, some demonstrators blocked roads with burning tires, a witness said, adding that troops deployed to the area.

Doctors, who along with other professionals have played a major part in organizing the protests, have set up field clinics at the sit-in where they treated the wounded from Monday’s shootings.

“So far all cases are stable, and those unstable have been transferred to hospital,” a duty doctor told AFP.



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'Infiltrators' suspected behind shooting dead of 5 protesters, army officer in Sudan Brother of Sudan's Bashir not in detention: army

[Egypt teaches students about love and marriage in attempt to curb divorce](#)

Author:

Tue, 2019-05-14 23:09

CAIRO: During a recent class at Cairo University, students laughed as they watched a skit acted out by their peers about a married couple. The husband came home from work and asked his wife, who was sweeping the floor, why dinner wasn't ready.

"I pick up the kids and I go to work ... Am I neglecting something because the food is still on the stove?" the wife asked, to which the husband responded: "The apartment looks like a rubbish dump."

The skit was part of a new government project called Mawadda, which offers lessons to university students about how to pick the right partner and how to handle conflicts in marriage. The goal is to prevent divorce after the number of divorces reached more than 198,000 in 2017, a 3.2 percent increase from the year before.

Mawadda, meaning affection, is still in a trial phase, but the goal is to target 800,000 young people yearly starting 2020 and to eventually make it mandatory for university students to take a class before graduating.

After watching the skit, some students and the teacher pointed out that the husband should carry out more household tasks.

"It's not her obligation to do all that," said Salah Ahmed, the teacher, adding that the Prophet Muhammad helped his wives with all tasks and his example should be followed.

But he also said the wife should have been more understanding and tried to look good for her husband instead of welcoming him while sweeping the floor.

Julia Gosef, a 23-year-old student who attended the class with her fiancé, said she worries that Egypt's economic hardships could harm her marriage. The couple will not be able to rely on one income so she would be forced to work, which could lead to arguments similar to the one in the skit, she said.

"I think I won't be able to take care of our home well enough," she said.

Mawadda's lessons will be accompanied by YouTube videos, a radio program and educational plays. The church and Egypt's top Muslim authority, Al-Azhar, are partners.

"If we want to solve the problem from the root we need to target people before they get married," said Amr Othman, manager of Mawadda at the Social Solidarity Ministry. He added that there's a correlation in Egypt between divorce and problems such as child homelessness and drug addiction.

At a youth conference in July, President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi said divorce and separation meant that millions of Egyptian children were living without one of their parents.

In Egypt, the divorce rate is too high. The project typifies some of El-Sisi's efforts to drive social change.

"He is patriarchal and speaks to Egyptians as if he was their father," Barak Barfi, research fellow at New America, a think tank based in Washington, said of El-Sisi. "It (Mawadda) reflects his belief that transformation can be instituted from the top rather than from below at the grass roots level."

Adhab Al-Hosseiny, 26, who played the role of the husband in the skit, said he hoped to get married in the near future.

He also worries financial difficulties might lead to arguments between him and his future wife.

"What might cause problems after I marry is external pressure," he said. "If there are money issues in terms of affording school fees and food ... all that affects my mental state."



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Egyptian actress faces backlash after appearing in blackface
Debate rages in Egypt as priest tells Christian women to cover up

[US official in Lebanon to discuss border dispute with Israel](#)

Author:

Tue, 2019-05-14 22:50

BEIRUT: Lebanon's Prime Minister Saad Hariri has received a US official as Washington mediates a maritime border dispute with Israel.

Acting Assistant Secretary of State David Satterfield arrived Tuesday, beginning a two-day visit to meet with Lebanese officials.

Satterfield's visit comes a week after President Michel Aoun presented the US ambassador to Lebanon with a "unified stance" regarding the demarcation of the maritime border between Lebanon and Israel.

Last month, Lebanon's Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri told the commander of the UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon, Maj. Gen. Stefano del Col, that Beirut is ready to establish the maritime border and special economic zone with Israel.

There are some 860 sq. km of waters claimed by the two countries, which are technically in a state of conflict.

Torture allegations

Separately, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has called for "a thorough, effective and independent investigation" into the death of a Lebanese man who was allegedly tortured by police intelligence.

Michelle Bachelet said Hassan Diqa died Saturday despite numerous interventions by a variety of UN entities with Lebanese authorities after he was allegedly tortured while detained on drug-related charges in November.

Bachelet said Tuesday that Diqa's death "highlights what appears to be a number of very serious failings in Lebanon's legal and prison systems."

She said those who ordered the crime must be held accountable.

Diqa's father, Toufic, said his son suffered partial paralysis of his left

leg.

He was admitted to hospital in early April and remained there until his dea



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It's austerity or catastrophe, Saad Hariri tells Lebanon
Protests return to Lebanon as government discusses austerity