

Jordanian mayor apologizes for helping Israeli tourists

Sat, 2019-05-04 22:11

A Jordanian mayor apologized on Saturday for his interaction with a group of Israeli tourists, after his hospitality toward them triggered a protest, angry meetings, a social media backlash and a resignation.

Ibrahim Karim Karaki, who is mayor of Karak, organized a day-long tour for the visitors during the Jewish Passover holiday.

He was seen on Israeli media helping them to cross a valley that is closed to tourists. He also fed the group, which included children, and presented them with plaques of appreciation from the city.

His attentiveness angered Karak residents, who viewed it as an act of normalization.

Karaki's apology video, which was posted on the city council's Facebook page, followed social media attacks, the resignation of a council member, angry town hall meetings at the headquarters of professional unions, and a protest after Friday prayers.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Ibrahim Karim Karaki fed tourists and gave them plaques.
- Karaki's apology video followed social media attacks, the resignation of a council member, angry town hall meetings and a protest after Friday prayers.

The mayor can be seen in the apology video denouncing Israeli occupation, calling for the liberation of all of Palestine "from the sea to the river" and a rejection of normalization in all its forms.

The video is also full of praise for Jordan, including strong support for King Abdullah and the Hashemite custodianship of Jerusalem. It was filmed in front of a model of Al-Aqsa mosque.

Dr. Khaled Baqaen, the council member who resigned in protest at Karaki's actions, said the apology was not enough and that he would not change his mind. He even called for the mayor to be pushed out.

"The tourists were on a mistaken path," he told Arab News. "Fine, have the proper authorities help them and send them back. Why give them the public plaque to honor what they did? Those who elected him should remove him.

The plaques cost money. How did he decide on giving the plaques to the Israelis? What are the criteria that were considered before agreeing to order and give the plaques using city money? I did what I believe is correct. I

took my position after the Zionist media celebrated the event. I will not withdraw my resignation even if the people of Karak accepted his apology, which they have.”

The resignation and protests may have prompted the mayor to rethink what he did, but the social media onslaught would have been a little harder to stomach for a mayor who courted the youth vote.

Zaid Nabulsi, a lawyer and social media commentator, said the mayor had crossed a line. “There is no problem in helping the tourists whatever their nationality was,” he told Arab News. “But the mayor went way beyond the humanitarian part and into the political sphere. Unilaterally presenting plaques in the name of the city of Karak to the tourists who had entered an area that they are not even supposed to have entered makes no sense. The mayor thinks he can whitewash what he did with a few words. People today are well aware of things and you can’t simply fool them with words that he most likely doesn’t even believe in.”

Arab News attempted to contact Karaki but he did not return the calls.

Karak is home to one of the region’s biggest Crusader castles. It is home to around 170,000 people.



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Jordan condemns Israeli trespassing at Al-Aqsa Mosque Israel farmers fear for future as Jordan claims back lands

3 Turkish soldiers killed in mortar attack from Iraq

Author:

Sat, 2019-05-04 21:58

ISTANBUL, ANKARA : Three Turkish soldiers died on Saturday in a mortar attack by Kurdish militants launched from Iraqi territory, the Turkish Defense Ministry said.

“Three of our brothers in arms died as martyrs after mortar fire from northern Iraq by terrorists,” the ministry said, in reference to the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).

A fourth soldier was wounded, it said in a statement. The attack took place in a region where Turkey carried out a cross-border operation dubbed Euphrates Shield in 2016, aiming to drive Daesh militants and the People’s Protection Units (YPG) from its border with Syria, the ministry said.

The army had retaliated with artillery fire but gave no further details on the whereabouts of the attack, it said.

Fighting insurgency

The attack targeted a military base in the border province of Hakkari, according to the ministry.

The Turkish Army had responded with aerial bombardments and artillery fire. The PKK, branded a terrorist group by Turkey, the US and the EU, has waged an insurgency against the Turkish state since 1984. The conflict has claimed more than 40,000 lives, the ministry added.

The PKK’s deployment in northern Iraq has been a constant source of tension between Baghdad and Ankara, with Turkey pressing Iraq to play a bigger role in fighting the group.

The Defense Ministry also said that another Turkish soldier had been killed on Saturday in northern Syria by the YPG, a Kurdish militia closely allied with the PKK.

Unlike the PKK, however, the YPG has the backing of Western powers in its fight against Daesh.

Turkish forces shelled YPG positions in the Tel Rifaat region earlier this year, saying this was in response to YPG fire.

Tel Rifaat is controlled by Kurdish-led forces and is located some 20 km east of Afrin, which has been under the control of Turkey and its Free Syrian Army (FSA) allies since an operation last year to drive out the YPG.

Turkey, which has long been one of the main backers of opposition groups fighting against Syria's Bashar Assad, has conducted patrols with Russia, one of Assad's main allies, in northern areas under agreements reached last year.

In March, the Defense Ministry said Turkish and Russian forces carried out the first "independent and coordinated" patrols in Tel Rifaat.



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Turkish operation on Kurdish rebels in Iraq is matter of timing: ministerIran denies joint raid with Turkey against Kurd rebels

[Hardline Egyptian preacher receives 5-year sentence for court siege case](#)

Author:

Sat, 2019-05-04 20:41

CAIRO: Hardline Egyptian preacher and politician Hazem Salah Abu Ismail's five-year sentence for his involvement in besieging a court in Nasr City in 2012 has been upheld by the country's top appeals court.

A Cairo court sentenced Abu Ismail and five others in January 2017 to five years in prison over the case, but they appealed against their sentences. Abu Ismail was jailed for inciting and participating in violent demonstrations at Nasr City court in northeast Cairo in December 2012 demanding the release of one of his supporters, who had been arrested in possession of an automatic weapon, according to the police. He and his supporters blocked the court's entrance, barring anyone from entering or exiting, including prosecutors who were inside. The defendants used threats and violence against the prosecutors to try to coerce them into releasing the supporter, the prosecution said. Earlier in 2012, Abu Ismail was disqualified from the presidential race that eventually brought Mohammed Mursi of the Muslim Brotherhood to power in June that year. Reports had emerged that Abu Ismail's late mother held a US passport, meaning he was not eligible to run for the presidency. Abu Ismail was arrested in July 2013, two days after Mursi was ousted following mass protests against his rule, and is currently serving a seven-year sentence for falsifying his candidacy application for the 2012 presidential race.



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Egypt court upholds prison term for former anti-graft chief
Egyptian policeman sentenced to death for killing Christian father and son

Said Bouteflika, brother of former Algerian president, two former intelligence chiefs arrested

Sat, 2019-05-04 20:12

ALGIERS: Algerian police have arrested Said Bouteflika, the youngest brother of former president Abdelaziz Bouteflika, and two former intelligence chiefs, Generals Bachir Athmane Tartag and Mohamed Mediene, security sources said on Saturday.

No more details were available, and there was no immediate comment from police. The sources were confirming an earlier report from Ennahar TV. Said Bouteflika, who served as a top adviser to the presidency for more than a decade, acted as Algeria's de facto ruler after his brother suffered a stroke in 2013 which left him in a wheelchair.

Massive ongoing protests calling for a radical change to Bouteflika's regime pushed the ailing president to resign on April 2, but demonstrators continue to demand the removal of all those linked the former administration.

"The arrest of Said is definitely the peak in the dismantling of Bouteflika's system," a top political source told Reuters on Saturday.

Army chief of staff Ahmed Gaed Salah has promised to rid the country of corrupt politicians, oligarchs and military officials in order to restore confidence among the people.

Last month Salah accused a former intelligence chief of trying to undermine the transition, in a clear reference to Mediene, dubbed "Algeria's God" because many saw him as the country's real authority.

"I send to this person a final warning," Salah said at that time.

Bouteflika had fired Mediene in 2015 in an attempt to weaken the intelligence services, but he is still seen as one of the most powerful figures in Algeria.

Protesters are also calling for the resignation of interim president Abdelkader Bensalah, who is due to serve until an election on July 4, and Prime Minister Nouredine Bedoui.

On Friday, hundreds of thousands of protesters rallied peacefully in Algiers, chanting "we will not shut up!."

The army remains the most powerful institution in Algeria, having swayed politics from the shadows for decades. It has so far patiently monitored the mostly peaceful protests.

Last week Lt. Gen. Salah, who helped push Bouteflika out after having him declared unfit for office, said several big corruption cases would come to light in a crackdown on graft.

Several oligarchs, including Algeria's richest man Issad Rebrab, are behind bars with investigations ongoing.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Protesters hit Algerian capital to keep up pressure for change
Algeria army chief calls for 'dialogue' with protesters

[Sudan faces fuel crisis and worsening cash crunch](#)

Author:

Sat, 2019-05-04 19:14

KHARTOUM: Sudan is facing a pre-Ramadan fuel crisis and a worsening cash crunch less than a month after president Omar Al-Bashir was ousted following protests sparked by bread and fuel shortages.

Cars queued at almost every petrol station in Khartoum on Saturday as motorists waited for fuel for several hours. Soldiers manned the stations to ensure order.

The crisis, along with a cash shortage and electricity outages, pose challenges to the country's ruling Transitional Military Council (TMC), set up after generals deposed Bashir and arrested him on April 11.

The TMC is locked in a standoff with the opposition over who will control a proposed joint civilian-military body to oversee the country until elections

can be held. Protests have continued in a bid to push the council to cede power to civilians.

At least a dozen ATMs in a commercial area in central Khartoum had no cash, and dozens of people lined up at those still dispensing money. A Reuters witness counted 88 customers in one line on a main road in central Khartoum. Queues had previously been shorter and more ATMs held cash.

"I am searching since the morning for an ATM to withdraw cash from," said Ahmed Yassin, 52. "I have been standing in line for three hours and I must withdraw so that I can buy Ramadan needs for my family."

One banking employee, who declined to be named, said most ATMs held no cash. Most Sudanese employees get paid near the beginning of the month, and consumer spending often increases during the Islamic month of Ramadan, likely to begin on May 6, contributing to the liquidity crisis.

The maximum daily withdrawal has long been set at 2,000 Sudanese pounds (\$45). Some have set up several bank accounts to try to circumvent the limit. Most residential areas in the capital experience near-daily electricity outages for hours. The increasing blackouts occurred as Khartoum's temperatures soar to highs of 45 Celsius.

Bashir's government had run up enormous budget deficits by subsidising fuel, bread and other products. To cover the deficit, it expanded the money supply. But that served to debase the currency, causing inflation to rise and the value of the Sudanese pound against other currencies to plummet – in turn pushing up the cost of subsidies and widening the deficit even further. Attempts to raise bread and fuel prices to reduce the cost of subsidies sparked the protests that led to the military's overthrow of Bashir last month.



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Sudanese take aim at 'deep state' left by Bashir
Sudan protesters tone down demands in standoff with military