

World's largest falcon hospital cares for UAE's heritage

Mon, 2019-04-29 23:30

ABU DHABI: When a falcon in the Gulf Arab countries falls sick, the owners of these much-loved and expensive hunting birds know where to take them: The world's largest falcon hospital, in Abu Dhabi.

"It's their baby, they want the best for it," said hospital director Margit Muller, a German veterinarian with over 25 years experience in treating falcons.

"Sometimes when the falcons have an accident at night, the owners will sit there for hours into the early morning."

The birds are more than pets and the practice is more than a sport.

Falconry is an important part of the cultural desert heritage of the Arabs of the UAE and neighboring countries such as Saudi Arabia going back thousands of years.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Falconry is an important part of the cultural desert heritage of Arabs going back thousands of years.
- The UAE issues falcons their own passports and the birds travel with their owners in airplane cabins, sometimes dozens at a time for specific hunting trips.
- Owners train their birds using meat and then fly them to countries like Pakistan, Morocco and the central Asian region during colder months.

"The Bedouin used falcons to hunt meat ... so the falcon was essential to ensure the survival of the Bedouin's family," said Muller. "(The birds) have always been considered like the children of the family and this remains until today."

With flight speeds exceeding 300 km an hour, falcons can suffer serious injuries as they collide with prey, misjudge a landing or ingest infected meat.

The government-supported Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital is the world's main center

for falcon medicine, research and training. Its subsidised prices means people of all income levels can use its falcon care, Muller said.

“Nowadays falconry is one of the very few opportunities for the former Bedouin to reconnect to their past,” she said.

Falcons are recognized internationally as endangered and only captive bred falcons can be legally owned in the UAE.

Hunting in the UAE outside a few special reserves is illegal, so owners train their birds using meat and then fly them to countries like Pakistan, Morocco and the central Asian region during colder months.

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Saudi falconry festival adds another feather to its cap with new world record Falcon breeding played key role in Arab world

Sudan's military, opposition hold key talks

Author:

Mon, 2019-04-29 22:46

KHARTOUM: Sudan's military rulers and an opposition alliance met on Monday to discuss the powers of a joint military-civilian council to steer the country's transition after three decades of rule by Omar Al-Bashir, sources said.

The two sides had been due to talk about the makeup of the proposed body, but military officers who toppled Bashir on April 11 focused the discussions instead on the future council's functions and powers, sources said.

A further meeting between the Transitional Military Council (TMC) and the Declaration of Freedom and Change Forces, an umbrella group representing opposition groups and activists, will be held to discuss the council's composition, they added.

The makeup of the proposed council is key because activists who organized 16 weeks of protests leading to Bashir's ouster have insisted that the body be civilian led. The TMC has not indicated that it is willing to cede ultimate authority.

The joint council would be the sovereign body overseeing a technocrat government and a legislative council.

On Sunday, protest leaders held talks with the military council after the army condemned an attack on an Islamist party close to Bashir.

Dozens of protesters on Saturday surrounded a building where the Popular Congress Party was holding a meeting.

The state-run SUNA news agency quoted party leader Idriss Suliman as saying that protesters attacked the party members as they left the building, wounding at least 64 people. The party was established in the late 1990s by Hassan Al-Turabi, the Sudanese leader who played a key role in the 1989 coup that brought Bashir to power. It is a symbol of the lingering power of Bashir's regime, which was built on a close alliance between the military and Islamists.

The deputy head of the military council, Gen. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo – commonly known by his nickname Hemedti – accused the demonstrators of trying to set the building on fire. Security forces intervened to separate the two groups, he added, to avoid “a disaster.”

The Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA), which spearheaded four months

of overwhelmingly peaceful protests, condemned the violence.

The military has said it is open to “proportional” civilian representation in its council and the granting of executive powers to civilians. It has said it is consulting with all political factions except for National the Congress Party on the way forward.

Amjad Fareed, an SPA spokesman, said late Saturday the talks have focused on “the nature of the council, whether it is going to be a civilian council with some military representation or just military like the military council insists on. And how long is the transition process.”

Two activists within the SPA said both sides have reached an “initial deal” to share power in the transitional council. They said Sunday’s talks would focus on apportioning representation between the two sides. Both activists spoke on condition of anonymity as the talks are ongoing.



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Sudan army agree to share power with civilians
Sudanese protesters demanding civilian rule meet with army

Demonstrations erupt in Tunisian city demanding development

Author:

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TUNIS: About 5,000 Tunisians protested on Monday in central Sidi Bouzid city against marginalization and deteriorating conditions, two days after the deaths of 12 female rural workers in a traffic accident.

Traffic stopped and schools, hospitals and public offices were closed under a regional strike called by unions in Sidi Bouzid, the birthplace of Tunisian revolution.

The deaths of 12 women traveling to work in an inappropriate vehicle in the village of Sabbela on Saturday provoked a wave of anger among Tunisians.

Similar incidents have occurred in recent months, fueling Tunisians' anger at the high cost of living, unemployment and decline of state services.

Protesters including women and youths in Sidi Bouzid chanted anti-government slogans.

In December, 2010, a young Tunisian vendor named Mohamed Bouazizi set himself alight in a suicide protest over unemployment and marginalization, spreading revolt across the Arab world.

"This strike is a support for the victims of this tragedy ... we suffer in Sidi Bouzid from marginalization and very bad conditions," said Mohamed Azhar Gamoudi, an official in the UGTT union.

Unemployment in the country stands at about 15 percent, up from 12 percent in 2010, due to weak growth and low investment.

Tunisia, since 2011, has also experienced multiple terrorist attacks that have killed dozens of members of the security forces and 59 foreign tourists.

The country has been under a state of emergency since November 2015, when a Daesh-claimed suicide bombing in Tunis killed 12 presidential guards.

On Friday, a Tunisian soldier was killed and three others were wounded in a mine blast in the restive Kasserine region, the Defense Ministry said, in an attack claimed by Al-Qaeda-linked terrorists.

The mine exploded on Mount Chambi, in Kasserine, where the army has conducted search operations since 2012 to hunt down terrorists linked both to Al-Qaeda and Daesh, the ministry said.

The area which borders Algeria – a "closed military zone" since 2014 – is considered to be a bastion of Okba Ibn Nafaa, a local affiliate of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

Okba Ibn Nafaa claimed responsibility for the attack, SITE Intelligence Group reported late Friday.



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Tunisia soldier killed in mine blast in extremist bastion
Struggle over leadership deepens divisions in Tunisia president's party

[Guards repel assault on Libya's biggest oilfield](#)

Author:

Reuters

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1556566788055063000

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TRIPOLI/BENGAZI, Libya: An armed group attacked Libya's largest oilfield but was repelled after clashes with its protection force on Monday, while fighting escalated in eastern strongman Khalifa Haftar's effort to capture the capital, Tripoli.

The state oil company NOC said unknown gunmen fired a rocket propelled grenade at a control station of El Sharara oil field. Guards at the oilfield eventually repelled the attackers, an oil engineer there told Reuters. There were no casualties among oil workers and production was unaffected, the

National Oil Corporation (NOC) said in a statement.

OPEC member Libya's oil output has been repeatedly disrupted by factional conflict and blockades since the 2011 uprising that toppled dictator Muammar Qaddafi.

Haftar's three-week-old offensive to seize Tripoli, seat of Libya's internationally recognized government, has sharpened a power struggle that has fractured Libya since Qaddafi's fall.

The assault by the Haftar-led Libyan National Army (LNA), which is allied to a parallel government based in the eastern city of Benghazi, stalled on Tripoli's stoutly defended southern outskirts last week.

But fighting intensified again on Monday, with heavy shelling, small-arms fire and a warplane all heard in the center of Tripoli coming from southern districts, residents said. No more details were immediately available.

The LNA carried out an air raid overnight on at least one target south of Tripoli, residents said, though it was less intense than one on Saturday night.

The battle for Tripoli has killed 345 people, 22 of them civilians, a World Health Organization official said on Monday. A hospital in Tripoli was evacuated after shelling shattered some windows, he added in a tweet.

The UN refugee agency UNHCR said 146 refugees, mainly Africans and a handful of Syrians, were evacuated on Monday from Libya to Italy, where their asylum claims will be processed. Most of them had been transferred earlier this month from detention centers near the fighting, a spokeswoman said.

But 3,300 migrants and refugees remain trapped in detention centers near the Tripoli clashes, the UNHCR said.

"It's now crucial that other States match this gesture and offer similar evacuation places for refugees caught up in the conflict," UNHCR chief Filippo Grandi said in a statement.

Vulnerable oilfield

It was not clear who the gunmen who targeted El Sharara were affiliated to. The oilfield is in a southwestern region held by forces loyal to Haftar.

State guards and local tribesmen shut down El Sharara in December to press financial demands before allowing production to reopen in March. The field, operated by the NOC and foreign partners, has been pumping crude only intermittently due to blockades mostly by armed groups and other incidents.

UN officials say Haftar is backed militarily by the United Arab Emirates and Egypt, which want to build him up to help fight and neutralize Islamist militants in the region. His opponents see him as a budding new autocrat in Qaddafi's mold.

Divisions among European and Gulf nations over how to deal with Haftar have scuppered UN efforts to broker a cease-fire between the main factions to prepare Libya for elections to help reunify the country.

France and the United States been accused by Prime Minister Fayed Al-Serraj's government in Tripoli of playing both sides since Haftar launched his offensive. Paris has backed Haftar's efforts to curb radical Islamists while at the same time formally supporting Serraj's UN-recognized government.

Serraj is backed emphatically by Italy, the former colonial power that has oil assets in Libya, and Turkey. Qatar, a Gulf rival of the UAE, also supports Serraj.

UN Libya peace envoy Ghassan Salame warned nations tempted to continue

supporting Haftar that he was no democrat and his political agenda was not favored by most Libyans.

“He is no Abraham Lincoln, he is no big democrat, but he has qualities and wants to unify the country,” Salame told France Inter radio, referring to the president who steered United States through its Civil War, preserving the union, and abolished slavery.

Salame said his peacemaking effort was suffering from deep divisions within the UN Security Council that led to a British draft resolution on stopping the fighting over Tripoli being blocked last week by Russia and the United States.



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GNA advances in Tripoli, UN warns of worsening humanitarian situationUN:
Libya fighting reaches facility holding migrants

Family of Palestinian found dead in Turkish prison after UAE spying charges dismiss suicide claim

Mon, 2019-04-29 20:50

AMMAN: The family of a Palestinian man found dead in prison after being accused of spying for the UAE have dismissed Turkish claims that he committed suicide.

The Istanbul prosecutor's office said Monday that Zaki Mubarak Hassan had been found hanging in his cell in Silivri prison on Sunday.

But his brother, Zakaria, told Arab News that they did not believe he had killed himself and called for an "international investigation."

Zaki was one of two suspects charged earlier this month with international, political and military espionage, Reuters reported.

The pair were arrested on April 19 and had confessed to spying on Arab nationals for the UAE, a senior Turkish official said at the time.

The prosecutor's statement on Monday said an investigation has been launched and the Istanbul forensics institute has carried out an autopsy.

But Zakaria challenged the Turkish government to produce video footage from the cell to prove how his brother died.

"I don't trust the Turkish government nor do I trust the Palestinian ambassador (to Turkey)," Zakaria told Arab News from his home in Bulgaria. "I want an international investigation of what happened to him.

"My brother is innocent and our lawyers told us he would be released. The Turkish government didn't want that because they didn't want to show that they made a mistake."

Zakaria said his brother, who had nine children, went to Turkey for business and to make money for his family. He said Zaki's lawyer told him they had met on Friday and expected him to be released this week.

Turkey, he said, "cared more for its political interests rather than justice."

He said he had informed the Palestinian ambassador in Ankara of his brother's disappearance from a restaurant in Istanbul before his arrest was announced, but that the embassy stopped taking his calls.

Zaki's son, Yusuf, told Al-Arabiya that there should be an international commission to investigate his father's death.

"I want the creation of a specialized medical committee, including a trusted Palestinian doctor who can go there and do the autopsy on my father's corpse in order to find the truth himself," he said.

Relations between Turkey and Gulf allies, the UAE and Saudi Arabia, deteriorated after the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Kingdom's Istanbul consulate in October.





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