

Israel slammed for banning top cleric from holy site

Author:

Sun, 2019-03-03 22:23

AMMAN: Jordan's waqf minister has slammed the Israeli government for barring a top cleric from entering Al-Aqsa Mosque, Islam's third-holiest site, for 40 days.

Jordanian Minister of Waqf Abdel Naser Abu Basel described the temporary ban on Sheikh Abdel Hafiz Salhab, head of the Jerusalem Waqf Council, as "unacceptable."

The Israelis have also ordered his deputy, Najeh Bkeirat, to stay away from Al-Aqsa Mosque for four months.

Other members of the newly established waqf council are to be quizzed too, with Israeli security wanting to question Mahdi Abdul Hadi, the head of the Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA), and Hatem Abdel Qader, the former Palestinian legislature and senior Fatah activist.

In a strongly worded statement on the Israeli action, Basel said: "Restricting the head of the waqf who holds diplomatic status, and others, is aimed at ruining the work of the Jerusalem waqf.

"It is aimed at crippling the work of the Jerusalem waqf, terrorizing members of the waqf council which was established recently by the Jordanian Cabinet, and is a violation of the Hashemite custodianship of the Islamic and Christian holy places."

The Jordanian minister insisted that the Bab Al-Rahmeh prayer area will stay open to Muslim worshippers. A senior Jordanian Foreign Ministry official told Arab News that Salhab carried a diplomatic passport but did not have diplomatic status.

Khaleel Assali, a newly appointed member in the waqf council, said that during its occupation Israel had never acted in such a way against members of the Jordanian waqf. He told Arab News: "It is a clear escalation by Israel aimed at frightening the council."

Assali said the waqf council had taken decisions to repair the prayer hall at Bab Al-Rahmeh but denied it had received any order to close it. "We open it and close it according to our decisions. At present there is a lot of water and we want to repair the site before opening it for regular prayers."

Anis F. Kassim, editor of the Palestine Yearbook of International Law, told Arab News that holding a diplomatic passport did not make its holder part of the Jordanian diplomatic mission. "Sure, the restriction is a kind of a punishment, but it doesn't reach the level of a diplomatic crisis," he said.

“Normally host countries have the right to restrict the movement of diplomats accredited to it and in some cases can deport them by considering them persona non grata,” Kassim added. He noted, however, that Salhab’s case was different to most.

During a weekly Cabinet meeting on Sunday in Ramallah, Palestinian Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah referred to the daily challenges being faced in Jerusalem. “Palestinians are standing up to the Israeli attempts to deny Jerusalem’s Arab and Islamic character, trying to empty it of its original inhabitants and its leaders, to isolate the city and to close Bab Al-Rahmeh.”

Ofer Zalberg, International Crisis Group’s senior Middle East and North Africa analyst, called Israel’s restraining orders on the waqf council “unprecedented.” Zalberg said that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appeared to be trying to deflect accusations “about refraining from ordering the police to physically close the building.”



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On Jerusalem’s edge, a ‘nowhere land’ for Palestinians Israeli police arrest 19 Palestinians at Jerusalem holy site

Egypt approves new anti-terror laws

Author:

Sun, 2019-03-03 22:06

CAIRO: The Egyptian government has approved tough new laws to fight terrorism in the wake of recent deadly attacks in the country.

One of the latest key changes to the legislation will see a tightening up of regulations surrounding the rental of property.

Under current rules, anyone leasing furnished real estate in Egypt does not have to be officially registered as living there. However, in the future property owners will be required to inform police of the identities of tenants, even for short-term rental periods, and will face criminal penalties for failure to do so.

Dr. Mohammed Khalifa, a member of the legislative committee of the Egyptian Council of Representatives, told Arab News that terrorists often took advantage of the old regulations to rent furnished apartments and stay under the radar of the authorities.

"The owner of a property will now have to notify the police department in the form of a copy of the contract between the two sides, so that Egyptian security will have sufficient information about the citizens who rent the furnished apartments, even if only for short periods," said Khalifa.

He said the amendment to the law was designed not to inconvenience the owners of rented apartments but to encourage them to interact with the police.

Other alterations to the government's anti-terror legislation include giving the Egyptian Public Prosecution Office powers to temporarily close any premises where weapons have been manufactured or designed for use in terrorist crimes.

In addition, the Egyptian Parliament's proposals and complaints committee has approved a law blocking organizations listed as terrorist groups from exercising their political rights.

MP Kamal Amer, head of the country's National Defense and Security Committee in the House of Representatives, said that the government was constantly reviewing and amending laws to combat terrorism and confiscate the funds of armed organizations.

He stressed that Egypt had made significant strides in its war on terror through its legislative and security efforts. At the same time, it was working hard to tackle the root causes of extremism.

In a recent speech at the first Middle East and North Africa Regional

Conference titled “Strengthening International Cooperation in the Face of the Growing Threat of Terrorist Financing and Money Laundering Operations,” Egyptian Attorney General Nabil Sadiq said that his country had been focused on fighting terrorism since the beginning of the last century.

Sadiq said its strategy was based on information technology to track and intercept the financing of terrorist groups, which rely on funding from organized crime.



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Egypt court upholds prison term for former anti-graft chief
Egypt denounces UN over executions criticism

[Azhar Grand Imam sparks controversy with remarks on polygamy](#)

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Sun, 2019-03-03 21:02

CAIRO: The grand imam of Egypt's Al-Azhar Institution, Sheikh Ahmed Al-Tayeb, has sparked a debate on social media with comments on polygamy, saying it can be an "injustice for women and children."

Al-Tayeb, a leading Sunni scholar, said the practice came from "a lack of understanding of the Qur'an."

"Those who say that marriage must be polygamous are wrong, we have to read the (Qur'anic) verse in full," he said.

Speaking on his weekly television program and on Twitter, Al-Tayeb said that monogamy was the rule and polygamy was an exception.

He said Islam requires the condition of fairness, and "if there is not fairness it is forbidden to have more than one wife."

The Imam also advocated a broader revamp of the way women's issues are addressed.

"Women represent half of society, if we don't care for them it's like walking on one foot only," he posted on Twitter.

The comments sparked a fervent debate on social media, prompting Al-Azhar Institution to clarify that the grand Imam was not calling for a ban on polygamy.



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OIC foreign ministers condemn Israeli violations against Palestinians

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Sun, 2019-03-03 20:09

ABU DHABI: A high-profile meeting of foreign ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has pledged its commitment to establishing an independent Palestinian state, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Delegates at the 46th session of the OIC's Council of Foreign Ministers concluded their two-day conference in Abu Dhabi by issuing a declaration condemning Israeli violations against the Palestinian people.

And ministers agreed to set up an endowment fund to guarantee future finance for the aid activities of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

According to the UAE news agency, WAM, the declaration also called on Iran to start peace talks with the UAE and international community, aimed at ending the Iranian occupation of three Emirati islands.

A reaffirmation of support in finding a political solution to the crisis in Yemen was agreed, and issues surrounding Syria, Libya and other countries were also covered.

On the situation over Palestine, the OIC statement reaffirmed that the Palestinian issue was central to both Arab and Muslim nations and reiterated the organization's position to strive to reach a permanent solution to the matter "and to establish an independent Palestinian State according to the borders of June 4, 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital."

The declaration condemned "all Israeli violations against the brotherly Palestinian people," and pledged backing for UNRWA while urging "the international community to fulfill its commitments regarding the Palestinian issue and Palestinian refugees."

On Yemen, the foreign ministers affirmed their "commitment to preserve the unity, sovereignty and territorial independence and integrity" of the country.

They said only a political solution would resolve the crisis in Yemen and they renewed their support for the efforts of the UN, its special envoy for Yemen, and coalition forces led by Saudi Arabia.

The declaration praised the efforts of the OIC over five decades to address the challenges facing not only the Muslim world, but the international community in general.

The agreement said: "(OIC members) affirm our commitment to respect the security, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of member states, and believe in the necessity of resolving existing and emerging litigations and conflicts through negotiation, mediation and reconciliation by adopting diplomatic solutions based on the principles of international

law.”

The OIC will mark 2019 as its golden jubilee year with member states urged to organize national programs to celebrate the 50th anniversary.

OIC Secretary-General Dr. Yousef Al-Othaimen said the new endowment fund, to be set up to guarantee sustainable financing for UNRWA activities, would be run as a trust fund under the umbrella of the Jeddah-based Islamic Development Bank.



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OIC foreign ministers to map out Islamic road to prosperity

[Egypt court upholds prison term for former anti-graft chief](#)

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CAIRO: An Egyptian court on Sunday upheld a five-year prison sentence for the country's former anti-corruption chief, found guilty of insulting the military, legal sources said.

A military court rejected Hisham Geneina's appeal and confirmed his sentence, a judicial source said, over comments made in an interview with the news website HuffPost Arabi.

Geneina was head of Egypt's Central Auditing Organization until he was sacked by President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi in 2016 for allegedly exaggerating the cost of corruption.

He subsequently became a top aide to former military chief of staff Sami Anan, who planned to challenge El-Sisi in presidential polls but was arrested.

Geneina claimed Anan held documents on "political events and crises that Egyptian society has passed through" since the 2011 uprising.

He said the documents could be released if Anan – who remains in jail – was harmed.

Following the interview, Geneina was detained in February 2018 and sentenced last April to five years in prison for "spreading news that harms the armed forces."

Sunday's ruling "could be challenged before a higher military court," Geneina's lawyer Ali Taha said.

Moataz Wadnan, the journalist who conducted the interview, was also detained but has not yet been put on trial, according to rights lawyer Negad Al-Borai. Without any serious challenger at the ballot box, El-Sisi won a second four-year term last March with 97 percent of the vote.

Egypt's parliament, packed with El-Sisi supporters, is seeking to institute constitutional amendments that would extend his rule beyond 2022.



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