

Egypt deports another German for alleged Daesh connection

Author:

Mon, 2019-01-14 21:57

BERLIN: Egypt has deported the second of two young German men who were arrested last month as suspected militants, the Foreign Ministry in Berlin said on Monday.

Eighteen-year-old Issa Ibrahim El-Sabagh landed at Frankfurt airport, reported Spiegel Online, following last week's repatriation of Mahmoud Abdel-Aziz, 23.

A ministry spokeswoman confirmed that "the person arrived back in Germany last night."

Both men had vanished in December in Egypt, where the government only reported their arrests following inquiries by Germany.

Their families had raised the alarm and have called the arrests cases of mistaken identity.

El-Sabagh, a German-Egyptian dual citizen and student in the city of Giessen, was arrested in mid-December after landing in the southern city of Luxor.

Egyptian security sources said the two men were suspected of having tried to join the Daesh group's affiliate in the troubled Sinai peninsula.

German prosecutors said last week they were looking into the Egyptian media reports on Abdel-Aziz to investigate whether there were "any indications of criminal offenses."

The 23-year-old has since posted a video on Facebook in which he denied he is an extremist militant who supports violence or has any Daesh links.

The student from the university town of Goettingen also said he had flown to Egypt to visit his grandparents and retracted anything he had said in Egypt "under duress and pressure."

Egypt has been battling insurgency in North Sinai, which spiked following the 2013 military ouster of President Muhammad Mursi.

In February, security forces launched a major Sina operation aimed at wiping out a Daesh affiliate accused of spearheading the insurgency.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Egypt](#)

[Daesh](#)

[German](#)

Egypt deports German citizen over alleged terror suspicions
Lebanese security forces arrest three Syrians with links to Daesh in Middle East, Europe

[Malaysia disrupts maritime people smuggling venture](#)

Malaysian authorities, led by the Royal Malaysia Police, have successfully disrupted a maritime people smuggling venture before it could depart for our region.

[US reiterates concern about Hezbollah](#)

agenda to destabilize region

Author:

Sun, 2019-01-13 23:03

BEIRUT: US officials are in Beirut holding talks with Lebanese officials about the growing threat posed by Hezbollah as US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo continues to tour the Middle East.

During the visit, David Hale, US undersecretary of state for political affairs, will underscore US concerns about Hezbollah's destabilizing activities in Lebanon and the region, which include the recent discovery of Hezbollah's cross-border tunnels.

The tunnels "defy UN Security Council Resolution 1701, jeopardize the security of the Lebanese people and undermine the legitimacy of Lebanon's state institutions," the US Embassy in Lebanon said in a statement issued ahead of the meeting.

Hale's visit came ahead of the global summit that will take place in Poland on Feb. 13 and 14 "to counter Tehran's regional influence," according to a statement made by Pompeo two days ago.

Pompeo announced on Twitter before embarking on his Middle East tour that he would send a clear message to US friends and partners that "the US is committed to the region, committed to defeat Daesh and committed to countering Iran's destabilizing activities."

Lebanon is not included in Pompeo's visit, which covers eight Arab countries and concludes on Tuesday.

The US Embassy also said in its statement that Hale "will meet with senior Lebanese officials to discuss the full range of bilateral and regional issues."

The embassy also added that he "has enduring ties with Lebanon and the Lebanese people after serving at the US Embassy in Beirut as a political officer, deputy chief of mission and ambassador over the span of 27 years."

"He is returning to Lebanon in his new role to reaffirm strong US support for the Lebanese state, including its legitimate security institutions, as it continues to cope with significant challenges," the US Embassy added.

Shortly after arriving in Beirut, Hale, accompanied by US Ambassador to Lebanon Elizabeth Richard, met with Walid Jumblatt, the leader of the Progressive Socialist Party.

Hale also met with Joseph Aoun, the commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces, who said that their discussion was focused on "the general situation in Lebanon and the region, as well as cooperation relations between the armies of the two countries, especially the amount of military assistance provided by the US to the Lebanese Army."

During his visit to Lebanon, Hale will also meet with President Michel Aoun, Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri, and a number of political leaders with whom he was acquainted when he served as the US ambassador to Lebanon.

Hale's visit comes at a time when Lebanon is going through a very sensitive phase as a result of the eight-month disruption to the government's formation.

Lebanese parties have accused Hezbollah militant group of being behind this disruption for reasons associated with Lebanon's regional stance.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Hezbollah](#)

[terrorism](#)

[Irania proxies](#)

[proxy wars](#)

Lebanon's Hezbollah believes solution to government impasse 'very close' Israel urges UN action over Hezbollah 'attack tunnels' from Lebanon

[Turkey crackdown on Hayat Tahrir Al-](#)

Sham network

Author:

Zaynab Khojji

ID:

1547407424416329000

Sun, 2019-01-13 22:24

ANKARA: Over the weekend, Turkey carried out counter-terrorism operations against the alleged members of Syria's former Al-Qaeda affiliate Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS) in cities throughout the country.

With HTS taking control of more strategic towns in Syria's northwestern province of Idlib from Turkish-backed fighters, experts said the group represented an increasing terror threat inside Turkey due to its geographical proximity and Turkey's involvement in the Syrian conflict.

In Istanbul, in the southern city of Adana and in the capital city Ankara, 13 HTS officials were arrested in the first operation against the terror group, which was carried out by 300 police officials.

In Adana, Turkish police arrested a cell of financial supporters of HTS, including the president of a humanitarian aid NGO named Fukara Der whose financial operations had already attracted the attention of Turkish Financial Crimes Investigation Board (MASAK). The suspects, who also fought during Syrian civil war, are accused of sending money, clothes and providing logistics to HTS members in Syria.

Kyle Orton, a researcher on the Syrian war, thinks that it is difficult to avoid the suspicion that the timing of this anti-HTS raid is political.

"Turkey switched to targeting HTS/AQ cells in the way it did the PKK and Daesh infrastructure some time ago. There is clearly a significant HTS network in Turkey, which is tied into the broader Al-Qaeda network for legacy reasons," he told Arab News.

According to Orton, Turkey's intentions in Idlib remain deeply murky, at least in part because the capture of territory in the east of Syria that allowed for the return of refugees and broke up the PKK cantons would diminish Ankara's interest, in terms of its security, in holding on to Idlib. Therefore the Turks might do a deal that allows the pro-Assad coalition to have Idlib back.

Turkey has listed HTS as a terror group associated with Al-Nusra and Al-Qaeda since last August.

Nihat Ali Ozcan, a security analyst at the Ankara-based think tank TEPAV, said Turkey faces a domestic security risk when intervening in a civil war in its neighbor, and added that this terror threat might increase if the power struggle between HTS and pro-Turkey rebels ever turn into conflict.

"These counter-terrorism operations across the country are therefore of a pre-emptive character," he told Arab News.

According to Ozcan, HTS has a more established support network in Turkey compared to Daesh, and its membership base is more mixed in nationality, making it more open to the recruitment of foreign fighters.

Sertac Canalp Korkmaz, a researcher in security studies at ORSAM, a think tank in Ankara, said the threat posed by HTS in Turkey is as great as that posed by Daesh and Al-Qaeda.

According to Korkmaz, HTS opposed the Sochi de-escalation agreement from the beginning, as it didn't agree on laying down its arms.

Escalating clashes between HTS and the Ankara-backed National Front for Liberation in Idlib have also raised concerns about the sustainability of other clauses of the Sochi agreement, in which Article 5 stipulates that all radical terrorist groups should be removed from the demilitarised zone.

"The prospect of Ankara taking part of a limited operation in Idlib increases the potential of a terror act inside Turkey through its cells," Korkmaz told Arab News.

"Southern city of Adana is geographically close to the conflict zone, while Istanbul and Ankara, as cities, provide opportunities for terror cells to hide themselves and recruit members," he added.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham \(HTS\)](#)

[Turkey](#)

[Syria](#)

Turkey vows operation against Kurdish militia, when time is right
Turkey announces counterterror plan in Syria

Israeli energy minister on rare visit to Egypt

Author:

AFP

ID:

1547395751135347800

Sun, 2019-01-13 16:06

CAIRO: Israel's Energy Minister Yuval Steinitz arrived in Cairo on Sunday to attend a natural gas conference in a rare visit to Egypt by an Israeli official, airport sources said.

Jordan and Egypt are the only two Arab states to have full diplomatic ties with Israel, but the relations remain limited and taboo among the general populations.

Egyptians, like most Arabs, are largely opposed to the normalization of ties with Israel in the absence of any resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Steinitz's visit came at the invitation of the Egyptian government, Israel's energy ministry said.

The Israeli minister was set to attend a regional forum on natural gas, which has become a major economic and strategic issue in the eastern Mediterranean. The "development of gas fields has geopolitical and geostrategic value," Steinitz told Israeli army radio ahead of the trip.

"Here you have for the first time real economic cooperation between the axis-of-peace states Israel, Egypt and Jordan, along with European countries."

Egypt has increased its meetings and agreements on natural gas with neighboring countries as of late.

In February 2018, Cairo reached a deal with Israel for the transfer of natural gas from Israel's Tamar and Leviathan reservoirs to Egypt.

"Steinitz's invitation to the conference in Egypt is the positive outcome of the gas agreement," a source close to energy minister told AFP.

The last time an Israeli minister visited Egypt was in November 2017 when Social Equality Minister Gila Gamliel took part in a conference on the promotion of gender equality in Mediterranean states.

Relations between Israel and some Arab countries have warmed in recent months, with Israeli ministers last year visiting the United Arab Emirates and Oman.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Israel](#)

[Egypt](#)

[energy minister](#)

[Yuval Steinitz](#)

Israel drone maker Aeronautics gets \$232 million buyout offer
Israel finds last tunnel, ending mission on Lebanese border