

2 babies die at camp for displaced in Jordan

Author:

Thu, 2018-12-13 21:37

AMMAN: Two babies have died of illness in the past week at a camp for displaced people on the Syrian border with Jordan, the UN children's agency UNICEF said Thursday.

The deaths prompted UNICEF to reiterate calls for humanitarian access for the thousands of people at Rukban camp, which lies in an inhospitable stretch of desert.

"Another sad week for children and families in Rukban. Two sick babies under six months old died in Rukban," said Geert Cappelaere, UNICEF regional director for the Middle East and North Africa.

"Freezing temperatures and lack of supplies including of basic commodities, threaten the lives of nearly 45,000 people – among them many children, leaving them at the risk of disease and death," he said in a statement.

Last month the UN and Syrian Arab Red Crescent announced the first delivery of humanitarian aid at Rukban in 10 months.

Civilians trapped at the camp face the risk of starvation amid a deteriorating humanitarian situation after Jordan sealed its border following a Daesh attack on its soldiers.

Soon afterwards, the army declared Jordan's desert regions that stretch northeast to Syria and east to Iraq "closed military zones."

Amman believes the responsibility of the camp lies with Damascus since it is inside Syrian territory.

Syria has been embroiled in a civil war that killed more than 360,000 people and displaced millions since it started with the brutal repression of anti-government protests in 2011.



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US-backed Syrian forces smash Daesh defenses in east Syrian state seizes opponents' property, rights activists say

[Jordan braces for more anti-austerity protests](#)

Author:

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Thu, 2018-12-13 16:34

AMMAN: Jordanian authorities deployed hundreds of riot police in the capital and warned activists to stay within the law on Thursday ahead of another protest against the government's tough austerity measures backed by the International Monetary Fund.

Large demonstrations in the summer managed to bring down the previous government over an unpopular IMF-backed tax bill.

Protesters have held sporadic protests over the past two weeks and a judicial source said authorities had detained several people for chanting slogans

critical of King Abdullah as well as the government.

“(For) anyone who breaches the law there will be punishment,” government spokeswoman Jumana Ghunaimat told reporters on Thursday.

“There are those who want to sow destruction... We must safeguard Jordan’s stability and security,” she said, adding that the government wanted dialogue.

The latest protests erupted after a largely pliant parliament last month approved a tax bill widely seen as making few changes to the unpopular law scrapped after the summer demonstrations.

Many Jordanians say the government, which faces a record public debt of around \$40 billion and desperately needs to raise revenue, is eroding the disposable incomes of poorer and middle class Jordanians while letting the wealthy off the hook.

The protesters complain that Prime Minister Omar Razzaz, appointed by King Abdullah after the summer protests, has not delivered on promises to jail corrupt officials and businessmen.

They also say he has sought public support for tough economic measures while failing to curb lavish public expenditure and improve public services, and that he should resign.

Jordan suffers from high unemployment, with regional conflicts weighing on business confidence. Poor economic growth has reduced tax revenues, forcing Jordan to borrow heavily abroad and also to resort to more domestic financing.



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Likes' are no substitute for action, Jordan's queen tells online influencers

[Netanyahu's adviser accused of sexual assault resigns](#)

Author:

Associated Press

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Wed, 2018-12-12 (All day)

JERUSALEM: An adviser to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has tendered his resignation following allegations of sexual assault. David Keyes, Netanyahu's spokesman with the foreign press, formally resigned on Wednesday, nearly three months after taking a leave of absence after he was accused of sexual assault by at least a dozen women. Keyes issued a statement saying he had "decided to pursue new opportunities in the private sector." Keyes has denied the assault accusations, saying all were "deeply misleading and many of them are categorically false." Israel's Civil Service Commission closed an investigation into the allegations last month without taking any disciplinary action against Keyes. Netanyahu thanked Keyes in a statement "for his great contribution to Israel's information effort."



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[Tunisia's 'truth commission' winds up four-year mission](#)

Author:

Wed, 2018-12-12 22:52

TUNIS: After four years working “under fire” and interviewing almost 50,000 witnesses, Tunisia’s commission tasked with serving justice to victims of half a century of dictatorship is poised to submit its recommendations.

Set up in 2014 following the 2011 revolution and in the wake of dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali’s fall, the Truth and Dignity Institute has a mission to “reveal the truth about the human rights violations” in Tunisia between 1955 and 2013.

In its final act, the commission will submit its recommendations to Tunisia’s leadership.

The first version is to be delivered at a public event on Friday and Saturday, before the full report is submitted by Dec. 31.

The government, with the assistance of a parliamentary follow-up committee, will have one year to draw up an action plan based on the recommendations.

The commission's task was to collect and disseminate testimonies, send some of those suspected of rape, murder, torture or corruption to specialised courts, and recommend measures to prevent any recurrence.

Operating in the only Arab Spring country which has kept to a democratic path since the 2011 revolt, its mandate has also been to seek national reconciliation through a revival of the North African state's collective memory.

The commission, whose mandate was extended in the spring until the end of 2018, has been studying more than 60,000 complaints and has this year sent dozens of cases to the courts.

Over the past four years, the panel has heard harrowing testimony from victims of torture in jail, some of which has been aired to large television audiences.

"From the very start we've worked under fire and come up against difficulties, due to the absence of political will," commission official Khaled Krichi told AFP.

He said demands for the handover of judicial cases involving corruption had been rejected, as well as for archive materials from the Interior Ministry on prisoners who had suffered torture.

A contested amnesty law passed in 2017 cleared some officials suspected of administrative corruption.

The commission also faced political resistance with the return of former regime leaders to power, internal disputes as well as the lack of cooperation by state institutions.

Thirteen specialized courts have been set up and started work at the end of May on dozens of cases submitted by the commission.

Twenty trials are underway, mostly of victims of the 2011 revolution and of radical and leftist opposition figures tortured under the rule of Ben Ali or his predecessor Habib Bourguiba.

Krichi said settlements have been reached in 10 cases of financial corruption involving former regime figures, including that of Slim Chiboub, a son-in-law of Ben Ali, who has agreed to pay back 307 million dinars (\$113 million).

The state, however, faced with accusations of torture and sexual violence, has rejected 1,000 demands for "reconciliation" with the victims. A row has also broken out over compensation cases, with members of Parliament claiming the costs would bankrupt the state and that many claims were designed to

benefit supporters of extremist movement Ennahdha.

At the end of November, the commission drew up criteria for compensation that exclude those with post-2011 government or parliamentary posts.

Around 25,000 people are eligible to compensation from the Al-Karama (Dignity) Fund established in 2014, according to Krichi.

It is being financed by donations, a percentage of the funds recovered through settlements and a one-time government grant of 10 million dinars (\$3.7 million).



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[Palestinian child dies of wounds after](#)

border clash: Gaza ministry

Author:

Wed, 2018-12-12 22:27

GAZA CITY: A four-year-old Palestinian boy has died after being injured during clashes between the Israeli army and protesters along the Gaza border, the health ministry in Gaza said.

"Ahmed Abu Abed, aged four years and eight months, died as a result of the wounds he received last Friday east of Khan Yunis," health ministry spokesman Ashraf Al-Qudra said in a statement late Tuesday.

The statement did not provide further details on how the child was injured. In the hospital where the boy died, 38 year-old Bassem told AFP he was the child's uncle.

He said Abu Abed was injured by shrapnel when his father was shot during regular Friday protests along the border.

It was not clear why the child had been taken to the border protests and there was no independent confirmation of the circumstances.

His funeral will take place on Wednesday.

The Israeli army said it was reviewing the incident, while accusing Gaza's Islamist rulers Hamas of using residents as cover for attacks.

"The Hamas terrorist organization cynically uses Gaza residents, especially women and children, as human shields and places them at the forefront of the violent riots, terrorist attacks and the terror of arson, demonstrating their contempt for human life," the army said in a statement on Wednesday.

"Facing this reality, the IDF (army) does everything possible to avoid harming children."

Palestinians have been protesting along the Gaza border at least weekly since March 30, triggering repeated clashes with the army.

At least 235 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire, the majority during clashes on the border but others in air strikes or by tank fire.

Two Israelis have been killed over the same period.



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