

Baton-wielding police clash with mourners at Palestinian journalist's funeral

Author:

Fri, 2022-05-13 21:16

RAMALLAH: Israeli troops stormed the Jenin refugee camp in the occupied West Bank on Friday, arresting a wanted member of the Islamic Jihad militant group and demolishing his house.

At least 13 people were injured in the raid, which followed clashes between Israeli police and mourners at the funeral of veteran Al-Jazeera reporter Shireen Abu Akleh in East Jerusalem.

Abu Akleh was shot and killed earlier this week while covering a military raid in the occupied West Bank. The Palestinian Authority has blamed Israeli gunfire for her death.

Israeli police moved in on a crowd of mourners in front of the French Hospital in Jerusalem, beating demonstrators with batons and forcing pallbearers to briefly drop the casket.

Masked police faced scores of flag-waving and chanting Palestinians in the St. Joseph's Hospital compound in Israeli-annexed East Jerusalem.

Officers charged the crowd, pushing the group carrying Abu Akleh's coffin back against a wall.

Police lobbed tear-gas shells and fired rubber bullets at the chanting mourners in a bid to stop them raising Palestinian flags in the old city. Through loudspeakers, an Israeli officer warned the hospital would be stormed within minutes if the chants continued.

Police imposed strict conditions for the burial, including a ban on chanting and the raising of flags.

Israel's military said earlier that its initial investigation showed that a heavy firefight was underway about 200 meters from the spot where Abu Akleh died, but that it was unable to determine whether she was shot by Israeli forces or Palestinian militants.

Israel has called for a joint investigation with the PA and for the bullet to be handed over for forensic analysis to determine who fired the fatal round. The PA has refused, saying it will conduct its own investigation and send the results to the International Criminal Court, which is already investigating possible Israeli war crimes.

The US administration has also urged the PA to cooperate with Israel in the probe, but the authority has rejected that request.

An Israeli soldier died from wounds suffered during Friday's raid near Jenin. A large number of Israeli troops stormed Jenin camp early on Friday, sparking armed clashes with Palestinian fighters.

Israeli forces blew up the house of the wanted man, Mahmoud Al-Daba'i from the Islamic Jihad militant group. Four other civilian homes were shelled. Mohammed Al-Daba'i, the father of the wanted man, confirmed that his son had been arrested after their homes were targeted.

Nabil Abu Rudeineh, the spokesperson for the Palestinian presidency, said the

attack on Jenin came “as a continuation of the ongoing Israeli war against our people, coinciding with the current settlement policy in all Palestinian territories, which creates more tension and escalation for which the Israeli government bears full responsibility.”

He warned that events in Jerusalem and the rest of the Palestinian territories “will push matters toward a comprehensive explosion that cannot be controlled.”

Abu Rudeineh called on the US to stop the Israeli attacks, “which are making the situation reach the point of no return.”

Ghassan Al-Khatib, a Palestinian political analyst, told Arab News that Abu Akleh’s funeral showed the world, via a live broadcast, the tragedy and daily suffering of Palestinians at the hands of occupation forces.

“For the first time, the world was informed live about the brutal and unjustified attacks of the Israeli occupation forces on the Palestinians. Even a deceased Christian civilian who held American citizenship was not spared and was subjected to this degree of brutality.”

Prominent Palestinian journalist Mohammed Daraghmeh, Abu Akleh’s close friend, told Arab News that the funeral had restored Jerusalem’s Palestinian identity.

“It is forbidden to raise Palestinian flags in Jerusalem, but the flags were raised, and a sea of people amid tears bid her farewell on her last journey. Christian churches of various denominations rang bells, and mosques performed prayers for her, even though she was Christian.”

Daraghmeh added: “The Palestinians felt that the targeting of Abu Akleh with Israeli bullets amounted to an attack on their voice, so they went out to express their anger over this atrocity.”



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IDF official: Al Jazeera journalist may have been shot by Israeli soldier
Israel resumes raids in West Bank area where journalist was killed

[Pope appoints Lebanese priests to lead Eastern Churches dioceses](#)

Fri, 2022-05-13 19:29

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis appointed three Lebanese Catholic priests to lead some of the most prominent dioceses in the Eastern Catholic Churches, in a move seen by Vatican observers as a “further sign of attention toward that country’s clergy and faithful.”

The leader of the Catholic Church granted his assent to the election of Rev. Joseph Abdel-Jalil Chami as archbishop of Hassake-Nisibi, Syria.

Rev. Elie Joseph Warde was appointed bishop of the Syrian Catholic Eparchy of Cairo and patriarchal vicar for Sudan and South Sudan, and Rev. Jules Boutros was posted to the position of bishop of the Syrian Patriarchal Curia of Antioch.

All the new bishops were born in Lebanon, where they completed all their theological studies, a communique issued by the Vatican Press Office said. The Catholic Church in Lebanon is considered the most important and influential in the Middle East, representing today nearly 50 percent of the Christian population.

“This clearly represents a further sign of attention by Pope Francis toward the clergy and the faithful who live in Lebanon, an Arab country where the Catholic presence has historically been remarkable, and the cohabitation between different religions is fruitful,” Fr. Giuseppe Ciutti, an Italian priest who spent time in Iraq, told Arab News.

He added that the pontiff “has always expressed his closeness and appreciation for Lebanese Christians.”

The pope’s planned trip to Lebanon next month was postponed as the 85-year-old Francis experienced difficulty walking due to a flare-up of pain in his right knee, in addition to a long-term case of sciatica, which also causes pain in the legs.

The trip had been announced by the Lebanese government for June 12-12. The Vatican never officially confirmed the trip, but the pope referred to plans relating to it several times in recent interviews. It is now likely to take place in the autumn.



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[Palestinians honor slain journalist, reject joint probe](#)

Thu, 2022-05-12 23:56

RAMALLAH: Thousands of Palestinians on Thursday honored Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh at a memorial service in the occupied West Bank, a day after she was shot dead during an Israeli army raid.

Israel and the Palestinians have traded blame over the killing of Palestinian-American Abu Akleh, 51, a veteran of the network's Arabic service, during clashes in the Jenin refugee camp.

The US, EU and the UN have backed calls for a full investigation into what Al Jazeera labeled a deliberate killing “in cold blood,” but the Palestinian Authority has rejected holding a joint probe with Israel.

In a sign of Abu Akleh’s stature among Palestinians, she received what was described as a full state memorial at the Ramallah compound of President Mahmoud Abbas, attended by foreign diplomats, prominent Arab Israeli politicians, and senior Palestinian leaders.

Thousands lined the streets as her coffin, draped in the Palestinian flag, was driven through the West Bank city.

Many held flowers, wreaths and pictures of Abu Akleh, who has been widely hailed for her bravery and professionalism and was well known to Arabic audiences since she covered the second Palestinian Intifada, or uprising, from 2000 to 2005.

“This crime should not go unpunished,” said Abbas.

He stressed that the PA held Israel “completely responsible” for her death, and had “refused and rejected” an Israeli proposal for a joint investigation.

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett had said on Wednesday it was “likely” Abu Akleh was killed by stray Palestinian gunfire – but Defense Minister Benny Gantz later conceded that it could have been “the Palestinians who shot her” or fire from “our side.”

“We are not certain how she was killed,” Gantz said. “We are investigating.”

Draped in a Palestinian scarf under the late morning sun, Tariq Ahmed, 45, described the death as a “tragedy for all the nation,” comparing his grief to that he felt at the funeral of iconic Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

“I have not felt this pain since Arafat died,” Ahmed said.

As Abu Akleh’s coffin was taken out of the presidential compound to the drumbeat of a marching band, crowds chanted slogans demanding an end to Palestinian security cooperation with Israel.

Men ran alongside the ambulance as it drove to the checkpoint barrier between Ramallah and Jerusalem.



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Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh shot dead in West Bank, channel blames Israeli troops
Japan's Foreign Press Club demands investigation into Palestinian journalist's killing in West Bank

[GCC diplomats urge Lebanese voters to preserve country's sovereignty, freedom, Arab identity](#)

Author:

Thu, 2022-05-12 22:54

BEIRUT: Gulf Cooperation Council ambassadors to Lebanon have urged the country's voters to prioritize the national interest over any other.

The diplomats stressed that only those who preserved Lebanon, its sovereignty, freedom, Arab identity, and territorial integrity should become MPs.

Their appeal came as the third stage of the parliamentary elections for

official employees took place on Thursday. These employees will manage the final stage of the elections on Sunday.

Almost 15,000 voted on Thursday in 29 polling stations to facilitate their work on Sunday. Voter turnout reached 50 percent by noon in some constituencies.

The envoys expressed their wish for a transparent electoral process to reflect the aspirations of the Lebanese.

The ambassadors said that “negativity toward the upcoming elections does not build a nation rather (it) allows others to fill the void and define the identity of Lebanon and its Arab people.”

Kuwaiti Ambassador to Lebanon Abdul-Al Sulaiman Al-Qena'ei, Saudi Ambassador Walid Bukhari, and Qatari Ambassador Ibrahim Al-Sahlawi visited Lebanon's Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdel-Latif Derian.

“Boycotting the elections would be surrendering,” the religious leader warned after meeting the diplomats. “We do not want to hand Lebanon over to the enemies of Arabism. We have to realize that whoever wins the elections determines Lebanon's future and its relations with its Arab brothers and friends.”

The grand mufti's remarks came amid local calls for electoral participation.

The appeals have gained significance since Sunnis said they would boycott the polls due to the decision from the head of the Future Movement, former Prime Minister Saad Hariri, to step down from politics and not contest the election.

Dar Al-Fatwa's media office said: “The three ambassadors stressed the importance of the religious and national role that Dar Al-Fatwa has played and is playing to strengthen the unity of the Lebanese and Islamic ranks amid the difficult circumstances in Lebanon, the homeland of moderation, love, convergence, and coexistence.

“They reiterated their support, cooperation, and solidarity with the Lebanese people and institutions, and their keenness on national unity, noting that Lebanon's unity, and its Islamic-Christian coexistence model, is a guarantee for the unity of the Lebanese.”

Lebanon's Arab Clans and the Beirut Families Union stressed the necessity of “full and complete commitment to Derian's call for massive participation in Sunday's elections.”

It said that systematic voting was required to “preserve Lebanon's independence, the sovereignty of the state of legitimate institutions, its identity, its Arab relations, and its international friendships.”

It added: “Boycotting is a malicious and treacherous deception, promoted by the enemies of democracy and the Lebanon of coexistence, in favor of strange and suspicious projects and racist suicidal alliances that have ravaged our

country.”

The statement stressed that the Sunni community was a “key component in Lebanon, and it will not give up its national and Arab role for anyone. Boycotting the elections is a suicide. Casting a blank ballot is a waste. Rational participation is a victory.”

It also said the elections would not be “swindled by the pseudo-leaders who sold themselves and their homelands at a cheap price.”

Amid calls for mass participation, the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections expressed concerns about the integrity of Sunday’s elections.

President Michel Aoun said: “We received information about the illegal disbursement of funds.”

During the penultimate Cabinet session on Thursday, he called on the ministers of justice, defense, and interior to instruct the army’s intelligence agency and security forces to crack down on bribery during the election period.

LADE said that some employees were unfamiliar with the voting mechanism, even though they are tasked with managing the largest and most critical electoral process on Sunday and have already undergone training.

An Arab League delegation, headed by Ahmed Rachid Khattabi, arrived in Lebanon on Wednesday to supervise the elections.

After touring several polling stations Thursday, Khattabi said: “The delegation arrived in Beirut at the Lebanese interior minister’s invitation to monitor the course of this legislative entitlement, which is of special and pivotal importance in the course of national action.”

Lebanese Army commander Gen. Joseph Aoun has already stressed that troops are ready to maintain the security of the elections.

He said the military would operate with the utmost impartiality and only intervene to prevent clashes.

He was speaking at a meeting on Tuesday with the commanding staff and the leaders of the major units and independent regiments.

He called on the parties running for election to assume national responsibility and cooperate with the military to hold the vote in a calm and democratic atmosphere.

A report from the UN special rapporteur on the issue of extreme poverty and human rights, Olivier de Schutter, issued on Wednesday said 80 percent of people in Lebanon were living below the poverty line as prices had risen by over 200 percent.

It said nine out of 10 people had difficulty earning an income and an average of six out of 10 would leave the country if they got the chance.

The head of the Association of Petroleum Importing Companies, Maroun Chammas, expected demand for gasoline to double from Friday until Monday.

The total consumption of gasoline is expected to reach about 37 million liters, an increase of about 14 million liters over regular days.

“The general cost of gasoline canisters that will be consumed from Friday to Monday, is about LBP938 billion (\$622.22 million), an increase of about LBP355 billion compared to normal days,” he said.

These figures did not include the cost and quantities needed by the armed forces this upcoming election weekend, Shammass added.



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[Houthis using summer camps to train](#)

child soldiers, parents warned

Author:

Thu, 2022-05-12 22:36

AL-MUKALLA: Yemen's government officials, human rights activists, religious figures and journalists have warned families living in Houthi-held areas against sending their children to the militia's summer camps, and have accused the Iran-backed group of wanting to recruit these young people for their army.

This comes in the wake of the movement's leader, Abdul Malik Al-Houthi, ordering his supporters to open these camps in areas under their control, where he pledged to "immunize them" against misconceptions about his organization and Islam.

Houthi officials have reportedly said that 57 camps were launched in Sanaa alone, which are expected to attract hundreds of students during the upcoming summer vacations.

Yemeni officials and activists say that the Houthis are using these gatherings to radicalize and indoctrinate minors, so that they can prepare them to become soldiers.

"Your child that you will send to the Houthi summer and military course is a time bomb that will kill you tomorrow," said Ghamdan Al-Yosifi, a Yemeni journalist, labeling them "factories for manufacturing explosives."

A similar warning to parents had been issued last year when the Houthis launched these centers. The Houthis have claimed that thousands of children graduated with religious education from these camps.

However, critics have said that the children were brainwashed, taken to graveyards and trained to use weapons.

This year's camps are being set up as the Yemeni government and the Houthis have halted hostilities under a truce brokered by the UN.

Abdul Kareem Al-Medi, a Yemeni journalist, said that the recruitment of children threatens the country's fragile peace.

"To our honorable people and to all those who trust us, avoid the evil of the summer terror centers. Let him go with them if you want your son to turn into a mobile death machine," Al-Medi said.

But the Houthis argue that their summer camps are meant to teach the correct recitation of the Qur'an, counter misconceptions about Islam, and prepare the new generation to fight their enemies, including Israelis.

"The summer courses are a step and an initiative that prevents youth from wasting time during the summer holidays, immunizes them from false cultures and enables them to master the Holy Qur'an and to recite it correctly," Jalal

Al-Ruwishan, a Houthi military official, was quoted as saying while visiting a summer camp in Sanaa on Wednesday.

However, Yemen's information Minister Muammar Al-Eryani accused the Houthis of trying to turn young people into ideologically driven soldiers, and shared images of dead child soldiers and children inside the group's camps.

"We call on parents, sheikhs and tribesmen in Houthi-controlled areas to boycott child recruitment camps, preserve their children ... refrain from sending them to fuel their absurd war and to implement (an) Iranian agenda," he said on Twitter on Thursday.

But given the Houthis' harsh treatment of those who disobey their orders, many Yemenis believe that parents might still allow their children to sign up for these camps.

In January, a report prepared by the UN Panel of Experts found that some women who refused to participate in these Houthi activities were abducted and raped.

"While some adults join these cultural courses because they agree with the ideology, others participate in order not to lose employment benefits or humanitarian assistance, or out of fear of reprisals for non-participation," the experts stated.

They added that almost 2,000 Yemeni children, some as young as 10, recruited by the Houthis, were killed in fighting between early 2020 and May 2021, and children received military training or were taken to military sites during summer courses.

Mohammed Jumei, Yemen's permanent delegate to UNESCO, said that those children who were killed on the battlefields were initially indoctrinated and recruited inside the Houthi camps, and blamed parents for not heeding warnings.

"Protecting children from extremist ideology and priesthood is the responsibility of parents in the first place," Jumei said.

Yemeni military analysts argue that the continuing recruitment of children by the Houthis show that they are getting ready for a new round of military operations, despite their announced commitment to the UN-brokered truce.

"Summer centers and cultural courses are epicenters of sectarian incitement (and) mobilization in preparation for new rounds of conflict and endless battles," Brig. Gen. Mohammed Al-Kumaim, a Yemeni military analyst, said.



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