

[Egyptian Foreign Ministry: Israeli plans to demolish West Bank villages undermine peace prospects](#)

Sun, 2022-05-08 16:09

CAIRO: Egypt condemned Israeli authorities' intentions to demolish a number of Palestinian villages in the Masafer Yatta area in the occupied West Bank, stressing on Saturday that "such practices undermine the chances of reaching a two-state solution and establishing a comprehensive and just peace in the region."

The Egyptian Foreign Ministry expressed "great concern over the Israeli authorities' intention to demolish a number of Palestinian villages in the Masafer Yatta area in the occupied West Bank, and the consequent risk of displacing thousands of Palestinians from those villages."

The ministry also affirmed its rejection of reports about the plan to build around 4,000 new settlement units in the occupied Palestinian territories, stressing it represents "a flagrant violation of the rules of international law and the decisions of international legitimacy."

Ambassador Ahmed Hafez, spokesperson for the Egyptian Foreign Ministry, affirmed "(the ministry's) total condemnation of the settlement policy in the Palestinian territories, whether through building new settlements or expanding existing ones, as well as confiscating lands and displacing Palestinians."

He stressed that "continuing such unilateral measures leads to an increase in tension and contributes to fueling the cycle of violence, as it undermines the chances of reaching a two-state solution and establishing comprehensive peace."



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Israel's top court paves way for razing eight Palestinian villages
JCB challenged over use of tractors to destroy Palestinian villages

[Syria President Assad visits Iran for meetings in rare trip](#)

Author:

Reuters

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Sun, 2022-05-08 11:57

TEHRAN: Syrian President Bashar Assad met with Iranian leaders in Tehran on Sunday, Iranian and Syrian media reported, marking his second trip to major wartime ally Iran since Syria's civil war erupted in 2011.

Nour News, a website close to Iran's Supreme National Security Council, reported that Assad met Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and

President Ebrahim Raisi. It said the leaders praised the strong ties between their nations and vowed to boost relations further. Assad was reported to have left Tehran for Damascus later on Sunday.

"Everybody now looks at Syria as a power," Khamenei told Assad in the meeting, according to Iran's semiofficial Tasnim news agency, believed to be close to the country's powerful paramilitary Revolutionary Guard. "The respect and credibility of Syria is now much more than before."

Assad, for his part, said that strong relations between Iran and Syria served as a bulwark against American and Israeli influence in the Middle East.

"America today is weaker than ever," Syrian state news agency, SANA, quoted Assad as saying. "We should continue this track," he added, praising Iran's help in Syria's "fight against terrorism."

In an apparent reference to a recent string of deadly attacks in Israel by Palestinian assailants, Assad also said that the Palestinian cause has again captured the world's attention "because of the sacrifices of the Palestinian resistance."

Iranian media published photos of Assad shaking hands warmly with Khamenei and grinning beside Raisi.

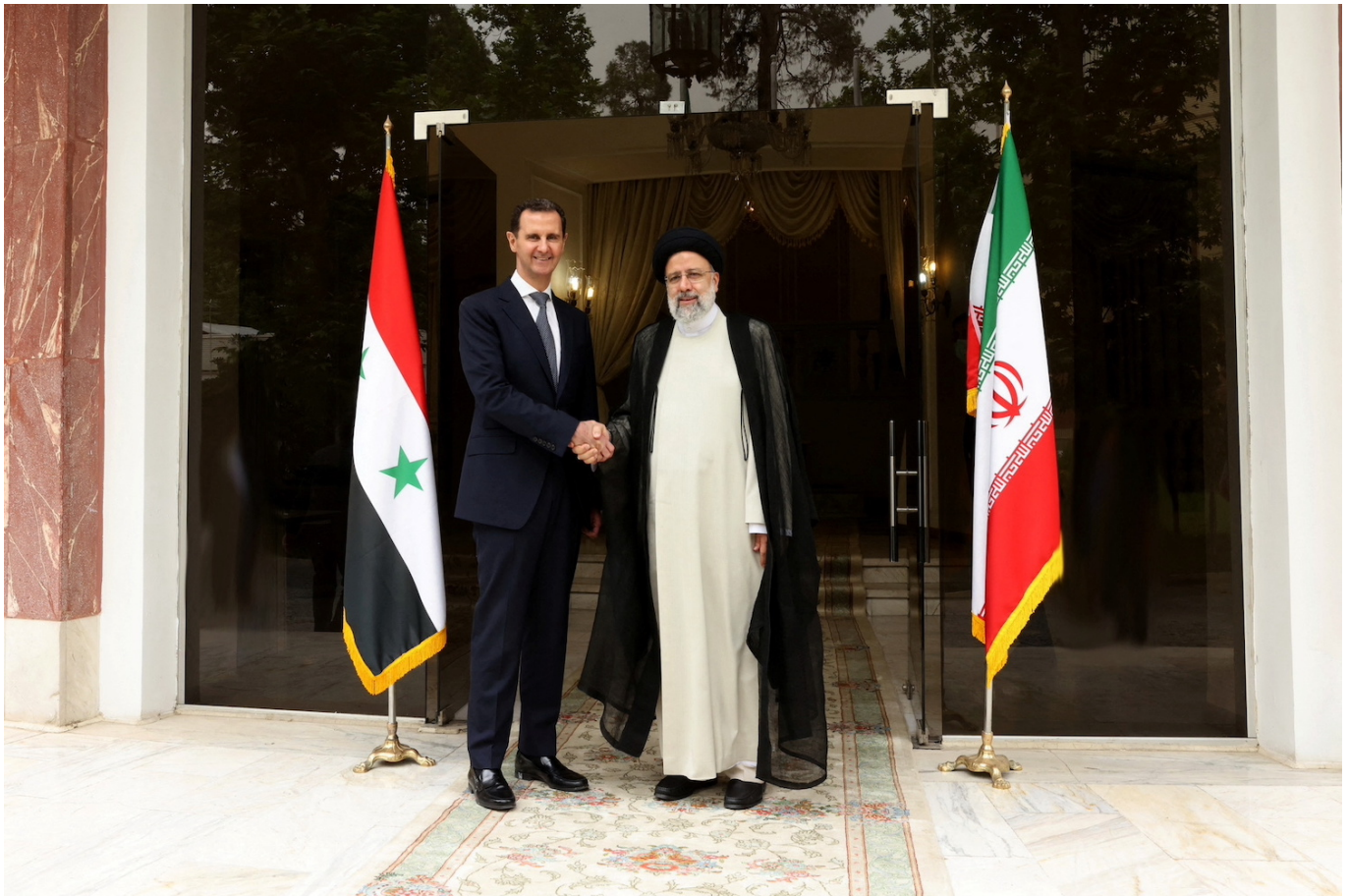
Assad has rarely traveled abroad since his government's crackdown on Syria's civil unrest in 2011 led to a devastating civil war and made him a global pariah.

He has visited key patrons Russia and Iran, and made his first trip to the United Arab Emirates since the conflict earlier this year.

Tehran has given the Syrian government billions of dollars in aid and sent Iran-backed fighters to battle alongside his forces – assistance that, along with Russian air power, has helped turn the tide in Assad's favor.

The Tehran visit marked Assad's first trip to the Iranian capital in over two years. The visit was not announced beforehand.

Police were out in force at major thoroughfares and intersections in Tehran on Sunday.



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Syria accused of flouting Chemical Weapons Convention at UN Iranian regime under pressure to release teachers held after wage protests

[Palestinians facing eviction by Israel vow to stay on land](#)

Sat, 2022-05-07 23:50

JINBA, West Bank: Everything here is makeshift, a result of decades of uncertainty. Homes are made from tin and plastic sheets, water is trucked in and power is obtained from batteries or a few solar panels.

The lives of thousands of Palestinians in a cluster of Bedouin communities in the southern West Bank have been on hold for more than four decades, ever since the land they cultivated and lived on was declared a military firing and training zone by Israel.

Since that decision in early 1981, residents of the Masafer Yatta region have weathered demolitions, property seizures, restrictions, disruptions of food and water supplies as well as the lingering threat of expulsion.

That threat grew significantly this week after Israel's Supreme Court upheld a long-standing expulsion order against eight of the 12 Palestinian hamlets forming Masafer Yatta – potentially leaving at least 1,000 people homeless.

On Friday, some residents said they are determined to stay on the land. The verdict came after a more than two-decade-long legal struggle by Palestinians to remain in their homes. Israel has argued that the residents only use the area for seasonal agriculture and that they had been offered a compromise that would have given them occasional access to the land.

The Palestinians say that if implemented, the ruling opens the way for the eviction of all the 12 communities that have a population of 4,000 people, mostly Bedouin who rely on animal herding and desert agriculture.

The residents of Jinba, one of the hamlets, said on Friday that they have opposed any compromise because they have lived in the area long before Israel occupied the West Bank in the 1967 Middle East war.

Issa Abu Eram was born in a cave in the rugged mountainous terrain 48 years ago and has endured a tough life because building is banned here.

In the winter, he and his family members live in a cave. In the summer, they stay in caravans near the cave. His goats are a source of income, and on Friday, he had laid out dozens of balls of hardened goat milk yogurt on the roof of a shack to dry.

He said his children grew up with the threat of expulsion hanging over them. They are attending a makeshift school in Jinba, with the oldest son now in 12th grade.

“He did not live in any other place except Jinba. How are you going to convince him ... to live somewhere else?” he said.

The Palestinian leadership condemned the Israeli Supreme Court ruling, which was handed down on Wednesday – when most of Israel was shut down for the country's Independence Day.

Nabil Abu Rdeineh, a spokesman for President Mahmoud Abbas, said the removal order “amounts to forced displacement and ethnic cleansing, in violation of international law and relevant UN Security Council resolutions.”

Also on Friday, Israel's interior minister said Israel is set to advance plans for the construction of 4,000 settler homes in the occupied West Bank. If approved, it would be the biggest advancement of settlement plans since the Biden administration took office. The White House is opposed to settlement growth because it further erodes the possibility of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.



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Israel destroys home of Palestinian accused in settler killing US 'strongly oppose' expansion of Israeli settlements in West Bank

[Thousands of laborers in Qatar form long queues for glimpse of World Cup](#)

Author:

Sat, 2022-05-07 23:45

DOHA: Thousands of migrant laborers, many of whom have worked on Qatar's new stadiums, have formed long queues to see the World Cup trophy that will be contested in the Gulf state this year.

The price of tickets means that most of those who waited up to two hours for the chance of a selfie next to the gold trophy will not see the games that start Nov. 21.

South Asia has contributed the biggest contingent to the army of laborers that built seven new stadiums and refurbished an eighth for the first World Cup in an Arab country.

For the latest stage of its final display in Qatar before the tournament, the trophy was set up in a car park near Doha's main cricket stadium in Asian Town.

Each person had about 15 seconds on Friday to snap a picture with the cup that is currently held by France. A Bangladeshi pop group and Indian drummers entertained the waiting hordes.

Azam Rashid, a carpenter who worked on two stadiums, said he was among the many workers who could not afford tickets but was intrigued by the cup.

"The tickets may be too expensive, but Qatar and the World Cup has given me an opportunity," he said.

"There are long lines, but it will be worth it to see the trophy," he said.

Some tickets costing 40 riyals (\$11) have been reserved for Qatar's 2.8 million population, most of whom are foreign workers.

Many in the line told AFP, however, that all the cheap tickets had gone and the cost of others was out of range for the mainly male workers earning Qatar's minimum wage of \$275 a month.

"The World Cup is exciting but it is definitely too much for me," said an administrative worker who gave his name as Tarir.

Another expat, Nasim, said he was more fortunate and obtained some \$10 tickets. "Everyone can afford the price I paid," he said.

But Ahmed Kareem, a construction laborer who said he had been in Qatar for a decade, predicted that most migrants would only watch matches on TV.



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FIFA chief Infantino says Qatar migrant workers get pride from hard work
Security fears: Israel might ban citizens from going to Qatar for World Cup

[Lebanese parliamentary elections: Second phase of expat voting scheduled for Sunday](#)

Sat, 2022-05-07 22:11

BEIRUT: Lebanon's embassies in countries with a Sunday weekend have completed their arrangements for Lebanese expats to cast their votes in parliamentary elections.

There are over 190,000 Lebanese expats living in the UAE, the US, Australia, and across Europe and Africa who registered their names with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs months ago, out of the millions of Lebanese expats around the world.

The first phase of the Lebanese expat voting process in 10 Arab and Muslim countries ended on Friday night, with a final turnout of nearly 60 percent of registered voters.

Three opposition parties topped the general electoral scene, the Lebanese Phalange Party (Kataeb), the Progressive Socialist Party, and the Lebanese Forces party. Hezbollah and the Amal movement dominated the electoral scene in Iran and Syria, which had the highest turnout.

The turnout of the Sunni voter was remarkable in the Gulf states, specifically voting in the boxes designated for Beirut's second constituency.

It was impossible to trace the votes for the forces of change or what is known as the candidates of the revolutionary movements that took to the streets in 2019, as they had several lists which dispersed the expat vote.

Candidates are committed to an electoral silence that lasts until Monday, according to electoral law.

Arab News contacted sources close to them. One of them said on condition of anonymity: "According to our sources in the Gulf countries, especially in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain, a good percentage of expats voted for the forces of change. Voters who voted for the revolution's lists posted pictures of their fingers dipped in blue ink.

"Votes in Beirut's second constituency, specifically by the Sunni voter, were remarkable, although some Sunnis boycotted the elections in line with the Future Movement's decision not to participate. Other voters boycotted because they did not find in the traditional parties' lists anyone who would convince them to re-elect them, specifically the Shiite voter preferred to boycott the electoral process."

According to the final results of the voter turnout, Syria had the highest, amounting to 83.79 percent, 73.83 percent in Iran, 66.45 percent in Oman, 65.59 percent in Kuwait, 49.26 percent in Saudi Arabia, 66.46 percent in Bahrain, 59.63 percent in Jordan, 48.72 in Qatar, 48 percent in Iraq, and 44 percent in Egypt.

About 18,000 expats voted in these countries, from around 31,000 registered voters. The general percentage was 58.89 percent.

In 2018, the turnout in Arab countries was about 65 percent.

The ballot boxes arrived in Lebanon on Saturday, sealed with red wax and equipped with a tracking device via DHL, with the exception of the two ballot boxes from Iran, which Lebanese ambassador Abbas Hassan brought personally by air as DHL does not deal with Iranian authorities. He said that the two boxes held 474 votes.

At the Masnaa crossing, on Lebanon's border with Syria, the Ministry of Interior received three ballot boxes containing 853 votes.

The boxes were transferred to the Banque du Liban for safekeeping until the

evening of May 15, after the end of the electoral process in Lebanon, to be sorted with the rest of the ballot boxes.



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Lebanese abroad cast votes in parliamentary electionExpats prepare to vote, marking the start of Lebanon elections