

Suspected Arab gunman kills at least 5 people in Tel Aviv suburb: Ambulance service

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Tue, 2022-03-29 21:00

JERUSALEM: A suspected Arab gunman killed at least five people in a Tel Aviv suburb on Tuesday before he was fatally shot, the national ambulance service said, in the latest of a string of deadly attacks in Israel.

Amateur video broadcast on Israeli television stations showed a man dressed in black and pointing an assault rifle walking down a street in Bnei Brak, a Jewish ultra-Orthodox city on the outskirts of Israel's commercial capital. Witnesses said he began shooting at apartment balconies and then at people on the street and in a car.

The Magen David Adom ambulance service said the gunman killed at least five people.

"The terrorist was liquidated," ambulance spokesman Zaki Heller said. It was not immediately clear who shot him.

Israeli media said initially that security services suspected the gunman was a member of Israel's Arab minority. They later reported that security officials believe he was a Palestinian from the occupied West Bank.

Last week, an Arab citizen of Israel killed four people in a stabbing and car ramming attack in the southern city of Beersheba, before he was shot dead by a passerby. Israeli authorities said he was a Daesh sympathizer.

On Sunday, as an Israeli-Arab summit convened in southern Israel, an Arab assailant, a resident of a town in the north of the country, shot and killed two police officers in Hadera, a city some 50 km (30 miles) north of Tel Aviv. Other officers shot and killed him.

Daesh claimed responsibility for the Hadera attack.



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Israeli security fears heightened in wake of Daesh killing of 2 policemen
Israel hosts US, Arab foreign ministers in historic summit

[Blinken in Morocco amid shifts in Mideast, North Africa diplomacy](#)

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By MATTHEW LEE | AP

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Tue, 2022-03-29 15:02

RABAT: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited Morocco on Tuesday to discuss recent shifts in the diplomatic dynamic in the Middle East and North Africa that could upend some of the region's long-standing disputes. A day after an unprecedented gathering in Israel's Negev Desert with the Israeli foreign minister and their counterparts from four Arab nations that

have normalized relations with Israel, Blinken held talks with senior Moroccan officials to look at opportunities for expanding those ties. In Morocco and again in Algeria on Wednesday, Blinken was also exploring options for helping end the neighbors' festering row over Western Sahara after new developments offered fresh hope but added new complications for a resolution.

The meeting between Blinken and Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita was their second direct encounter in two days. The pair were together on Monday in the Israeli town of Sde Boker, where they each confirmed their countries' commitment to supporting a revitalized Middle East with growing ties between Israel and Arab states.

Morocco, along with the UAE and Bahrain, was one of the countries to fully normalize relations with Israel during the Trump administration's push to negotiate the so-called "Abraham Accords," in which the US pledged significant support in exchange for such recognition. While technically not an Abraham Accords signatory, Morocco won US recognition for its claim to Western Sahara in return for its agreement with Israel.

In a rare endorsement of a Trump foreign policy initiative, the Biden administration has signaled its full backing for the Abraham Accords and pledged to try to expand and strengthen them. However, while the administration has not revoked Trump's decision on Western Sahara, it has been largely silent on the matter and US plans to build a consulate in the territory have not advanced since being announced by Trump in 2020.

That has led to questions about whether Washington is fully on board with Moroccan sovereignty over the former Spanish colony.

Just last week, Spain shifted its long-standing position on the territory by backing Morocco's plan to give Western Sahara more autonomy as long it remains under Moroccan control, calling it "the most serious, realistic and credible" initiative for resolving the decades-long dispute.

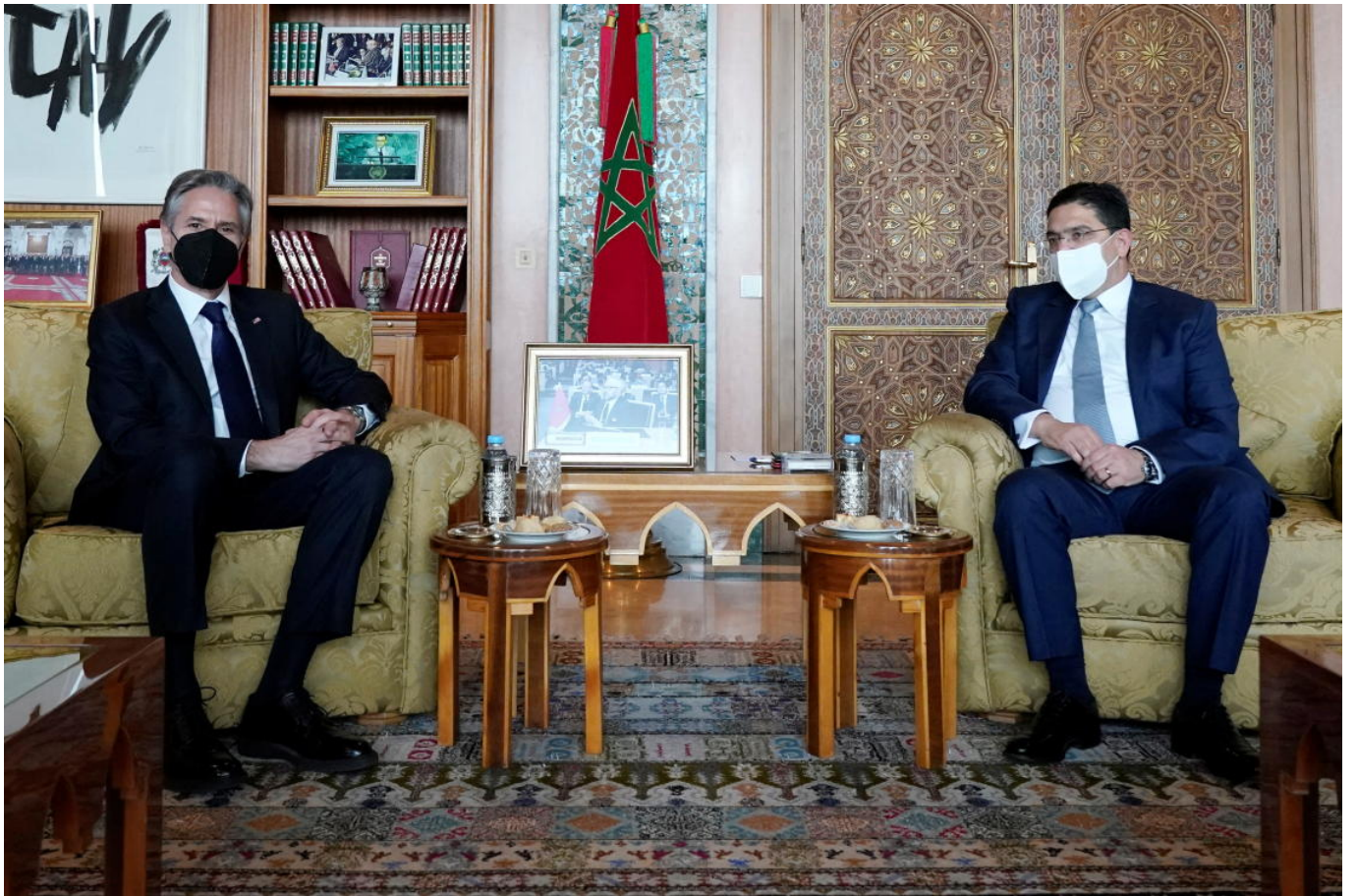
Blinken echoed the "serious, realistic and credible" phrase in addressing the Moroccan plan, but stopped short of a full endorsement, saying it represented "one potential approach" to resolving the dispute.

Bourita said the autonomy plan had been praised by many countries, including Spain and the United States, but that others – particularly in Europe – should get on board. "We think it's time for Europe mainly to get out of this comfort zone where people are supporting a process (and) shift into an outcome-oriented effort."

The Spanish move was immediately welcomed by Rabat, which reinstated its ambassador to Madrid after a 10-month absence. But it was sharply criticized by Algeria, which supports Western Sahara's Polisario Front independence movement, and recalled its ambassador to Spain.

In his meetings with the two protagonists, Blinken hoped to explore the potential for compromises on Western Sahara. The vast territory, which Morocco annexed in 1976, is largely barren but rich in phosphates and faces fertile Atlantic Ocean fishing grounds.

The Polisario called Spain's decision a "grave error" that yields to Morocco's leverage over the control of migrants crossing into Europe and accuses Madrid of taking sides in a dispute that the Spanish government for decades said could only be settled in a referendum held under UN auspices.





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[US Secretary of State Antony Blinken](#)

[Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita](#)

Morocco, Israel sign trade cooperation deal Israel hosts US, Arab foreign ministers in historic summit

[Syria camp clashes with Daesh leave three dead: Monitor](#)

Author:

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1648565942235597100

Tue, 2022-03-29 18:07

BEIRUT: Three people were killed in clashes between Daesh group fighters and Kurdish forces in a northeast Syria camp housing relatives of extremists, a war monitor said Tuesday.

Around 56,000 people live in Al-Hol, an overcrowded Kurdish-run camp for displaced people that has been plagued by murders and regular escape attempts, according to the United Nations.

The camp hosts about 10,000 foreigners, including the wives and children of Daesh fighters who are detained in a high-security annex guarded by Kurdish forces.

“Violent clashes between security forces responsible for the camp and Daesh cells” broke out on Monday night, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

The clashes “resulted in the death of a woman and a child (...) and the killing of one member of a Daesh cell,” the Observatory added.

Four women and six children were also injured in the fighting, said the Britain-based monitor, which relies on a wide network of sources inside Syria.

Kurdish Asayish security forces said that clashes started after members of an armed “cell” attacked one of their patrols in Al-Hol.

The perpetrators used kalashnikovs, pistols and rocket-propelled grenades during the attack, the Asayish said in a statement.

The Asayish did not identify the attackers but said they were hiding among Daesh relatives held in the camp.

“Our forces managed to kill one of the cell members,” the statement said.

Kurdish forces warned last week that a lack of international support risked allowing for a militant resurgence, as they marked three years since the declared defeat of Daesh’s so-called caliphate.

Kurdish authorities have repeatedly called on Western countries to repatriate their nationals held in northeast Syria, but most have been reluctant due to fears of a domestic political backlash.



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Kurds say 53 Daesh members arrested in Syria's Al-Hol camp
Release of Syrians from Al-Hol camp sparks concern for regional security

[Jordan's King Abdullah reiterates two-state Palestinian solution in talks with Israel's Gantz](#)

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Tue, 2022-03-29 13:01

AMMAN: Jordan's King Abdullah on Tuesday met with Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz in Amman, just one day following the Jordanian monarch's meeting with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in Ramallah.

The meeting was part of King Abdullah's efforts to create a new horizon to achieve just and comprehensive peace on the basis of the two-state solution, according to a Jordanian Royal Court statement.

The King reiterated the need to respect and preserve the historic and legal status quo of Jerusalem and to remove all obstacles hindering the freedom of worship in the old city ahead of the holy month of Ramadan, the statement said.

Jordan has been the custodian of Jerusalem's Islamic and Christian holy sites since the 1920s. The Jordanian custodianship was reaffirmed in the peace deal with Israel in 1994.

The Israeli media quoted a statement from Gantz's office saying that the defense minister discussed with the king the steps that Israel intends to take ahead of Ramadan in order to preserve freedom of worship in Jerusalem and the West Bank. Gantz also discussed security coordination during the holy days as well as additional steps that could be taken to improve the lives of Palestinians.

King Abdullah and Gantz also met in Amman in January this year, marking the

first high-profile Jordanian-Israeli meeting in years. The meeting followed the strained Amman-Tel Aviv relationship during Benjamin Netanyahu's premiership.

The king's meeting with Gantz also came just one day following an official visit of the Jordanian monarch to Ramallah for a meeting with Abbas, the first since 2017. He stressed the need to maintain calm in the occupied West Bank and to respect the rights of Muslims to worship at Al-Aqsa Mosque without provocation or interference, the Royal Court said.

A well-informed Jordanian source told Arab News on Tuesday that the Israeli President Isaac Herzog will visit Jordan on Wednesday for a meeting with King Abdullah.

The Israeli media also unveiled a meeting last week in Amman between Israel's Public Security Minister Omer Bar-Lev and Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi to discuss security arrangements ahead of Ramadan.

In remarks to Arab News, political analyst Amer Sabaileh said that Jordan has recently intensified its coordination with the Israelis and Palestinians in a bid to cool rising tension in Jerusalem and the occupied West Bank ahead of Ramadan.

Sabaileh explained that Jordan seeks to avoid tension in the occupied territories during the holy month that could trigger another escalation similar to events of May last year which culminated in Israel launching a large-scale military operation on Gaza.

Tensions erupted last Ramadan when Israel tried to expel Palestinian families from the East Jerusalem's Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood.

The security escalation in the West Bank and Gaza triggered massive rallies and protests in Amman near the Israeli embassy and elsewhere across the kingdom.

According to Sabaileh, the Amman-Tel Aviv relationship has enjoyed a "noticeable" improvement since Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett came to office.

He explained that Jordan is seeking to capitalize on this improved relationship with Israel to push for new peace talks between the Palestinians and Israelis.



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[Jordan's King Abdullah II](#)

Jordan's king lands in Ramallah on rare trip to meet Abbas
Negev Summit aimed at promoting peace: Egypt

[120 million euros frozen in Lebanese laundering probe](#)

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Mon, 2022-03-28 17:53

THE HAGUE: France, Germany and Luxembourg have seized properties and frozen assets worth 120 million euros (\$130 million) in a major operation linked to money laundering in Lebanon, the EU's justice agency said Monday. The seizures are linked to a probe launched by French investigators last year

into the personal wealth of Riad Salameh, the central bank chief in crisis-hit Lebanon.

"Five properties in Germany and France were seized as well as several bank accounts" were frozen, Eurojust said in a statement.

The Hague-based Eurojust said the operation on Friday was directed against five individuals who were suspected of embezzling public funds in Lebanon of more than \$330 million and five million euros, respectively, between 2002 and 2021.

The five suspects include Salameh, a former Merrill Lynch banker and members of his family, a source close to the probe told AFP.

Prosecutors are probing Salameh's alleged links to criminal association and money laundering, judicial sources said, following a similar move by Switzerland.

A Lebanese judge last week charged Salameh with "illicit enrichment" and money laundering after he failed to attend a court hearing for the fifth time.

Legal proceedings opened against Salameh after complaints filed by anti-graft groups in April last year, supported by a group of Lebanese citizens who lost money since the crisis hit the country in 2019.

Friday's seizures also include three properties in Germany, valued at 28 million euros as well as other assets worth seven million euros.

In France, two Paris properties valued at 16 million euros as well as a bank account with 2.2 million euros were seized.

In Luxembourg, around 11 million euros were frozen in another bank account, Eurojust said.

The agency did not give any details on the suspects, saying "they are assumed to be innocent until proven guilty."

In post since 1993 and once hailed by political and business leaders, Salameh has been repeatedly accused by the government of former caretaker Prime Minister Hassan Diab of being responsible for the collapse of the Lebanese pound.

The Lebanese public suspect him and other high officials of transferring money abroad during a 2019 uprising, when ordinary people were prevented from doing so.

The 71-year-old financial official has defended himself, saying he believed he was being made the scapegoat for the Middle Eastern country's financial woes.

His lawyers too have called for the opening of a judicial probe, saying "it will give us access to the file" the contents of which "we contest entirely." "We will exercise our full remedies" in the case, Salameh's French lawyer Pierre-Olivier Sur said.



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Motives unknown after fiance confesses to Lebanon quadruple murder
Concern in Lebanon over judicial decisions targeting opponents of Hezbollah, Free Patriotic Movement