

Israel says it is prepared to host up to 25,000 Ukrainians temporarily

Author:

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JERUSALEM: Israel said on Tuesday it was ready to take in up to 5,000 Ukrainians fleeing Russia's invasion and allow 20,000 other Ukrainians who arrived prior to the fighting to remain temporarily.

The policy was outlined by Interior Minister Ayelet Shaked at a news conference, in which she also said Israel was bracing for the possible influx of tens of thousands of Ukrainians whose Jewish heritage affords them immigrant status under Israeli law.

"Israel will host temporarily about 20,000 Ukrainian citizens who resided, most of them illegally, in Israel before the fighting broke out," Shaked said, in a reference to visitors and workers, such as caregivers for the elderly, who overstayed their visas.

"In addition, if, God forbid, the battles don't end within a reasonable time, we will allow them to work in Israel," she said.

Shaked said the up to 5,000 Ukrainian citizens allowed in to escape the current fighting would receive a three-month visa and be allowed to seek employment if the situation did not change in Ukraine.

The European Union said on Tuesday its member states had so far taken in two million refugees fleeing the Russian invasion and expected millions more to follow.

Israel has been engaged in diplomatic efforts to try to end the war in Ukraine. Last week, Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett held talks in Moscow with Russian President Vladimir Putin and spoke by phone with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy.

Putin and Bennett discussed the conflict in Ukraine again, by telephone, on Tuesday.

In a readout of the call, the Kremlin said Putin had told Bennett about Moscow's assessment of the third round of talks between Russian and Ukrainian officials that took place on Monday.



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Israeli PM vows more Ukraine talks, even if prospects 'not great'Israeli PM Bennett meets Putin in Moscow to discuss Ukraine crisis

[Prince Hamzah pens letter of apology to Jordan's King Abdullah for involvement in sedition case](#)

Tue, 2022-03-08 19:37

AMMAN: Jordan's Prince Hamzah has written to King Abdullah apologizing for his misconduct, admitting his mistakes, and seeking forgiveness for his involvement in the country's high-profile sedition case.

In the letter, dated March 6, the prince, a half-brother of the Jordanian

monarch, said that he took responsibility for his wrongdoings.

"I apologize to our Jordanian people and our family (Hashemite) for these mistakes," Prince Hamzah wrote in the letter, a copy of which was received by Arab News.

The prince has not been seen in public since April last year following the government's announcement of his involvement in the sedition case with former Royal Court chief Bassem Awadallah, and Sharif Hassan bin Zaid, a distant relative of the royal family.

Convicted of attempting to undermine the regime, Awadallah and Bin Zaid were each sentenced by Jordan's State Security Court to 15 years of hard labor after the hearing was told the pair had plotted to cause unrest and sedition by exploiting certain internal and external incidents.

"What happened was a criminal plotting from the suspects in fulfillment of their hidden desires and was targeting the existing regime. The court had clear and convincing evidence of the crime."

Jordanian authorities said at the time that Awadallah, Bin Zaid, and Prince Hamzah were attempting to destabilize the country in collaboration with "foreign entities."



بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

والصلاة والسلام على أشرف الخلق والمرسلين، سيدنا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه أجمعين،

أخي جلالة الملك عبدالله الثاني ابن الحسين المعظم، حفظه الله ورعاه،

أبعث إلى جلالته بأطيب مشاعر الاحترام والتقدير، داعياً الله أن يحفظ جلالته ويديم عليك موفور الصحة، وأن يعزز ملكك ويديمك ذخراً لوطننا وأسرتنا.

لقد مر أردنا العزيز العام الماضي بظرف صعب، وفصل مؤسف تجاوزهما الوطن بحكمة جلالته وصبرك وتسامحك. ووفرت الأشهر التي مرت منذ ذلك الوقت فرصة لي لمراجعة الذات، والمصارحة مع النفس، ما يدفعني إلى كتابة هذه الكلمات إلى جلالته، أخي الأكبر، وعميد أسرتنا الهاشمية، أملاً طي تلك الصفحة في تاريخ الأردن والأسرة.

أخطأت يا جلالة أخي الأكبر، وجل من لا يخطئ. وإنني إذ أتحمّل مسؤوليتي الوطنية إزاء ما بدر مني من مواقف وإساءات بحق جلالة الملك المعظم وبلدنا خلال السنوات الماضية وما تبعها من أحداث في قضية الفتنة، لأمل بصفحك الذي اعتدنا عليه من جلالته.

اعتذر من جلالته ومن الشعب الأردني ومن أسرتنا عن كل هذه التصرفات التي لن تتكرر بإذن الرحمن الرحيم.

وأؤكد، كما تعهدت أمام عمتنا صاحب السمو الملكي الأمير الحسن بن طلال، حفظه الله، أنني سأسير على عهد الآباء والأجداد، وفي إرثهم، مخلصاً لمسيرتهم في خدمة الشعب الأردني، ملتزماً بدستورنا، تحت قيادة جلالته الحكيمة.

حفظ الله جلالته قائداً ملهماً، وأخاً رحيماً، ويسر لجلالته ولولي العهد سمو الأمير الحسين بن عبدالله الثاني كل التوفيق في خدمة الأردن الغالي وقيادة مسيرته التي ستبقى إن شاء الله مسيرة عز وفخر وإنجاز.

والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته،

أخوك

حمزة بن الحسين

عمان

٦ آذار ٢٠٢٢

On the directives of King Abdullah, the prince's case was settled within the Hashemite family.

The Jordanian Royal Court published a letter signed by Prince Hamzah on April 3, in which he vowed allegiance to the monarch and confirmed that he would

act “always for His Majesty and his crown prince to help and support.”

Declaring his love and appreciation for his eldest brother, Prince Hamzah vowed allegiance to King Abdullah in his latest letter, and said: “I write to Your Majesty with my deepest respect and appreciation, and I pray that God protect you and grant you good health and that you remain a pillar of strength for our nation and our family.

“I will follow in the footsteps of our forefathers, and remain loyal to their legacy, devoted to their path of service to the people of Jordan, and committed to our constitution, under Your Majesty’s wise leadership.

“I have erred, Your Majesty, and to err is human. I, therefore, bear responsibility for the stances I have taken and the offences I have committed against Your Majesty and our country ... I seek Your Majesty’s forgiveness, knowing that you have always been very forgiving,” the prince added.

The Royal Court said on Tuesday that the letter was sent following a meeting between King Abdullah and Prince Hamzah on Sunday evening at the prince’s request, in the presence of Prince Feisal and Prince Ali.

It also described Prince Hamzah’s acknowledgment of his mistake and apology as a “step in the right direction on the path to regaining his role as other royal family members, in the service of Jordan.”



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Jordan's former royal court chief charged in Prince Hamzah sedition case
Prince Hamzah 'in my care' at his palace: Jordan King Abdullah II

[Qatar steps up its mediation role in US-Iran nuclear negotiations](#)

Tue, 2022-03-08 19:21

LONDON: Qatar has stepped up its role as a mediator in the negotiations between the US and Iran about the future of the latter's nuclear program.

After nearly a year of EU-brokered talks in Austria, officials said time is running out to strike a deal.

At the request of Tehran and Washington, Doha has been acting as an intermediary in the talks, which are taking place in Vienna, delivering messages between the parties and seeking to allay Iranian fears that the US might pull out of the deal in the future.

Those concerns stem from the Trump administration's sudden withdrawal in 2018 from the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, also known as the Iran nuclear deal. The agreement was the result of a lengthy and intense diplomatic process between Iran and the US, Russia, China, the UK, France, Germany and an EU delegation.

Qatari officials have also been working to facilitate direct talks between Washington and Tehran, should a deal be reached, to ensure that any outstanding issues, such as prisoner exchanges and additional sanctions relief, can be addressed in the future, a diplomat briefed on the talks told The Financial Times.

"Both sides really need a deal and there's a willingness on both sides but the biggest problem is trust," the diplomat said. "They each think the other side doesn't want it, which is not legitimate."

An Iranian official refused to discuss Doha's role in the process but said Qatar "and one or two other countries have brought messages (from the US) in some cases."

Western officials are pressuring Iran to agree to a deal within days, warning that if this fails to happen the already-ailing agreement will be redundant because of advances Tehran has made in its nuclear program. Iran has been

enriching uranium to ever-higher levels for several years and has progressed with other aspects of nuclear-arms production since the 2015 deal began to break down.

In February, the Wall Street Journal reported that Iran had significantly decreased its breakout time – the time required to produce enough uranium for a single nuclear bomb – to much less than a year, threatening to undermine a core tenet of the original deal.

The parties are said to be close to an agreement but some outstanding issues have yet to be resolved. The Financial Times reported that a demand by Moscow at the weekend for guarantees that US sanctions, imposed on Russia after Vladimir Putin ordered the invasion of Ukraine, will not impede its trade with Iran has threatened to complicate the negotiations and further added to the sense of urgency.

But the parties have also said that they will continue to negotiate “if they reach an agreement.”

The diplomat said: “The biggest mistake with the 2015 deal was the talks stopped after it was signed. Initially, neither side trusted one another and needed signs of good faith but now there are positive movements. The Iranians now see Biden as someone they can negotiate with.”

The resolution last year of a diplomatic feud between Qatar and a number of Gulf nations, including Saudi Arabia, has allowed Doha to build on its reputation as a regional intermediary and diplomatic interlocutor. It assisted in peace talks between the US and the Taliban prior to the latter’s takeover of Afghanistan, and was designated a “major non-NATO ally” by Washington in January this year.

Since the start of the Ukraine crisis, Qatar’s importance to the West has once again spiked, as it is one of the largest global producers of Liquid Natural Gas and so a potential source to replace dwindling Russian gas supplies to Europe and North America.

Ali Vaez, an expert on Iran at international think tank Crisis Group, told The Financial Times that a major issue with intermediaries at the Vienna talks has been that there was no one both sides fully trust to “share things they were not comfortable with.”

But Rob Malley, the US’s top negotiator, has for a long time had a “very good relationship” with Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, Qatar’s foreign minister, Vaez explained.

“Qatar’s relationship with Iran changed post the regional embargo and so all the stars aligned for the Qataris to step in,” he added.

“There was no one else who had the personal ties to both sides and was better placed geostrategically at this point in time to play the role.”



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Iran's Raisi, Qatar's Emir sign bilateral accords in Doha
Iranian minister 'ready to fly to Vienna' to sign new nuclear deal

[Egyptian, South Sudanese ministers in talks to enhance ties](#)

Tue, 2022-03-08 15:31

CAIRO: Egyptian Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation Mohammed Abdel-Aty and his South Sudanese counterpart Manawa Peter, who is currently visiting Cairo, discussed issues of common interest and ways to enhance bilateral relations.

Among the topics of discussion was the status of projects in South Sudan to provide drinking water and protection against floods.

Abdel-Aty said that Egypt was implementing the projects requested by South Sudan, citing the history of cooperation between the two countries, during which several development initiatives benefitting the South Sudanese people have been implemented.

He explained that the ministry has established six underground wells, while seven underground drinking water stations equipped with solar energy in and around vital areas of South Sudan's capital, Juba, are currently being constructed to provide clean drinking water to residents.

A lifting unit, the minister added, was installed to transfer river water to population centers near the waterways in the city of Wau in South Sudan to provide clean drinking water for citizens, and river sidewalks connecting the main cities and villages of the country were constructed. A project to purify waterways in the Bahr Al-Ghazal basin was also implemented.

The minister referenced a number of other initiatives aimed at benefitting South Sudan, including the protection of villages and agricultural lands from high water levels and the establishment of a water quality analysis laboratory, which is currently carrying out analyses for government agencies in the country.

Abdel-Aty added that a joint memorandum of understanding had been signed between the two countries to realize a project to reduce flood risks in the Bahr Al-Jabal basin.

The South Sudanese minister expressed his hope in achieving increased cooperation between the two countries in the field of water management.



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Egypt signs green energy deal with Saudi ACWA Ethiopia PM inaugurates electricity production at Nile mega-dam

[Activists assaulted after trying to remove Soleimani poster at Beirut Book Fair](#)

Author:

Mon, 2022-03-07 22:20

BEIRUT: A scuffle broke out on Monday at the Beirut International and Arab Book Fair taking place at the Seaside Arena after activists demanded that the displayed pictures of Iranian Quds Force commander Qassem Soleimani be taken down. The activists, among whom were Shafiq Badr and Nelly Qandil, were severely beaten up after chanting "Beirut Free, Iran Out!"

Soleimani's huge picture was displayed at one of the book fair's pavilion that kicked off last Thursday, angered social media activists and mocked the exhibition as the "Tehran Book Fair."

A squad from the Internal Security Forces Intelligence Branch later arrived on the scene and launched investigations as a number of other activists arrived in solidarity.

Badr is part of the "Lebanon Rises Up" group, while Qandil is part of the "Lebanese sovereign opposition" group.

The book fair, organized by the Arab Cultural Club, was launched in its 63rd session under the slogan "Beirut cannot be broken" after a three-year forced hiatus due to the economic crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Beirut port's explosion.

Traditionally, the exhibition takes place in January each year, which has confused some participating publishing houses.

Ninety Lebanese publishing houses – from Syria and Egypt and 10 from Iran – are taking part in the exhibition.

Activists circulated pictures of books displayed in the participating

pavilions, noting the large number of books with photographs of Soleimani and other Iranian figures. This scene seemed sufficient to criticize the exhibition and dig up political sensitivities of what Soleimani represented in Iranian politics and its hostilities in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, especially since Hezbollah is keen to raise pictures of Soleimani on every occasion. Soleimani's pictures are also placed on the road leading to Beirut airport and in the south and the Bekaa.

Meanwhile, the Arab Publishers Association missed the exhibition. The exhibition's permanent goers noted "radical changes in its pavilions and books, amid the absence of Gulf publishing houses that used to be present in each edition of the exhibition as a kind of support, due to the diplomatic and economic crisis between Lebanon and Saudi Arabia and a number of Gulf countries.

Two days ago, when the exhibition hosted a concert, protests erupted in the Iranian pavilions, according to activists and eyewitnesses. "People broke into the place and shouted in protest at the loud voice of the music," said a girl who was attending the concert.

Prime Minister Najib Mikati, during the inauguration of the exhibition last Thursday, said that "it is one of the many pillars to immunize the Lebanese and Arab people against patterns alien to our nature, culture, traditions and heritage, which we cherish."

Former justice Ashraf Rifi said in a tweet that "Soleimani's image in the exhibition is provocation to the Lebanese people who were stung by the Iranian occupation," and that whoever put it "wants to bully the Lebanese, but the youth of Lebanon are stronger than this arrogance."

MP Fouad Makhzoumi said: "Even the Beirut Book Fair did not escape unscathed from Hezbollah, which is working to paint this ancient cultural destination with an Iranian identity that does not resemble it, and with the ideology of death that has nothing to do with the Arabism of Beirut, its coexistence and diversity."

The deteriorating living conditions in Lebanon reflected in a decline in the purchase of books at the fair. Some publishers said "demand for books has fallen by up to 70 percent in libraries."

"The cost of any book is at least \$10, that is, more than 200,000 Lebanese pounds," Mona Ismail, one of the permanent exhibition goers told Arab News, adding "getting into the show tempts me a lot, but at the same time it is going to hit me financially."

This year, according to one of its curators, the Arab Cultural Club rented pavilions to publishers at reduced prices to encourage them to offer discounts to customers. However, the high prices of books are due to the high cost of publishing and printing supplies, all of which are paid in dollars at a time when publishers sell their books in Lebanese Liras.



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Gas queues in Lebanon as fears mount over food security
State losing stature, crime rising as economic gloom envelops Lebanon