

Israeli PM Bennett meets Putin in Moscow to discuss Ukraine crisis

Author:

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JERUSALEM: Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in the Kremlin on Saturday to discuss the Ukraine crisis, his spokesperson said.

Israel, home to a substantial population of Russian immigrants, has offered to mediate in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, though officials have previously played down expectations of a breakthrough.

While Israel, a close ally of the United States, has condemned the Russian invasion, voiced solidarity with Kyiv and sent humanitarian aid to Ukraine, it has said it will maintain communications with Moscow in the hope of helping to ease the crisis.

Israel is also mindful of Moscow's military support for President Bashar Assad in next-door Syria, where Israel regularly attacks Iranian and Hezbollah military targets. Contacts with Moscow prevent Russian and Israeli forces trading fire by accident.

Bennett, a religious Jew, took a flight in violation of Sabbath law because Judaism permits this when the aim is to preserve human life, his spokesperson said.



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[Jordan exerting 'intensive' effort to get citizens out of Ukraine](#)

Author:

Sat, 2022-03-05 19:22

AMMAN: Jordan on Saturday said that it is exerting "intensive" diplomatic efforts to ensure a safe evacuation of its citizens in the Ukrainian cities of Kharkiv and Sumy.

Foreign Ministry Spokesman Haitham Abu Al-Foul said that around 145 Jordanians with their families are still in the northeast of Ukraine, which has been reportedly witnessing fierce battles between Russian and Ukrainian forces.

The spokesman's remarks followed reports claiming that Ukrainian forces are holding about 5,000 foreigners hostage, including 200 Jordanians, as human shields in Kharkiv and Sumy.

Al-Foul told Arab News that many Jordanians have already left Kharkiv to neighboring countries, without giving exact figures about how many have fled and how many are still trapped in Ukraine's second-largest city, which also has been witnessing heavy fighting between Russian and Ukrainian forces.

The official said that Jordan is exerting intensive diplomatic efforts through its embassies in Moscow and Ankara and relief organizations working in Ukraine to create corridors to evacuate Jordanians from the war-hit country.

He also said that a total of 810 Jordanians have been evacuated from Ukraine since the beginning of the conflict on Feb. 24.

Al-Foul said that around 2,600 Jordanians were in Ukraine before the conflict. "But this figure was provided by the Ukrainians, and it is not exact since many probably left before the war," he added.

Russian authorities said on Saturday that Ukrainians were holding about 5,000 foreigners hostage to use them as human shields.

Russia's National Defense Control Center Col. Gen. Mikhail Mizintsev was quoted in international press as claiming that "militants of Ukrainian nationalist battalions continue holding hostage about 5,000 foreigners as human shields."

The Russian official claimed that the Ukrainian side has refused proposals to open humanitarian corridors in Kharkiv and Sumy.



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Ukrainian crisis hits Jordanian students, imports Nearly 1.37 mn people flee Ukraine war

[Lebanese bank closes over 30 British-held accounts after UK ruling-depositors' group](#)

Author:

Reuters

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BEIRUT: Lebanon's Bank Audi has closed more than 30 accounts belonging to UK

nationals or their close relatives since a London court ordered it to transfer funds stuck in the crisis-hit banking sector to a British client, a depositors' union said.

The Feb. 28 order requiring Bank Audi and its peer SGBL to transfer \$4 million is the first UK ruling obliging Lebanese banks to transfer dollars out of the paralyzed financial system, potentially encouraging similar claims.

A Bank Audi official told Reuters the bank was "asking that the UK residents apply the terms applicable to anyone opening a new account: no international transfers, no cash withdrawals."

"If this is not accepted, then the bank has no choice but to close the account."

More than \$100 billion remains stuck in a banking system paralyzed since 2019, when the economy collapsed due to decades of unsustainable state spending, corruption and waste.

In the absence of formal capital controls, banks have largely blocked dollar withdrawals and transfers abroad, sparking numerous legal challenges, with mixed results.

Since the UK order, Bank Audi, one of Lebanon's biggest, has told dozens of clients their accounts had been closed and a cheque issued for the balance at a notary public, lawyer Dina Abou Zour of the Depositors Union told Reuters. They were told the accounts could be reopened if they signed a form waiving the right to make international transfers or to withdraw dollars in Lebanon, and accept that a cheque was due payment of the balance. Abou Zour said the total amounts involved were in the tens of millions of dollars.

Banks have already closed many dollar accounts by issuing cheques which cannot be cashed and instead change hands in the market, currently at about a quarter of their face value.

"FAILING ECONOMY"

Bank Audi has said it intends to comply with the UK order but will consider its options on an appeal.

British passport holder Maliha Badr Raydan said she got a call from a Bank Audi employee on Monday saying her account had been closed and a cheque issued for the balance. A second UK citizen said the bank told him the same on Wednesday.

"They said it's because I have British passport," Raydan said, adding that money had been earmarked for the education of her two children after the death of her husband.

She was told she could open a new account if she signed a form waiving some of her rights. She declined to do so.

"I didn't steal this money, I did nothing wrong, it's the labor of my late husband over all these years and the future of my children and the other people I support."

A copy of the form seen by Reuters sets terms for opening new accounts, including accepting that only Beirut courts have jurisdiction in any legal dispute.

The Bank Audi official said the bank had not asked clients to waive the right to bring lawsuits.

Bank Audi says the UK order will lead to unequal treatment among depositors, with wealthy savers who are UK residents able to get all their funds at the expense of others who cannot bring such cases.

Many Lebanese have protested against unfair treatment by banks throughout the crisis, with influential clients able to make withdrawals and transfers abroad and ordinary people unable to send even small sums to children studying abroad, for example. Banks have been calling for a capital control law.

A British embassy spokesperson said: "This unfortunate situation is symptomatic of Lebanon's failing economy and underlines the urgency of Lebanon's government adopting comprehensive economic reforms."



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Lebanon's ruling parties announce candidates for parliamentary elections
Lebanon sends congratulations on Saudi Arabia's Founding Day

[**Egyptian students back from Ukraine**](#)

after evacuation via Poland

Author:

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CAIRO: Egyptian students returning from Ukraine via Poland arrived in their country on Saturday on board two Air Cairo planes.

Egypt's government announced on Friday that it had sent two planes to Poland to return 177 Egyptian students.

Egypt's Ambassador to Poland Hatem Taj El-Din said his embassy "has received hundreds of phone calls from Egyptian students stranded in Ukraine."

He added: "The embassy is coordinating with the Polish side to facilitate the entry of stranded Egyptian students." He said 500 Egyptians have arrived in Poland so far.

Mohamed Abdel-Aty, first secretary of the Egyptian Embassy in Ukraine, said the evacuation of Egyptians is taking place in a more disciplined manner than in the initial days of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

He added that coordination is underway with the Egyptian community and its leaders in various cities in Ukraine, as well as with the Ukrainian Supreme Authority for Emergency Management to determine safe paths and the presence of a police escort on buses moving to the border.

"There is a large number of the Egyptian community in Ukraine who managed to cross the borders," said Abdel-Aty, adding that they "are being transported in cooperation with the Egyptian embassies in neighboring countries such as Romania, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia."

Egyptian embassies in countries neighboring Ukraine are trying "to find solutions to the problems facing ... Egyptians in the eastern border cities, namely Kherson, Kharkiv and Sumy, and to find solutions to evacuate them," he said, adding that these cities are located in a region where there is heavy fighting.

There are initiatives with the International Red Cross in eastern Ukraine to negotiate with Ukrainian and Russian authorities to find safe corridors to get Egyptians out of those three cities, Abdel-Aty said, adding that his embassy's goal is to evacuate all Egyptians.



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Ukraine says evacuation delayed by Russian ceasefire violations Saudi FM calls for dialogue in Russia-Ukraine crisis during call with Lavrov

[Iran says nuclear deal subject to Tehran's red lines, E3 says agreement 'close'](#)

Author:

Reuters

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VIENNA: Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said on Friday the

West's "haste" to reach a nuclear deal "cannot prevent the observance of Iran's red lines," including economic guarantees.

Negotiations on reviving a 2015 Iran nuclear accord appear near a climax, amid talk of an imminent ministerial meeting. Such a meeting, said Amirabdollahian, "requires full compliance with the red lines."

Jalina Porter, a US State Department spokesperson, said a possible deal was close, but cautioned that unsolved issues remained.

Indirect talks were close to reaching an agreement, the chief British envoy said on Friday as she and her French and German colleagues flew home to brief ministers.

"We are close. E3 negotiators leaving Vienna briefly to update Ministers on state of play. Ready to return soon," Stephanie Al-Qaq said on Twitter.

"Our delegation will continue to work hard to reach a final and good agreement," Iranian media quoted Amirabdollahian as telling the EU's top diplomat Joseph Borrell by telephone.

"We are ready to finalize a good and immediate agreement," he said, adding: "Most of Iran's requests have been considered in the upcoming agreement."

Among remaining issues is an effort by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to resolve questions about nuclear material that the Vienna-based agency suspects Iran failed to declare.

The IAEA has found particles of processed uranium at three apparently old sites that Iran never declared and has repeatedly said Tehran has not provided satisfactory answers.

Iran wants the IAEA investigation ended as part of an accord, but Western powers have argued that the issue is beyond the scope of the 2015 deal, to which the IAEA is not a party.

IAEA Director-General Rafael Grossi is to travel to Tehran on Saturday hoping to agree on a process that would lead to the end of the investigation, potentially clearing a way for the wider agreement, diplomats said.

The 2015 agreement between Iran and world powers was designed to make it harder for Iran to accumulate the fissile material for a nuclear weapons, an ambition it has long denied.

Then-President Donald Trump pulled the United States out of the deal in 2018, reimposing tough economic sanctions on Tehran. Iran responded by breaching many of the deal's restrictions.



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UN nuclear watchdog chief to travel to Iran on SaturdayIran deal 'cannot be postponed any longer': German chancellor