

# Lebanese PM: 'We insist on neutrality in Arab conflicts'

Author:

Sat, 2022-02-26 23:23

BEIRUT: Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit has praised Lebanon as "a beacon of knowledge that spares no effort in backing every activity that enriches joint Arab action."

Aboul Gheit was speaking on Saturday at a ceremony held by the Council of Arab Justice Ministers in Beirut for Arab doctoral thesis award winners in the field of law and justice.

His remarks came after comments by Lebanon Prime Minister Najib Mikati, who said at the ceremony: "We expect our Arab brothers to understand our reality and stand by us to spare Lebanon more risks and help us bear the burdens that have exceeded our capabilities."

"Lebanon, which was and will remain part of the Arab world, is experiencing an unprecedented crisis, and our government is trying to solve it with all available capabilities, relying on the support of its Arab brothers and international friends," Mikati added.

"It is unfair to burden Lebanon with more than it can handle," the prime minister said.

Mikati added: "We are unable to stand in a trench here or on a front line there. We have thus adopted a neutrality policy when it comes to Arab conflicts, and we insist on implementing it."

He said that the only loser in any regional dispute "is our Arab world, which has always been seeking unity."

The prime minister added that Lebanon's "bitter experience has taught it that fighting leads nowhere and everyone comes out a loser."

He said: "The homeland loses and the people lose. Whoever thinks they can win against their Arab partner is wrong."

"Victory can only be achieved through understanding, looking after future generations, and charting a future that fulfills their ambitions."

Aboul Gheit added during his speech that Arab universities are still experiencing "low rankings worldwide due to their lack of innovation and seriousness in scientific research, and the dwindling volume of scientific publications."

He highlighted the need to "recover from this shortfall by increasing the budget for scientific research, providing opportunities for the youth, preparing them to face modern challenges and allowing them access to equal

opportunities to compete with other societies.”

The awards were first proposed during the 35th session of the Council of Arab Ministers of Justice in 2019, and were promoted by the council’s Arab Center for Legal and Judicial Research to support scientific research, targeting a category of Ph.D. holders in law and justice.

Jury representative and former Lebanese justice minister Ibrahim Najjar said: “It was not easy to choose the best thesis out of hundreds that tackled various topics from all over the Arab world. This diversity shows that we can be open to different cultures and adapt to how the world is constantly developing.”

Lebanese Justice Minister Henry Khoury said that the awards, which will take place every two years, aim to “encourage applied comparative studies that deal with real issues in Arab law and justice, direct studies toward serving national needs in these fields, as well as strengthen legal and judicial studies, and raise institutional awareness in this regard.”

Algerian Justice Minister Abdul Rashid Tabbi, who was present at the ceremony, said: “The interest researchers from various universities in the Arab world expressed in the award is the beginning of an Arab scientific rapprochement between the peoples of the Arab world, and it will pave the way for other such opportunities.”

The ceremony awarded first prize to Amina Kab, second to Mohammed Mohammed Hussein and third to Safiyan Abdali.

Khoury and Tabbi signed two agreements on the sidelines of the event. The first covers judicial cooperation between Lebanon and Algeria on penal policies, while the second aims to prosecute convicts and extradite detainees between the two countries.

Tabbi said that the agreements “are the best mechanism for confronting the evasion of criminal accountability, and by signing them, we will establish for both our countries a comprehensive framework that will protect them from criminal threats.”

Meanwhile, an Iranian delegation, led by Culture and Guidance Minister Mahdi Ismaili, arrived in Beirut to inaugurate “Days of Cultural Dawn” activities in Lebanon.

The activities are scheduled to be held at the Hezbollah-affiliated Resalat Theater in south Beirut, at the UNESCO Palace in the capital and at the International Center for Dialogue of Civilizations in Rabweh.

They include a musical evening by the Rudaki National Iranian Orchestra, a craft exhibition, a symposium on cultural pluralism, a film screening, and poetry and folklore evenings.



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## [Ukraine Embassy in Israel calls for volunteers to join fight against Russia](#)

Sat, 2022-02-26 21:44

RAMALLAH: The Ukraine Embassy in Israel has issued a plea for Israelis and other volunteers to register and join the fight against invading Russian troops.

“If you are willing to defend Ukraine’s sovereignty, please send us a message,” the statement issued on Feb. 26 said.

A post on the embassy’s Facebook page said: “Urgent message to those wishing to participate in defense of Ukraine from Russian aggression. All our compatriots, interested Israeli citizens and citizens of other countries now in Israel. The embassy has begun compiling a list of volunteers interested in participating in the fight against Russian aggression.

“If you are ready to defend Ukrainian sovereignty, please send us a message.”

The Ukrainian embassy in Tel Aviv is asking IDF vets to volunteer to protect “[@Ukraine](#) from Russian military aggression!” Those interested should send ID #, citizenship, DOB, passport number, military specialty & contacts to [defendUKRinISR@gmail.com](mailto:defendUKRinISR@gmail.com). [pic.twitter.com/lqiCnmeE66](https://pic.twitter.com/lqiCnmeE66)

– Noga Tarnopolsky (@NTarnopolsky) [February 26, 2022](#)

It attached email addresses for volunteers to send their details, passport numbers and military qualifications.

There are hundreds of thousands of people of Ukrainian origin in Israel, some of whom have served in the Israel Defense Forces.

In recent days, media have interviewed several Israelis with Ukrainian citizenship in Ukraine who have already volunteered and joined the fight.

“This announcement is more moral than practical and aims to make the Russians aware that Israel is on the side of Ukraine,” political analyst Majdi Al-Halabi told Arab News.



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## [Egypt will ensure that Ukrainian and Russian tourists can stay until their safe return](#)

Author:

Sat, 2022-02-26 20:50

CAIRO: Egypt has announced that it will ensure that Ukrainian and Russian tourists remain on its territory until a "safe return" to their respective countries is guaranteed.

The ongoing political events between Russia and Ukraine have resulted in the closure of Ukraine's airspace, making it impossible for Ukrainian tourists to return to their country.

During a meeting to discuss the repercussions of the Russian-Ukrainian crisis, officials from the Egyptian tourism sector emphasized that "tourists from countries where air traffic is disrupted will be allowed to stay in the hotels where they are staying in Egypt until they can safely return home."

Assistant Minister of Tourism for the Affairs of Hotel Establishments, Shops and Tourist Activities Abdelfattah Al-Assi wrote in a letter to the Chamber of Hotel Establishments to "ensure the continued stay of Ukrainian and Russian tourists present in Egyptian hotels."

The Chamber of Hotel Establishments in Egypt sent a message to the general managers of hotels in Sharm El-Sheikh, urging them to "kindly receive" Ukrainian tourists from the airport and "provide all the necessary assistance and support to them."

The letter continued: "You will be informed of any new instructions that may be issued by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities in this regard. Please consider this matter urgent and extremely important."

The Egyptian Foreign Ministry announced earlier that it was "following with great concern the developments in connection with the situation in Ukraine."

The ministry stressed the necessity of prioritizing diplomatic solutions to settle the crisis in a way that preserves international security and avoids escalation.

Egypt receives hundreds of thousands of Russian and Ukrainian tourists annually in its hotels overlooking the Red Sea.



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## [Israel completes 'digital occupation' of Palestinians](#)

Sat, 2022-02-26 20:37

RAMALLAH: Israeli forces have digitized their occupation of the West Bank and control over the Gaza Strip through various electronic systems, including dozens of advanced thermal cameras deployed across the West Bank's main roads, as security experts warn that every Palestinian is under their control.

The cameras are connected to a control room manned by specialized security officers who analyze footage and deliver orders to troops.

The surveillance footage captures faces and vehicle registration plates which are sent to the Israeli security agency, Shin Bet, for processing.

The Israeli armed forces have also been provided with software that enables them to recognize people by scanning their faces through mobile phones.

The system is mainly used in the old city of Hebron, where the Palestinians need to cross Israeli checkpoints. The program helps scan approaching persons from 100 meters and, based on saved information captured by other security systems, determines whether the person is wanted or poses a threat.

Alongside the Israeli borders with the Gaza Strip, Shin Bet uses balloons fitted with high-resolution cameras that enable the officers to identify the faces of Palestinian protesters or marchers.

If anyone is identified as a threat, their details are passed to snipers for targeting. The advanced cameras also read any passing vehicle's number plate from several km inside Gaza to determine whether the vehicle belongs to a suspect.

At 15 crossing checkpoints alongside the West Bank, Israel has replaced the manual documents check of Palestinians who enter Israel daily with a magnetic card smart system to identify the carrier. Entry is decided based on their security status.

The Israeli authorities claim that the process will speed up the crossing of Palestinians, but many have reacted by claiming that it has only been introduced to enhance the 55-year occupation of 3 million Palestinians in the West Bank, 350,000 in East Jerusalem and 2 million in Gaza.

In late 2021, Israeli military authorities authorized the Jewish settlers in the West Bank to monitor Palestinian construction work in Area C, which comes under complete Israeli administrative and security control.

The settlers were given small drones to monitor any construction of new houses in nearby Palestinian villages and tasked to report it to the Israeli military authorities.

Even the Palestinian Authority, which enjoys close security coordination with Israel, has not benefited from the new digital processes.

A high-ranking Palestinian police officer told Arab News that when two armed thieves robbed the Bank of Palestine in Ya'abed town near Jenin on Oct. 25 last year and fled to Israel through a hole in the separation wall, the Palestinian Authority police asked the Israeli police to provide CCTV footage, but the Israeli side has not responded.

Monitoring Palestinian social media profiles, using the Pegasus software against Palestinian mobiles and the round-the-clock monitoring of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip by drones have reinforced Israel's digital occupation of millions of Palestinians.

As if this was not enough, the Israeli government has pressured social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram to silence Palestinian voices by suspending Palestinian accounts, especially during the escalation of violence.

Israeli security expert and analyst Eyal Alima told Arab News that the mass uprising of 2014 obliged the Israeli security services to change the intelligence methods which did not help deter the individuals carrying out aggressive attacks against Israeli targets.

“What is happening now is an extensive intelligence control of the West Bank through thermal cameras deployed on roads or sensors installed in some areas, in addition to permanent and continuous monitoring of cell phones, social networks and the Internet,” he said.

“No person can carry out any attack without being monitored by the Israeli security services,” said Alima, adding that this was proved by a recent security operation carried out in the West Bank where those involved in the violence were rapidly arrested.

Alima said that every Palestinian living in the West Bank is under the control of these digital system. “A section of Israelis tested the extent of the monitoring being done in the West Bank. The Israeli police monitored their cell phones during the pandemic through Pegasus, which sparked a huge controversy, because of the violation of privacy.

“But the matter is very different when the surveillance takes place in the West Bank, where there are no controls and no restrictions on the Israeli security services. They do what they want,” Alima said.

Israeli security expert and analyst Yoni Ben-Menahem told Arab News: “Most of these electronic means are used to combat terrorism, diagnose dangerous and wanted persons, and prevent infiltration into Israel; as there are special units of the Israeli Army made up of female recruits specialized in operating and monitoring surveillance systems.”

Ben-Menahem also pointed to the electronic wall as another form of digital security, which the Israeli Army finished building along 60 km on the border with the Gaza Strip. Modern systems and sensors were deployed to detect any attempt to dig tunnels toward Israel and to prevent any infiltration into Israel under the ground.



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## [Fighting erupts in Taiz as Yemeni troops target Houthi positions](#)

Sat, 2022-02-26 19:40

AL-MUKALLA: Heavy fighting between Yemeni troops and Houthi militia has broken out in the southern city of Taiz after government forces attacked rebel positions on the city's outskirts, a local military official said on Saturday.

Government troops intensified attacks on Friday on Iran-backed Houthis occupying the western and eastern edges of the city after the militia stepped up mortar fire on residential areas in the city's downtown.

"The fighting has not stopped for the past seven years. But the aim of the

latest attacks is silencing weapons that fire shells of death," Abdul Basit Al-Baher, a Yemeni military officer in Taiz, told Arab News by telephone.

At least 30 Houthis were killed or wounded, while several army soldiers are believed to have died in fierce fighting, he added.

Yemen's Defense Ministry said that troops repulsed Houthi attacks in the Al-Ahabout area, west of Taiz.

Residents said that the militia fired mortar and artillery shells at civilian areas in government-controlled downtown and eastern sections of the city, triggering explosions.

There were no confirmed reports of casualties.

After failing to storm the center of Taiz since 2015, the Houthis have positioned themselves on the city's outskirts, targeting densely populated residential areas with heavy weapons.

Essential food and humanitarian supplies have also been blocked from reaching the besieged population.

The Houthi siege has forced residents to use rough and dangerous mountain roads to leave or enter the city.

In Hajjah province, the Houthis intensified drone strikes on Yemeni troops in Haradh and Abes as the rebels try to drive government forces out of the two districts.

Local media said that the Houthis have fired at least five explosive-laden drones at government forces in the past 24 hours as part of militia counterattacks to seize back areas controlled by loyalists.

Fighting erupted as warplanes from the Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen carried out air sorties in Hajjah, targeting Houthi military equipment and positions.

A Houthi military leader, Ghazi Amen, died in an airstrike, local media said, while Yemeni troops also suffered casualties in the fighting.

Yemen's Defense Ministry on Friday arranged a funeral procession for Brig. Yahya Haykal Al-Sumaini, chief of the Fifth Military Region's Armament Division, and several soldiers killed in clashes with the rebels in Hajjah.

The Coalition's warplanes also targeted Houthis in flashpoint sites south of the central city of Marib, where government troops are seeking to drive the rebels away from the city.



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