

# Libyan prime minister unharmed after assassination attempt: Al-Hadath TV

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RIYADH: The Libyan Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibeh escaped unharmed after an assassination attempt in Tripoli, Al-Hadath TV reported early on Thursday.

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# Sudan arrests leading anti-coup bloc figures

Author:

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Wed, 2022-02-09 00:19

KHARTOUM: Sudanese security agents on Wednesday arrested two leading figures including an ex-minister from the opposition Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC), the civilian group driving protests against last year's military coup. The men are the latest in a long line of activists detained since the October 25 military takeover led by army chief Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, in which the civilian leadership and FFC figures were ousted.

Plain-clothed officers arrested Khaled Omar Youssef, a former minister of cabinet affairs, during a meeting of the FFC bloc at the headquarters of the Sudanese Congress Party, senior member Mohamed Hassan Arabi said.

Officers said they were affiliated with a police station in Khartoum without elaborating, Arabi added.

Also arrested was Wagdi Saleh, a leading figure of the protest movement and an FFC spokesman, according to FFC leader Omar Al-Degeir.

The reasons for their arrest were not immediately clear.

The arrests come a day after the two men joined an FFC delegation for talks with UN special representative Volker Perthes, as part of efforts launched last month hoped to resolve the deepening crisis.

Leading FFC figure Yasser Arman said the latest arrests "will affect the UN process."

Youssef and Saleh were among the figures who were detained immediately after the coup, before they were released weeks later.

Since the coup, the authorities have launched a deadly crackdown on regular mass anti-coup protests, leaving at least 79 people killed and hundreds wounded, according to independent medics.

The October military power grab, the latest coup in Sudan since the independence, has sparked wide international condemnation and punitive measures.

The United States, which suspended \$700 million in assistance, has warned there would be "consequences" if a crackdown by the authorities continues.

"Arbitrary arrests and detention of political figures, civil society activists and journalists undermine efforts to resolve Sudan's political crisis," Lucy Tamlyn, the US charge d'affaires in Sudan, wrote on Twitter late Wednesday.

The BBC said three of its reporters were also briefly arrested on Monday while covering anti-coup protests in Khartoum, but the trio were released later that day.

Multiple journalists have been targeted while covering the protests.



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## [Iraq struggles to make use of Saddam Hussein's crumbling palaces](#)

Author:

Wed, 2022-02-09 23:36

BAGHDAD: Scattered across Iraq lie more than 100 opulent palaces and villas built by former dictator Saddam Hussein – some in use, many in ruins like much of the war-scarred country.

With their marble columns, ornate carvings and gaudy furniture, they reflected the megalomania and delusions of grandeur of Saddam, who visited

some of them only once or twice.

In his Babylon residence, the feared strongman's profile is engraved in bas-relief like that of the Mesopotamian emperor he idolized, Chaldean dynasty King Nebuchadnezzar II.

In many places, the initials "S.H." are still visible as reminders of the despot who was toppled by the 2003 US-led invasion, captured later that year and executed in 2006.

Most of his palaces were looted during the chaos of the invasion, when thieves scavenged all they could carry, even ripping electric cables out of walls.

Since then, only a handful of the palatial residences have been given a second lease on life, often as military bases or public administrations, more rarely as museums.

Most lie empty, in part because the cost of renovating them is prohibitive. "We can turn palaces into museums, at least in Baghdad – a tapestry museum, for example, or on the royal family or Islamic art," said Laith Majid Hussein, director of the Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage.

But he conceded that rehabilitating many of Iraq's "gigantic castles" would require "astronomical sums."

Red tape and entrenched graft spell other hurdles, said a senior government official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"Bureaucracy and corruption hinder the restoration of these palaces to turn them into tourist complexes or heritage centers," he said.

Saddam, during his more than two decades in power in the oil-rich country, had many monuments and palaces built while cheerfully defying the Western embargo of the 1990s.

In the turmoil of war, many were damaged in fighting or used as bases by US and other foreign forces.

In Baghdad, three palaces now house the presidency and the prime minister's offices.

The sumptuous Al-Faw complex – encircled by an artificial lake – has since 2021 housed the private American University, built by an Iraqi investor.

Al-Faw, situated near the airport for Saddam's VIP guests, once served as an American base. Now its stone and marble buildings house auditoriums, amphitheaters and a food court.

The university's president Michael Mulnix voiced pride about the project which saw "the palace of a former dictator and a fairly ruthless man" become an institution of higher learning.

While the main palace had survived relatively intact, he said, "all of the other buildings ... were really destroyed.

"The windows were all broken out, there were birds flying around, snakes on the floor, literally. So it was very messed up. We had to go in and do substantial renovation."



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Chaos in Iraq over vote for president

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## [Tunisian president to change judicial council: Minister](#)

Author:

Reuters

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TUNIS: Tunisian President Kais Saied will change the Supreme Judicial Council

but not abolish it, the justice minister said after meeting him on Wednesday, days after his stated plan to dissolve the body met intense criticism. Justice Minister Leila Jaffel said on television that Saied would maintain the council as a constitutional institution but change the law regulating it and set up a temporary judicial authority in the meantime. Jaffel gave no details as to how the council's composition or role would change, or about the composition, role or tenure of the temporary authority. Saied's announcement on Sunday that he would dissolve the body prompted immediate criticism from judges, rights groups, opposition parties and Western donors whose help is needed to avert a crisis in public finances. They said abolishing the council would undermine judicial independence and could help Saied cement one-man rule after his suspension of parliament and seizure of broad powers last year, which critics call a coup.



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Tunisian president dissolves supreme judicial council

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# Israel-Dubai aviation security row continues

Author:

Wed, 2022-02-09 23:15

JERUSALEM: Israel extended on Tuesday a deadline that might have halted its airlines' flights to the UAE over an aviation security dispute, but warned of a potential crisis with the Gulf state unless the issue is resolved.

Direct El Al, Israir and Arkia connections from Tel Aviv to Dubai were among the fruits of a landmark 2020 deal establishing ties between Israel and the UAE. Hundreds of thousands of Israelis have visited the UAE commercial hub since.

But Israel's Shin Bet security service has voiced concerns – which it did not publicly detail – about arrangements at Dubai International Airport and said the three national carriers would stop operating there if these went unresolved.

The current arrangements had been due to expire on Tuesday. But a senior Israeli official said Transport Minister Merav Michaeli extended the deadline “by about a month” so the negotiations could continue.

Dubai authorities have so far not commented on the issue.

In tandem with the deadline extension, Israel increased pressure on the UAE to address its security concerns.

Should the Israeli airlines eventually stop flying to Dubai, the senior Israeli official said, that would spell a de facto end to their UAE operations and prompt a reciprocal ban.

“If El Al can't fly to the Emirates, then Emirati companies can't land here,” said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Emirati state carrier flydubai operates direct Dubai-Tel Aviv flights and Dubai's Emirates has been looking to launch flights to Israel. Etihad Airways and Wizz Air fly from Abu Dhabi to Tel Aviv.

“The crisis could be regional, not just bilateral,” the Israeli official said, citing UAE's cornerstone role in the Abraham Accords, a US-sponsored drive to warm relations between Israel and a range of Arab countries. “It could have a huge impact.”

Israel rarely publishes its aviation security measures.

Possible measures, however, could include earmarking special areas of airports, or even separate terminals, for their passengers, parking their planes under Israeli guards, and the presence of armed sky marshals aboard the flights.

The Shin Bet has suggested that UAE capital Abu Dhabi could serve as an alternative for the Israeli carriers, should they no longer be able to fly to Dubai.



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