

Scraping a living: Salt offers women lifeline in Yemen

Author:

Thu, 2022-02-03 23:59

AL-MUKALLA: Scooping up handfuls of white crystals from coastal pools, a group of women in Yemen harvest salt – a traditional industry proving to be a lifeline after seven years of war.

Zakiya Obeid is one among nearly 500 women who work in the industry in a village overlooking the Gulf of Aden, on Yemen's southern coast.

"We cooperate and take shifts because it is a sisterhood and we know each others' difficult circumstances," said Obeid said.

Employment is so scarce that the women work in rotation to allow more people to benefit.

She said the women are divided into two groups, with each working for 15 days while the others rest.

In bare feet and mud-spattered abaya robes, the women dig basins at low tide and return when the seawater has evaporated to dredge up the salt for packaging and selling.

The time-honored livelihood has been passed down from generation to generation.

It is now a means of survival, providing many families with their only source of income.

The women earn about \$100 per month for harvesting the salt and packing it in plastic containers.

Since the formation of the Al-Hassi Association for Sea Salt Production in 2020, the women are able to transport the salt to be ground, packaged and sold across Yemen.

"Before then, we used to do the same work but could only sell the salt raw," Obeid said.

"But that is no longer the case, with the association providing us with bags and transport."

The head of the Al-Hassi Association, Khamis Bahtroush, said the women, who produce between 20-30 tons of salt every three months, have come to rely on this industry.

"Production is lower in winter than in summer," he said.

“Each bag is sold for approximately 3,000 Yemeni rials (\$12) ... but we are struggling with inflation and do not have liquidity to give them raises.

“This is their only source of income ... they have nothing else. No farms, no livestock.”

The UN Population Fund has said the loss of male breadwinners in the conflict has added to the difficulties faced by women.

“The pressure is even more severe where women or girls suddenly find themselves responsible for providing for their families when they themselves have been deprived of basic education or vocational training,” it said.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Yemen](#)

[salt](#)

[Morocco rescuers dig for boy trapped in well](#)

Author:

AFP

ID:

1643920819516437000

Thu, 2022-02-03 23:44

BAB BERRÉD, Morocco: Moroccans waited anxiously Thursday as authorities said a dramatic operation to rescue a young boy trapped in a deep well for over two days was nearing its end.

The five-year-old, named as Rayan, fell down the narrow 32-meter (100-foot) deep well on Tuesday evening in his home village near Bab Berréd in the rural northern province of Chefchaouen, local media said.

"The child's rescue is approaching," government spokesman Mustapha Baitas said Thursday. "Our hearts are with the family, and we are praying that he will back with them as soon as possible."

The shaft was too narrow for rescuers to reach the bottom, so heavy diggers were dispatched to dig a hole alongside it.

Relief operations intensified as darkness fell for a third night with the boy deep down in the well, with diggers clawing out dirt under floodlights.

Rescuers reported they had dug down some 24 meters, but that around six meters still remained to reach the child.

The MAP news agency said rescuers had been able to send him oxygen and water via pipes.

Rayan's father told Le360 news website he had been repairing the well when the boy fell into it.

Lead rescuer Abdelhabi Temrani told Al Oula television that the diameter of the well was less than 45 centimeters.

Baitas said the nature of the soil meant it was too dangerous to try to widen the hole, meaning major excavations around it were the only solution.

The drama has sparked an outpouring of sympathy online, with the Arabic hashtag #SaveRayan going viral across the North African region, including in neighboring Algeria.

Moroccan footballer and PSG star Achraf Hakimi mentioned the rescue efforts on social media, alongside emojis of a broken heart and hands together in prayer.

The boy's fate has also attracted crowds of people to the site of the operation, putting pressure on rescuers operating in "difficult conditions," Baitas said.

"We call on citizens to let the rescuers do their job and save this child," he said.

Authorities have also prepared a helicopter to take the child to hospital once he is extracted, national news channel 2M said.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Morocco](#)

[well](#)

[boy](#)

[Trapped](#)

[rescue](#)

63 migrants rescued off Morocco: activistsMoroccans protest mass vaccination rules; some skirmishes

[Washington threatens Houthi terror militia with new sanctions](#)

Thu, 2022-02-03 02:43

WASHINGTON: The US on Wednesday threatened Yemen's Houthi rebels with new sanctions after a series of drone and missile attacks on the United Arab Emirates.

"We've taken a number of such actions, including in recent weeks and months alone, and I suspect we will be in a position to take additional action given the reprehensible attacks that we've seen emanate from Yemen from the Houthis

in recent days and weeks,” said State Department Spokesperson Ned Price. President Joe Biden’s administration is under increasing pressure to again formally designate the Houthis as a “foreign terrorist organization,” a label withdrawn from the group one year ago after Biden became president, to engender peace negotiations in the war-torn country. But the war between the Iran-backed Houthis and the government, backed by the multinational Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen, has continued to rage. “You heard from the president last month that this is a decision that is under review,” Price told reporters. “We will not relent in designating Houthi leaders and entities involved in military offensives that are threatening civilians and regional stability,” he said.

fff/pmh/sst



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Houthi militia](#)

[US sanctions on Houthis](#)

[UAE](#)

US Navy forces seize arms from Iran likely bound for Yemen
Tourists in UAE shrug off Houthi missile attacks

Turkish strikes Kurd targets in Iraq, Syria

Author:

AFP

ID:

1643834532195987600

Wed, 2022-02-02 18:08

JEDDAH/BEIRUT: Turkey launched a wave of airstrikes by 60 warplanes early on Wednesday targeting Kurdish militia positions in northern areas of Iraq and Syria.

The Turkish military said the airstrikes hit Derik in northern Syria, and Sinjar and Karacak in northern Iraq. The targets were outlawed PKK militants, who have bases in Iraq, and the Syrian Kurdish YPG militia. Turkey regards both groups as terrorists.

Defense Minister Hulusi Akar said “many terrorists” were killed.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a monitor based in Britain, said four security staff died in an airstrike on a Kurdish-run power station near Al-Malikiyah in Hassakeh province.

Iraq’s military condemned what it called a Turkish infiltration into Iraqi air space as a violation of its sovereignty, although Baghdad is widely thought to be giving Ankara free rein to attack the militants.

It called on Ankara “to put an end to these violations,” and said “Iraq is fully prepared to cooperate (with Ankara) to stabilize the situation on the border.”

The US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), the semi-autonomous Kurdish administration’s de facto army, said four of its fighters died in the attack and vowed vengeance against Turkey.

The YPG – which forms the backbone of the SDF fighting IS in Syria – also condemned the Turkish airstrikes, which followed an attack by Daesh on a prison in Hassakeh province last month in an attempt to free their fighters.

“Turkey tries to continue what Daesh started,” the YPG said. “Everyone has to take action against this attack now.”

The YPG is viewed by Ankara as the PKK’s Syria offshoot.

On Wednesday, shelling on the Turkish-held city of Al-Bab in northern Syria killed eight people, including five civilians, according to the Observatory which relies on a network of sources inside Syria.

It didn’t specify who was responsible but Kurdish forces and Syrian regime troops are both deployed in the region.

Turkish forces escalated attacks in northeastern Syria on Wednesday evening, shelling “about 20 villages and sites... in the Hasakah countryside and north of Raqqa governorate,” the Observatory added later.

It said the attacks targeted residential areas and displaced a large number of people.

The Turkish strike came hours after hundreds of mourners gathered in Al-Malikiyah for mass funerals honoring Kurdish fighters killed in a week of battles with Daesh extremists who had attacked the Ghwayran jail on January 20.

Since the start of its military intervention in Syria in 2016, Ankara has sporadically bombed the YPG and carried out military operations targeting Daesh and Kurdish forces.

Turkey also routinely carries out attacks in Iraq, where the PKK has bases and training camps in the Sinjar region and on the mountainous border with Turkey.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who has threatened to “clean up” parts of northern Iraq, accuses the PKK of using the border area as a springboard for its insurgency.

In December, Turkey carried out retaliatory air strikes in northern Iraq after three Turkish soldiers died in a PKK attack.

(With AFP)



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Turkey](#)

[Syria](#)

[Iraq](#)

[Kurds](#)

[Ghwayran jail](#)

[Daesh](#)

Clashes near Syria prison leaves 332 dead, war monitor reports Daesh-Kurds battle after Syria prison attack kills over 120 in 4 days

[Power cuts help Syrian tradition of public bathhouses pick up steam](#)

Author:

Wed, 2022-02-02 23:29

DAMASCUS: At Hammam Bakri in Damascus' Old City, Syrian men wrapped in towels from the waist down lie down on a scalding marble floor. Masseurs vigorously scrub their skin with a soap-soaked loofah and wash them down with hot water.

Around a hexagonal fountain outside – traditionally found in old Damascene houses – patrons sip an infusion of herbs and dried flowers known as zhourat. The soothing smell fills the air around the domed roof.

After having fallen victim to modernization, Syria's ancient public bathhouses, known as Hammamat, are picking up steam again, largely due to prolonged electricity cuts during a particularly cold winter in this war-scarred country.

With soaring fuel prices and barely enough power to heat water at home, many are turning to the few remaining Hammams in cities like Damascus, Homs and Aleppo more to the north.

Damascus, along with major Arab cities like Baghdad, Mosul and Cairo, is home to some of the country's oldest and best bathhouses, some of them over a thousand years old. Many of them have closed due to modernization, lack of business and the war that left much of the country in ruins, crippled the economy and shrunk wages.

Now, officials at Damascus' remaining public baths say they are doing brisk business again but it's mostly due to residents who come for the hot water – a luxury they no longer find at home. Power outages often run for more than 20 hours a day in Damascus. Few can afford to have a private generator or pay the price of fuel.

The difficult times, say owners of public bathhouses, are in a way helping keep the tradition alive.

For 10,000 lira (less than \$3), the customers at Hammam Bakri located within the old city are given towels, a loofah and a piece of traditional olive oil soap. They are then scrubbed in a steamy room, often with Arabic music in the background. "Having a hot shower is very different than having cold showers especially in these temperatures," said Husam Hamami, the manager.

"We are now going through a difficult time. There is little electricity and the water is little so people are not even getting a chance to heat their water so we are finding that many people are coming in once a week."

Bakri is one of the oldest bathhouses in Damascus, established in 1069. Instead of tourists, it is now residents who come in more frequently. On a recent day, a group of men sauntered in elevated clogs made from wood, known as qabqab, as they patted themselves dry with towels, emerging from a fog.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Syria](#)

[bathhouses](#)

Aleppo bathhouse boom as Syria crisis turns showers cold
Syrian fighters search for Daesh sleeper cells near prison