

63 migrants rescued off Morocco: activists

Author:

AFP

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RABAT: The Moroccan navy on Tuesday rescued 63 migrants including 15 women and three children after their vessel started to sink as they tried to reach the Canary Islands, activists said.

Alarm Phone, which provides an emergency hotline for migrants in trouble at sea, said on Twitter that "63 people in severe distress close to the Moroccan coast were found by the Moroccan navy and safely brought to shore."

The Moroccan authorities did not immediately confirm the operation.

Helena Maleno Garzon of rights group Caminando Fronteras had earlier warned that dozens of people were sinking in an inflatable boat off Tarfaya, on Morocco's southern coast, and would "die if they are not rescued soon."

Migrants, mostly from sub-Saharan Africa, regularly use Morocco as a launchpad for attempts to reach European shores.

Last year more than 4,000 migrants died or went missing in such attempts, mostly as they tried to reach the Canary Islands, according to Caminando Fronteras.

Many choose to head for the Spanish territory in the Atlantic as shorter routes across calmer Mediterranean waters are more closely monitored, the group says.



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[migrants](#)

Six migrants drown off Tunisia, 30 missing
At least 11 migrants drown off Tunisia in shipwreck

[Iranian teachers in new day of protests over pay](#)

Author:

Wed, 2022-02-02 00:41

TEHRAN: Thousands of Iranian school teachers have protested and staged a one-day strike over the slow implementation of salary and pension reforms, local media reported on Tuesday.

Reformist newspaper Arman Melli said the teachers demonstrated outside parliament in Tehran and Education Ministry offices in provincial cities including Isfahan and Shiraz.

The paper said it was the third day of protests by teachers in recent weeks.

Iran's ILNA news agency reported that striking teachers in Alborz province, west of the capital, carried placards demanding "Free the imprisoned teachers."

It was an apparent reference to colleagues detained at previous rallies.

Protesters called for the alignment of teachers' salaries with those of other public sector employees among other demands, ILNA said.

"Unfortunately, our salary with a master's degree and sometimes a doctorate is about 4.5 million tomans (\$160) per month," it quoted a protesting teacher in the city of Yazd as saying.



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[Middle-East](#)

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Frenchman jailed in Iran halts hunger strike: familyUS officials say negotiations on Iran nuclear program at crossroads

[Blinken discusses Palestinian](#)

Authority reform with Mahmoud Abbas

Author:

Tue, 2022-02-01 02:56

WASHINGTON: In a further step to strengthen bilateral relations, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken discussed the need for reform in the Palestinian Authority in a phone call on Monday with President Mahmoud Abbas, the State Department said.

President Joe Biden has sought to repair ties weakened when his predecessor, President Donald Trump, slashed aid to Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza and closed a US consulate for Palestinians in Jerusalem. The Biden administration has restored aid and pledged to reopen the consulate over Israeli objections, while urging Abbas, 86, to change several policies including payments his self-rule authority makes to Palestinians held in Israeli jails.

Briefing reporters on Monday, State Department spokesperson Ned Price did not mention the prisoner stipends but said Blinken and Abbas discussed "the need for reform within the Palestinian Authority."

The two also discussed "the need to improve quality of life for the Palestinian people in tangible ways," Price said.

In a readout of the phone call, Abbas' office did not mention any discussion of reform within the authority, which exercises limited self-rule in West Bank territory Israel captured in the 1967 Middle East war.

Good discussion with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas today. We discussed strengthening the U.S.-Palestinian relationship, and the need for Palestinian Authority reform and for Palestinians & Israelis alike to enjoy equal measures of freedom, security, & prosperity.

– Secretary Antony Blinken (@SecBlinken) [January 31, 2022](#)

Abbas told Blinken that Israel must "stop the abuse of prisoners and ... the withholding of taxes." Israel in 2018 began deducting the value of the prisoner stipends from taxes it collects on the Palestinian Authority's behalf and transfers to it monthly.

Israel and the US say the stipends, dispersed monthly to prisoners, their relatives and the families of Palestinians killed for allegedly carrying out attacks, encourage further violence.

The Palestinians consider them a form of welfare for inmates and families they regard as national heroes.

Meanwhile, two members of Wisconsin's congressional delegation asked the Biden administration Monday to investigate how a Palestinian-American who lived in Milwaukee before moving back to his home village died at a West Bank checkpoint.

Omar Assad, 78, died after Israeli troops stopped him at a checkpoint in his native village of Jiljilya during the early morning hours of Jan. 12,

according to family members and media reports.

Assad's nephew, Assad Assad, said others who were detained at the checkpoint told family members that the soldiers dragged Assad out of his car, threw him to the ground and shackled his hands and feet with zip ties, then fled after he died on the spot.

The Israeli military has said Omar was detained after resisting an inspection and later released, implying he was alive. It's unclear exactly when he died. An autopsy performed by Palestinian doctors that became public on Thursday determined the cause of death was a heart attack brought on by "external violence."

Lt. Col. Amnon Shefler, an Israeli military spokesman, said Assad's death remains under investigation and that "actions will be taken if wrongdoing is found."

Assad was born in Jiljilya but spent about 40 years in the United States. He became a US citizen before he returned to his home village in 2009 to retire with his wife, Nazmia, his nephew told The Associated Press.

US State Department officials have said they're seeking clarification about the events leading up to Assad's death.

US Sen. Tammy Baldwin and Rep. Gwen Moore sent a letter to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken asking him to launch an investigation into Assad's death and whether the soldiers involved used equipment procured with American aid. "We strongly support human rights and the rule of law as the foundation of United States foreign policy," Baldwin and Moore wrote. "As a Palestinian American, Mr. Assad deserves the full protections afforded US citizens living abroad and his family deserves answers."

State Department spokesman Ned Price said Monday that he hadn't seen the request from Baldwin and Moore and the agency hasn't seen a final report from Israeli officials.

"We continue to support an investigation that is thorough and comprehensive into the circumstances of the incident and we welcome receiving additional information as soon as possible," Price said.

Israel has occupied the West Bank since the Six Day War in 1967. Assad Assad said his uncle and aunt left Jiljilya for Chicago in 1969 in hopes of finding jobs. They moved to Milwaukee in 1974 and prospered, opening convenience stores and a restaurant, he said.

They were among dozens of Jiljilya residents who have returned to the village over the years to build retirement homes, Assad Assad said.

(With Reuters and AP)



Main category:

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Palestinians raise funds for Syrians living in tents
Autopsy says violence caused death of detained Palestinian

[Lebanon pleased with Gulf reaction to Kuwaiti initiative](#)

Mon, 2022-01-31 22:53

BEIRUT: The Lebanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants believes the country's response to the Kuwaiti initiative proposing confidence-building measures to end a diplomatic rift with Gulf states had a "positive impact" during Sunday's Arab League consultative meeting in Kuwait.

Lebanese Foreign Minister Abdullah Bou Habib attended Sunday's meeting, at which Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah once

again stressed his country's "keenness to maintain Lebanon's stability and the welfare of its people."

He noted that Kuwait will keep trying to mend the relationship, adding: "The concerned authorities in Kuwait and the Gulf countries will discuss the Lebanese response to decide on the next steps with Lebanon."

The Lebanese response stressed Beirut's commitment to respect all international resolutions in a manner that guarantees domestic peace and stability, and the government's commitment, in word and deed, to the policy of neutrality, so the country is not turned into a platform for attacks against Arab countries.

The response did not mention specific international resolutions or steps to implement them, such as UN Security Council resolution 1559 – which was adopted in 2004 and calls for the disarmament of armed militias in Lebanon.

Saudi Arabia and several other Gulf countries cut diplomatic ties with Lebanon in October 2021 after Information Minister George Kordahi offended the Kingdom.

Kordahi then resigned in November in an attempt to ease the situation, but the crisis persisted amid hostility from Hezbollah.

The Lebanese Cabinet resumed discussions for the 2022 budget on Monday, while a speech by Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah, scheduled for Monday, was postponed.

Interior Minister Bassam Mawlawi announced Lebanon's support for the UAE "against attempts to target Arab legitimacy, which we are keen to preserve and strengthen," adding: "We have been, and will remain, unified in the fight against harm and evil of all kinds."

Mawlawi also briefed the Cabinet on busting 17 spy networks in Lebanon, allegedly working for Israel.

The Information Branch of the Internal Security Forces was able to uncover the networks, arresting at least 10 suspects.

A security source stated: "Over a month ago, specifically after the bombing that shook the Burj Al-Shemali Palestinian refugee camp in Tyre, southern Lebanon, the branch obtained information about a person close to Hamas being linked to the bombing.

"The Information Branch was able to uncover multiple unconnected networks after monitoring the suspect's movement and communications," said the source, adding that a number of suspects were arrested and were currently under investigation.

Two suspects are allegedly from the city of Sidon, with another employed at a commercial center in the city of Tyre. Other suspects live inside and around Sidon.

One was arrested in Tyre, and his house and the house of another suspected agent were raided simultaneously. Large quantities of gift boxes, perfumes and computers were confiscated.

The spy networks are thought to be distributed throughout Lebanon and include agents from different sects, initial investigations reportedly revealed.

These agents were apparently recruited through social media, with most unaware that they were working for Israel, while others knew and were asked to buy burner phones.

On Monday, President Michel Aoun asked the foreign minister to file a complaint in the UN Security Council against Israel for “using Lebanon’s airspace” to attack Syria, with the Cabinet condemning the “Israeli breach that took place at 3 a.m., when Israeli planes bombed the Syrian territory from the airspace of Riyaq in the Bekaa.”

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported “human losses resulting from the Israeli bombardment, which targeted Hezbollah sites and warehouses, northeast of Damascus.”



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Lebanon highlights drug seizures as PM 'smooths rough edges' of response to Kuwaiti initiative
Gulf states review Lebanon's response to proposal to ease row

[Israeli president meets UAE vice president on first official visit](#)

Author:

Mon, 2022-01-31 19:36

RIYADH: UAE Vice President, Prime Minister and ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid met Israeli President Isaac Herzog at the UAE pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai, state news agency WAM reported on Monday.

Sheikh Mohammed welcomed Herzog, who is on his first official visit to the UAE, and the two sides discussed the future of economic, commercial and investment cooperation.

They also held talks on raising the level of scientific and technological cooperation and other paths that supported the future of development, as well as various regional and international developments, issues of common concern, and international efforts to accelerate the pace of global recovery.

Excellent discussion today with the Ruler of Dubai, HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum [@HHSkhMohd](#). We discussed a range of issues, including deepening collaboration in trade, innovation, tourism and investments. We also discussed Israel & UAE's special shared history. pic.twitter.com/7di93pRqcd

– [Isaac Herzog \(@Isaac_Herzog\)](#) [January 31, 2022](#)

Sheikh Mohammed said that Israel's participation in the expo, along with more than 190 countries, opened several areas for cooperation as "the mega global event seeks to shape a better future for humanity based on peaceful coexistence and sharing of expertise and resources."

Herzog and his wife Michal visited the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi as part of his official visit.

While meeting the Israeli president at Expo 2020 Dubai On his first visit to the UAE.

We discussed aspects of trade, investment and technological cooperation.. we welcomed their participation in the largest international cultural event, Expo 2020. pic.twitter.com/LiBnCxa2ob

– HH Sheikh Mohammed (@HHSkhMohd) [January 31, 2022](#)



Mohammed Al-Khajja, the UAE's ambassador to Israel, and Amir Hayek, Israeli ambassador to the UAE, and several senior Israeli officials accompanied Herzog.

Dr. Yousif Al-Obaidli, director-general of the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque Center, accompanied the president and his accompanying delegation on a tour of the mosque's halls and external corridors.

They were briefed by one of the center's cultural tour specialists about the mosque's message "that underscores notions of coexistence, tolerance, and openness to cultures, emanating from the nation's late founder's rich legacy," according to a statement on WAM.

They also learned about the mosque's history, components, and aesthetic features of Islamic art and architecture.

Finishing a very moving, historic visit to the UAE at the invitation of a great leader, HH Sheikh [@MohamedBinZayed](#). There is huge potential for our two nations. Together, we can truly lead the Middle East toward a new horizon of peace, prosperity, and cooperation. pic.twitter.com/xX0n6gD00m

–   Isaac Herzog (@Isaac_Herzog) [January 31, 2022](#)

The Israeli leader was presented with two of the center's publications at the end of the visit.

One was "Spaces of Light" and showcases the winning photographs from the "Spaces of Light" photography award, which is held annually by the center in celebration of the aesthetics and visual culture of the mosque.

The other was "Houses of God" and is about places of worship in Islamic history, including the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque.











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Israel supports UAE security needs, president says on first visit UAE foreign minister discusses strategic partnership with British MP