

Illegal but essential, migrants recycle Istanbul's waste

Author:

AFP

ID:

1639259614339014700

Sun, 2021-12-12 00:53

ISTANBUL: Shrouded by acrid smoke, a young Afghan crouches sorting waste he has pulled from the trash bins of Istanbul, anxious that Turkey will soon strip him of even this subsistence.

"I start at eight in the morning and finish at eight at night," said Issam Raffur, who has spent four of his 20 years in Turkey.

"It is very hard and poorly paid, but I have no choice," he shrugged, smoke billowing from a fire barely warming his makeshift sorting center on a soggy winter day.

Considered the poorest of Turkey's poor, Afghans have joined Kurds, the Laz, Roma and other ethnic minorities and undocumented migrants in doing work others snub.

For less than \$10 a day, they roam the streets of Istanbul, a megalopolis of nearly 16 million people straining under the weight of a currency crisis and a flood of refugees from Syria, Afghanistan and other conflict-riven states. Diving headfirst into dumpsters, they dig up plastic bottles, glass and other waste they then sort and sell in bulk – a self-organized, unregulated business that keeps the city clean, and men such as Issam fed.

But as public sentiment turns against migrants and other foreigners in Turkey, the state-appointed prefecture of Istanbul has declared this work bad for "the environment and public health."

Issam and his friends suspect that what Turkish officials really want is to put this potentially profitable business under the control of a few, well-connected recycling firms.

"If the big companies take over, they will saw off our last branch of support," said Mahmut Aytar, a Turk who manages one of the small recycling centers on the Asian side of Istanbul. "They will throw us in the ravine." Speaking to AFP, Deputy Environment Minister Mehmet Emin Birpinar did little to ease Aytar's concerns.

"Waste can be bought and sold, so we have started to view it as a raw material with other uses," he said. "After the price of raw materials increased, the value of recycled goods has risen."

Born in multi-ethnic southeastern Turkey, Aytar, 28, launched his recycling business out of desperation after failing to find work befitting his biology degree.

"This job does not require experience or training. Anyone can do it, but it is mostly the people excluded by the system who get involved," he said while watching his press machines crush plastic bags and empty bottles.

After being shrunk into tidy bales, the plastic waste is loaded onto trucks of small, independently run recycling operators who convert them into granules.

Aytar said he runs one of 2,500 or so impromptu recycling depots in Istanbul, receiving dozens of trash collectors – called “cekcekci” and roughly translating as those who pull carts – every day.

Tugging white, muddied carts filled with paper, cardboard, plastic and bottles, they dart between honking cars and pedestrian streams, earning 80-120 liras (\$6-\$9) a day.

Women and minors specialize in cardboard boxes, which they find after the shops close at night, their babies sometimes riding along in the carts’ lower folds.

Each kilogram of waste is worth about a lira (7 US cents), and the bravest collect about 150 kg of waste a day. “They probably don’t realize it, but by being impoverished, they contribute to protecting the environment,” said Aytar. “They are helping society.”

They do so while living in destitution and depend on the whims of the police. In early October, security forces rounded up more than 250 cekcekci in one day, releasing them after a few hours but keeping their precious cargoes of waste.

“It’s harassment,” said Elrem Yasar, who started managing his own depot after collecting trash for 12 years.

“Each confiscation costs me about 560 liras, which I earn in three days.” Istanbul prefecture officials defended their crackdown.

“These cekcekci work illegally,” one official told AFP on condition of anonymity. “It is up to the city to take care of recycling and to collect revenues from it.”



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[Egypt, UAE education ministries sign cooperation agreement](#)

Author:
Sat, 2021-12-11 19:48

CAIRO: The education ministries of Egypt and the UAE have signed a cooperation agreement in the field of higher education and scientific research.

Egypt's Higher Education Minister Khaled Abdel Ghaffar said the agreement involves exchanging experiences, scholarships, information and faculty visits, holding regular forums, and joint marketing of study programs between the two countries.

Emirati Education Minister Hussain Al-Hammadi said the agreement contributes

to both countries' development, the consolidation of bilateral relations, and a future based on creativity and innovation.



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[UN 'cautiously welcomes' Sudan accord amid post-coup erosion of trust](#)

Author:

Ephrem Kossaify

ID:

1639176171651683600

Sat, 2021-12-11 01:42

The UN "cautiously" welcomed the agreement reached on Nov. 21 in Sudan between Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok and the leaders of October's military coup.

During a meeting on Friday to discuss the latest UN report on the situation in the country, Volker Perthes, the UN's special representative for Sudan, told the Security Council that the agreement is "far from perfect" but could help to avoid further bloodshed and provide a first step toward comprehensive dialogue and a return to constitutional order.

But he pointed out that there is strong opposition to the deal from a large segment of Sudanese stakeholders, including parties and associations within the Forces of Freedom and Change coalition, resistance committees, civil society organizations and women's groups, who feel "betrayed" by the coup. "Forthcoming decisions on government formation, high-level appointments and the establishment of transitional institutions will test the will and ability of the stakeholders to seek a common way out of the crisis," said Perthes. The military takeover on Oct. 25, during which Hamdok and other senior officials and activists were arrested, sparked protests across the country in what Perthes described as "the greatest crisis to date" faced by the political transition in the country.

The coup "exposed and deepened the mistrust between the military and civilian components, and within the civilian components" themselves, he told the members of the Security Council.

According to the UN, at least 44 people were killed and hundreds injured when Sudanese security forces used lethal force to crack down on peaceful protesters.

Perthes said this has caused the crisis to escalate as protesters continue to organize mass demonstrations in an effort "to reclaim the revolution and push for civilian rule."

He once again urged military leaders to reverse all unilateral decisions they have made in the wake of the coup, including the appointment of civilian members to the Sovereignty Council.

Referring to the ongoing state of emergency declared on the day of the coup by its leader, Gen. Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, Perthes warned that "a lack of inclusivity and consensus could cause further fragmentation.

Referring to Nov. 21 agreement, which stipulates the formation of technocratic cabinet, Perthes warned that such a move, while potentially a step toward advancing the political transition, could also create "a constitutional challenge if not based on consultations with the Forces for Freedom and Change."

He said: "Sudan's military and political leaders will primarily have to rebuild trust with their own domestic public, particularly with the young generation," and added that Sudanese authorities also need to work on regaining financial, economic and political support from the international community.

For this to happen, the envoy reiterated the need to release all political detainees, halt arbitrary arrests, guarantee the right to peaceful protest, and bring to justice those guilty of using violence against protesters.

Other key steps toward rebuilding trust among the international community include allowing the prime minister to freely form his own technocratic cabinet, lifting the state of emergency and restoring freedom of the press. However, Perthes called on the international community to adopt a balanced

approach to Sudan and not block aid to the country for too long.

“In the aftermath of the coup, the decision by donors to pause international development assistance is having a significant impact on the livelihoods of the Sudanese people, and risks rolling back the hard-won achievements of the past two years,” he said.

In addition, he urged Sudanese authorities to guarantee meaningful participation by women in the political process. The message from women in the country is clear, he said: “There can be no going back on the hard-earned gains on women’s rights, and they are asking for the international community’s support in this regard.



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Sudan youth radio gagged for six weeks after coup
Sudan cut off from \$650 million of international funding after coup

[Sudan youth radio gagged for six weeks after coup](#)

Author:

Sat, 2021-12-11 01:43

KHARTOUM: A lively youth-run radio station, Sudan's 96.0 FM was muzzled for 46 days after authorities banished the channel from the airwaves following an Oct. 25 military coup.

"I felt like a person who had the ability to speak and suddenly stopped ... It's a painful feeling," Khaled Yehia, production manager of "Hala 96," told AFP from the station's headquarters overlooking the Nile in Khartoum. Sudan, with a long history of military coups, has undergone a fragile journey toward civilian rule since the 2019 ousting of former President Omar Bashir following mass street protests.

A joint military-civilian transitional government took over, but the troubled alliance was shattered on Oct. 25 when Gen. Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan launched a military coup that sparked international condemnation, mass protests and deadly crackdowns.

Despite the release of Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok from effective house arrest, several radio broadcasts were silenced.

The Information Ministry refused to renew the license of Monte Carlo radio's Arabic service, which broadcasts from Paris, while the BBC's Arabic service was banned.

I felt like a person who had the ability to speak and suddenly stopped ... It's a painful feeling.

Khaled Yehia, Production manager of Hala 96

"All of the other radio channels were back on air two weeks after the coup except for Hala 96, BBC and Monte Carlo (RMC)," said Abiy Abdel Halim, Hala's programming manager.

"When we asked the authorities for the reason, we were referred to a military official who said there were orders from above regarding the editorial line of the station," he added.

Hala 96 was finally allowed to go back on the air on Thursday.

Founded in 2014 under the heavy-handed rule of Bashir, Hala Radio hit the airwaves with daily programs alternating between politics, culture and sports.

"We started playing patriotic songs that would mobilize crowds," when the demonstrations against Bashir in December 2018 began, Abdel Halim said.

"And we weren't even stopped back then save for one time and only for 24 hours."

Boasting a staff of 35 on-air presenters, journalists, technicians and administrators all under 40, they mirror the demographics of Sudan. Youth represent about 68 percent of the country's 48 million-strong population.

On Wednesday, dozens of journalists protested in front of the radio channel's headquarters carrying banners with the words "Free Hala 96."

Throughout Bashir's dictatorial reign, Sudan ranked 174 out of 180 countries on Reporters Without Borders' Press Freedom Index. Following his ousting, it marginally improved to 159.

"What with propaganda, the internet being disconnected and the crackdown on journalists, this military coup has jeopardized the fragile gains from the

revolution,” the Paris-based press freedom group said last month. It described Sudan as a “very hostile environment” for media to operate. Last week in a report submitted to the Security Council, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urged Sudanese authorities to “respect freedom of speech and of the press.”



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Death toll in Sudan's Darfur tribal clashes hits 138: medics
Sudan cut off from \$650 million of international funding after coup

[Israeli troops kill Palestinian in West Bank clash](#)

Author:

Sat, 2021-12-11 01:28

RAMALLAH: Israeli troops shot and killed a Palestinian and injured others on Friday during clashes at a protest against Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian Health Ministry and medics said. The Israeli military said that hundreds of Palestinians had gathered in the

area, south of the Palestinian city of Nablus, burning tires and throwing rocks toward troops at the scene.

The troops “responded with riot dispersal means to restore order. We are aware of reports that a Palestinian was killed,” the military said in a statement.

The Palestinian killed was shot in the head, and died soon after being rushed to hospital, the Palestinian Health Ministry said in a statement. Four other Palestinians were injured by Israeli fire, and over 50 others suffered from tear gas inhalation, medics said.

The West Bank is among territories Israel captured in the 1967 Middle East war where Palestinians seek statehood.

Violence has simmered there since US-sponsored talks between the Palestinians and Israel broke down in 2014.

Palestinians have staged weekly protests in the village of Beita, south of Nablus, to voice anger at a nearby Israeli settler outpost, often leading to violent clashes with Israeli troops.

The settlers agreed to leave the outpost in July under an agreement with Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, following weeks of demonstrations by Palestinians lighting fires that often engulfed the outpost in smoke.

But many of the outpost’s buildings have remained, locked and under military guard.

Palestinians, who claim the land the outpost is on, have vowed to continue their demonstrations.

Most countries deem the settlements illegal.

Israel disputes this, citing biblical and political connections to the land, as well as its security needs.



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