

# Uproar over 'Hezbollah pressure' on Lebanese military judiciary

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BEIRUT: The families of those arrested in the Tayouneh violence that occurred on Oct. 14, along with the families of those arrested in the Khalde incident that took place in early August, are up in arms over what they allege are the "biased actions" of the judicial authorities.

The families have in recent days been reacting angrily about the lack of arrests of anyone associated with Hezbollah regarding either incident, "although the party and its gunmen were clearly involved in both."

The families are questioning whether the Lebanese military judiciary is turning a blind eye on those involved in the violence, or if the institution was shaken by the pressure Hezbollah exerts on every aspect of the state.

Clashes had erupted in Khalde, south of Beirut, between Hezbollah members and residents affiliated to Arab tribes known as the "Arabs of Khalde," during the funeral of Hezbollah official Ali Shibli. Two people died and several civilians were injured as a result.

The first acting military investigative judge, Judge Fadi Sawan, issued an indictment for the Khalde incident two days ago, referring 32 defendants, including 23 detainees from the Arabs of Khalde, to the military court for trial.

However, he disregarded all Hezbollah affiliates who were involved in the clashes.

Sawan requested that the defendants be tried for "forming an armed group with the intent of committing crimes against people, murder, attempted murder, inciting sectarian strife, vandalism and the use of unlicensed war weapons."

Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah said that what happened in Khalde was "attempted murder, this massacre was committed by a gang."

He demanded that "all those involved, whose faces and names are well-known, be held accountable."

The families reacted strongly to Nasrallah's narrative, asking him to "double-check his sources before slandering the Arab tribes."

The families of those arrested in the Khalde incident blocked the Khalde highway on Friday in protest against "focusing only on the tribes and leaving Hezbollah out of it."

They expressed anger toward the military court's biased actions, since "21 young men from Khalde are yet to be released, while not a single Hezbollah affiliate, whose names and addresses the security services know, has yet been detained."

Future Movement MP Rola Al-Tabash said: "The Arab tribes will not be a scapegoat. Why weren't the gunmen who attacked the tribes in their homes arrested?"

He added: "The judiciary stood against the oppressed, and with the armed oppressor, right under the state's nose."

Meanwhile, no indictment has yet been issued regarding the Tayouneh incident, which left seven dead and 32 injured.

The defense team of the detainees, most of whom are affiliated to the Lebanese Forces, submitted a complaint before the military prosecution that includes "photos and videos documenting the armed individuals who participated in the clashes but were not summoned for interrogation."

However, the military prosecution "did not decide on the complaint," according to the defense team, "and none of the mentioned individuals were summoned, and they are members of the Resistance Brigades, a faction affiliated with Hezbollah."

In the wake of the Tayouneh incident, Nasrallah publicly accused the Lebanese Forces of starting the clashes and demanded that the party's leadership be held accountable.

Consequently, Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea was summoned to testify before Lebanese army intelligence, but he did not comply.

The families of the detainees have been protesting in front of the military court. Antoine Saad, an attorney representing the detainees, said: "Ain Al-Remmaneh will not be a scapegoat."

The lawyer added: "The judge is not treating all parties involved in the incident fairly. What was announced about the investigations contradicts what happened in reality."

The former head of the State Shoura Council, Judge Shukri Sader, told Arab News: "Many have complained about the military court that is handling the cases of the Tayouneh and Khalde incidents. It is believed to be an island that operates on its own and that the Supreme Judicial Council has no control over it. Is it permissible to try the victim and exclude the perpetrators?"

He added: "The judiciary in Lebanon is a mess; the parties and the legislative and executive authorities are always exerting pressure on it. What is happening in the Beirut port blast probe is proof."

Sader said the judicial investigator "has been prevented from questioning defendants, particularly political and security officials. Many have attempted to remove him from the case and illegally get their hands on the

confidential investigations.”

Sader noted: “It is clear that many are trying to influence and pressure the military judiciary.

“To prevent what is happening, the military judiciary’s powers must be limited to only trying military personnel.

“Using the ‘terrorist acts’ pretext is abuse. The Tayouneh and Khalde incidents were not acts of terrorism, but a group of thugs roaming the streets, which is the product of warlords controlling the state.

“These people do not want a state of law, but rather a farm; a farm that has infiltrated the judiciary.”

Former Minister Ahmed Fatfat said that he is not surprised by the military judiciary avoiding arresting Hezbollah militants.

“Hezbollah has taken all state institutions hostage, including the military judiciary, and is trying to take over the civil judiciary as well. But civil judges are speaking up, namely Judge Tarek Bitar, who is leading the investigation into the Beirut port blast,” he told Arab News.

Fatfat added: “This has been happening for a long time. Have we forgotten about the pilot officer, Samer Hanna, who was killed in 2008 while his helicopter was flying over an area where Hezbollah was stationed in Sejoud? At the time, Hezbollah sent a man with a hand disability to the military court and said that he was the one who shot down the helicopter.

“This man later admitted that he was legally mandated by Hezbollah to say that he did it. The case was closed there and then, and Hezbollah was never held accountable.”

He noted: “Some Lebanese parties refuse to admit that Lebanon is under Iranian occupation.

“As long as these parties provide cover for Hezbollah by sharing power, nothing will change. Hezbollah controls the country, but it does not bear responsibility.

“People criticize the government and the president and do not realize that Hezbollah is the source of the crisis.”

Fatfat stressed: “We should let Hezbollah rule alone and bear the responsibility.

“We should all join the political opposition against it and only then will Hezbollah’s true colors be revealed.

“I don’t know why the Free Patriotic Movement and even Prime Minister Najib Mikati are clinging to power.

“What for? I don’t believe they fear another vacuum because the government is

already disrupted by a Hezbollah decision.”



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Saudi Arabia classifies Lebanon's Al-Qard Al-Hassan as 'terrorist entity' for financing Hezbollah

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## [Yemen government troops foil Houthi attacks outside Marib province](#)

Author:

Sat, 2021-11-06 23:11

AL-MUKALLA: Yemen government troops pushed back Houthi attacks and scored limited advances in contested areas south and west of the central province of Marib, local sources and media reports said on Saturday.

Fighting broke out on Friday when the Houthis attacked troops on hilly terrain overlooking the Al-Amud area, south of Marib, and around a strategic

road that links the central city of Marib with Juba district.

With the help of the Arab coalition, the troops and allied tribesmen repelled the assault and later attacked the retreating Houthi forces.

By Saturday afternoon, government troops announced the liberation of small locations and villages in Juba after killing and wounding dozens of Houthis.

Yemen's Defense Ministry said coalition warplanes had carried out many airstrikes, targeting Houthi gatherings and military equipment.

In the west, heavy clashes also broke out when troops repelled Houthi attacks in Serwah district.

The current round of fighting started in February, when the Houthis resumed an offensive to seize control of the energy-rich city of Marib, the government's remaining bastion in the northern half of the country.

Despite the deaths of hundreds of civilians and suffering heavy casualties in Marib province, the Houthis have ignored local and international calls for de-escalation and instead intensified their ground attacks and shelling of government-controlled areas.

Army commanders and senior government officials in Marib have vowed to keep fighting the militia and foil its attempts to undermine security in the city.

On Saturday, the Marib Security Committee, chaired by Governor Sultan Al-Aradah, thanked the Arab coalition for its "unlimited" military logistics and air support to government forces battling the Houthis outside the city, ordering local security and military units to remain on high alert to counter their attacks.

Al-Aradah said the coalition's airstrikes had supported troops, destroyed the Houthis' military reinforcements, and neutralized their military capabilities on the battlefield.

The government has accused the Houthis of increasing their indoctrination and recruitment of children in areas under their control and of sending them to fight troops.

"(The) Houthi militia intensified recruitment of children under 18 to compensate (for) its depleting fighters, due to unprecedented losses it incurred since its escalation on Marib fronts, in the widest crimes of recruiting children in combat operations in the history of humanity," Yemen's Information Minister Muammar Al-Eryani tweeted.



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US, UN call for de-escalation in Yemen's Marib  
Arab coalition destroys two ballistic missile sites in Saada and Amran in Yemen

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## [Drought gives rebirth to Kurdish village in northern Iraq](#)

Sat, 2021-11-06 02:28

DOHUK: The ruins of an Iraqi Kurdish village abandoned 36 years ago and submerged under the waters of a dam, have suddenly resurfaced thanks to sinking water levels in the drought-hit country.

The construction of the dam, 2 km north of the town of Dohuk, started in 1985 and prompted the resettlement of Guiri Qasrouka's 50 families.

Guiri Qasrouka was then swallowed by the waters which serve to irrigate surrounding farmland.

“Because of the drought” caused by scant rainfall in Iraq, the Dohuk dam’s water level dropped by seven meters in September and brought the village back to the surface, explained the dam’s director, Farhad Taher.

## BACKGROUND

**The construction of the dam, 2 km north of the town of Dohuk, started in 1985 and prompted the resettlement of Guiri Qasrouka’s 50 families.**

“This phenomenon is certainly linked to climate change,” Taher said, adding that the ruins had also reappeared in 2009, 1999 and 1992.

Before the winter rains set in and the village goes under again, visitors on foot can now view the stone walls of a Guiri Qasrouka home that is still standing.

The algae-splattered and shell-indentated ruins are set against a backdrop of the towering Kurdish mountains of northern Iraq.

With financial compensation, villagers, who had also fled between 1974 and 1976 during a Kurdish uprising, built a new Guiri Qasrouka nearby.



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## [Pope to revisit island of Lesbos on trip to Cyprus, Greece](#)

Author:

Sat, 2021-11-06 02:14

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis will visit Cyprus and Greece next month, the Vatican said on Friday, returning to the island of Lesbos, a major port of entry for migrants into Europe.

His 35th trip abroad comes just five months after the Argentine pontiff, who turns 85 in December, was hospitalized following surgery on his colon.

"Pope Francis will travel to Cyprus from 2 to 4 December, visiting the city of Nicosia, and to Greece from Dec. 4 to 6, visiting Athens and the island of Lesbos," spokesman Matteo Bruni said in a brief statement.

The Argentine pontiff has traveled widely since he took office in 2013, and although his schedule was suspended by the coronavirus pandemic, this year he has already made a historic trip to Iraq and visits to the Hungarian capital and Slovakia.

Migration has been a key theme – his first trip as pope, in July 2013, was to the Italian island of Lampedusa, the landing point for migrants crossing the Mediterranean from North Africa.

While there, he criticized the "globalization of indifference" over migrants. In April 2016, he visited Lesbos at the height of Europe's migrant crisis, where he paid a trip to Moria, the continent's largest migrant camp that was destroyed by fire last year.

Lesbos has for years been the main entry point into Europe for asylum seekers.

Josif Printezis, the Catholic archbishop for Greek islands in the Aegean, said earlier this month that the pope "wishes to see the evolution of the refugee issue, the fruits of Greece's efforts and make a humanitarian statement."

He would say "that the Church and all European peoples care about refugees, and that the weight borne by Greece should be recognized by the other European countries," Printezis said.

After his last visit to Lesbos, Francis took three Syrian families from the camp home with him, in what he described as a humanitarian gesture.

The Vatican said later that the group, selected on the grounds that their paperwork was sufficiently in order, had settled into life in Rome and started to learn Italian.

The last papal visit to the Mediterranean island of Cyprus was by Benedict XVI in 2010.

Several other visits are in the works.

The pope said in October he intends to visit Oceania for the first time next year, without saying where, and also had “in my head” trips to Congo and the rest of Hungary.

Speaking to Argentine news agency Telam, he said he was overdue a trip to Papua New Guinea and East Timor originally planned for 2020.

The pope had expressed hope he could fly to Glasgow for this month’s UN talks on climate change, another subject close to his heart, but in the end he sent only a video message.

Despite his busy schedule, there are signs that his age is catching up with him.

On returning from a grueling three-day trip to Iraq, the pope admitted he “felt a lot more tired” than during other visits.



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Greek police move homeless migrants to new Lesbos camp

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[Israel troops kill Palestinian](#)

# teenager in West Bank

Author:

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JERUSALEM: A 13-year-old Palestinian was shot and fatally wounded on Friday by Israeli troops in the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian Health Ministry said.

It said Mohammed Daadas died in hospital after being shot in the stomach during clashes between Palestinian protesters and Israeli forces in Deir Al-Hatab village, east of Nablus.

The Israeli military did not immediately comment on the report.

Two other Palestinians were injured Friday in clashes in Beita, another West Bank village where locals have struggled for months to dislodge Israeli settlers and the military from a hilltop.

The clashes come days after Israel announced it would advance plans for 3,000 more homes for Jewish settlers in the West Bank, despite international criticism.

Israel has also advanced plans to build about 1,300 homes for Palestinians in the West Bank, but critics see the move as an attempt to parry global condemnation of settlement construction.

Palestinians eye the West Bank as part of a future state, while hard-line Israelis including Prime Minister Naftali Bennett say it is a heartland of Jewish history.

Israel seized the West Bank and east Jerusalem in the 1967 Middle East war. Hundreds of thousands of Israelis have since moved into settlements that most of the international community regard as illegal.

Bennett has ruled out formal peace talks with the Palestinian Authority, saying he prefers to focus on economic improvements.

Bennett, a hard-line former settler, presides over a motley alliance of fellow nationalists, centrists, liberals and the first Arab party to ever sit in an Israeli government.

Israeli MPs approved the government's two-year budget on Friday, bringing stability to a shaky coalition of ideological opposites that would otherwise have collapsed, returning Israel to years of political turmoil.

"The budget we passed last night is excellent! I am mostly proud that it brings us a true and timely response to the needs of Israel 2022," Bennett tweeted after the package was approved.

The coalition needed to pass a budget by Nov. 14 to avoid a fifth election in three years.

None of the 61 members of the coalition defected through nearly 36 straight hours of voting.

Roughly 600 separate votes on individual spending measures were required to pass the budget that sets expenditure for this year at 609 billion shekels (\$194 billion) and for next year at 573 billion shekels.

Speaking on Thursday after the approval of the 2021 measures, Bennett boasted: "After years of chaos, we have formed a government, we have conquered delta (variant of the coronavirus) and now, praise God, we have passed a budget for Israel."

The country's largest-selling newspaper, Yediot Aharonot, said Bennett's

government had finally attained “stability and a horizon,” and would no longer “topple in the slightest wind.”

Mansour Abbas, whose Raam party forms part of Bennett’s governing coalition, said it was the first time an Arab party had played a key role in the adoption of a budget.

“This is an important step in the political integration process” of Israel’s Arab minority, he said.

Approval of the two-year budget gives the coalition stability until 2023, when Bennett is due to turn the premiership over to centrist Foreign Minister Yair Lapid.

Suggestions that the government might fall before Lapid gets to take over could have unsettled the coalition’s left wing, analysts said.

“Coalition of change,” Lapid tweeted after the budget vote.

Israeli media reported attempts by the opposition, led by former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s right-wing Likud party, to peel away coalition lawmakers to vote against the budget.

Instead, the approved a budget that will increase military spending and aim to narrow gaps between the Jewish majority and Arab minority, among other priorities.



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Benjamin Netanyahu’s hopes for a comeback dim as Israel passes budget