

# Woman dies in crash, run over repeatedly on pitch-black Lebanese highway

Author:

Thu, 2021-10-21 20:34

BEIRUT: Lebanon on Thursday woke to news of one of the bleakest moments brought on by the country's energy crisis, after the smashed-up body of a female Ethiopian worker was found on Al-Zahrani Highway, which links Beirut to the south.

According to a security source, she was killed in a crash during the night but was run over again and again as drivers could not see her body in the dark.

People took to the streets for the second day in a row to protest their ever-worsening conditions, especially the uncontrolled rise in fuel prices and its repercussions on everyday life.

On Thursday, Banque du Liban said a meeting was held with the executive director at the International Monetary Fund during which the government's priorities were discussed, especially with regard to a "comprehensive economic project."

The IMF's Mahmoud Mohieldin described his visit to Lebanon and his meetings with officials as "successful, with a positive outcome, compared to previous visits."

He said: "I saw a better consensus over priorities and a common discourse between the parties regarding the economic crisis and its social effects. The meetings reflect the four priorities that constitute the pillars of future dealings with the IMF, and a framework for the negotiations that the government will carry out with the BDL in the coming weeks. It is important to consider a timeframe."

Mohieldin stressed the importance of unifying the exchange rate which was, he added, usually a product of comprehensive economic reforms that were being initiated.

"A law to control remittances from inside and outside the country needs to be adopted, along with structural reforms and emphasis on the issue of governance, transparency and sector-related priorities, determined by the state.

"If we succeed in developing a good framework to present to the IMF in the coming weeks, it can then be presented to the IMF's board of directors, and the form of the program and the financing framework associated with it will thus be determined, in a way that will reinstate confidence in the Lebanese

economy and restore financial flows," he said.

But the Cabinet has yet to convene as the ministers of Hezbollah and the Amal Movement are refusing to attend a session until Judge Tarek Bitar, who is leading the investigation into last year's Beirut Port blast, is dismissed and until the deadly street violence from earlier this month is investigated.

The government is also supposed to decide on the ration card for the country's poorest and most vulnerable, coinciding with the lifting of fuel subsidies.

Prime Minister Najib Mikati on Thursday contacted several officials following statements from the Culture Minister Mohammad Mortada, who is affiliated with the Shiite parties Hezbollah and the Amal Movement, about Shiite ministers resigning from the government.

Mikati also met President Michel Aoun.

According to a ministerial source, their meeting revolved around "finding a formula" that would lead to the resumption of government work "under the pressure of stressful living conditions."

"All parties realize that the uncontrolled rise in prices will implode in the street, and the government bears the responsibility to implement rescue measures and secure the required international assistance," the source added.

Mikati chaired a committee meeting to address the repercussions of the financial crisis on public utilities.

The committee discussed existing obligations and an agreement to provide a financial, contractual and legal equation that allowed securing public utility services and the continuation or termination of business in a balanced and fair manner that took into account urgent factors.

The majority of contractors that signed with the Lebanese state have stopped their work, including waste removal companies, because the cost was calculated on the official exchange rate of LBP1,507 to the US dollar. But the Lebanese national currency trades at around LBP20,000 to the dollar on the black market.

During the meeting, it was decided that the first Cabinet session would announce measures that would respond to the living crisis, specifically raising the daily transport allowance, and approving a monthly advance as social assistance for workers in public institutions, government hospitals and schools, within an integrated project.



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IMF official hopes Lebanon program talks can start before new year  
Lebanon elite united against Beirut port blast probe seen as survival threat

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## [Tunisia president promises 'dialogue' over political system](#)

Thu, 2021-10-21 20:08

TUNIS: Tunisia's president said on Tuesday he would launch a "national dialogue" on changing electoral law and the political system, but gave no detail on how he would allay international concerns about his seizure of near total power.

President Kais Saied assumed executive authority in July then last month brushed aside most of the constitution. Critics called the moves a coup and the European Union this week joined other donors in calling for a restoration of democratic order.

In a speech streamed on the presidential Facebook page, Saied said the

dialogue would include the country's young people, but kept up a defiant tone.

He said the discussions would not include "those who stole the people's money and traitors". He also criticised what he called foreign interference, telling world powers to "return smuggled Tunisian money to European and international banks".

Critics say his moves have cast doubt over the democratic gains of Tunisia's 2011 revolution. But his supporters have hailed the changes, saying they have reclaimed the revolution from an entrenched, corrupt elite.

Saied announced a new government this month but gave no indication he was ready to relinquish control. Under rules announced in September, the new cabinet ultimately answers to him rather than the new prime minister, Najla Bouden.



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# Blast at US outpost in Syria, no American injuries – US officials

Wed, 2021-10-20 23:51

WASHINGTON: A US outpost in southern Syria was attacked on Wednesday, but there were no reports of any American casualties from the blast, US officials told Reuters.

The officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said it was too early to say who was responsible for the attack.

One of the officials said it was believed to have been a drone attack.

The garrison, known as Tanf, is located in a strategic area near Syria's Tanf border crossing with Iraq and Jordan.

The garrison was first set up when Islamic State fighters controlled eastern Syria bordering Iraq but since the militants were driven out, it is seen as part of the larger US strategy to contain Iran's military reach in the region.

Tanf is the only position with a significant US military presence in Syria outside the Kurdish-controlled north.

While it is not common for attacks on the US troops at the outpost, Iranian-backed forces have frequently attacked American troops with drones and rockets in eastern Syria and Iraq



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Syrian army shelling kills at least 11 civilians

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## [Yemen counters Houthi attacks in Shabwa province](#)

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Wed, 2021-10-20 23:34

AL-MUKALLA: Yemen's army troops and allied tribesmen on Wednesday launched counterattacks in the southern province of Shabwa with the aim of liberating three strategic areas that the Iran-backed Houthis captured during the past couple of weeks.

Local officials said hundreds of Yemeni troops attacked Houthis in the district of Bayhan and managed to recapture a military base along with a large swathe of land in the district after killing and capturing dozens of rebels.

Rashad Al-Mekhlafi, a military official at Yemen's Armed Forces Guidance Department, told Arab News on Wednesday that military units from Shabwa's capital Attaq, Abyan province, along with security forces also took part in the offensive in Shabwa.

"This is a well-prepared military offensive," Al-Mekhlafi said. "There are great advances for the government forces."

After months of relentless attacks on government forces, the Houthis have recently managed to seize control of three areas in Shabwa and the besieged Abedia district in the province of Marib. The advancement put them closer to oil and gas fields and Marib city, the main goal of their continuing offensive in the province.

In Marib, dozens of combatants were killed in fierce fighting between government forces and the Houthis outside the city of Marib as the Arab coalition intensified airstrikes in the province.

Al-Mekhlafi said that at least three Houthi field leaders were killed in fighting with government forces or in the coalition's airstrikes. Several army officers and tribesmen were also killed in the fighting.

The focus of Wednesday's fighting was on the Juba and Hareb districts, south of Marib city, where government forces pushed to expel the Houthis from areas they controlled during their latest incursions.

Yemeni Prime Minister Maen Abdul Malik pledged full support to army troops and tribesmen who have fought off relentless Houthi attacks in Marib. He also urged international aid organizations to help displaced people and civilians

who come under Houthi missiles, drones, and ground strikes in Marib province. The official Yemen News Agency (SABA) reported that the prime minister called the governor of Marib, Sultan Al-Arada, to express the government's support with Marib's authorities in their battles against Houthis. He also praised their handling of the desperate humanitarian situation in the city of Marib, which hosts more than 2 million internally displaced people. Abdul Malik accused the Houthis of committing genocides in Abedia and other areas in the province. The Yemeni prime minister vowed to throw full weight behind government forces in order to win the "existential" battle in Marib. Thousands of combatants and civilians have been killed in Marib province since early this year when the Houthis resumed a major military offensive to control Marib city, the government's last stronghold in the northern half of the country.



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# UN Security Council condemns Houthi violations in Yemen, Saudi Arabia

Wed, 2021-10-20 23:17

LONDON: The UN Security Council on Wednesday condemned the threat posed by the Iran-backed Houthi militia to navigation in the Red Sea and its increasing attacks on commercial ships off the coast of Yemen. The Security Council called on the Houthis to reduce their military escalation in Marib, lift its blockade on nearby Abedia, and for an immediate nationwide cease-fire.

The Houthi militia has stepped up its offensive to take control of the strategic city of Marib in recent weeks, following a lull in September. The UN Security Council also condemned the Houthis' recruitment and exploitation of children in the conflict, some of whom are subjected to sexual abuse

The top UN body also expressed its concern about the faltering peace efforts in Yemen and called on all parties to constructively implement the Riyadh Agreement.

It said it welcomes and supports the Saudi initiative to end the war in Yemen and expressed its full support for the efforts of UN envoy to Yemen Hans Grundberg, calling on all parties to cooperate with him without preconditions.

The Security Council also condemned the Houthis' attempts to target Abha International Airport in Saudi Arabia using explosive-laden drones. Member countries also implicitly warned the Houthi militia against using Hodeidah port for military purposes, and renewed its warning of the risk posed by the lack of maintenance of a floating oil tanker moored in the Red Sea. They reminded the Houthis of their responsibility for the Safer tanker. The Security Council stressed its full commitment to the unity, sovereignty and independence of Yemen, and emphasized the need to respect the arms embargo on Yemen.

It also expressed its support for the return of the Yemeni government to the interim capital, Aden, while also condemning an assassination attempt on the governor of Aden and the Yemeni minister of agriculture on Oct. 10.

Saudi Arabia's ambassador to the UN Abdallah Al-Mouallimi welcomed the Security Council statement and said it constitutes a strong condemnation of the Houthi militia, Al Arabiya reported.

He also welcomed the statement on Abha airport and said he hoped that the UN envoy to Yemen has benefited from the council's statement.





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