

# Lebanon's former PM Diab says he gave up shares in company mentioned in 'Pandora Papers'

Author:

Reuters

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Mon, 2021-10-04 19:34

BEIRUT: Lebanon's former prime minister Hassan Diab said on Monday he had given up shares in a company he was linked to in a leak of financial documents, and denied wrongdoing.

A statement by his office said he had taken part in founding the company in 2015 and owned 17 shares, but that the firm had no activity since then and he had since resigned his management role and sold his stake.

A Lebanese news organization, Daraj, was one of a number of international media outlets that reported the "Pandora Papers," a set of leaked documents purported to reveal offshore transactions involving global political and business figures.

Reuters has not verified the reports or the documents. The use of offshore companies is not illegal and not evidence of wrongdoing on its own, but the news organizations that published the trove said such arrangements could be intended to hide transactions from tax collectors or other authorities.

Daraj reported that top political figures in Lebanon, including Prime Minister Najib Mikati, had embraced offshore havens.

"Is founding a company against the law?" Diab said, adding that he reserved the right to sue anyone who tries to defame him.



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## [Israeli PM discloses Mossad mission to find information about long-missing airman](#)

Author:

Reuters

ID:

1633364550236686700

Mon, 2021-10-04 19:24

JERUSALEM: Israeli Mossad intelligence agents carried out a “wide-ranging and bold” operation last month to try to uncover the fate of Ron Arad, a long-missing Israeli airman, Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said on Monday. Arad, an air force navigator, bailed out of a warplane that went down over Lebanon during a 1986 bombing mission. Initially taken prisoner by Lebanese Amal guerrillas, he is widely assumed to no longer be alive. The aircraft’s

pilot was rescued.

In a speech on government policy at the opening of parliament's winter session, Bennett said: "Last month, the women and men of the Mossad embarked on an operation aimed at finding new information about the fate and whereabouts of Ron Arad. "It was a complex, wide-ranging and bold operation. That is all that can be said right now." Arad's fate has long generated strong public interest in Israel, whose leaders have pledged over the years to discover what happened to him.



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# Egypt can defend itself, says defense minister

Author:

Mon, 2021-10-04 00:21

CAIRO: Egypt boasts an advanced armament system and is capable of defending itself, said Defense Minister Lt. Gen. Mohammed Zaki during a military exercise.

At the final stage of the Raad-32 maneuver with live ammunition, which was carried out by units from the Western Military Region in cooperation with the main branches of the armed forces, he added that the army also has professional personnel capable of carrying out all tasks, whatever the circumstances.

Zaki praised the high level of the exercise, indicating a high combat readiness and training that led to professionalism in carrying out the planned tasks.

The senior officer stated that the maneuver included the management of combat operations to develop the attack with the assistance of the country's air assets.

He stated that the military drills also witnessed the armored elements and mechanized infantry developing the attack, penetrating hostile defenses, engaging and destroying them in complete harmony between all elements of the battle formation.

He added that the final stage of the Raad-32 drills revealed the high standard of Egyptian forces' field and combat skills and the use of the latest control and guidance systems for various weapons and equipment.

Zaki said that the maneuver showed the combat readiness of the participating elements and their skill in using the latest means of cooperation and technical and administrative control to carry out both planned and emergency tasks during the exercise.



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## [Tunisians take to the streets to back president's anti-corruption drive](#)

Author:

Mon, 2021-10-04 00:11

JEDDAH: Thousands of marchers took to the streets of Tunisia on Sunday in demonstrations of support for President Kais Saied's drive to rid the country of corrupt politicians.

Crowds on Bourguiba Avenue, the main thoroughfare in central Tunis, chanted "We are all Kais Saied, we are all Tunisia" and "The people want the dissolution of parliament."

As well as Tunis, there were simultaneous marches in the industrial city of Sfax, the seaside town of Sousse, and Sidi Bouzid, Gafsa and Monastir.

With up to 5,000 demonstrators in Tunis alone, the event dwarfed minor protests last week against what the president's critics call a "power grab."

Saied assumed executive power under the constitution on July 25, when he sacked the prime minister, suspended parliament and began ruling by decree.

The moves command overwhelming public support among Tunisians frustrated by corruption and economic incompetence in a political class dominated by the Islamist Ennahda party, whose leader Rached Ghannouchi was parliamentary Speaker.

## **BACKGROUND**

President Kais Saied, elected in late 2019, has said his aim was to save Tunisia from 'imminent peril' during an economic crisis aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Saied, elected in late 2019, has said his aim was to save Tunisia from "imminent peril" during an economic crisis aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Official unemployment has soared to almost 18 percent and the economy has grown by only 0.6 percent in the past decade.

Last week the president appointed university lecturer Najla Bouden as Tunisia's first female prime minister, and directed her to form a Cabinet to free Tunisia of political corruption.

"Saied wants to implement reforms and we back him," Noura ben Fadhel, a civil servant, said at the Tunis rally. "I came to support change to end the current decline. We're fed up with it. It's been going on for 10 years and that's enough."

Elyes Ouni, 28, who campaigned for Saied in 2019, said: "July 25 ended a faulty system. Now it's in the morgue and today we're going to bury it." He blamed parliament for the "deterioration of the country."

Another demonstrator, Noura Bensalah, said: "We demand that Saied dissolve Ennahda and the political parties involved in corruption."



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Tunisia's first woman prime minister raises spirits despite power grab

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## [Algeria escalates France dispute with flight ban](#)

Mon, 2021-10-04 00:16

PARIS: The diplomatic discord between Algeria and France deepened Sunday after Algiers banned French military planes from its airspace, its latest response to a row over visas and critical comments from President Emmanuel Macron.

France's jets regularly fly over the former French colony to reach the Sahel region of western Africa, where its soldiers are helping to battle jihadist insurgents as part of its Barkhane operation.

"This morning when we filed flight plans for two planes, we learned that the Algerians had stopped flights over their territory by French military

planes,” said an army spokesman, Col. Pascal Ianni.

He said the decision had “slightly impacted” supply flights but “does not affect our operations” in the Sahel.

But the move heightened tensions that had already flared on Saturday when the Algerian government recalled its ambassador to France, citing “inadmissible interference” in its affairs.

According to French and Algerian media reports, Macron told descendants of figures in Algeria’s 1954-62 war for independence that the country was ruled by a “political-military system” that had “totally re-written” its history.

“You can see that the Algerian system is tired, it has been weakened by the Hirak,” he added, referring to the pro-democracy movement that forced Abdelaziz Bouteflika from power in 2019 after two decades at the helm.

Macron’s office did not deny the reported comments, but said the president was discussing the war in Algeria with French youths and answering questions, not giving an official interview.

Ianni said there had been no official notification of the flight ban, and the French Foreign Ministry, contacted by AFP, declined to comment.

Last year, the Algerian government criminalized the dissemination of what it considers “false news” that harms national unity.

Saturday’s ambassador recall was the second time it had done so, having taken a similar response in May 2020 after French media broadcast a documentary about the Hirak movement.

Algerian officials have cracked down on efforts to revive the pro-democracy protests, and rights groups say dozens of people linked to it have been jailed in recent months.

Algiers was also angered last week after France said it would sharply reduce the number of visas it grants to citizens of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia.

Paris said the decision had been made necessary by the former colonies’ failure to do enough to allow illegal migrants in France to be returned.

When a French court denies a person’s visa request, authorities must still secure a consular travel pass from his or her home country in order to forcibly expel them, a document that Paris says Algiers, Rabat and Tunis are largely refusing to provide.

Macron has reportedly ordered the number of visa deliveries to Algeria and Morocco to be halved from 2020 levels, and by a third for Tunisia.

The Algerian Foreign Ministry summoned France’s ambassador Francois Gouyette on Wednesday to make a “formal protest” of the visa ruling.





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Algeria recalls ambassador to France as tensions rise  
Algeria summons French ambassador over visa restriction decision