

Thousands of Yemeni children brainwashed in Houthi 'summer camps'

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ALEXANDRIA: Iran-backed Houthis have arranged graduation ceremonies for thousands of children who joined their summer camps this year in the densely populated areas of Yemen under their control.

The biggest ceremony was organized in Sanaa, where hundreds of children, their relatives and Houthi officials showed up to see the graduating children display their skills.

The Houthis claim that for 45 days, the children were educated, trained and "immunized from false cultures."

But Yemeni government officials and human rights activists have accused the group of using the camps to indoctrinate Yemeni children with sectarian ideologies and antisemitic propaganda, before sending them to the battlefields.

"These camps prepare children and adolescents to be part of the war machine," Ahmed Al-Qurashi, director of SEYAJ Organization for the Protection of Children, told Arab News.

During the ceremonies in Sanaa, Saada, Hajjah, Hodeidah and Al-Bayda, children in military attire displayed their combat skills and chanted slogans cursing the US and Israel, blaming them for starting the war on Yemen.

"We tell the world that the Yemeni youth are at the forefront of the ranks in fighting off brutal aggression. These people say no to the damned culture of the US and Israel," a Houthi figure said at a Sanaa gathering, as nearby children carried the movement's slogan and pictures of leaders before their relatives.

Parents in Sanaa warn that the Houthis blacklist families who do not encourage children to join recruitment camps during the school summer break.

"There is a clear brainwashing process going on for our children, and we cannot do anything or would be accused of being mercenaries. Those camps and centers turn our children into soldiers loyal to Abdul Malik Al-Houthi," Mohammed, a middle-aged father of a child who joined the Houthi camps, told the Al-Sahwa news site.

He added that he later had to re-educate his child at home in order to correct some of the Houthi-taught radical ideologies.

Jamel, an 11-year-old student, told the same news site that he “learned in the Houthi camps the true Islam and was educated about expressing loyalty to the Houthis and hating the US and Israel.”

When the Houthis first demanded people in their areas send their children to the summer camps, Yemeni officials and activists quickly warned people against joining the events, and said that the group was “indoctrinating children into joining the battlefields and hating Yemenis and the West.”

However, SEYAJ Organization said in a report that the Houthis have recruited more than 500,000 children through summer camps in 2021.

“SEYAJ is concerned that large numbers of children will be involved in the fighting. We call on the Houthi group to immediately stop the recruitment and involvement of children in the armed conflict, and the use of schools for military purposes.”

Al-Qurashi said that the Houthis woo children into joining recruitment centers and summer camps through financial incentives.

Families that send their children to the battlefields or summer camps are given money and food baskets. The recruited children are usually given the nickname Mujahid.

“Those titles give teenagers big social status and they think that they are important,” he said.

A joint report released by the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor and SAM for Rights and Liberties in February said that the Houthis turned schools and other educational facilities into military camps, and modified textbooks with texts that incite violence and glorify the movement.

“Houthis also deliberately used schools and educational facilities for military purposes and used the education system to incite violence and indoctrinate students with the group’s ideologies. They did this by giving lectures with sectarian propaganda contents and promoting their military victories,” the report said.



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[Surging poverty in Gaza Strip as residents decry Israeli siege](#)

Author:

Mon, 2021-08-16 23:17

GAZA CITY: More than two months after a fierce 11-day war between Palestinian factions and Israel, 2 million Palestinians in the small coastal Gaza Strip are still suffering from the repercussions of the violence.

Severe restrictions imposed by Israel since then – deepening the siege imposed in Gaza since mid-2007 – have caused hardship for residents in the occupied territory, despite the end of violent clashes in May.

Egypt, which has acted as a mediator in the conflict, succeeded in putting an end to the killings and destruction by reaching a cease-fire agreement.

However, Cairo's efforts have not yet been successful in restoring the situation in Gaza to what it was before the outbreak of the war.

Israel has attributed its continued siege and ban on reconstruction in Gaza to Hamas' detainment of Israeli prisoners.

Through these restrictions, Israel is pressuring Hamas – which has ruled Gaza since its seizure by armed force in 2007 – to release four Israelis, including two who entered Gaza under unknown circumstances, and two soldiers who were captured during the 2014 war and whose fates are unknown.

Hamas insists on releasing them within the framework of a prisoner exchange agreement similar to the 2011 Shalit deal, through which hundreds of Palestinian prisoners were released from Israeli prisons.

Officials in Gaza said that the strict Israeli restrictions are resulting in “negative effects on all aspects of life,” and have led to an “unprecedented rise in poverty and unemployment rates.”

During the past few weeks, Israel gradually allowed an increase in imported items to the Gaza Strip, but the most important materials still forbidden are construction supplies.

This prevents the start of a reconstruction process and the resumption of infrastructure projects funded by international groups.

Rami Abu Al-Rish, an official for the Palestinian Ministry of Economy, said that the industrial, commercial and agricultural sectors in Gaza are “paralyzed.”

This is reflected in the lives of Gazans, with the unemployment rate rising to 75 percent amid surging poverty, said Abu Al-Rish.

“Thousands of workers in various sectors lost their livelihoods, whether due to the destruction of commercial and industrial facilities, or the suspension of production due to the blockade and restrictions,” he told Arab News

Abu Al-Rish said that “the horizon is blocked” and the situation in Gaza was “getting worse day by day.”

There is “no indication of a breakthrough soon,” especially for reconstruction and repair, he added.

Israel is also preventing funds from a \$30 million Qatari grant from entering the territory.

The monthly fund is intended for poor families and temporary employment, and normally arrived in Gaza accompanied by Qatari Ambassador Mohammed Al-Emadi of the Qatari Reconstruction Committee.

The Gaza Municipality – the largest in the Gaza Strip – has complained about the continued suspension of work on infrastructure projects.

A member of the Municipal Council, Hishem Skaik, said that 13 infrastructure projects were halted after the outbreak of the war, as Israel prevented the entry of building materials and materials for completing infrastructure projects.

The tightening of restrictions at the Kerem Shalom commercial crossing in Gaza has also caused delays for about 16 other infrastructure projects.

The projects were fully funded about two years ago, and all the relevant contracts have been signed, Skaik said, but work cannot begin.

He added that the municipality did not receive funding to repair the recent damage to infrastructure as a result of the war, which has been estimated at \$20 million.

The war on the Gaza Strip lasted for 11 days, leaving 243 Palestinians dead, thousands of housing units destroyed and infrastructure in rubble, with total losses of \$479 million in damage.

Samir Al-Attar, a clothing merchant in Gaza, said that summer holidays and weddings are the "most prominent times in our trade," but that this year "was the worst, as a result of the war and the continued closure of the Kerem Shalom crossing."

He told Arab News: "The economic reality in general in the Gaza Strip has been suffering for years, and many sectors have been hurt during the recent period as a result of the tightening in the entry of goods, which has been reflected in other sectors to which goods are allowed to enter as well, as a result of weak purchasing power."

There are daily reports that Palestinian factions led by Hamas intend to ramp up activity along the border between the Gaza Strip and Israel with marches and night activities, as a means of putting pressure on Israel to ease the siege and allow the entry of the Qatari funding.

Hamas warned through its spokesman Abdel-Latif Al-Qanou that "more restrictions and tightening on Gaza will only generate an explosion in the face of the occupation."



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Israel to relax Gaza curbs amid security calm

[Attempts to destroy Egypt were thwarted, says president](#)

Author:

Mon, 2021-08-16 02:30

CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi said attempts to destroy the country had been thwarted.

In a speech at an event on Saturday, El-Sisi said that this outcome was thanks to the Egyptian people who had “confronted attempts to sabotage the country.”

“We were expected to reach the stage of ruin and fight amongst each other,” he told the audience.

“Those who were fighting us did not know that they were a tool for destroying

the country, and the Egyptians were the ones who confronted these with their sons who were martyred in defense of the homeland, and contributed to the process of correction and change.”

He addressed the people present and said: “Through you, I salute the whole Egyptian people.

“I am always frank and honest, and I speak according to my understanding and knowledge and to the honesty that I need to talk to people.”

He said there was a need to rearrange and distribute the package of support measures provided to people in light of the state’s orientation toward development and progress.

I am addressing issues that no one has addressed. I am taking the difficult path and not the easy one.

President Abdel Fattah EL-Sisi

The value of annual support measures was more than EGP275 billion (\$17.5 billion) and such support would reach around EGP3 trillion within 10 years, he added.

“I am addressing issues that no one has addressed. I am taking the difficult path and not the easy one. The government is working with the aim of developing the state.”

He stressed that any state official was required to make the greatest effort to change the current situation.

He also said that the development of the Egyptian countryside would cost the state from EGP700 billion to EGP800 billion in three years.



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[Houthi court adjourns trial of abducted model due to absent judge](#)

Sun, 2021-08-15 23:42

ALEXANDRIA: A Houthi-controlled court on Sunday adjourned the trial of an abducted model and her colleague because a judge was absent, a legal source told Arab News.

During Sunday's hearing, the judge was supposed to decide on whether to accept or reject the defense and legal arguments from the model's lawyer.

"The women were brought to the court for trial, but unfortunately Judge Osama

Al-Junaid did not come and the court decided to adjourn the trial to Sunday," the lawyer said, referring to Entesar Al-Hammadi and her colleague.

The model's defense attorney is demanding her release on bail.

Since her abduction from a Sanaa street in February, 20-year old Al-Hammadi has faced charges of violating Islamic dress codes, trading in drugs and being involved in prostitution.

She has denied all the charges and accused the Houthis of punishing her for refusing to work with them.

The Houthis refused her request and ignored international calls to free her, instead putting her in solitary confinement in a special ward for "prostitutes," a move that pushed her into trying to take her own life.

The Houthis banned her lawyer Khaled Mohammed Al-Kamal from speaking to local or international media outlets and also replaced a prosecutor who had ordered her release.

Citing the judge's previous verdicts, lawyers following the case described him as a hardliner who might hand down a lengthy prison sentence for Al-Hammadi.

FASTFACT

Entesar Al-Hammadi has denied all the charges and accused the Houthis of punishing her for refusing to work with them.

"Judge Osama Al-Junaid is a hardliner and loyal to the Houthi militia. A very short time ago, he ordered a man's hand to be cut off for stealing," the legal source said.

In a separate case, the Houthi-run Supreme Court on Saturday overturned two sentences, including the death penalty, against Asmaa Al-Omeissy, a mother of two who was abducted by the militia on spying charges.

Her lawyer Abdul Majed Sabra told Arab News that the Supreme Court repealed two previous rulings by the Specialized Criminal Appeals Division after accepting his appeal and ordered the same court to urgently review the case.

Amnesty International said the Houthis had arrested Al-Omeissy at a checkpoint in Oct. 2016 and later accused her of colluding with the Arab coalition. In Sanaa, the Houthis summoned her father and subjected both of them to torture.

"Their arrest marked the beginning of a horrific ordeal including enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment, and death sentences following a grossly unfair trial," the rights group said.

The court first sentenced Al-Omeissy to death but later reduced this to 15

years in prison.

Rights groups have condemned the Houthis for using judicial bodies under their control to punish their opponents, adding that the militia were not serious about releasing abducted women.

Majed Fadhail, deputy minister of human rights, said Sunday that the Houthis would not release the model and were using the courts to justify their actions against her.

“Those mock trials are illegal,” he told Arab News. “The Houthis are using the courts for political purposes.”

Her trial comes as the Houthis intensify their morality crackdown in areas under their control.

Residents told Arab News that the group has banned singers from weddings and outdoor gatherings and ordered people to replace songs with religious chants or folk songs known locally as zawamel.

Earlier this month, a checkpoint manned by the Houthis in the western province of Hodeidah detained Yemeni singer Fuad Al-Kibsi for eight hours and confiscated his belongings, criticizing him for violating their ban on singing.



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Houthi-run court starts trial of abducted Yemeni model

US Navy commander visits largest base in Egypt

Author:

Sun, 2021-08-15 23:36

CAIRO: The commander of the US Naval Forces Central Command, Lt. Gen. Charles Cooper, visited the Egyptian Berenice Military Base alongside Washington's Ambassador to Egypt Jonathan Cohen.

The site is the largest air and naval base in both the Middle East and the Red Sea region, located east of Aswan near the country's southern border.

The US delegation inspected Berenice's facilities for use by both the Egyptian Navy and units belonging to allied nations, and praised its geographic location, close to sea transportation lines, said Egyptian military spokesman Col. Gharib Abdel Hafez Gharib.

Lt. Gen. Ahmed Khaled, commander of the Egyptian Navy, received Lt. Gen. Cooper and Ambassador Cohen at the base "within the well-established strategic relations between Egypt and the US," the spokesman added.

The meeting coincided with the visit of US warship USS Monterey to the base – a Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser, and one of the oldest and largest US navy units. The visit was the first major naval activity at the base since its inception.



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