

Palestinians protest Israeli 'violation' of Hebron heritage site

Sun, 2021-08-15 22:39

AMMAN: Protests against Israeli plans to construct near Hebron's Ibrahimi Mosque have escalated after Israeli army-protected contractors worked on the mosque in order to install a nearby electric elevator.

Palestinian members of the Israeli Knesset made a supportive visit to Hebron on Saturday and vowed to back Palestinian efforts to preserve the UNESCO-protected heritage site.

UNESCO, the UN cultural organization, declared the ancient and hotly contested core of Hebron in the Israel-occupied West Bank as "in danger," despite a concerted diplomatic effort by Israel and the US to change the verdict.

Knesset Member Sami Abu Shehadeh told Arab News that a delegation of the Joint Arab List was hosted by the city's mayor, waqf officials, as well as the Chamber of Commerce.

"The changes that they are trying to carry out near the mosque are illegal and racist," he said.

He added that Israelis were claiming that the changes are to help the disabled.

"But even this so-called benevolent act is not available to disabled Palestinians because it is being created in an area that is restricted only to Jewish settlers."

Abu Shehadeh and others experienced for themselves the difficulties that normal Palestinian worshipers face in reaching their own mosque.

"Even as members of the Knesset – who cannot be disrupted by the army – we had a hard time crossing so many checkpoints. Imagine what it is like for ordinary Palestinians," he said.

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Sami Abu Shehadeh

Abu Shehadeh added that what he saw in a single square kilometer was "the ugliest site of the Israeli settlement racist enterprise."

The delegation of the Joint Arab List was stopped on Hebron's Shuhada Street,

which has been closed since 1994, causing business losses to the tune of \$1.2 billion for 1,800 Palestinian shops in the heart of the old city.

But on a positive note, Abu Shehadeh said that the delegation was “pleasantly surprised” to see many Palestinian citizens of Israel from Al-Fahm and Jaffa, who had come to show solidarity.

Dana Mills, director of development and external affairs at Peace Now, told Arab News that the issue of the mosque is “not a matter of accessibility,” but rather a “performance of sovereignty.”

Through the “excuse of accessibility,” Mills said that Israel was constructing an elevator and a bridge at one of the holiest sites in both Islam and Judaism.

Mills added that improving accessibility requirements “should have been done with full coordination and the consent of the Muslim waqf.

“It is still not too late to stop this project and we call upon the Israeli government to immediately end the work.”

On Friday, Palestinians unilaterally closed all mosques in the Hebron area and encouraged worshipers to visit the Ibrahimi Mosque in a peaceful act of protest.

But many who traveled to the holy site have claimed they were met with violence from the Israeli side.

Tareq Salmi, a spokesman of Islamic Jihad, said that Israeli actions are aimed at “having control of the mosque.

“The new plan of the settlement enterprise is to create a separate corridor and an electric elevator which will allow settlers to reach the roof of the mosque.”

These actions are aimed at “changing the historic Islamic site which is part of Arab and Islamic heritage in the city of Hebron,” Salmi said.

Salmi said that the 44th session of the World Heritage Sites meeting in Fuzhou, China, in July decided that “the status of Hebron old town on the endangered World Heritage list remains unchanged.”

UNESCO deplored “the ongoing Israeli excavations which are illegal under international law and harmfully affect the authenticity and integrity of the site.”

The organization also “took note of reports regarding new planned projects, including an electric elevator.”



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CIA chief's visit to Israel, Palestine expected to give fresh push to peace
German label GmbH launches 'Free Palestine' T-shirt

[UAE and Egypt conclude joint air force exercises](#)

Sun, 2021-08-15 22:49

CAIRO: Egypt and the UAE have concluded their joint air force exercises, an Egyptian military spokesman said.

Zayed-3 included theoretical and practical sessions to unify concepts, improve skills, and coordinate the management of joint operations in various modern air combat methods, Col. Arkan Harb Gharib Abdel Hafez added.

Multi-role fighters from both sides carried out several joint exercises for training such as attacking enemy targets and defending vital targets in unison, as well as training in refueling in the air.

The military spokesman said the training demonstrated the "distinguished level and high professionalism reached by the coordination between the air forces of both countries."

The training is intended to enhance the forces' ability to manage joint air combat operations efficiently and competently.

On Aug. 2, the Egyptian Armed Forces announced that the air force had arrived at Al-Dhafra Air Base in the UAE to participate in the drills.

The training comes in light of strengthening relations between both countries' armed forces to maximize their capabilities in facing all risks and challenges that could compromise regional security and stability.



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Egypt army says 13 militants killed in Sinai Abu Dhabi updates travel

Lebanese livid over fuel shortages and power outages as Hezbollah leaders face the heat

Author:

Sat, 2021-08-14 21:49

BEIRUT: Lebanon's army on Saturday seized fuel from petrol pumps to curb hoarding amid crippling shortages.

The country is grappling with a financial crisis and foreign currency reserves are fast depleting, while its national currency has lost more than 90 percent of its value on the black market.

Traffic in Beirut and other places was low on Saturday, and security forces temporarily closed the northern Aboudiyeh Border Crossing with Syria because of a power generator malfunction.

Dozens of institutions surprised their employees with a day of unplanned leave next Monday, while shops and institutions in Beirut's center were informed they would not be supplied with electricity because of the lack of diesel.

Activists shared a video on social media showing a crowd in the town of Ali Al-Nahri, in the Bekaa Valley, protesting around Hussainia Mosque, where Hezbollah member and former minister Hussein Hajj Hassan was giving a speech.

Eyewitnesses told Arab News that around 50 people objected to Hassan going up to the pulpit and speaking. "They called on him to get back, throwing insults at him and saying, 'We are hungry.'"

The MP had to leave the town, shortening his mosque speech, amid a heavy army deployment.

Army intelligence on Saturday arrested four of the people who had objected to Hassan's presence. But they were released due to popular pressure.

People objecting to the arrests blocked the road between Ali Al-Nahri and the eastern village of Massa, which is a vital road for Hezbollah.

This road helps the party access Syria's Al-Shaara region, where its military posts are located. Protesters accused Hezbollah of using the town as "a road to smuggle diesel to Syria."

Another video showed young men surrounding the house of MP Anwar Jomaa, who

is a member of Hezbollah's political wing, in protest against the country's dire situation.

One of the protesters said: "We came to ask him what he is doing for us in light of this crisis. We are not sheep or dogs. He is considered one of us and is not doing anything for us."

Ibrahim Sareini, head of the Syndicate of Tanker Owners, said: "The attacks targeting tankers transporting fuel to bakeries, mills, hospitals and generators in all regions could force the owners of these tankers to stop transporting fuel."

President Michel Aoun called on parliament to meet and take appropriate action following the Central Bank's decision to end fuel subsidies, his office said.

But the Future Movement criticized Aoun, saying he was implementing the policy put in place by his son-in-law Gebran Bassil. It also warned the president against "continuing to violate the constitution."

Bassil, who heads the Free Patriotic Movement, is an ally of Hezbollah.

Former MP Nadim Gemayel criticized Aoun on Twitter: "No electricity, no diesel, no gasoline, no water, no security and no stability... Michel Aoun, Leave."

The Progressive Socialist Party supported the idea of putting an end to the "charade of senseless subsidies that actually benefit monopolies, monopolists, smuggling and smugglers. It also constitutes a lifeline for the Syrian regime at the expense of the Lebanese people, their money and livelihood."

The fuel crisis has led a top private hospital to say it may have to close due to power shortages, warning this could cause hundreds of deaths.

In Lebanon, 78 percent of the population lives below the poverty line.



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Lebanon economic deterioration accelerates as fuel subsidy ends
Angry citizens detain Hezbollah MP in Lebanon over deteriorating living conditions

[Japan needs its solid ties with Arabs: Former Vice Foreign Minister Kazuyuki Hamada](#)

Sat, 2021-08-14 18:33

TOKYO: "I took my family several times to Arab countries including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman," says former Japanese Vice Foreign Minister Kazuyuki Hamada, who has a Ph.D. in international political economics.

Hamada, while he runs the Research Institute for Future Technologies, is also a best-selling author whose most recent book, "Elon Musk: his Next Target is IOB (Internet of Bodies)" was published in July.

He has a lot to say, particularly concerning relations between Japan and Arab countries, Asia and the political situation in Japan. And he believes that Arabic food could help with the coronavirus pandemic.

A permanent solution, he says, “may take a few more years, and we must find a way to live with the virus.” He said that besides the vaccine, there are many ways to tackle the pandemic, such as eating traditional Arabic food that may strengthen the immune system. He also gave the example of Japanese dish natto, a traditional food made by fermenting soybeans.

“Natto has a long life,” he said. “I think we can easily export it to Arab countries.”

Hamada’s outlook is international and he emphasizes the need for close cooperation between countries.

“I am trying to build a comprehensive network of friends and supporters to promote more robust international networks,” he explained. “As long as Japan can survive, we need a solid and respectful working relationship with the international community – not only with the United States, but also with China and many other Asian and Arab countries.”

He accused the Japanese government and political leadership of “not caring much about the international community.” As such, he wants change.

“I believe that, based on my own experience as a vice foreign minister who was in charge of the Middle East and Europe, I am trying to pursue a new direction for Japanese diplomacy and economic and cultural exchanges with these countries. I am sure that these trustworthy international relations will strengthen Japan’s standing in the coming years. Now I am trying to get as many friends as possible from Japan and overseas, including the Arab countries.”

On future Arab-Japan relations, Hamada referred to the many serious challenges facing Japan and the world, including energy, the environment and human rights. In terms of cooperation with Arab countries in alternative energy, he said that Japan could be a good partner.

“Japan has a history of nature-friendly technologies. Many Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Oman, have sprawling deserts. We have a special research institute for using natural sand for energy production. I am very interested in promoting this potential and co-working cooperation between Japan and the Arab countries.”

On the problems facing the world, he said, “No country can solve them alone. We need a robust partnership. Being a future political leader, I am trying to pave the way for making this kind of dream possible. Today, I am still working behind the scenes to find good, trustworthy friends, not only in Japan but also in many other countries and most of the Arab countries.”

Asked about his assessment of the Japanese government’s response to the coronavirus, Hamada said that Japanese politicians and government officials are “too influenced by media and exaggerated news coverage. They should be

more confident about what they are doing." He said that 99 percent of the 4,000 cases of coronavirus in Tokyo recovered naturally." He stressed the need for people to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Hamada criticized the government's measures, including closing restaurants by 8 pm, stopping the sale of alcohol in restaurants and bars, and staying home, as measures that "frustrate and frighten people." But his words on vaccines were equally disturbing. "The safety of vaccines has not yet been proven," he said. "There are a lot of reports of side-effects." Hamada also criticized the vaccine gap between developed and developing countries.

"We were surprised that Prime Minister (Yoshihide) Suga invited the president of the US company Pfizer to attend the Tokyo Olympics and allowed him to stay in the Imperial Guest House. Not only did Suga meet him, but the minister in charge of the corona vaccine campaign, (Taro) Kono, also went so far as to demand an increase in vaccine supplies," he said. "It's a very prosperous business. They charge the Japanese government almost 15 percent higher than the regular price in the United States."

Hamada criticized patent protection for vaccines, as "those patents are made only possible for international support from the American government and Bill Gates' foundations." He added: "Humanity should be more cooperative. They donated 40,000 doses to the Tokyo Olympics but they are still demanding higher prices. Politicians need to pay attention to that." Hamada said that the Russian Sputnik 5 vaccine is "not so effective," and the situation in China was becoming worse.

Hamada was not impressed by Prime Minister Suga's decision to go ahead with the Tokyo Olympics. "He tried to convince the people that holding the Tokyo Olympics was good for the nation. But many people are worried about how to beat the virus. The situation is getting worse."

He said that opposition parties criticized the Suga government's response to the pandemic as a failure of risk management. Hamada expects that "if this situation continues, the possibility of Suga being re-elected as the president of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party of Japan is not so high."



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A deeper look into 'The Journey' the first Saudi-Japanese anime Saudi Arabian judoka praised by Japan media to play against Israeli player

[Egypt has 'open budget' to fight coronavirus, says finance minister](#)

Author:

Sat, 2021-08-14 19:19

CAIRO: Egypt has an "open budget" to fight coronavirus, the country's finance minister said Friday, adding that the health sector's allocation exceeded the established constitutional entitlement, totaling EGP275.6 billion (\$17.5 billion).

The move followed presidential directives granting priority to preserving citizens' health, especially in the face of coronavirus, explained Finance Minister Mohamed Maait.

"We are ready to meet any additional appropriations for the health sector ... in order to contribute to strengthening its capabilities to combat the coronavirus and to provide the necessary funding to complete the purchase of

vaccines. There is an open budget for the health sector to combat the coronavirus, and to provide vaccines, so there is no complacency in the health of Egyptians.”

He said that EGP3 billion had so far been provided to purchase vaccines to ensure the largest number of citizens were immunized against COVID-19, especially in light of a fourth wave in some countries, and that scientific studies had confirmed the effectiveness of vaccines against any mutations of the virus.

A return to pre-coronavirus economic performance indicators and the expansion of the vaccination program were closely linked, he added.

The minister stressed that the economy would emerge from the pandemic stronger in light of the gains made by the economic reform program, which enabled the government to flexibly handle the health crisis.

Egypt recently received a new shipment of 1.7 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine through the global COVAX initiative.

“We are pleased to take a quick step to enhance efforts to vaccinate the Egyptian people in cooperation with the global COVAX initiative,” Health and Population Minister Hala Zayed said. “With the arrival of this new shipment we are able to ensure that the vaccines reach the growing numbers of Egyptians ... and we move forward with our efforts to recover from the effects of the pandemic.”

Egypt is aiming to vaccinate 40 percent of its citizens by the end of 2021.

Ministry workers have visited markets, public transport, places of worship, salons, cafes, shops, gathering spaces, and villages to educate people about the vaccine and encourage them to sign up for it.



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Egypt COVID-19 vaccine to begin distribution in mid-August
Egypt COVID-19 cases could be '10 times higher' than reported figures