

G7 foreign ministers condemn Iran for Mercer Street attack

Fri, 2021-08-06 17:55

TOKYO: Foreign ministers from the Group of Seven economies said Iran was threatening international peace and security and that all available evidence showed it was behind an attack on the a merchant vessel off the Omani coast last week.

During a meeting in Tokyo, they condemned the “unlawful attack committed by Iran,” which killed a British and a Romanian national. They also confirmed their unified position in their commitment to maritime security and the protection of commercial shipping.

“This was a deliberate and targeted attack and a clear violation of international law. All available evidence clearly points to Iran. There is no justification for this attack,” the foreign ministers of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, UK and the US and the High Representative of the European Union said in a statement on Friday evening.

“Iran’s behavior, alongside its support to proxy forces and non-state armed actors, threatens international peace and security. We call on Iran to stop all activities inconsistent with relevant UN Security Council resolutions and call on all parties to play a constructive role in fostering regional stability and peace,” they said.

Meanwhile, Britain called on Iran to cease activities that go against UN Security Council resolutions.

“All available evidence clearly points to Iran. There is no justification for this attack,” the G7 chair Britain said in their statement.

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“We call on Iran to stop all activities inconsistent with relevant UN Security Council resolutions, and call on all parties to play a constructive role in fostering regional stability and peace.”



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UK foreign minister Dominic Raab says door is 'ajar' for talks with Iran
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[Tunisian activists say they will keep up pressure on president](#)

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Fri, 2021-08-06 17:29

TUNIS: Sitting on her rooftop in Tunis, political activist Fatma Jgham said she and her comrades backed the Tunisian president's seizure of governing powers but would maintain pressure on him if their demands were not met.

"We must hold a referendum on the constitution, and the demands of the people must not be turned around...not by you (the president) or anyone else," said Jgham, a 48-year old art teacher.

She was one of the people who organized the wave of protests across Tunisian cities on July 25 that were cited by President Kais Saied later that day as he dismissed the prime minister and froze parliament. His opponents have called the moves a coup.

Saied's actions have proved mostly popular, with thousands of people crowding the streets immediately afterwards to celebrate, but he has not given any details of how he plans to handle the crisis or Tunisia's future.

The demonstrations represented a wave of anger that had built over years of economic stagnation and politically dysfunction, sharpened by a COVID-19 surge.

Though the protests were not very big, with hundreds rather than thousands of people braving the sweltering weather in each of the handful of cities where they took place, they also involved several attacks on offices of a major political party.

The moderate Islamist Ennahda, the most consistently successful party since the 2011 revolution that introduced democracy, has played a role in successive coalition governments and is blamed by many Tunisians for their economic problems.

"The demands were the overthrow of the entire failed system of government, especially the parliament, led by the gangs of the Ennahda Party and its coalitions," Jgham said.

Some Ennahda officials have questioned whether the attacks on their offices were planned by Saied supporters as a pretext for his sudden intervention.

Jgham denies this. "People were angry and marginalized. It wasn't planned but it was spontaneous," she said.

The protests that day had not been backed by political parties but were organized by activists like Jgham on social media, she said.

Female activists, like Jgham, have played a prominent role throughout, reflecting Tunisia's reputation as a leading center of women's rights in Arab states.

Another activist, Emna Sahli, says that the role of women in protests has fundamentally changed. They are no longer led by men, she said.

"Today those who bear ideas are females and this is really great," said the 35-year-old, who also took part in the July 25 protests.



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Tunisia puts Ennahda official under house arrest, colleague says Tunisia's president says there is 'no turning back'

[Tunisia's president says there is 'no turning back'](#)

Thu, 2021-08-05 23:35

TUNIS: Tunisia's President Kais Saied said on Thursday there was "no turning back" from his decision to freeze parliament and assume executive power, moves his opponents have branded a coup.

Speaking in a video published by his office, Saied also rejected calls for talks over the crisis, saying "there is no dialogue except with the honest" and that no dialogue was possible with "cancer cells."

The biggest party in parliament, the moderate Islamist Ennahda, which has

been the most vocal opponent of Saied's moves, had called for dialogue in a statement earlier on Thursday.

Some 11 days after his intervention, Saied has not named a new prime minister, announced any steps to end the emergency or declared his longer-term intentions.

The powerful labor union, as well as both the United States and France, have called on him to quickly appoint a new government. The union is preparing a roadmap to end the crisis that it says it will present to Saied.

US Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Bob Menendez and ranking member Jim Risch said on Thursday they were deeply concerned by the situation.

"President Saied must recommit to the democratic principles that underpin US-Tunisia relations, and the military must observe its role in a constitutional democracy," they said in a joint statement.

Ousted Prime Minister Hichem Mechichi appeared in public for the first time on Thursday since he was dismissed. He was shown in pictures published by the anti-corruption watchdog that it said were taken on Thursday at its office.



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What comes next in Tunisia more important than current crisis: Experts

[Amnesty International denounces Iran's 'cruel' secret execution of man arrested at 15](#)

Thu, 2021-08-05 22:48

LONDON: The execution in Iran of a man arrested at 15 is a "cruel assault on child rights," Amnesty International said on Thursday, which also warned of more imminent executions.

In August 2010, Sajad Sanjari – then 15 – was arrested over the fatal stabbing of a man. He said the man had tried to rape him and claimed he had acted in self-defense, but in 2012 he was convicted of murder and sentenced to death.

Sanjari was executed in secret on Monday, but his family was only told of the killing after it happened when a prison official asked them to collect the body.

"With the secret execution of Sajad Sanjari, the Iranian authorities have yet again demonstrated the utter cruelty of their juvenile justice system," Diana Eltahawy, deputy director for the Middle East and North Africa at Amnesty International, said.

"The use of the death penalty against people who were under 18 at the time of the crime is absolutely prohibited under international law and constitutes a cruel assault on child rights.

Eltahawy added: "The fact that Sajad Sanjari was executed in secret, denying him and his family even the chance to say goodbye, consolidates an alarming pattern of the Iranian authorities carrying out executions in secret or at short notice to minimize the chances of public and private interventions to save people's lives."

The rights group also warned that two other young men, Hossein Shahbazi and Arman Abdolali – both 17 when arrested – are now at risk of "imminent" execution.

"Their trials were marred by serious violations, including the use of torture-tainted 'confessions,'" said Amnesty International, which pointed out that Shahbazi would already be dead if it had not been for international outcry in the lead up to his planned execution in July that convinced authorities to postpone the killing.

"His execution could be rescheduled at any moment," the rights group warned.

Amnesty said it had identified 80 people in Iran currently on death row for

crimes committed when they were children, and since 2005, it recorded the executions of “at least 95 individuals” who were children when they committed their crime.

“The real numbers of those at risk and executed are likely to be higher,” Amnesty said.

The rights group also highlighted the unequal laws dictating how girls and boys are treated by the judicial system: “in cases of murder and certain other capital crimes, boys aged above 15 lunar years and girls aged above nine lunar years may be held as culpable as adults.”

As a state party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Iran is legally obliged to treat individuals under the age of 18 as children and ensure they are never subjected to the death penalty or life imprisonment.



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[Sajad Sanjari](#)

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UK foreign minister Dominic Raab says door is ‘ajar’ for talks with Iran
Iranian ex-deputy vice president slams regime over water crisis

University professor shot dead in Houthi-held Sanaa

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Thu, 2021-08-05 22:33

ALEXANDRIA: Gunmen shot and killed a Sana'a University professor as he walked out of a friend's house on Wednesday night in a Houthi-controlled part of the city, residents said.

Mohammed Ali Naeem, who worked in the school's engineering and architecture department, was pronounced dead at a local hospital following the attack on Tunisia Street in Sana'a.

The assassination was carried out a few hours after he wrote a post on social media demanding the Houthis and the Yemeni government increase the salaries for employees.

After he complained about the depreciation of the Yemeni riyal and the increased price of essential commodities, the Yemeni professor wrote on Facebook: "We demand the government of Sana'a and Aden increase salaries."

In another post on Wednesday, he wrote: "The revolution is still going on."

Public servants in Sana'a and other Houthi-held areas in Yemen have not received employment compensation since late 2016 when the Iran-backed rebels stopped paying salaries in response to the Yemen president's relocation of the central bank headquarters from Sana'a to Aden.

The killing is the latest in a series of drive-by shootings presumably carried out by senior Houthi officials against dissidents and other opponents. Last year, gunmen assassinated Hassan Zaid, minister of sports and youth in the Houthi cabinet.

Citing the Houthis' handling of the Zaid case, similar assassinations, and the proliferation of armed men in Sanaa, Yemeni activists and critics of the rebels quickly blamed the Houthis on Wednesday for killing the professor.

Sami Noaman, a Yemeni journalist and former Houthi prisoner, told Arab News the rebels are suspected of killing their opponents and critics while only Houthi supporters are given special treatment.

"No one can freely roam around Sana'a carrying weapons other than the Houthi movement's supporters," Noaman said.

More evidence that suggests the Houthis' involvement in the Naeem murder is their handling of the Zaid investigation. In that case, the rebels quickly announced capturing perpetrators in the province of Dhamar, and then the investigation was over.

"In a comical scene, they closed the file within 24 hours," Noaman said. "The alleged killer was a prisoner. They executed people who had nothing to do with the case."

Other critics of the Houthis urged the rebels to focus on capturing and prosecuting armed assailants in Sana'a, instead of incarcerating Yemeni activists, artists, actors, and women.

Ahmed Al-Khibi, a judge in Yemen, said the Houthis should be alarmed by the resurgence of assassinations in the country's capital and divert efforts and attention to securing areas under their control.

"We hold the (Houthi) authority and its security services that are preoccupied with pursuing (women's) undergarment and artists fully responsible for this crime" and it is their responsibility to arrest the perpetrators and bring them to justice, Al-Khibi posted on Facebook. He was referring to the recent Houthi crackdown against women, singers, and actors who have been arrested for allegedly violating Islamic norms.

Dozens of Sana'a University students took to social media on Wednesday night to mourn the late professor. Students described Naeem as a "noble" man and an outstanding lecturer.

"No words can describe the extent of the tragedy and sadness of your death," Ghadir Yahya, a former student, wrote on Facebook.



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