

Iraq PM visits activist in hospital after abduction, assault

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BAGHDAD: Iraq's Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhemi early Sunday visited in hospital a pro-democracy activist who has been critical of pro-Iran armed factions, after the campaigner had been abducted and assaulted.

Ali Al-Mikdam, a young Iraqi journalist, activist and researcher, had disappeared on Friday, sparking widespread concern from his friends and supporters, before he was released late Saturday, injured, on the outskirts of Baghdad.

A tweet from Khademi's office said the premier had checked up "on the health of journalist and activist Ali Al-Mikdam in one of Baghdad's hospitals after security forces released him from his kidnappers."

Mikdam was a key figure in anti-government protests which swept Iraq for months from October 2019 calling for the removal of Iraq's political class, which activists branded as inept and corrupt.

The protesters also rallied against the influence of Iran in the war-battered country, where powerful pro-Tehran armed factions have been integrated into the national security apparatus.

Mikdam, after receiving threats, had moved to Istanbul and then Irbil in Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan region.

He had returned to Baghdad eight days ago, his mother told AFP while he was missing on Friday.

"Only two days ago he told me he had received threats and gave me the phone numbers of his friends to contact them if anything bad happens to him," his mother said then, holding back tears.

Killings, attempted murders and abductions have targeted more than 70 activists since the protest movement erupted in late 2019.

Authorities have failed to publicly identify or charge the perpetrators of the violence, for which no groups have claimed responsibility.

Pro-democracy activists are often portrayed as foreign stooges by Iraq's powerful pro-Iran factions.

Last month, Iraq freed a commander of the state-affiliated Hashed Al-Shaabi, a Shiite paramilitary coalition, two weeks after he was arrested over the murder of a pro-democracy activist.

Mikdam's most recent analysis, published with the Washington Institute for Near East Policy last month, criticized the ongoing wave of assassinations targeting journalists and scholars by armed factions.



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[Second batch of Yemenis stranded in India due to pandemic arrive in Aden](#)

Author:

Sun, 2021-07-11 09:20

DUBAI: The second batch of 153 stranded Yemenis in India landed in Aden Airport on Saturday, state news agency Saba News reported. Health specialists were present at the airport to carry out precautionary measures for those arriving.

The arrivals were then transported by health and security officials into an isolation center to provide them with the necessary health service.

A crumbling health system in war-torn Yemen led thousands of its citizens to seek treatment overseas.

Earlier last year, Yemen's internationally recognized government said it will begin the first evacuation flights for citizens who have been stranded abroad since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.

The first evacuation flight was sent to Jordan after Yemen's Supreme National Emergency Committee created procedures and timetables for scheduling the

return of citizens to Yemen.



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Yemen troops seize key Al-Bayda area as Houthis flee Top Houthi commander killed in new Yemen battle

[Dubai's ruler launches national program for coders with big tech companies](#)

Author:

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Sat, 2021-07-10 15:37

CAIRO: Dubai's ruler, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, on Saturday

launched a national program for coders that aims to establish 1,000 tech companies and increase start-up investments from 1.5 billion dirhams (\$408 million) to 4 billion dirhams (\$1 billion). The program, which is in cooperation with Google, Microsoft, Amazon AWS, Cisco, IBM, HPE, LinkedIn, Nvidia, and Facebook, is aimed at training 100,000 coders and establishing tech companies that will go global. "The new program represents a new step toward establishing our digital economy. The world is rapidly changing and the fast-growing digital economy will create new types of jobs," he said on Twitter.



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Dubai's medical supplies trade hits \$1.9bn
Jebel Ali Port: Dubai blast ship fire put out in less than 40 minutes

[Fighting with Houthis intensifies in](#)

Al-Bayda, Marib, Jouf

Sat, 2021-07-10 21:34

ALEXANDRIA: Heavy fighting broke out between Yemeni government troops and Iran-backed Houthi forces in key battlefields in the provinces of Al-Bayda, Marib and Jouf, as both sides sought to make territorial gains on the ground, local officials and state media said on Saturday.

During the past 24 hours, the Houthis mounted counterattacks on army troops and allied tribesmen in different locations in the central province of Al-Bayda, where loyalists scored major advances over the last seven days.

Rebel media said their forces managed to recapture the center of Al-Zaher district, and pushed back government forces from recently-liberated areas in the province.

Yemen's Defense Ministry said on Saturday that the rebel forces suffered heavy casualties and lost military equipment in a fierce five-hour battle in Al-Zaher.

Backed by air support from the Arab coalition, government troops last week mounted an offensive to seize control of districts in Al-Bayda, and to relieve pressure on other government troops battling Houthi attacks in the central province of Marib.

Government troops seized control of a large swathe of territory in Al-Zaher district, south of Al-Bayda province, and pushed deeper into Houthi-controlled areas in Al-Saoma and Al-Hazemia, southeast of the province, after killing, wounding and capturing dozens of rebel fighters.

The offensive slowed over the weekend as the Houthis mounted deadly counter-offensives.

By attacking the Houthis in Al-Bayda, Yemen's government has sought to secure neighboring provinces such as Lahj, Abyan, Shabwa and Al-Dhale, push into other Houthi-controlled provinces such as Sanaa, Ibb and Dhamar, and weaken the Houthi offensive on Marib, local army officials and experts said.

On Saturday, local media reports said that a Houthi field commander called Abu Yahya Al-Hanemi was killed in the fighting in Al-Zaher.

Government supporters on social media mourned the death of many loyalists killed in Al-Bayda.

Local officials say that fighting could escalate there in the coming days as the Houthis and government continue bringing in military reinforcements.

People from Abyan told Arab News that the Houthis had shut down internet and mobile services in Al-Bayda.

In Marib province, the scene of the heaviest fighting, Yemen's Defense

Ministry said on Saturday that army troops and tribesmen mounted an attack on the Houthis in the Halhalan Valley and Mezam Mas, northeast of the province, as other government troops pushed back Houthi attacks in Al-Mashjah and Al-Kasara, west of Marib city.

Thousands of combatants and civilians have been killed in the province since February when the Houthis resumed an offensive on oil-rich Marib, the government's last bastion in the northern part of the country.

In the province of Juf, Rabia Al-Qurashi, a Yemeni army spokesman, told Arab News on Saturday that government troops repulsed a Houthi attack in Al-Jadafer region, west of Hazem, the provincial capital, adding that several Houthis were killed in the area when a warplane from the Arab coalition targeted their vehicle.



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Saudi aid agency concludes project to support orphans in Yemen
Yemen troops seize key Al-Bayda area as Houthis flee

US-Russia cooperation ensured Syria border crossing kept open: Official

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1625936598068406600

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ATLANTA: A vital border crossing between Syria and Turkey has been kept open thanks to Washington and Moscow forging an agreement to pass a resolution at the UN Security Council (UNSC), the deputy to the US ambassador to the UN told a press briefing attended by Arab News on Saturday.

Jeffrey Prescott said keeping the border crossing open will “save lives” and deliver critical food and medicine, especially vaccines, to internally displaced Syrians. The US had initially expected Russia to veto the resolution, he added.

Prescott described the passing of the resolution as a “critical starting point” that the US and others will have to build on in the months ahead in order to expand humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people.

The UNSC voted unanimously on Friday to extend its authorization to keep the Bab Al-Hawa border crossing open for humanitarian aid to the Syrian people for another year in two six-month intervals.

The UN said the resolution applies “only to Bab Al-Hawa, not to several other crossing points whose use was previously curtailed by the council.”

It added: “The second six-month extension remains pending, subject to the issuance of a substantive report by the secretary-general on transparency in aid delivery operations and progress on cross-line access.”

Vassily A. Nebenzia, Russia’s ambassador to the UN, attributed the passing of the resolution to the “spirit of commitment” that was achieved during the recent summit between presidents Joe Biden and Vladimir Putin. “We are grateful for this,” Nebenzia added.



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Biden hails diplomatic victory after UN votes to extend cross-border aid to Syria
Russia allows UN Syria aid access from Turkey for 12 months