

UN expert backs probe into Iran's 1988 killings, Raisi's role

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GENEVA: The UN investigator on human rights in Iran has called for an independent inquiry into allegations of state-ordered executions of thousands of political prisoners in 1988 and the role played by President-elect Ebrahim Raisi as Tehran deputy prosecutor.

Javid Rehman, in an interview with Reuters on Monday, said that over the years his office has gathered testimonies and evidence. It was ready to share them if the United Nations Human Rights Council or other body sets up an impartial investigation.

He said he was concerned at reports that some "mass graves" are being destroyed as part of a continuing cover-up.

"I think it is time and it's very important now that Mr. Raisi is the president (-elect) that we start investigating what happened in 1988 and the role of individuals," Rehman said from London, where he teaches Islamic law and international law.

A probe was in the interest of Iran and could bring closure to families, he said, adding: "Otherwise we will have very serious concerns about this president and the role, the reported role, he has played historically in those executions."

Raisi, a hard-line judge, is under US sanctions over a past that includes what the United States and activists say was his involvement as one of four judges who oversaw the 1988 killings. Amnesty International has put the number executed at some 5,000, saying in a 2018 report that "the real number could be higher."

Raisi, when asked about allegations that he was involved in the killings, told reporters: "If a judge, a prosecutor has defended the security of the people, he should be praised ... I am proud to have defended human rights in every position I have held so far."

Rehman said: "We have made communications to the Islamic Republic of Iran because we have concerns that there is again a policy to actually destroy the graves or there may be some activity to destroy evidence of mass graves."

"I will campaign for justice to be done," he added.

Raisi succeeds Hassan Rouhani on Aug. 3, having secured victory this month in an election marked by voter apathy over economic hardships and political restrictions.

Rehman denounced what he called "deliberate and manipulative strategies adopted to exclude moderate candidates and to ensure the success of a particular candidate."

"There were arrests, journalists were stopped from asking specific questions about the background of the presidential candidate Mr. Raisi and there was intimidation toward any issues that were raised about his previous role and

background.”

Iran has never acknowledged that mass executions took place under Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the revolutionary leader who died in 1989.

“The scale of executions that we hear imply that it was a part of a policy that was being pursued...It was not just one person,” Rehman said.

He said there had also been “no proper investigation” into the killing of protesters in Nov. 2019, the bloodiest political unrest since the 1979 Islamic revolution.

“Even by conservative estimates we can say that more than 300 people were killed arbitrarily, extrajudicially, and nobody has been held accountable and no compensation,” he said.

“There is a widespread and systemic impunity in the country for gross violations of human rights, both historically in the past as well as in the present.”



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Raisi's hard-line stance 'could spell trouble' Continuity of aggressive Iranian policies assured with Raisi's election: Former senior CIA official Norman Roule

Police, Palestinians clash as Israel begins demolition in Jerusalem's Silwan

Author:

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Tue, 2021-06-29 16:36

JERUSALEM: Israel demolished a Palestinian shop in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Silwan on Tuesday, triggering scuffles between police and protesters who accused authorities of discriminatory enforcement of building permits in the holy city.

Palestinians seek East Jerusalem, which Israel captured in a 1967 war, for a future state. Israel deems all of Jerusalem its capital – a status not recognized internationally – and has encouraged Jewish settlement of predominantly Palestinian areas.

A bulldozer escorted by Israeli police flattened Harbi Rajabi's butchers shop in the neighborhood which is overlooked by the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third holiest shrine in Islam and the most sensitive site in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The shop is one of at least eight properties that residents said were slated for demolition. The residents say many have been there for decades, even from before 1967. The authorities have earmarked the land for a park and say the shops and homes have been built illegally.

Mahmoud Basit who runs the butchers told Reuters 14 family members depended on income from there. "We have no other way to support our families," said Basit, who added he would have to look for new work from scratch.

Deputy Jerusalem Mayor Arie King said "around 20" buildings in Silwan – which Israel refers to by its Hebrew name Shiloach – had received demolition orders. Around another 60 buildings there were in violation of Israeli zoning laws, he told Reuters.

Palestinians in Silwan say it is near-impossible to get building permits. They see the demolitions as designed to drive them from Jerusalem. Disputing this, King said the municipality had approved hundreds of new Palestinian homes in Silwan.

Palestinian medics said 13 people were injured in Tuesday's confrontations in Silwan. Police said two officers were hurt by stone-throwers and that three people were arrested for disorderly conduct and assault.

The municipality had given Palestinians until June 28 to dismantle the structures themselves. King said the land would be cleared to make way for the park and public buildings, adding that Silwan's biblical links made it "an important historical site."

Nader Abu Diab, who also received a demolition order, lives in fear of the knock on the door from municipal inspectors.

“My grandchildren ask me questions and I can’t answer them. They’re children. What can I tell them? That they’re going to demolish our home?” Abu Diab, 55, said.

His brother, Fakhri Abu Diab said he applied seven times for an Israeli permit to expand his home in Silwan “but it was always rejected”. He added that over a hundred Palestinians could become homeless if the current round of demolitions continues.

The future of another East Jerusalem neighborhood, Sheikh Jarrah, was one of the flashpoints at the heart of fighting between Israel and Palestinian militants last month.







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Palestinian teen bears scar of eviction battle in East Jerusalem
Jerusalem's Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood eviction appeal delayed

[Abu Dhabi will only allow vaccinated people in some public spaces from Aug. 20](#)

Mon, 2021-06-28 22:04

ABU DHABI: Abu Dhabi has announced that a wide range of public places will soon be accessible only to those vaccinated against the coronavirus in a bid to encourage more people to get shots.

The Emirati government on Monday said that starting August 20, authorities

will begin restricting access to shopping malls, restaurants, cafes, sporting activities, museums, gyms, schools and universities, the emirate's media office said in a tweet on Monday.

The decision doesn't apply to those who are unvaccinated because of an exemption, nor to children aged 15 and below, the media office added.

The Abu Dhabi Emergency, Crisis and Disasters Committee has approved allowing only those vaccinated to enter some public places, after vaccinating 93 per cent of target groups in the emirate and to preserve public health. pic.twitter.com/KUGz9YWqTa

– مكتب أبوظبي الإعلامي (@admediaoffice) [June 28, 2021](#)

The unvaccinated will effectively be barred from entering any business in the UAE capital except for supermarkets and pharmacies.

Abu Dhabi has already rolled out a “green pass” system that limits public access to those who have either received the shot or can show a negative virus test.

It comes as the country looks to economic reopening helped by its speedy vaccination campaign. The government says at least 93% of Abu Dhabi's population has received at least one dose of the vaccine.

The neighboring travel hub of Dubai also has introduced some vaccination restrictions on mass entertainment and sporting events. However, malls and other businesses remain open to the unvaccinated.

The UAE boasts one of the world's fastest inoculation campaigns, with 15.1 million doses administered to its population of some 9 million.

* With AP and Reuters



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Abu Dhabi approves use of EDE scanners to detect COVID-19 infections
Abu Dhabi COVID-19 app removes vaccine option for visitors

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relations with Sudan

Mon, 2021-06-28 21:53

LONDON: US relations with Sudan have returned to normal, according to an embassy spokesperson in Khartoum.

Amber Baskett, the Chargé d’Affairs at the American embassy in the Sudanese capital, confirmed the decision came as a result of the achievements of the interim transitional government.

Sudanese Foreign Minister Maryam Al-Sadiq, who hosted Baskett on Monday, welcomed the American move, which she said was deserved for the progress the country had made since the ousting of Omar Bashir in 2019.

She added that the US decision would support Sudan’s democratic transition efforts and address its challenges.

American relations with Sudan have been on an upward trajectory since 2019, and included the removal of the African country from the US list of state sponsors of terrorism in 2020.



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Egypt signs cooperation protocol with South Sudan to build Wau Dam Sudan peace talks stumble over division of powers with Khartoum

Israeli settlers agree to leave flashpoint West Bank outpost

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Mon, 2021-06-28 15:52

JERUSALEM: Jewish settlers agreed Monday to leave a new outpost in the occupied West Bank that has stirred weeks of Palestinian protests following a deal with Israel's government, officials said.

Under the agreement, confirmed by settler leaders and the interior ministry, the settlers will leave the Eviatar outpost within days but their mobile homes will remain and Israeli troops will establish a base in the area.

According to a statement from regional settler leader Yossi Dagan, the defense ministry has agreed to study land claims to assess the prospect of a future recognized settlement.

Dagan said the agreement had been approved by Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, Defense Minister Benny Gantz and Interior Minister Ayelet Shaked.

Shaked's office confirmed the deal, but spokespersons for Bennett and Gantz were not immediately available to comment.

About 50 Jewish families moved to Eviatar last month, erecting huts, tents and caravans – in defiance of international and Israeli law – on land near Nablus in the occupied West Bank, which Palestinians claim for a future state.

Palestinians in the nearby community of Beita responded with nighttime protests, flashing horns, burning tires and shining laser beams to keep the settlers awake.

Moussa Hamayel, the deputy head of the Beita municipality, told AFP that the Palestinian community had "completely rejected" the purported compromise.

In unrest sparked by the protests, four Palestinians including a teenager have been killed by Israeli troops.

Eviatar is named after a settler fatally stabbed near Beita in 2013.

An earlier version of the outpost was evacuated by Israeli authorities.

Israeli families returned to the outpost in May after a yeshiva student was shot dead by a Palestinian gunman nearby.

Gantz ordered the settlement removed, but Benjamin Netanyahu – who served 12 unbroken years as prime minister, before he was unseated on June 13 – froze the decision.

Bennett, who ousted Netanyahu by joining a broad coalition including left-wingers and an Arab party, is the former head of the Yesha Council, a settlers' lobbying group.

All Jewish settlements in the West Bank, occupied by Israel since 1967, are considered illegal by most of the international community.



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Palestinians, Jewish settlers clash in tense Jerusalem neighborhood
Anger in East Jerusalem as settlers occupy homes