

Israel's war buried many a wedding dream in Gaza

Author:

Thu, 2021-05-27 20:45

GAZA CITY: Salwa Nofal and Sobhi Ziad were forced to have a "silent wedding" following Israel's military operations in Gaza.

Their marriage had already been postponed twice due to the outbreak of the coronavirus disease pandemic and a death in the family; they set May 18 as the third date for their big day, which ended up being the eighth day of the fighting.

The young couple decided to cancel their wedding party, and instead began their life together quietly in a house that Nofal had prepared before the start of the fighting on May 10.

Ziad wrote on Facebook: "We went to our house carrying all the love for each other in our hearts and the hope that our home would be filled with joy and happiness ... I wish you all complete safety."

They were among the luckier couples, but many others were less fortunate.

Anas Al-Yazji's world came crashing down on him as his fiancée Shaima Abu Al-Ouf was killed in an Israeli airstrike that destroyed her family's home in Al-Wehda Street in Gaza City.

She had been in her third year of university, and was set to become a dentist. Her professors and colleagues said that she was bright, and dreaming of her graduation day; she was eager to kickstart her career.

It was decided that Shaima and Anas would tie the knot after Eid Al-Fitr, but an Israeli raid destroyed everything. What remained was blood, debris and many scattered engagement gifts.

After a love story that lasted almost three years, Al-Ouf's last words to Al-Yazji, on the phone, were "I am afraid," he said. "I asked her to take refuge in a safe place, then a massive explosion took place and she got killed. She is in paradise," he added.

Muhannad Al-Nawati, 20, and his bride Hiba Harzullah, lost all their wedding gifts – clothes, appliances, gifts – in the rubble of Harzullah's family house, next to the Kuhail building, which was targeted by an Israeli airstrike that flattened it.

The pair stood looking on in disbelief at what was left of the seven-story building, which had collapsed on Harzullah's modest house, burying their simple dreams.

Al-Nawati said the wedding party, scheduled for after Eid, has been postponed

indefinitely due to what happened.

Ahmed Al-Masry, 21, was preparing for his wedding on the second day of Eid, but was killed in the first strike of the conflict, along with his sister Rahaf, 10, nephew Yazan, 18 months, and seven others, most of whom were his relatives.

“It is not possible now for Ahmed to be a groom in this world ... He is now a groom in heaven,” said his father, Abu Atallah. “He joined his mother, who was martyred in an Israeli raid during the first war on Gaza in 2018,” he added.

The family has suffered before at the hands of Israeli strikes on Gaza: Their home was flattened during the 2014 war.

“The missile tore my heart before it took the life of Ahmed and killed our joy,” he added.



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UN rights council orders probe into Gaza conflict
Gaza conflict forged new sense of Palestinian unity

UN mission in Iraq extended, widened to observe October vote

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Thu, 2021-05-27 15:41

UNITED NATIONS, United States: The UN Security Council on Thursday unanimously voted to extend the mandate of its mission in Iraq and to expand it to cover monitoring of legislative elections set for October 10, acceding – in part – to a request from Baghdad.

The mission, known as the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), will now run through May 27, 2022, according to a resolution drafted by the United States.

It calls for a “strengthened, robust and visible UN team, with additional staff, in advance of Iraq’s forthcoming election, to monitor Iraq’s election day with as broad a geographic coverage as possible.”

The world body’s help should come in a “manner that respects Iraqi sovereignty,” the text says.

Baghdad “wanted more,” including a “full observation mission” for the elections, a diplomat told AFP on condition of anonymity.

But what the Council agreed upon was in keeping with its usual practice, the diplomat said, adding that some members were hesitant to accept a larger role, fearing the UN would end up taking on too much responsibility for the vote.

According to the resolution, UNAMI should “engage, encourage, and coordinate with, and provide, as appropriate, logistical and security support to international and regional third-party observers invited by the government of Iraq.”

The mission will also be asked to “launch a UN strategic messaging campaign to educate, inform, and update Iraqi voters on election preparations, and UN activities in support of elections in advance of and on election day,” the text says.

During a recent Council meeting on Iraq held by videoconference, the UN special representative to Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, asked authorities in Baghdad to “uphold the integrity of the electoral process.”

Killings, attempted murder and abductions have targeted more than 70 activists since a protest movement erupted against government corruption and incompetence in 2019.

“These elections were a central demand of the protest movement; and yet, many of its members continue to be persecuted with rampant impunity,” she said earlier this month.

“The failure to hold credible elections would cause significant, lasting, widespread anger and disillusionment, which in turn could further destabilize the country at a time where strength and unity are desperately needed,” the UN envoy warned.



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[United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq \(UNAMI\)](#)

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UN mission in Iraq proposes roadmap for ending upheaval Iraq election recount complete but doubts remain

[Sanders ends bid to block US weapons sale to Israel](#)

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Wed, 2021-05-26 21:41

LONDON: Sen. Bernie Sanders has reportedly canceled an attempt to block a \$735 million arms sale to Israel authorized by the US government.

The Wall Street Journal report cited a Sanders aide who said the State Department had already finalized the sale and it was unclear whether legislation could prevent it.

Sanders, who staged high-profile presidential bids in 2016 and 2020, is a

frequent critic of the Israeli government, alongside other popular Democrats from the progressive wing of the party.

He previously said “the provision of US military aid must not enable human rights abuses,” before introducing legislation to prevent the sale.

“At a moment when US-made bombs are devastating Gaza, and killing women and children, we cannot simply let another huge arms sale go through without even a Congressional debate,” he said last week.

“I believe that the US must help lead the way to a peaceful and prosperous future for both Israelis and Palestinians. We need to take a hard look at whether the sale of these weapons is actually helping do that, or whether it is simply fueling conflict.”

The Vermont senator’s legislation was designed to target “defense articles, defense services and technical data” provided to the Israeli military by the US.

Earlier this month, the US blocked the UN Security Council from issuing a statement condemning Israeli military airstrikes against the Gaza Strip that left hundreds of people dead and thousands homeless.

When asked to comment on the weapons sale, a State Department spokesperson said it is “legally restricted from commenting on details of individual export licensing cases.”



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Blinken pledges US support to Gaza without aiding Hamas

[Egypt receives \\$500,000 Canadian grant for health sector](#)

Author:

Wed, 2021-05-26 21:19

CAIRO: Canada granted Egypt \$500,000 in aid to combat the negative effects of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic as the funds will go toward procuring necessary equipment at the Sadr Al-Abbasiya Hospital in Cairo.

The announcement of the grant came during Tuesday's meeting between Egyptian ministers, Canada's Ambassador to Egypt Louis Dumas, and the UNDP Resident Representative in Egypt Randa Aboul-Hosn.

During the meeting, they also discussed supporting Egypt's health sector and how to combat the spread of the virus.

Rania Al-Mashat, Egypt's minister of international cooperation, said Canada is among several development partners that have come forward to help the country.

The ministry seeks to advance development efforts in various sectors through the principles of economic diplomacy, following the UN goals of sustainable development.

Al-Mashat said the government has developed an urgent response plan for the health, economic and social impacts of COVID-19. She also praised Egypt's ministry of health and the huge efforts it has made since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020.

Development cooperation efforts with Canada in 2021 have resulted in partnerships worth \$28 million in various sectors such as empowering women and youth, she added.



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Egypt moves to calm black fungus panic as two cases detected
Egypt coronavirus cases top 100,000: ministry

[Emir invites El-Sisi to visit Qatar](#)

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Wed, 2021-05-26 21:29

CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi has been invited to visit Qatar by its Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani.

The message was delivered on Tuesday during a meeting of Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, Qatar's deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs, with El-Sisi in Cairo.

In an official statement, Sheikh Tamim said he hoped to enhance discussions on bilateral relations. He added that he looked forward to discussing international developments and coordinating positions on them to serve the aspirations of both countries.

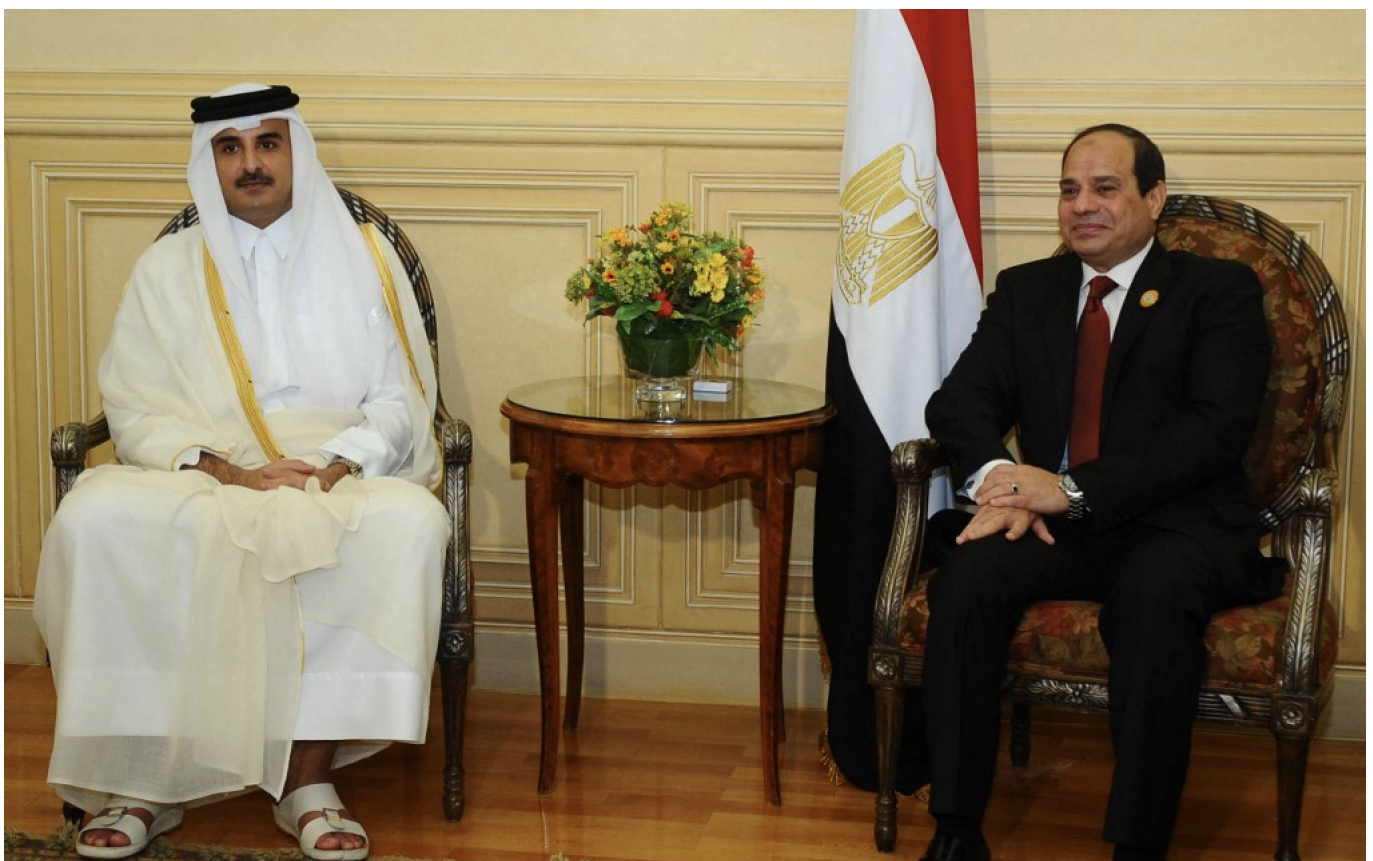
The Qatari minister expressed his appreciation of the strategic and pivotal role Egypt plays under El-Sisi's leadership in protecting Arab national security and defending Arab causes. He also expressed his thanks for Egypt's tireless efforts to establish security and stability at the regional level. El-Sisi and the Qatari minister agreed on "intensifying joint consultation and coordination" to boost bilateral ties between the two nations, the statement added.

Qatar's chief diplomat also discussed with Egypt's Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry "the positive development" in ties between the two countries. El-Sisi asked the diplomat to convey his greetings to the emir, welcoming the recent positive developments in Egyptian-Qatari relations.

El-Sisi reiterated Egypt's keenness to achieve cooperation and support for Arab solidarity as a solid strategic approach to its policy based on mutual respect, common interest and sincere intentions.

Both parties agreed to intensify consultation and joint coordination between Egypt and Qatar, including the exchange of visits by senior officials. The meeting stressed the importance of taking advantage of the economic and investment opportunities available in the two countries.

The meeting was also attended by the head of the Egyptian General Intelligence Service, Abbas Kamel, and the head of Qatar's state security apparatus, Abdullah Al-Khalifi.



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