

Egypt court upholds seizure of ship that blocked Suez Canal

Author:

AP

ID:

1620144383777958100

Tue, 2021-05-04 19:10

CAIRO: An Egyptian court Tuesday rejected an appeal by the owner of a massive container ship of the court-ordered seizure of the vessel over a financial dispute.

Egyptian authorities have impounded the hulking Ever Given, which blocked the Suez Canal for nearly a week in March, halting billions of dollars in maritime commerce.

The Suez Canal Authority said the vessel would not be allowed to leave the country until a compensation amount is settled on with the vessel's Japanese owner, Shoei Kisen Kaisha Ltd.

A court in the Suez Canal city of Ismailia ordered the seizure of the vessel earlier this month. The Ever Given's owner filed an appeal on April 22 in hopes of overturning the decision.

The Economic Court of Ismailia on Tuesday upheld the seizure decision. There was no immediate comment from the vessel's owner.

The Suez Canal Authority has demanded \$916 million in compensation, according to the UK Club, an insurer of the Ever Given. That amount takes into account the salvage operation, costs of stalled canal traffic and lost transit fees for the week the Ever Given blocked the canal.

Negotiations between the Suez Canal Authority and the ship owner were still ongoing to settle the compensation claim, Shoei Kisen Kaisha Ltd. said last week. The company said it has notified a number of the owners of the approximately 18,000 containers on the ship to assume part of the damages demand. It refused to disclose further details of the negotiations, including the amount covered by insurance and how much it is asking freight owners to share.

The Ever Given was on its way to the Dutch port of Rotterdam on March 23 when it slammed into the bank of a single-lane stretch of the canal about 6 kilometers (3.7 miles) north of the southern entrance, near the city of Suez. A massive salvage effort by a flotilla of tugboats helped by the tides freed the skyscraper-sized, Panama-flagged Ever Given six days later, ending the crisis, and allowing hundreds of waiting ships to pass through the canal. The blockage of the canal forced some ships to take the long alternate route around the Cape of Good Hope at Africa's southern tip, requiring additional fuel and other costs. Hundreds of other ships waited in place for the blockage to end.

The shutdown, which raised worries of supply shortages and rising costs for consumers, added strain on the shipping industry, already under pressure from the coronavirus pandemic.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Suez Canal blocked](#)

[Ever Given](#)

[Cairo](#)

[Egypt](#)

Japanese shipowner asks cargo owners to share Suez damage cost
Suez Canal seeks deal with Ever Given owners

[Iraq health minister resigns over hospital fire](#)

Author:

Reuters

ID:

1620140983827743500

Tue, 2021-05-04 18:20

BAGHDAD: Iraq's Health Minister Hassan Al-Tamimi resigned on Tuesday over a fire from an exploding oxygen tank at a Baghdad COVID-19 hospital last month that killed over 80 people, the government said in a statement.

Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi's cabinet also ordered the dismissal of the director of the Ibn Khatib hospital and other senior hospital officials. The entire hospital had been converted to treat COVID-19 patients.

The April 24 blaze highlighted the neglect of a health care system that was once one of the best in the Middle East, but has been wrecked by conflict, international sanctions, the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 and rampant state-wide corruption since then.

Tamimi had been suspended immediately after the fire. The government lifted his suspension on Tuesday but he immediately resigned.

The government has ordered hospitals across the country to review and implement better health and safety procedures.

The incident further eroded Iraqis' trust in their health care system. During the coronavirus pandemic, that lack of trust has meant many do not seek medical help when infected with COVID-19, and have decided not to be vaccinated at state-run medical centers.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Iraq](#)

[Ibn Khatib hospital](#)

[fire](#)

Anger in Iraq as 82 die in blast and fire at COVID-19 hospital
Iraqi medics recount horrors from inferno

Egypt steps up response to second filling of GERD

Author:

Mon, 2021-05-03 21:42

CAIRO: Egypt has outlined four plans to mitigate the effects of the second filling of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) on the country's irrigation system.

Mohammed Ghanem, spokesperson for the Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation, said that the ministry wants to ensure a strong water system under all possible scenarios.

"We have four major plans to mitigate the effects of any potential crisis," he said in a statement.

Ghanem said that the ministry has begun upgrading and lining over 8,200 km of irrigation canals at an overall cost of EGP18 billion (\$1.1 billion) to reduce water waste.

The second plan is the maintenance and construction of 92 water pumping and lifting stations, which operate with high efficiency, especially during peak demand.

The spokesperson said that the third plan is to inaugurate the Al-Mahsama wastewater treatment plant in Ismailia to drain 1 million cubic meters daily, and the Bahr Al-Baqar wastewater treatment plant, which treats 5 million cubic meters daily.

Bahr Al-Baqar is the largest treatment plant in the world. The inauguration of a Hammam wastewater treatment plant to serve new delta projects is also part of the third plan.

Ghanem said that the fourth plan is to encourage farmers to use modern irrigation methods in desert areas.

Agriculture consumes the largest proportion of the Nile water, he said.

The spokesman said that Cairo opposes the second filling of the dam, which will negatively affect both Egypt and Sudan.

Ghanem said Ethiopia did not generate energy last year, and will probably not generate energy this year, but seeks to impose a "fait accompli policy," which is rejected by Cairo.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam \(GERD\)](#)

Egypt applies stricter COVID-19 precautionary measures UAE entrepreneur Mohamed Alabbar covers Egypt's Enigma magazine

[Rockets land in Iraqi base hosting US contractors](#)

Mon, 2021-05-03 20:05

BAGHDAD: Three rockets were fired Monday evening toward Iraq's Balad air base north of Baghdad, a security source told AFP, but without causing US casualties or damage, the Pentagon said, citing initial reports.

The rockets fell in an area where US company Sallyport – the contractor that maintains F-16 aircraft Iraq has purchased from the US in recent years – is located, the security source said.

“Initial reports are that there are no US casualties or damages,” said Commander Jessica McNulty, Pentagon spokesperson.

No US or coalition troops are assigned at Balad, although US citizen contractors work there, the Pentagon said.

It is the second attack targeting US interests in under 24 hours, after two rockets Sunday targeted an air base at Baghdad airport housing US-led coalition troops. Sunday's attack did not cause casualties.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for either attack. Around 30 rocket or bomb attacks have targeted American interests in Iraq – including troops, the embassy or Iraqi supply convoys to foreign forces – since President Joe Biden took office in January. Two foreign contractors, one Iraqi contractor and eight Iraqi civilians have been killed in the strikes. Washington routinely blames Iran-linked Iraqi factions for such attacks on its troops and diplomats. In early April, two rockets hit near Balad, without causing casualties or property damage.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Iraq](#)

[balad air base](#)

[rocket attack](#)

Iraq to invest \$3bn in Basra Gas Co. over five years
18 Iraqis killed in multiple night-time extremist raids

[US and UK reject reports of imminent prisoner deal with Iran](#)

Mon, 2021-05-03 19:37

LONDON: The US and the UK dismissed reports coming out of Iran that they are thrashing out a prisoner exchange deal with Tehran that could see the imminent release of a British-Iranian woman, Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, and

four Americans, among others.

Iran was a key topic of discussions Monday between US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and his host in London, British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab. Their meeting took place a day before the first face-to-face meeting of foreign ministers from the Group of Seven leading industrial nations in two years, largely due to the coronavirus pandemic. Iran, Ukraine, China, Russia, climate change and COVID-19 are expected to dominate the talks.

Blinken's visit to London, his first since being appointed by President Joe Biden, comes amid mounting speculation of a prisoner swap deal with Iran. Such exchanges are not uncommon and were a feature of the 2015 nuclear accord between Iran and the world's leading powers. Biden has indicated he is looking to restart nuclear talks with Tehran after his predecessor, Donald Trump, pulled the US out of the agreement in 2018.

"The reports coming out of Tehran are not accurate," Blinken said at a press briefing after their meeting, adding that he had "no higher priority" than bringing all detained Americans home.

"More broadly on this, we have to take a stand against the arbitrary detention of citizens for political purposes," he said.

Raab also dismissed the prospects of an imminent breakthrough amid reports in Iran that Britain would pay a 400 million-pound (\$550 million) debt to secure Zaghari-Ratcliffe's release. He insisted that the British government was working "very intensively" on the release of detained British citizens in Iran.

"I would say it's incumbent on Iran unconditionally to release those who are held arbitrarily and in our view unlawfully," Raab said.

In Britain, there's particular interest in the well-being of Zaghari-Ratcliffe, who was last week sentenced to an additional year in prison on charges of spreading "propaganda against the system."

The two diplomats discussed an array of subjects, such as sanctions on Russian citizens, climate change and Biden's decision to withdraw US troops from Afghanistan later this year, a process that began in earnest over the weekend. Russia and its aggressive actions toward Ukraine were also on the agenda, with Blinken set to travel to the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv on Wednesday.

Biden is also set to take a new approach with regard to North Korea following a policy review completed last week. Blinken, who met in London with his Japanese and South Korean counterparts earlier Monday, said the new approach will be "practical and calibrated" and urged the leadership in Pyongyang to "take the opportunity to engage diplomatically."

On Tuesday, the top diplomats from the full G-7 – Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and the US – will meet along with their foreign minister colleagues from selected other countries, including Australia, India and South Africa.

Ahead of the gathering, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas warned that "authoritarian states" around the world are "trying to play us against each other" and that breaches of international law have become commonplace. "It is important that we hold our values of democracy, state of law, human rights and a global order based on rules against them, united and credibly," he said.

Britain's Foreign Office said the G-7 ministers will invest \$15 billion in development finance over the next two years to help women in developing

countries access jobs, build resilient businesses and recover from the coronavirus pandemic.

They are also expected to pledge to get 40 million more girls into school and 20 million more girls reading by the age of 10 in poorer nations by 2026.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Iran](#)

[United States](#)

[Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe](#)

[Dominic Raab](#)

[Anthony Blinken](#)

Washington denies Iran state media report saying prisoner swap agreedUK says Iran's treatment of Zaghari-Ratcliffe is 'torture'