

Housemaid arrested in Lebanon for \$50,000 cash theft amid dollar shortage

Author:

Tue, 2021-04-06 19:25

BEIRUT: Lebanese police arrested a housemaid accused of stealing \$50,000 in cash from her employer in a case that highlights the country's desperate dollar shortage.

The theft is believed to be one of the largest cash robberies since the deepening economic crisis destroyed the value of the Lebanese pound and led to banks blocking dollar withdrawals.

The Cameroonian housemaid, who worked for a Lebanese employer in Beirut's Achrafieh district, admitted stealing the money and running away on March 17, the Internal Security Forces [ISF] said.

"The amount of dollars in cash is one of the biggest, if not the biggest that has ever been stolen since the economic and dollar shortage crisis hit Lebanon in 2019," a senior ISF officer told Arab News.

The case has also shone a light on the plight of domestic workers in Lebanon amid the economic collapse.

Most maids go to work in Lebanon so they can send dollars to their families. In October 2019, the Lebanese Central Bank banned the withdrawal or transfer of previously deposited dollars in a bid to avoid a run on the banks. As a result, dollars became increasingly scarce.

The crisis led to many Lebanese withdrawing money from their bank accounts and hiding cash savings in their homes.

Some experts have estimated that as much as \$3 billion of cash has been stashed away inside properties.

The ISF officer said there had been plenty of dollar cash thefts since 2019 but that the latest was one of the biggest.

Identifying the Cameroonian suspect as 33-year-old E.Y., the ISF said police confiscated more than \$4,000 of cash and 6 million Lebanese pounds, three telegraphic transfer receipts to her home country worth \$6,000 and a new smart phone.

"She was the primary suspect since she went missing instantly after her employer reported to the police," the statement said.

She was traced to Tripoli in northern Lebanon, where she was arrested.

During questioning, she admitted that she kept part of the money hidden in a flat that she rented in Al-Bwar area outside Beirut.

She confessed that she gave \$12,700 to her two friends who were also arrested. They told officers they had transferred part of the money to their families in Cameroon.

"The suspects were referred to the General Prosecution to be forwarded for trial," the statement said.



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Off-duty soldier shoots two men dead in southern Lebanon outside pub
Syrian man admits killing Lebanese father after refusing marriage to his daughter

[Sudanese cabinet votes to repeal 1958 Israel boycott law – statement](#)

Tue, 2021-04-06 17:58

KHARTOUM: Sudan's cabinet approved a bill Tuesday abolishing a 1958 law on boycotting Israel, after Khartoum and the Jewish state struck a deal to normalize ties.

"The council of ministers approved a bill repealing the 1958 boycott of Israel law," it said in a statement.

It also emphasised "Sudan's firm position on the establishment of a Palestinian state within the framework of a two-state solution."

The 1958 law was in line with the policies of Arab nations at the time toward Israel.

Penalties for those who violated its stipulations, such as trading with Israelis, included up to 10 years in jail and a hefty fine.

But the political landscape has changed as Sudan, along with Gulf countries and Morocco, have built bridges with the Jewish state in deals mediated by the administration of former US president Donald Trump.

Sudan agreed to normalize ties with Israel in October last year, in a quid pro quo for Washington removing the country from its "state sponsors of terrorism" blacklist months later.

Khartoum maintained a rigid anti-Israel stance during the three-decade Islamist rule of former president Omar Al-Bashir, who was ousted amid mass protests in April 2019.

A post-Bashir transitional government has been pushing for re-integration with the international community and to rebuild the country's economy after decades of US sanctions and internal conflict.

The bill will be presented for final approval from the country's ruling Sovereign Council, made up of military and civilian figures, before it is passed into law.



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Egypt-Sudan air drills 'do not target a specific country,' say military chiefs
Dam discussion deadlock requires coordination, say Egyptian and Sudanese leaders

[Restoring nuclear agreement with Iran will not happen immediately – Russian diplomat](#)

Tue, 2021-04-06 17:52

VIENNA: A Russian diplomat participating in talks to save the Iran nuclear deal said Tuesday's meeting had been "successful," though their salvage efforts will take time.

"The Joint Commission meeting of JCPOA was successful... The restoration of JCPOA will not happen immediately. It will take some time. How long? Nobody knows," Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia's Vienna-based envoy to international organizations, wrote on Twitter, referring to the pact by its acronym. Talks aimed at salvaging the deal between Iran and world powers are taking place in Austria's capital, with the US joining indirectly for the first time since President Joe Biden's arrival in the White House. The US withdrew from the pact in 2018.



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[Houthi security chief accused of rape and torture in Yemen dies from COVID-19](#)

Author:

Tue, 2021-04-06 00:16

RIYADH: A Houthi security official in Yemen who had been sanctioned for torture, sexual violence, and cruel treatment of women has died from COVID-19.

Sultan Zabin, director of the militia's shadowy Criminal Investigation Department in Sanaa, was sanctioned by the US Treasury late last year and the UN Security Council earlier this year.

Houthi-run Saba News Agency said the official died "from an incurable disease." Al Arabiya reported that he died from COVID-19.

A Security Council resolution in February said Zabin was directly or through his authority responsible for using multiple places of detention including police stations, prisons and detention centers for human rights abuses.

The US Treasury sanctioned Zabin in December along with several other officials from the Iran-backed group.

Zabin had "direct involvement in acts of rape, physical abuse, and arbitrary arrest and detention of women as part of a policy to inhibit or otherwise prevent political activities by women who have opposed the policies of the Houthis," the Treasury said.



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UN hits back at Houthi threat over time bomb Yemen oil tanker
UN Security Council sanctions top Houthi security official for rape and torture

[Beirut's blast-hit silos must be demolished, experts warn](#)

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Mon, 2021-04-05 23:54

BEIRUT – A section of the grain silos that absorbed much of last year's Beirut port blast must be demolished to avoid collapse, experts warned in a report published Monday.

Swiss company Amann Engineering, which has offered laser scanning assistance to Lebanon since the cataclysmic August 4 explosion, called the most damaged of the disemboweled silos an "unstable, moving structure."

"Our recommendation is to proceed with the deconstruction of this block," the company said in a report.

"As it becomes more obvious the concrete piles have been heavily damaged... new silos will have to be built at a different location," it warned.

Economy minister Raoul Nehme had said in November that Lebanon will demolish its largest grain store over public safety concerns, but authorities have yet to take action.

Once boasting a capacity of more than 100,000 tons, the imposing 48-meter-high structure has become emblematic of the catastrophic port blast that killed more than 200 people and damaged swathes of the capital.

Authorities say the blast was caused by a shipment of ammonium nitrate fertilizer that caught fire after being impounded for years on end.

The silos absorbed much of the blast's impact, shielding large swathes of west Beirut from its ravaging effects.

"As much as the structure can be iconic, facts do show there is no way to ensure safety on even the medium term with the north block remaining as is," Amann said in its report.

It warned that the damage to some of the silos was so severe that they were tilting at an alarming rate.

"The inclination proceeds at the rate of 2 millimeters per day, which is a lot structurally speaking," it said.

"By comparison, the Tower of Pisa in Italy was leaning about 5mm per year until it was stabilized by very special works."

Lebanon relies on imports for 85 percent of its food needs.

Confirmation that the silos cannot be salvaged for future use compounds an

already alarming food supply outlook.

The country, grappling with its worst economic crisis in decades, has received donations of grain and flour in the aftermath of the explosion.



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Germany to propose Beirut port reconstruction with 'strings attached' Explosion sound heard at Beirut neighborhood caused by tyre burst