

Yemeni prisoner exchange talks ended with no agreement – UN envoy

Sun, 2021-02-21 21:04

LONDON: A round of Yemeni prisoner exchange talks ended on Sunday with no agreement reached between warring parties, said UN envoy Martin Griffiths. “Although the parties did not agree to releases during this round of talks, they committed to keep discussing the parameters of a future expanded release operation,” Griffiths said.

During the talks, held in the Jordanian capital, Amman, they discussed strategies and possibilities to fulfill their commitments under the Stockholm Agreement.

Yemen’s internationally recognized government and the Iran-backed Houthi militia agreed to the UN-brokered agreement back in December 2018, which included the release of thousands of prisoners and detainees, in addition to a cease-fire in the strategic port city of Hodeidah and setting up humanitarian corridors.

The Supervisory Committee on the Implementation of the Prisoners and Detainees Exchange Agreement resumed their fifth meeting in Jordan last month with the aim of releasing 300 prisoners on both sides.

“I am disappointed that this round of talks did not amount to what we saw in Switzerland last September which resulted in the historic release of 1,056 detainees” Griffiths said.

He also urged the parties to “continue their discussions and consultations, conclude the implementation of what they agreed to and expand the arrangements to release more detainees soon.”

In January, Griffiths had called on the parties to immediately free all vulnerable detainees, and arbitrarily detained civilians.

“I reiterate my call for the unconditional release of all sick, wounded, elderly and children detainees as well as detained civilians, including women and journalists,” he said on Sunday.

Yemen was plunged into civil war when the Iran-backed Houthi militia seized control of Sanaa from the internationally recognized government in late 2014.



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Algeria names new energy minister in government reshuffle

Sun, 2021-02-21 20:56

ALGIERS: Algeria named a new energy minister in a government reshuffle on Sunday, the presidency said on Sunday. Mohamed Arkab, a former mining minister, replaced Abdelmadjid Attar, it said in a statement.

Arkab had been energy minister from April 2019 to June 2020 when he was replaced by Attar in a reshuffle by President Abdelmadjid Tebboune.

OPEC member Algeria has been seeking to attract more foreign investors after a fall in oil and gas output, causing a drop in energy export earnings which account for 60 percent of the state budget and 94 percent of total export revenues.

The government early last year approved a new energy law offering attractive terms to investors, including tax incentives.

The coronavirus has further negatively impacted the state finances with lower global oil prices forcing the government to cut spending and delay some planned investment projects.

The state energy firm halved planned investment spending to \$7 billion in 2020 as the government sought to limit the economic effects of a lockdown. Most ministers kept their jobs in Sunday's reshuffle including those in charge of finance, trade and agriculture.



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[Mohamed Arkab](#)

[Algeria](#)

[Abdelmadjid Attar](#)

Algeria's president calls for dissolution of parliament, elections
Algeria frees first democracy activists after presidential pardons

[El-Sisi calls for African constitutional rules](#)

Author:

Sun, 2021-02-21 20:43

CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi has called for collective action to lay down common constitutional rules for African countries.

In a speech during a virtual preparatory meeting of Egypt's Supreme Constitutional Court ahead of the fifth African Constitutional Conference, he asked participants to discuss the challenges facing the continent, and to work collectively to set joint constitutional rules.

"The status quo requires us to think collectively in dealing with emerging challenges" such as the coronavirus pandemic "from a legal and constitutional perspective," as well as "traditional challenges" such as terrorism, "as an obstacle to development and stability," he said.



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Egypt to begin implementation of Sinai spiritual shrine project
Central Bank of Egypt gives \$128 million to support tourism

[Kuwait bans entry for non-Kuwaiti citizens until further notice](#)

Author:

Reuters

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1613852000011933300

Sat, 2021-02-20 19:51

CAIRO: Kuwait's Civil Aviation Authority on Saturday announced it was extending an entry ban for non-Kuwaiti citizens until further notice as part of coronavirus restriction measures, it said on Twitter.

Citizens are still allowed to enter but they must spend a week in quarantine at a hotel and another week at home.



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Travelers arriving in Kuwait from COVID-19 hotspots must isolate in local hotelsKuwait's emir postpones parliament meetings for a month

[Iran closes Iraq border points to stem spread of coronavirus variant](#)

Author:

Reuters

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1613841811231189800

Sat, 2021-02-20 16:52

DUBAI: Iran closed several crossing points with Iraq on Saturday in an effort to stem the spread of a mutant variant of coronavirus which the Iranian health minister said was entering from the neighboring country. Crossing points to Iraq from Khuzestan province as well as the nearby

provinces of Ilam and Kermanshah were being closed to travelers, Saeed Namaki told state TV.

Iran, the worst-hit country in the Middle East, faces a surge of new infections as 11 cities and towns in its southwestern Khuzestan province were declared high-risk “red” zones, state media reported.

Iraq’s health minister said on Monday that the new variant first found in Britain had been detected in the country which has been recording a sharp rise in infections.

“The main source of infection ... with the British coronavirus in Khuzestan province were travelers who came from Iraq, and for this reason we have closed the borders of this province until further notice,” Namaki said. Last week, Namaki reported Iran’s first three deaths from the new virus variant and warned that it was spreading and soon “may be found in any city, village or family” in a fourth wave of infections.

Iran’s health ministry on Saturday reported 7,922 new cases of coronavirus and 68 deaths in the past 24 hours, taking the total death toll to 59,409, with 1,566,081 registered cases.

State broadcaster IRIB said goods transports were not affected by the passenger terminal closure at the main border crossing of Shalamcheh near Iraq’s southern city of Basra.



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