

Reading stabber fought in Libya before claiming UK asylum

Tue, 2021-01-05 23:51

LONDON: A Libyan asylum seeker who carried out a terrorist attack in the British town of Reading fought for a terrorist group in his home country and lied about it during his asylum application, a court has heard.

Khairi Saadallah was a combatant during the Libyan civil war, where he fought for a group called Ansar Al-Sharia, which was later proscribed as a terrorist outfit by Britain and many other Western nations.

Saadallah, 26, had been imprisoned following numerous violent and criminal offenses in Britain, and was informed a day before his release in June 2020 that he was due to be deported from the country.

Two weeks later, he stabbed and killed three people who were socializing in Forbury Gardens, Reading, while shouting "Allahu Akbar."

Despite vast amounts of evidence provided by the prosecution claiming that he possessed an "extremist Islamist ideology," Saadallah has denied a terroristic motivation behind his murders.

On the first day of the trial, prosecutor Alison Morgan QC said: "The defendant believed that in carrying out this attack he was acting in pursuit of his extremist ideology – an ideology that he appears to have held for some time. In short, he believed that in killing as many people as possible that day he was performing an act of religious jihad."

When Saadallah arrived in the UK in 2012, he told Home Office officials that he had been helping wounded civilians during the conflict in his home country. He further claimed that he had fled from the group when he was asked to carry out torture.

However, Morgan said information taken from his personal electronic devices had disproven his claims, showing photos of Saadallah wearing military fatigues and posing with weapons.

Following his attack in Reading last year, Saadallah admitted to psychologists that he was a member of Ansar Al-Sharia, stating that he fought with the outfit for eight months and claiming that he was given training by the French military.

On June 4 – while imprisoned after one of his many convictions – he was informed that the home secretary had determined that his deportation would be for the "public good."

But due to ongoing violence in Libya, the UK could not commit to his safety in his home country, so Saadallah was released from prison on strict conditions and with mandatory mental health treatment.

In the days following his release, Saadallah carried out internet searches for violent material from the Libyan civil war, ignored his probation officer and mental health appointments, and purchased a large kitchen knife.

The court played footage of the attack, which showed Saadallah sprinting toward his victims and stabbing them from behind.

“The prosecution alleges that what took place was ruthless and lethal,” Morgan said. “In short, he executed Joseph Ritchie-Bennett, David Wails and James Furlong and it was done with such speed and precision, before they had time to even be aware of what was happening, less still to be able to react to defend themselves.”

A judge will soon decide if there was a religious, political or ideological motivation for Saadallah’s attack, and to what degree his mental state affected his actions. The sentencing hearing continues.



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UK knife attack suspect was known to security services: reportsSaudi Arabia condemns terror attack in Reading, England

Egypt's leader meets US treasury chief ahead of Sudan visit

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Tue, 2021-01-05 19:57

CAIRO: Egypt's president met Tuesday with US Secretary of the Treasury Steven Mnuchin in Cairo, ahead of Mnuchin's first visit to Sudan since the end of Khartoum's pariah status.

The office of President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi said in a statement the president and Mnuchin discussed mutual and regional issues, including the latest developments in talks with Sudan and Ethiopia over a disputed dam that Ethiopia is building over the Blue Nile River.

The statement said El-Sisi appreciated US efforts in the dam talks last year that resulted in a US-crafted draft deal to resolve the yearslong dispute over the massive project.

The three Nile Valley countries met Sunday in the latest push by South Africa, the current chairman of the African Union, which is mediating a deal between Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia.

Experts from the three nations and the AU were to meet Monday, but Sudan boycotted the meeting and insisted on a greater role for AU experts in the negotiations.

Egypt initialed the draft deal, crafted by the United States in February, but Ethiopia did not attend the signing ceremony and accused President Donald Trump's administration of siding with Egypt. Sudan attended the meeting but did not sign.

The US has suspended some aid to Ethiopia over the "lack of progress" in the talks and US "concern about Ethiopia's unilateral decision to begin to fill the dam before an agreement and all necessary dam safety measures were in place."

Africa's largest hydroelectric dam has caused severe tensions between the three nations.

Mnuchin was scheduled to travel to Sudan's capital Khartoum on Wednesday to meet with the country's leaders, according to Sudan's state-run SUNA news agency.

It would be the first visit by a senior US official since Washington last month approved the removal of Sudan from the US list of state sponsors of terrorism.

SUNA's report said Mnuchin would discuss with Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, head of the ruling sovereign council, and Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok possible US economic aid debt relief. It did not give further details.

Mnuchin said last month he would work with Congress and the transitional government in Khartoum to advance Sudan's efforts to secure debt relief in 2021.

Sudan is on a fragile path to democracy after a popular uprising led the military to overthrow longtime autocrat Omar Al-Bashir in April 2019.



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Egypt has agreed to reopen airspace with Qatar
Egypt urges GERD agreement ahead of reservoir filling

[UAE minister says Gulf cohesion will be restored at 'historic' GCC summit](#)

Mon, 2021-01-04 23:39

DUBAI: Gulf cohesion will be restored at the "historic" GCC summit being held Tuesday in Saudi Arabia's AlUla, according to the UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs.

“We are before a historic summit in AlUla, through which we restore Gulf cohesion and we are keen to ensure that the security, stability and prosperity of our countries and peoples are the first priority,” Anwar Gargash said on Twitter.

“We have more work to do and we are moving in the right direction,” he added.

Gargash’s comments come after it was announced on Monday that Saudi Arabia would reopen its airspace and land and sea borders to Qatar.



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Qatar emir announces attendance at GCC summit in Saudi Arabia ‘Inclusive’ GCC summit to lead members to ‘reunification’: Saudi crown prince

Reuters: Jared Kushner to attend GCC Summit after Qatar dispute breakthrough

Author:

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Mon, 2021-01-04 19:36

WASHINGTON/RIYADH: A breakthrough has been reached in Qatar's three-year-old dispute with Saudi Arabia and three other Arab countries and an agreement aimed at ending their rift is to be signed in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday, a senior Trump administration official said.

The development is the latest in a series of Middle East deals sought by Washington – the others involving Israel and Arab states – aimed at building a united front against Iran.

As part of the deal, Saudi Arabia will reopen its airspace and land and sea border to Qatar as of Monday, Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Ahmad Nasser Al-Sabah said on Kuwait TV ahead of a Gulf Arab summit in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said the annual gathering of Gulf leaders would unite Gulf ranks "in the face of challenges facing the region."

Qatar's ruler, Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, will attend, the royal court said. The US official said the Saudi crown prince and Qatari emir would sign the deal.

Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt have imposed a diplomatic, trade and travel embargo on Qatar since mid-2017 accusing it of supporting terrorism. Qatar denies it and says the embargo aims to undermine its sovereignty.

While Saudi Arabia made clear it intended to lift the blockade, the other three countries did not, but the Trump official said "it's our expectation" they would also join in lifting the blockade. Under the emerging agreement, Qatar will suspend lawsuits related to the blockade, the official said.

All of the countries involved in the deals are US allies. Qatar hosts the region's largest US military base, Bahrain is home to the US Navy's Fifth Fleet, and Saudi Arabia and the UAE host US troops.

White House senior adviser Jared Kushner, assigned to work on the dispute by US President Donald Trump, helped negotiate the deal and was working the phones on it until the wee hours of Monday morning, the official said.

When in December Saudi Arabia's foreign minister said a resolution to the dispute seemed within reach, Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in a Twitter post said he hoped Gulf reconciliation "contributes to stability and political and economic development for all peoples of our region."

Kushner, joined by Middle East envoy Avi Berkowitz and Brian Hook, a special State Department adviser, were flying to the Saudi Arabian city of Al-Ula to attend the ceremony, the US official said.

If the deal holds, the Gulf dispute will be added to a string of diplomatic achievements of the Kushner team, a list that includes normalization deals last year between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan and

Morocco.

Kushner, who is also Trump's son-in-law, has been working on more normalization deals between Israel and Arab countries but may run out of time with President-elect Joe Biden due to take over the presidency on Jan. 20. "It's just a massive breakthrough," the official said. "The blockade will be lifted. It will allow for travel among the countries as well as goods. It will lead to more stability in the region."

Diplomats in the region have said that Saudi Arabia was keen by pushing a deal to resolve the dispute to demonstrate to Biden that they are peacemakers and open to dialogue.

The United States has about 10,000 troops in Qatar, which is home to Al Udeid Air Base. There are thousands more troops in the UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia.



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Qatar emir announces attendance at GCC summit in Saudi Arabia Saudi Arabia and Qatar to open airspace, land and sea borders

Woman close to being blind after botched Turkey treatment

Author:

Mon, 2021-01-04 22:55

LONDON: A woman who sought simple treatment in a Turkish hospital has been left blind in one eye and struggling to see through the other after suffering a devastating allergic reaction to antibiotics, despite informing doctors of her allergies.

Cilem Kelleci, 31, visited doctors in Gazi State Hospital in the city of Samsun to treat a minor infection, Britain's Daily Mail newspaper reported on Monday.

She made it clear to doctors that she is allergic to antibiotics, but says they gave them to her anyway.

A short while later, she started to suffer from a near-fatal allergic reaction. She was unable to see, and said she could feel lumps of her skin falling off.

"At one point, they told me that they were going to have to remove my right eye," the Daily Mail reported Kelleci as saying.

She was transferred to a private hospital that demanded \$12,300 to save her right eye, and said if she left it too long it would be too late.

Kelleci is now blind in her right eye and has just 20 percent usage of her left one. She said she is "terrified that I will become a prisoner of the darkness."

She plans to sue the hospital for malpractice, but said she cannot wait until the outcome because even if she gets the money it may be too late to save her vision.



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