

# Palestinian Authority's financial crisis 'could come to end next month'

Author:

Thu, 2020-10-15 00:55

GAZA CITY: A union leader has urged striking West Bank teachers to "be patient with the government" amid assurances that the Palestinian Authority's (PA) ongoing financial crisis could soon be resolved.

Secretary-General of the Teachers Union Saed Erzikat has warned that worker representatives would "not be able to protect any teacher" taking part in unauthorized industrial action from the prospect of arrest.

Teachers from a number of schools in Hebron and the West Bank have been staging protests after having only received part of their monthly salaries since May.

PA finances have been hard hit as a result of its fractious relationship with Israel and the US over what it describes as "plans to liquidate the Palestinian cause."

Five months ago, the PA found itself unable to meet its monthly financial obligations, most notably the payment of wages, after it stopped receiving tax revenues on goods entering Palestinian territories, collected by Israel on its behalf. The taxes are estimated to make up more than 60 percent of the PA's income.

A number of teachers were arrested after taking part in strikes, which union officials have distanced themselves from.

Erzikat said that the union was in constant contact with the PA on the issue of salary payments adding that the financial crisis would come to an end next month. But the official warned that the union would "not be able to protect any teacher, and all teachers must abide by the attendance at their schools."

However, so-called United Teachers' Movement protesters described the union as a "government front that does not care about teachers."

Teacher and activist Khaled Shabita, who was one of those arrested, said teachers had a right to peacefully strike and it was wrong of the PA to question their "patriotism" for taking part in industrial action.

"We want a free country, and we want a decent life. Employees face a difficult choice. Do they not have the right to live in dignity, just as much as having the right to fight for the freedom of their country from occupation?" he told Arab News.

Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammed Ishtayeh, previously told public servants, "do you want a homeland or money?"

Education affairs writer, Ismail Muslimani, said workers, including teachers, had the right to strike. "The scene has become complicated and the scale of the tragedy is great, and the employee is not obliged to pay the price of failed policies," he added.

International mediation efforts are reportedly underway to get a resumption of tax income for the PA. The authority's monthly salary bill is about 550 million Israeli shekels (\$162 million) for about 136,000 employees in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Average monthly government expenditure would normally be expected to top 1.1 billion shekels.

Economist Ayman Abu Aisha said: "If the Palestinian Authority succeeds in obtaining an Arab loan, then it will not need the tax revenues that are collected by Israel, but if it does not succeed, then the option of receiving the revenues will be its last resort to solve its financial crisis."



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# UN urges Libyans to prioritize national interest in November talks

Author:

Wed, 2020-10-14 00:57

CARTHAGE, Tunisia: The UN's Libya envoy on Monday urged rival parties to place the national interest before political ambitions when they meet for talks next month aimed at ending a decade of bloodshed.

The North African country is dominated by armed groups, riven by local conflicts and divided between two bitterly opposed administrations: A United Nations-recognized unity government based in Tripoli and its eastern-based rival backed by strongman Khalifa Haftar.

Neighbouring Tunisia is set to host talks in early November including representatives of civil society, tribesmen, political leaders, and members of bodies representing both administrations.

"What we want to see in terms of participation is people who are not there for their own political aspirations, but for their country," said UN envoy Stephanie Williams on Monday, after meeting Tunisian President Kais Saied.

Asked whether Haftar or unity government chief Fayez Al-Sarraj would be present, she said participants would be able to take part on the condition "that they remove themselves from consideration in high government positions."

This included membership of the key Presidential Council, the prime minister's job and ministerial posts, she told AFP.

The talks are intended to prepare for national elections, she added.

Tunisia's Foreign Minister Othman Jerandi called for "a dialogue between Libyans that could lead to a political solution to the crisis."

Saied spoke on Monday with his Algerian counterpart Abdelmadjid Tebboune, who saluted the renewed dialogue and said that Algeria, another neighbor of Libya, was "always at Tunisia's side."

Tebboune also spoke of a visit to Tunisia after the Nov. 1 referendum on constitutional reform in Algeria.

The Algerian president's office confirmed that the two men had spoken via telephone.

"The President of the Republic, Abdelmadjid Tebboune, received a telephone call on the part of his counterpart Kais Saied, and they reviewed bilateral relations and his planned visit to Tunisia," it said in a statement.

Tebboune "welcomed Tunisia's organization of inter-Libyan dialogue under the

auspices of the UN," the statement said.

A previous agreement between rival Libyan sides, signed in Morocco in 2015, created a unity government that was never recognized by Haftar.

In April 2019 he launched an offensive to seize Tripoli, but was pushed back after over a year of fighting.

Since his forces were driven from western Libya, the rival sides have resumed talks on specific themes: Institutions, military and political affairs.

The Tunis talks will begin on Oct. 26 by videoconference, before continuing face-to-face in early November.



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UN, Germany host summit to capitalize on glimmers of hope for peace in Libya  
Italy, Morocco hold talks on Libya

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# Sudan's premier sacks provincial governor after protests

Author:

Wed, 2020-10-14 00:52

CAIRO: Sudan's prime minister on Tuesday sacked the governor of an eastern province, less than three months after his appointment, the state-run news agency reported.

Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok's decision to fire Saleh Ammar, newly appointed governor of Kassala province, came amid sporadic protests against his appointment – protests that at times have turned deadly.

Ammar was named governor of Kassala in July, when Hamdok appointed civilian governors for the country's 18 provinces. The move was seen at the time as a key step forward in Sudan's transition to democracy.

But the protesters, who opposed his appointment on tribal grounds, barred Ammar from entering Kassala, so he remained in the capital, Khartoum. The protests escalated in August, when at least five people were killed and over three dozen were wounded.

Sudan is on a fragile path to democracy after a popular uprising led the military to overthrow former autocratic President Omar Bashir in April 2019. A military-civilian government now rules the country, with elections possible in late 2022.

Ammar had claimed, without offering evidence, that supporters of Bashir were behind the protests. The prime minister did not immediately name a replacement for Ammar.

Later Tuesday, Ammar's sacking triggered new protests in Kassala. Footage circulated online showing protesters blocking roads and setting tires ablaze. No casualties were reported.

The Beni Amer tribe, from which Ammar hails, rejected his dismissal.

Several activists also criticized the sacking, warning of widespread chaos in eastern Sudan amid tribal tensions. Award-winning novelist Hamour Zyada said the decision showed the transitional government's weakness in fighting those who opposed Ammar's appointment.

Elsewhere in Sudan, more than 4,500 people in South Darfur province have been displaced in the past week by ongoing clashes between factions of a rebel group boycotting a recent peace deal between the transitional government and a rebel alliance, according to the UN migration agency.

The fighting between factions of the Sudan Liberation Army–Abdel-Wahid Nour erupted earlier this month in the Sharg al-Jabal area, the International Organization for Migration said.

The transitional government and the Sudan Revolutionary Front, a coalition of several armed groups, signed a peace deal earlier this month, capping torturous talks that had been underway in South Sudan's capital, Juba, since late last year.

Abdel-Wahid's group rejects the transitional government and has not taken part in the talks. It criticized the deal, saying it was "not different from" other previous deals that did not end the wars.

Sudan's largest single rebel group, the Sudan Liberation Movement-North, led by Abdel-Aziz Al-Hilu, was involved in the talks but has yet to reach a deal with the government.



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Inflation in Sudan hits record 212 percent Sudanese migrant reaches UK after fateful journey

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[Yemen leader rejects UN peace deal,](#)

# denounces Houthi demands

Author:

Tue, 2020-10-13 22:53

AL-MUKALLA: Yemeni President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi rejected a peace proposal presented by UN Special Envoy for Yemen Martin Griffiths on Monday.

According to a government official, the proposal fell outside the agreed framework to achieve peace in the country.

The internationally recognized Yemeni government will only support peace initiatives that comply with the GCC Initiative, the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference and UN Security Council Resolution 2216, official sources told Arab News on Tuesday.

The Security Council Resolution 2216 recognizes the Hadi-led government's authority over Yemen and requires the Iran-backed Houthis to disarm and abandon territory under their control.

Despite Hadi's rejection of the agreement, a report in SABA, Yemen's official news agency, said the leader still fully supported Griffiths' efforts to broker a peace deal.

The report added that the government had already offered many concessions to the Houthis to reach an amicable solution.

Hadi also accused Iran-backed militias of violating the UN-brokered Stockholm Agreement through growing military activity in the western province of Hodeidah.

Another senior government official told Arab News that Hadi rejected two Houthi demands included in the Joint Declaration presented by Griffiths – maintaining control of an oil pipeline from the central city of Marib to the western city of Hodeidah and exempting aircraft departing from Houthi-controlled airports from inspections.

“Instead of agreeing to emptying the decaying Safer oil tanker, the Houthis demanded the resumption of oil pumping to the same facility,” the official said.

On Tuesday, the UN envoy said on Twitter: “Last evening, I met with President Hadi. We discussed the UN efforts to mediate a resolution to the conflict in Yemen, and exchanged views on the draft of the Joint Declaration.”

In recent months, the UN envoy has urged Yemen's warring parties to accept the Joint Declaration, a peace proposal that requires the internationally recognized government and Iran-backed Houthis to enter a nationwide truce and introduce humanitarian and economic measures to alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni people.

After halting hostilities, both parties can engage in direct peace talks

aimed at reaching a comprehensive peace settlement. The two parties on Sept. 10 received a revised draft of the Joint Declaration that included their comments, edits and suggestions, Griffiths said.

Yemeni parliament speaker Sultan Al-Barakani told Griffiths in Riyadh on Monday that the UN's tolerance of the Houthis has encouraged them to violate truces and agreements, shell cities, target Saudi Arabia with ballistic missiles and drones and reject warnings about the decaying Safer tanker, SABA reported.

Yemen's Vice President Ali Mohsen Al-Ahmer also repeated the government's demands to include the three requirements in peace proposals.

Al-Ahmer told outgoing French Ambassador to Yemen Christian Tiesto in Riyadh that the Yemeni government will only support peace deals that follow the agreed framework.

Yasser Al-Yafae, an Aden-based political analyst, told Arab News that the government should avoid taking a tough stance on the three requirements because the Yemen conflict has "produced new powerful forces that oppose the framework."

He said: "Since 2015, the war has produced a new reality as the Houthi movement has gained control over large areas in northern Yemen and is expanding. The Southern Transitional Council that appeared in 2017 controls important parts in the south. Insisting on the references means continuing the war."

### **Fierce fighting**

Fighting intensified on Monday and Tuesday in almost all major battlefields in northern, western and southern Yemen.

On Tuesday, local army officers told Arab News that heavy mortar, canon and katyusha shelling on residential areas in the southern city of Taiz killed five civilians and wounded many others.

Abdul Basit Al-Baher, a Yemeni army spokesman in Taiz, said that army troops exchanged heavy fire with Houthi fighters.

"The army troops responded to the Houthi shelling, targeting the source of the fire. They have mobilized a huge number of forces and targeted Taiz with all kinds of heavy weapons," Al-Baher said.

In the northern province of Jouf, army commanders said that Arab coalition warplanes hit a convoy of Houthi military vehicles, killing several militants, including a senior field commander.

Another Houthi military leader, Col. Sultan Abdul Kareem, was killed along with five associates in fighting with government forces in Jouf's Beir Al-Mazareq area.

On Monday, hundreds of Houthis in Sanaa attended the funeral of Mohammed



Yahiya Al-Houri, a field military commander who was killed in fighting with government forces in the western province of Hodeidah earlier this week.



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Yemeni president pledges 'permanent support' to UN peace efforts  
Yemeni government rejects latest UN peace plan draft

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## [Tunisians protest after man dies in kiosk demolition](#)

Author:

AFP

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1602616384704833200

Tue, 2020-10-13 17:50

KASSERINE, Tunisia: Angry residents took to the streets of an impoverished Tunisian town on Tuesday after a man died when authorities demolished an

illegal kiosk where he was sleeping.

The shop in Sbeitla, in the central province of Kasserine, was demolished in the early hours on the orders of local authorities, security sources told AFP.

Abderrazek Khachnaoui, the father of the shop's owner, was killed in the operation, according to the same sources and his son.

"I was not informed of this decision... and agents of the municipality proceeded with the destruction without checking if there was someone inside," said the son, 25-year-old Oussama Khachnaoui.

"My father, who was only 49 years old, died on the spot. Security agents fired tear gas at my family who had tried to approach my kiosk to save my father," he told AFP.

The death sparked angry protests by residents who blocked roads and set fire to a municipal car in Sourour district, where the shop selling newspapers and cigarettes was located, witnesses told an AFP correspondent.

The protesters also threw stones and other objects at the security forces, said interior ministry spokesman Khaled Hayouni, who did not confirm the cause of the man's death.

Military and security forces were deployed "as a precaution" to protect sensitive sites in the town, said defense ministry spokesman Mohamed Zekri. Sbeitla, in Tunisia's economically marginalized center, has often seen protests in the past over lack of jobs and investment.

Youths often turn to selling newspapers and bread on the informal market in order to support their family's incomes while out of work.

Tunisia's Prime Minister Hichem Mechichi on Tuesday voiced his support for Khachnaoui's family, announcing the launch of an enquiry into the incident. In a statement, he said he had sacked two top regional officials, a district security chief and Sbeitla's police head, as well as sending Interior Minister Taoufik Charfeddine "immediately" to offer support to the victim's family.

Inland regions of Tunisia have higher unemployment than the already dire national average, which is currently at 18 percent and could top 21 percent by the end of the year.

Khachnaoui's death came as Tunisia prepares to mark 10 years since a revolution sparked when a young street vendor, Mohamed Bouazizi, set himself alight to protest against police harassment.



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