

Iran sentences journalist to death, clamps down on jailed female activists

Tue, 2020-06-30 20:39

LONDON: Iran has sentenced to death a journalist whose work helped to inspire nationwide protests in 2017, and is further suppressing female rights activists within the country's notorious prison system.

From his exile in Paris, Ruhollah Zam ran a website called AmadNews which posted embarrassing videos and information about Iranian officials. He also ran a channel on Telegram, the most popular messaging app in Iran, that spread information about upcoming protests and shared videos from the demonstrations.

Judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Esmaili announced the journalist's death sentence on Tuesday.

Zam was persuaded to return to Iran in October 2019, and was subsequently arrested. Following his detention, he appeared in televised confessions where he offered an apology for his past activities.

The journalist is the son of a reformist Shia cleric, Mohammad Ali Zam, who served in the Iranian government during the early 80s and openly denounced his son's activities during the 2017 protests.

In addition to Zam's death sentence, Tehran has recently increased its campaign against women's rights activists in the country.

Tehran temporarily released thousands of prisoners to deal with a COVID-19 outbreak in the country's crowded prison system, but the regime has been criticized by rights groups for denying release to women's rights campaigners by levelling additional charges at them.

For example, Narges Mohammadi, one of Iran's best-known women's rights defenders, was jailed for 16 years in 2015 after she campaigned to abolish the death penalty.

Her family said that she was denied prison furlough and charged with "dancing in prison during the days of mourning to commemorate the murder of the Shia Imam Hussein" – a charge the family dismissed as absurd.

She could face an additional five years in prison and 74 lashes for the new charges.

Atena Daemi, 32, a women's rights activist and anti-death penalty campaigner, was expected to be furloughed on July 4, but now faces additional charges that make her ineligible for release.

Held in the notorious Evin prison, she faces a further 25 months in prison for allegedly "disturbing order" by chanting anti-government slogans, a claim

she denies.

Jasmin Ramsey, of the New York-based Center for Human Rights in Iran, said: “Women are on the frontlines of struggles for rights and equality in Iran, as shown by the multiple political prisoners who continue to speak out for the rights of others from inside jail cells.

“By going so far as to alter the judicial process with the hope of muzzling these prisoners under lengthy jail sentences, Iranian judicial and intelligence officials are revealing how desperate they are to prevent women from taking on more leadership roles.”

US-based journalist and activist Masih Alinejad said: “For years and years, we had the fear inside us. And now women are fearless. They want to be warriors and that scares the government.”



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Iran journalist flees Zarif delegation to stay in SwedenIran sentences journalist to two years in jail

[Explosion at Tehran clinic kills 13 people](#)

Tue, 2020-06-30 20:35

TEHRAN: Thirteen people were killed and several were injured in an explosion at a medical clinic in the north of the Iranian capital Tehran, the Khabaronline news site reported on Tuesday.

The explosion was caused by a gas leak, Tehran Deputy Governor Hamid Reza Goudarzi told state TV.



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Japanese FM Motegi emphasizes his country's support for two-state Middle East peace solution

Tue, 2020-06-30 19:47

TOKYO: Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi stressed that the Japanese government has supported and will continue to support a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine, effectively rejecting Israel's annexation plans for the West Bank.

In replying to Arab News Japan question, Motegi said at a press conference at the foreign ministry Tuesday that the issues between Palestinians and Israelis "should be solved through negotiations and our position has not been changed."

Israel currently plans to annex the part of West Bank containing the Jordan Valley, but Japan stands against that and opposes the annexation of disputed territories in principle and has shown concern about such a trend spreading internationally, as it could have implications for Tokyo's claims to islands disputed by Russia, China and South Korea.

Japan is traditionally supportive of Palestinian rights to their land based on the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and has accused Israel of violating international law by expanding settlements into occupied Palestinian territory.

#BREAKING: Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi (@moteging) stressed that the Japanese government has supported and will continue to support a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine. <https://t.co/DT9sx4rnZ5> pic.twitter.com/24Yq1RXnMw

– Arab News Japan (@ArabNewsjp) [June 30, 2020](#)



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Former European leaders slam Trump peace plan

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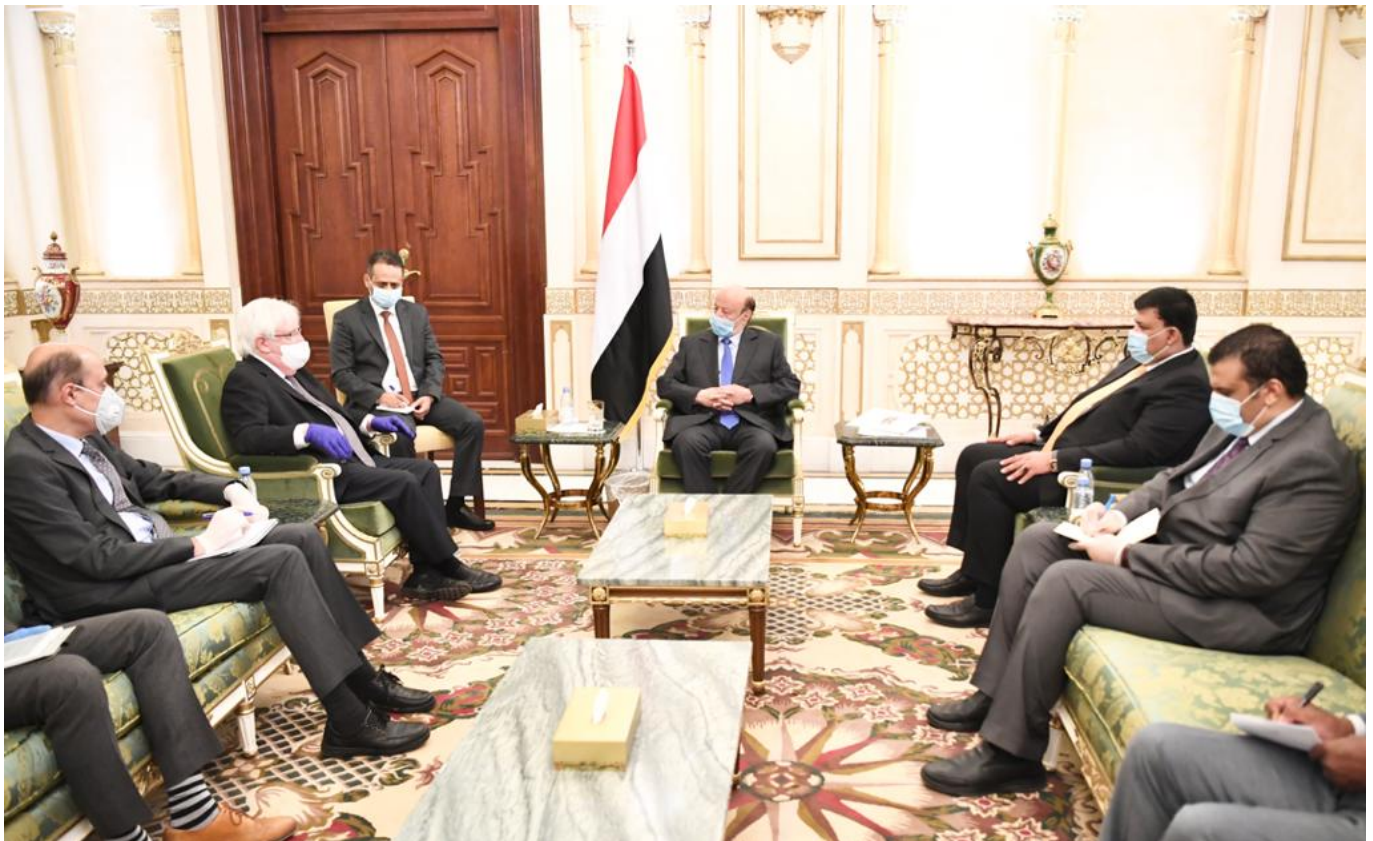
Tue, 2020-06-30 18:38

RIYADH: The United Nations Special Envoy to Yemen Martin Griffiths has called for a complete ceasefire in the country during a meeting with Yemeni President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi on Tuesday.

During the meeting, which covered a number of issues related to a possible peace deal in Yemen, Hadi thanked the UN envoy on his diplomatic efforts to end the conflict.

He said this came despite the Houthi militia's attempts to avoid fulfilling its pledges and commitments to the process. Hadi insisted he wants to achieve a comprehensive peace in order to reach sustainable security and stability in Yemen and the region.

Hadi's internationally recognised government was forced to flee Yemen's capital Sanaa when the Houthis seized the city and much of the country's north in 2014, triggering the devastating conflict.



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Yemen PM slams Houthis for preventing UN assessment of decaying oil tanker in Red Sea

[Pompeo to UN: Ending Iran arms ban](#)

would mean 'sword of Damocles' over region

Tue, 2020-06-30 18:16

NEW YORK: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo pushed the UN Security Council on Tuesday to indefinitely extend an arms embargo on Iran before it expires in October.

Speaking at the virtual briefing, Pompeo warned that its expiration would risk the stability of the region.

"Iran will hold a sword of Damocles over the economic stability of the Middle East, endangering nations like Russia and China that rely on stable energy prices," Pompeo told the virtual session, referencing two opponents of prolonging the embargo.

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"Don't just take it from the United States, listen to countries in the region. From Israel to the Gulf, countries in the Middle East – who are most exposed to Iran's predations – are speaking with one voice: Extend the arms embargo," Pompeo said. "This council has a responsibility to listen to them."

He also argued that the country was not a "responsible democracy like Australia or India," and must be held accountable.

Jonathan Allen, the UK representative, echoed calls for the embargo to be extended, citing the Iranian origin of missiles used on attacks on Saudi Aramco facilities in 2019, which he called "unacceptable."

Earlier this month, the US circulated a draft resolution on the measure to the 15-member council, but council veto-powers Russia and China have already signaled their opposition to the move.

The Security Council was meeting on Tuesday to discuss the latest report by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on implementation of the arms embargo and other restrictions still in place under the nuclear deal.

#LIVE: *UN Security Council virtual meeting on #Iran nuclear agreement* <https://t.co/KoyBdVmH9M>

– Arab News (@arabnews) [June 30, 2020](#)

(With AFP)



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