

Turks oppose sending troops to war-torn Libya, survey shows

Author:

Sat, 2020-01-11 01:30

ANKARA: Deployment of Turkish troops to war-torn Libya has a strikingly low rate of support among the country's population, a recent survey suggests.

More than 1,500 people across 12 provinces took part in the poll, conducted by market research firm Istanbul Ekonomi Arastirma, with 58 percent of respondents saying they disapproved of any troop deployment to the war-torn country. Only 34 percent were in favor of the deployment.

Can Selcuki, general manager of Istanbul Ekonomi Arastirma, said that people fail to see any benefit in sending troops to Libya.

"In other military involvements, such as those in northern Syria, the threat was Syrian Kurdish YPG taking root along Turkey's borders. Hence public support was above 75 percent for both the Euphrates Shield and Peace Spring operations.

"Military involvement in Libya may be well justified from a national benefit perspective, but the government has more convincing to do," he told Arab News.

FASTFACTS

- 58 percent of respondents say they disapproved of any troop deployment to the war-torn country.
- Respondents who oppose the troop deployment are mainly in the range of 35-54 age, while those who approve are mostly aged from 18-25.

Libyan intervention also divides the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and its ally Nationalist Movement Party (MHP). Only 61.8 percent of the AKP voters consider the deployment of forces to Libya as a necessity, while 45 percent of the MHP voters are against the military presence in Libya.

Opposition party supporters are principally against military deployment to the North African country, with 92.9 percent of pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party voters opposed to the move. In the newly formed İyi Party, the rate is 88 percent, while in the main opposition Republican People's Party the figure is 78 percent.

Turkish people are also reluctant for the government to become involved in every conflict in its neighborhood, with 75 percent of respondents suggesting Ankara should adopt an intermediary role for regional conflicts rather than

becoming involved.

Along with drones, armored vehicles and Syrian mercenaries, Turkey recently sent military advisers to Libya following a request by Prime Minister Fayed Al-Serraj's Government of National Accord (GNA), which Ankara backs against Libyan military commander Khalifa Haftar.



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[France calls for 'gesture' from Iran over detained academics](#)

Author:

Sat, 2020-01-11 01:26

PARIS: France said on Friday that the imprisonment of two prominent French academics by Iran was unacceptable and that their release would represent a "significant gesture," as tensions mount between Tehran and the West.

The plea for the release of Fariba Adelkhah and Roland Marchal – imprisoned since June last year – comes as Iran is embroiled in an international crisis over its missile attacks on US troops in Iraq and a passenger plane crash near Tehran.

“These arrests and the fact that they are in prison today is totally unacceptable,” French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian told RTL radio. “It would be a significant gesture if Iran freed them as soon as possible,” he said.

France has repeatedly called for de-escalation in the latest intensification of the Iran-US standoff, sparked by the killing of top Iranian commander Qassem Soleimani in an American drone strike which prompted Iran to attack bases in Iraq housing US troops.

France, Britain and Germany are scrambling to keep alive a 2015 deal that reined in Tehran’s nuclear program, which US President Donald Trump walked out of in 2018.

Iran has dropped espionage charges against Adelkhah but she still faces charges of spreading “propaganda against the political system” and “conspiracy against national security,” her lawyer said this week.

Iran does not recognize Adelkhah’s dual French-Iranian nationality and has lashed out at Paris for what it has described as “interference” in the cases of the academics, both from Sciences Po University in Paris.

Marchal is also accused of “collusion against national security,” according to his lawyer.

The two researchers are not the only foreign academics behind bars in Iran – Australian Kylie Moore-Gilbert of the University of Melbourne is serving a 10-year sentence on espionage charges.

Sciences Po said late last year that Adelkhah and Moore-Gilbert had begun a hunger strike. Moore-Gilbert has issued a plea to Prime Minister Scott Morrison to work for her release.

Tehran is still holding several other foreigners in high-profile cases, including British-Iranian mother Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and Iranian-American businessman Siamak Namazi and his father, Mohammad Bagher Namazi.



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[Israeli brutality fails to break spirit of Jerusalem neighborhood](#)

Author:

Sat, 2020-01-11 01:16

AMMAN: Despite the fact that locals are arrested daily and that a number of houses have been demolished, residents of Issawiya, a small neighborhood in East Jerusalem, continue to defy Israeli attempts to break their spirit.

Over the past two months, Israeli police have detained an estimated 200 residents of Issawiya – many of them children – in defiance of international law. Orders to demolish three more homes in the neighborhood were also issued this week.

According to data from the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI),

more than 600 residents have been arrested since the launch of regular police raids in Issawiya. About a third of those, according to residents and lawyers are minors.

The ACRI has written to the Israeli attorney general saying that the systematic over-policing directed at thousands of people – most of whom have never even thrown a stone in their life – along with intimidation, arrests, and the use of gas, stun grenades, and sponge-tipped bullets “are not legitimate means” for imposing law and order.

“This policy serves only to exacerbate and foment the confrontations, and in itself causes disturbances, while using means intended to punish, humiliate, and oppress an entire population that is mostly innocent of any crime,” the Israeli human rights organization wrote.

Since June the situation in Issawiya, as described by the ACRI, has been intolerable. “Day after day, night after night, Special Patrol Unit and Border Police forces enter the neighborhood, patrolling the streets, haranguing youths, invading homes, ordering shops to close, blocking roads, handing out incessant tickets, and conducting arrests, many of which prove to be spurious.”

Yaser Darwish, an activist in Issawiya, told Arab News that the daily attacks would not deter people from standing up for their rights. “They have been attacking Issawiya almost every night, and this week alone they have issued demolition orders for three homes in the center of town, claiming that they (were) built without a license,” he said.

Another Israeli human rights organization, Btselem, said that in 2019 alone Israel has demolished 169 homes in East Jerusalem – 18 of them in Issawiya – more than had previously been destroyed in the years since 2004, and that those demolitions “resulted in making 328 Palestinians, including 182 children, homeless.”

Former Palestinian Minister of Jerusalem Affairs Ziad AbuZayyad told Arab News, “(The Israelis) want to break their spirit and force them to kneel, but the people of Issawiya are stubborn and the entire town has stood up to the Israeli police and other Israeli officials’ efforts.”

Hanna Issa, head of the Islamic Christian Committee for Jerusalem, told Arab News that the constant attacks are a prelude to an attempt to displace this small neighborhood, which is close to Israeli institutions including the Hebrew University’s Mount Scopus Campus and the Hadassah Hospital.

“They want to knock off the head of anyone that dares raise his head so that Issawiya will be an example to other neighborhoods, and so that eventually they can move these areas while widening the borders of what they call their unified capital,” Issa said.

Micky Rosenfeld, spokesman for the Israel National Police, told Arab News that police carry out regular patrols in the neighborhood of Issawiya, and “have done so for years,” in order to prevent and respond to security-related

incidents whether caused by criminals or terrorists.

“Police officers have been attacked when on patrol by masked residents with petrol bombs, and have had fireworks fired at them from close range, causing the officers to be in a life-threatening situation,” he claimed.

Rosenfeld added that Israeli police officials “are in contact with the leaders of the community to discuss the general situation and coordinate.”



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Author:

Fri, 2020-01-10 02:07

– Developing story.



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[Gaza florists facing extinction amid Israeli blockade](#)

Author:

Fri, 2020-01-10 01:56

RAFAH: Flower cultivation in Gaza is on the verge of extinction, due to the six-year long Israeli blockade and ban on exports, which has prompted dozens of farmers to switch to more popular crops.

Ghazi Hijazi, 62, is the owner of the largest flower farm in Gaza, and is one of the few farmers still clinging to flower cultivation since he started in 1991.

Despite his adherence to this agriculture, Hijazi was forced to reduce the area of the land he cultivates from 40 dunums to 10. He faces many obstacles in order to sell his product in the local market, including reducing his workforce from 40 to three along with his four sons to manage costs.

“Because of the restrictions imposed by Israel on exports from Gaza, marketing is limited to the local, which is not comparable to what was achieved by exports to the Netherlands and the European market,” he told Arab News.

Hijazi recalled the years of prosperity and openness before the imposition of the Israeli blockade on the Gaza Strip following the victory of Hamas in the second legislative elections in early 2006.

Flowers of Gaza were second only to the Dutch in terms of quality, according to Hijazi, who said: “Israel has lost our flowers its international reputation.”

He stressed that Gaza’s flowers maintained a position on the international stock exchange in the Netherlands from 1998 to 2013. But after Israel tightened its restrictions imposed on commercial crossings, this status declined, and international traders turned to other farms in the region.

Ministry of Agriculture data indicates that Gaza farmers were exporting some 60 million flowers annually to Europe, but they only exported 5 million flowers in 2012, before exporting stopped completely after the third Israeli war on Gaza in 2014.

Hijazi explained that exports completely stopped for six years, but before that the farmers faced great obstacles, which affected their commitment to the delivery dates to the Stock Exchange in the Netherlands due to complex Israeli inspections.

According to the ministry, the area currently cultivated with flowers is estimated at only 22 dunums, the majority of which is owned by Hijazi and his siblings in Rafah, on the Palestinian-Egyptian border, in the south of Gaza. Cultivation of flowers began in Gaza in 1991.

The farmers received training courses and Dutch financial support, which led to the expansion of the farm area to 1,200 dunums by 1998.

Hijazi said that dozens of farmers, who have great experience, could not tolerate the bitter reality resulting from the conditions of the blockade, and had to bulldoze their farms, and switch to cultivating other crops.

Flowers planting requires extensive care and high costs.

Hijazi said that these costs cannot be compensated due to local sales being limited to only three seasons: Christmas, Valentine's Day, and Mother's Day, which are not enough to sustain a business.

Flowers are not a priority for 2 million Palestinians suffering from a suffocating siege and collapse in economic conditions. About 80 percent of them depend on humanitarian relief.

Hijazi compared domestic and foreign marketing with a rose, which is sold locally for about one shekel, while it can be exported abroad for 7 shekels.

He does not rule out the complete extinction of flower cultivation in Gaza if the current situation continues.

A spokesman for the Ministry of Agriculture in Gaza, Adham Al-Bassiouni, agreed with Hijazi that the cultivation of flowers is subject to a total collapse.

Bassiouni told Arab News that Gaza farmers were interested in cultivating 10 varieties of flowers, which were among the most important export crops, while some of them are struggling to continue.

Bassiouni said the main issues facing farmers are the blockade, marketing problems, a lack of export guarantee and the high costs of cultivation.



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Anxious Gazans fear for the future as daily life in Palestine worsens Hundreds join final Gaza-Israel border protests for three months