

[Algeria's culture minister resigns after deadly concert stampede](#)

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Sat, 2019-08-24 15:50

ALGIERS: Algeria's Culture Minister Meriem Merdaci resigned Saturday, following the deaths of five young music fans in a stampede at a packed concert by rapper Soolking in the capital, the president's office announced. It said Merdaci handed her resignation to interim president Abdelkader Bensalah "who accepted it."

On Friday, prime minister Nouredine Bedoui fired the head of ONDA (the National Office of Copyright and Neighbouring Rights), the public authority in charge of organizing concerts. An investigation has been opened. Thursday night's stampede that killed five people aged between 13 and 22 came as fans thronged an entrance of the August-20 Stadium in Algiers where France-based Soolking was performing.

The 29-year-old is a major star in the North African country, his song "La Liberte" (Freedom) becoming a mainstay of anti-government protests that entered their seventh month on Friday.



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Five people killed in stampede at Algiers rap concert
Algeria court orders arrest of former ministers

[Britain sends another warship to Gulf](#)

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AFP

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Sat, 2019-08-24 14:45

LONDON: A third British warship is heading to the Gulf, the Royal Navy announced Saturday, amid heightened tensions in the region.

Britain has already sent the HMS Kent to cover for frigate HMS Montrose while it undergoes maintenance in nearby Bahrain, and is now redirecting the Type 45 destroyer HMS Defender from its mission to the Pacific.

"Wherever the red ensign flies around the world, the UK stands by to protect freedom of navigation whenever is it tested," said Defense Secretary Ben Wallace.

Britain outraged Iran by seizing one of its tankers – the Grace 1 – on July 4 on suspicion it was carrying oil to Syria in violation of EU sanctions.

The HMS Montrose then warned off three Iranian gunboats that UK officials said were trying to "impede" the progress of a British supertanker through the Strait of Hormuz in the Gulf on July 11.

Iranian Revolutionary Guards stormed and detained the UK-flagged Stena Impero and its 23 crew as they sailed through the Strait of Hormuz on July 20.

The British government subsequently raised the alert level for ships traveling through Iranian waters to three on a three-point scale, indicating a "critical" threat.

Tensions have been escalating in the region, with US President Donald Trump in June calling off at the last minute an air strike on Iran over its downing of a US spy drone.

The HMS Defender sailed from Portsmouth on August 12, alongside HMS Kent, which was also heading to the Gulf to replace the HMS Duncan.

HMS Defender's commanding officer Richard Hewitt said his boat would "play her part alongside other Royal Navy warships in keeping these essential trade routes secure."



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[Gulf](#)

Stena Impero owner met Iran's Zarif to urge release of UK-flagged ship
Australia joins US-led mission to protect Hormuz shipping

[Yemen government takes control of city after separatist clashes](#)

Author:

By AHMED AL-HAJ | AP

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Sat, 2019-08-24 12:54

SANAA: Yemeni government troops took control Saturday of the city of Ataq, two days after deadly clashes between loyalists and southern separatists in the capital of Shabwa province, a pro-government source said.

Fighting between the troops and forces linked to the Southern Transitional Council (STC) broke out in Shabwa on Thursday night, in the latest such confrontation.

At least 11 people have been killed, medical sources told AFP.

Fighters from the Elite Forces, established in 2016 and striving for the independence of southern Yemen, "were forced to retreat after entering a number of government buildings" in Ataq, the source told AFP.

The source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, also said the government troops took control of one of the Elite Forces' military camps.

"Fighting between the two sides has moved to the outskirts of the city," added the source.

The two have sent reinforcements to the area, the rival sides said on Saturday.

The flare-up in Shabwa comes after deadly clashes earlier this month between the government and troops from the so-called Security Belt, who are dominated by separatists seeking an independent south, erupted in Yemen's de-facto capital Aden.

The STC partially withdrew last week from key sites it occupied in Aden under pressure from Saudi Arabia and the UAE, but it retains control of key military sites.

The STC has since driven government troops out of two military camps in Abyan province.

While the separatists have fought against the Houthis, STC forces want to see South Yemen regain the independence it gave up with unification in 1990.



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[Arab Coalition](#)

[Southern Transitional Council](#)

Yemeni human rights NGO: Houthis commit 2726 violations in Sanaa
US military drone shot down in Yemen

[Tunisia media mogul still candidate despite arrest: commission](#)

Author:

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Sat, 2019-08-24 11:35

TUNIS: Media magnate Nabil Karoui remains in the race for Tunisia's upcoming presidential election despite his arrest for alleged money laundering, the

head of the country's electoral commission said on Saturday.

Karoui, one of 26 presidential candidates given preliminary approval this month to run in the September 15 election, was arrested on Friday, his party said.

A judicial official said an arrest warrant had been issued for Karoui and his brother Ghazi for money laundering.

"Nabil Karoui is still a candidate and his name remains on the preliminary and definite list of candidates" who are vying to become Tunisia's next president, electoral commission (ISIE) head Nabil Baffoun said.

"Following his arrest... as long as there are no changes in his legal status... he remains a presidential candidate," Baffoun told the private Mosaïque FM radio station.

According to Baffoun, candidatures of individuals who have been convicted in Tunisia are accepted as long as the verdict against them does not specifically say they are banned from running in an election.

The tycoon was charged with money laundering in early July shortly after stating his intention to stand in the polls, but has remained a leading candidate.

His party announced his arrest the same day that authorities declared a ban on three local outlets – including Karoui's Nessma TV – from reporting on the election campaign over unlicensed "illegal" broadcasts.

Karoui has been accused by regulators and some politicians of using Nessma to bolster his political ambitions.

He was nearly removed from the race in June when parliament passed an amended electoral code that would bar any candidate who handed out "favours in cash or in kind" in the year before the vote.

But then-president Beji Caid Essebsi neither rejected nor enacted the bill, leaving the door open for Karoui to run.



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Tunisia electoral commission approves 26 presidential candidates
Authorities ban 3 broadcasters from covering Tunisian poll campaign

[Flights suspended at Libya airport after rocket fire](#)

Author:

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Sat, 2019-08-24 11:25

TRIPOLI: Flights were temporarily suspended Saturday at the Libyan capital's

sole functioning airport after it was hit by a rocket as two civilian flights were landing, airport authorities said.

"Flights are suspended until further notice due to rocket fire," the Mitiga airport said on its Facebook page.

After a pause of several hours flights resumed around midday, airport authorities announced in a later post.

Located east of Tripoli, Mitiga is a former military air base that has been used by civilian traffic since Tripoli international airport suffered severe damage during fighting in 2014.

Authorities said a rocket hit just as two flights were landing – a Buraq Air flight from Istanbul and a Libyan Airlines flight inbound from Medina in Saudi Arabia carrying over 200 passengers, including pilgrims returning from Makkah.

Mitiga has previously been targeted in fighting between the Tripoli-based UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) and forces loyal to eastern Libyan strongman Khalifa Haftar.

Haftar's self-styled Libyan National Army launched an offensive on April 4 to conquer Tripoli.

The two sides have since been embroiled in a stalemate on the capital's southern outskirts and Haftar's forces have allegedly repeatedly targeted Mitiga.

The origin of Saturday's rocket fire was not confirmed but the GNA forces blamed Haftar's forces.

The blast damaged a sidewalk outside the airport terminal and left cars parked nearby riddled with shrapnel, an AFP photographer at the scene said. The UN mission in Libya said it is concerned by the "growing frequency" of these attacks, which have come close to hitting civilian aircraft.

Since April, the fighting has killed at least 1,093 people and wounded 5,752, while some 120,000 others have been displaced, according to the World Health Organization.

Libya has been mired in chaos since a NATO-backed uprising that toppled and killed dictator Muammar Qaddafi in 2011.



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Young Libyans chose danger at sea over peril at home
Libyan navy says more than 300 migrants rescued