

Homemade bomb kills Israeli teen, wounds two others in West Bank

Author:

Fri, 2019-08-23 22:19

JERUSALEM: A rare homemade bomb attack in the occupied West Bank killed an Israeli teen and seriously wounded her father and brother Friday as they visited a spring near a Jewish settlement, officials said.

Israeli security forces deployed throughout the area where the attack took place near the settlement of Dolev, northwest of Ramallah, to search for suspects.

Israeli medics had earlier reported that a 17-year-old had been critically wounded in the attack and officials later announced her death, naming her as Rina Shnerb from the central Israeli city of Lod.

Medics from the Magen David Adom rescue service initially gave the ages of the two wounded as 46 and 20, before amending to 21 in the latter case.

The army said the three victims were a father and his two children.

The two wounded were taken by helicopter to hospital, the army said.

"Three civilians who were in a nearby spring were injured in an IED (improvised explosive device) blast," it said in a statement.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called it a "harsh terrorist attack" and sent condolences to the family, while pledging to continue building settlements.

"The security arms are in pursuit after the abhorrent terrorists," he said in a statement.

"We will apprehend them. The long arm of Israel reaches all those who seek our lives and will settle accounts with them."

United Nations envoy Nickolay Mladenov condemned the "shocking, heinous" attack, saying there was nothing heroic in Shnerb's "murder," calling it a "despicable, cowardly act."

"Terror must be unequivocally condemned by ALL," Mladenov wrote on Twitter. Israeli forces meanwhile entered the Palestinian village of Beitunia, south of the spring, to take footage from surveillance cameras.

An AFP reporter said Palestinians clashed there with Israeli soldiers, but no casualties were reported.

Chief of the army, Lt. Gen. Aviv Kohavi visited the site of the attack to understand the incident and oversee the efforts to locate the perpetrators, which he was "confident" would happen quickly, the military said.

Later in the day, Shnerb was buried in her hometown Lod, with thousands participating in the funeral.

Shnerb's father Eitan, who was wounded and couldn't attend the funeral, relayed through an uncle his request that people focus on "our strength and love and the wonderful nation and our good land" and avoid sinking into "weakness and anger and strife."

"We should be worthy of the great sacrifice we offered today," Eitan Shnerb was cited by the uncle as saying.

In a speech on Friday, Ismail Haniya, the leader of the Islamist Hamas movement which rules Gaza, praised the attack but did not claim

responsibility for it.

He referred to a recent clash between Israeli police and Palestinian worshippers at the highly sensitive Al-Aqsa mosque compound in Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem and sought to draw a link between the two incidents. AFP reporters said thousands of Gazans participated in weekly Friday protests at the Israeli border fence, with some youths using slingshots to launch stones at the barrier and a few approaching it.

The health ministry in the enclave said over 122 Palestinians were wounded in clashes with Israeli forces, dozens of them hit by live fire.

Palestinians sporadically clash with Israeli settlers and security forces in the West Bank, occupied by Israel since the Six-Day War of 1967, but bomb blasts have been rare in recent years.

Palestinian attacks have mostly involved guns, knives and car ramming.

There have been concerns about a possible increase in violence in the run up to Israel's September 17 general election.

A week ago, a Palestinian carried out a car-ramming attack in the West Bank, wounding two Israelis before being shot dead.

On August 8, an off-duty Israeli soldier's body was found with multiple stab wounds. Two Palestinian suspects were later arrested.

Late Thursday, a Palestinian threw grenades at Israeli soldiers while attempting to cross the Gaza border and was shot by Israeli forces, leaving him wounded, the army and the Gaza health ministry said.

Gaza militants have also launched six missiles at Israel in the past week; the most recent were on Wednesday.

In retaliation, the Israeli army said it struck "a number of military targets in a Hamas naval facility in the northern Gaza Strip."



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Israeli farmer remixes ancient scents near Dead Sea
US officials confirm Israeli strike in Iraq

[Iraq summons US charge d'affaires over military base attacks](#)

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Fri, 2019-08-23 21:26

BAGHDAD: The Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohamed Ali Alhakim summoned the US charge d'affaires Brian McFeeters on Friday evening.

The two discussed the latest developments in Iraq and across the wider region, as well as cooperation on intelligence and military matters and the fight against terrorism.

According to a statement from the foreign ministry, Alhakim stressed that Iraq is committed to maintaining good relations with its neighbors and preserving security within its borders.

The charge d'affaires at the US embassy in Baghdad had been summoned hours after US officials disclosed to the New York Times intelligence that Israel had attacked a military base belonging to an Iraqi armed faction in July and bombed three makeshift warehouses inside the base in northern Baghdad.

Alhakim urged the US to commit to "implementing the terms of the strategic partnership agreement with Iraq in the security and economic spheres and to enhance joint cooperation between the two countries in various sectors," the statement read.

He added that Iraq was not an "arena for conflict and disagreement," but rather for "building and growth."

Alhakim made it clear that Iraq places the "utmost importance on diplomatic and legal options to prevent any external interference in its internal affairs and to safeguard the security and sovereignty of the country," according to the statement.

□ Leaders of armed factions in the country accuse Israel and the US of carrying out attacks using armed drones, but the Iraqi government denies that there is currently any evidence of the involvement of external parties.

US officials earlier this week uncovered intelligence indicating that Israel was involved in at least one of the attacks, which Iraqi officials told Arab News had embarrassed the Iraqi government and increased local and regional pressure on officials to take a clear position on the American forces and their control of Iraqi airspace.



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US officials confirm Israeli strike in Iraq
Head of Iran-backed militia in Iraq walks back US accusation

[Authorities ban 3 broadcasters from covering Tunisian poll campaign](#)

Author:

Fri, 2019-08-23 22:11

TUNIS: Tunisian electoral and media authorities have banned three local outlets from covering the presidential election campaign, including a channel founded by key candidate Nabil Karoui.

The ban targets media mogul Karoui's Nessma TV, alongside Zitouna – a broadcaster close to the Islamist-inspired Ennahdha party – and Radio Qur'an.

“It is not permitted for candidates in the presidential election... (to) conduct their electoral campaigns through these channels, who do not hold licenses and broadcast illegally,” Nouri Lajmi, head of the High Independent Authority of the Audiovisual Commission (HAICA), told AFP on Friday. The ban was agreed jointly by HAIFA and the Independent Higher Authority for Elections (ISIE), Lajmi said.

The campaign is set to take place from September 2 to September 13 and the poll itself is scheduled for September 15.

Established in 2012 to regulate Tunisian media, HAICA has been fighting for months to impose the law on the three outlets.

Nessma TV, one of the leading channels in the country, was banned from broadcasting by HAICA in October 2018 but did not comply and remains on air. HAICA accuses Nessma TV of “positioning itself to influence government bodies,” and rebuked it for not having disclosed its shareholders, reputedly including Italian politician Silvio Berlusconi.

In April, HAICA seized equipment from the channel.

Karoui, a leading candidate in the election, was charged in early July with money laundering.

He says he is being targeted by “attempts to undermine his growing popularity.”

Zitouna and Radio Qur’an are under scrutiny for lack of financial transparency, in particular as they do not report any advertising revenue, according to HAICA.

The popular uprising in 2011 that ousted dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali opened up space for the previously largely muzzled media.

Originally scheduled for November, the elections were brought forward after the death last month of incumbent Beji Caid Essebsi.



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Ennahda make new power quest in Tunisia
Tunisian pavilion at Souk Okaz depicts vibrant street life

[Israeli farmer remixes ancient scents near Dead Sea](#)

Author:

Fri, 2019-08-23 22:03

ALMOG, Palestinian Territories: At his farm near the Dead Sea in occupied Palestinian territory, Israeli Guy Erlich remixes blends of perfume and incense that he believes were used by royalty in the biblical era. He claims to have re-created a scent that Cleopatra may have dabbed on her skin and oils that anointed ancient Jewish kings. With a passion for ancient plants, Erlich set out in 2008 to try to grow them himself to turn into fragrances and other products, on a small hill in the West Bank, near the Israeli settlement of Almog. He now cultivates around 60 biblical plants, from which he creates creams, perfumes, soap and honey, and attracts tourists who come to learn about the rare plants and take in their scents. Erlich, 48, dreams of bringing back into widespread circulation the balm of Gilead, used medicinally during the ancient Roman era and referenced in the Bible. He's even named his farm after it. The balm is thought to have been used by the ancient Greek physician, Galen, to heal infections and wounds, he says. He mentions Jewish teachings from the Talmud and Christian sources that name it. A farmer before making a job out of his fascination for biblical agriculture – some of which has long disappeared – Erlich says he has read everything he can find on the subject. Elaine Solowey, a desert agriculture specialist at Israel's Arava Institute for Environmental Studies, helped him to identify some of his plants. Speaking to AFP, she said that she could not say for sure if Erlich's plants were those found in biblical times since more research was necessary. "The species produced by Mr. Erlich are probably those cultivated in the region during antiquity, but we can't be certain," Solowey said. "Many plant species mentioned in the Bible have disappeared and it is vital that we figure out how to study the subject," she said, adding that more funding was needed. Erlich makes honey with the flowers of Boswellia trees that yield frankincense – one of the offerings to the baby Jesus in the Bible's New Testament. The trees grow in places like Somalia, Yemen, Ethiopia and Oman but Erlich

has planted them at his Balm of Gilead Farm.

For now, the small leafed species takes up only a limited part of his farm, but the honey he produces sells at a premium price: \$1,000 (900 euros) per kilogram.

The farm is currently quite spartan and he hopes in time to be able to develop his tourist center, a simple, wooden structure that shields visitors from the sun next to his fields.

Wearing boots and a large hat, he explains to visitors the story behind each plant and its name.

Erlich is seeking to attract investors but says it is difficult since his farm is in occupied territory.

For Palestinians, his work has more than a whiff of controversy, given the location of the farm.

Abdallah Abu Rahma, a Palestinian Authority official who monitors Israeli settlements, was unequivocal when asked about the project.

"Everything produced in the settlements is illegal," he said. "That's why we call for a boycott of such products."

Settlement expansion has accelerated under Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a policy that detractors say reduces the chances of a two-state solution to the Jewish nation's conflict with the Palestinians.

But Erlich is undeterred.

Noting the ancient Egyptians' use of fragrances and the possibility that several of the plants he grows were used at that time, he advertises his perfume as a type used by Cleopatra.

"Offer your wife Cleopatra's perfume, the fragrances of antiquity, the scents of Rome," he tells visitors.

Erlich also claims to have re-created fragrances used at the time of the two biblical-era Jewish temples, the first destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 BC and the second by the Romans in 70 AD.

"On your right hand, you have the scent of the first temple, on the left hand the second temple, and if you rub them against each other, you will smell the incense that will be burned in the third temple," Erlich said.

According to Jewish tradition, the third temple will be built when the Messiah comes.

Erlich sells his products from his farm.

He has so far sold four kilos (8.8 pounds) of his frankincense honey in 30-gram (one-ounce) bottles and hopes to increase production.

Visitors can also buy a five-milliliter (0.2 ounce) bottle of fragrance for 100 shekels (\$29, 26 euros).

"These products have a history, a specificity," he said. "They are unique."



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International community must help stop Israeli aggression against Al-Aqsa:
Arab LeagueIsrael shoots grenade-throwing Gazan on border

[Six EU nations agree to take 356 Ocean Viking migrants](#)

Author:

Fri, 2019-08-23 21:58

ON BOARD THE OCEAN VIKING: Six EU countries Friday agreed to take in 356 migrants stranded on a rescue ship in the Mediterranean after a two-week standoff again exposed the failure of European leaders to deal quickly with desperate people fleeing conflict and poverty in Africa.

The Norwegian-flagged Ocean Viking, run by charities MSF and SOS Mediterranee, had been seeking a port after rescuing four boats of migrants off the Libyan coast between August 9 and 12.

The migrants screamed with joy as the news broke, the adults sweeping their children into their arms and dancing and singing.

After talks with the European Commission, Malta agreed its navy would transfer the migrants to the island but they would not be allowed to stay.

The transfer to navy boats was completed in just under three hours, after which the Ocean Viking set sail for Marseille for a crew change. The migrants will be relocated to other member states, Maltese Prime Minister Joseph Muscat tweeted, listing destination countries as France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal and Romania.

Charities had warned that food supplies on the 69-meter (220-foot) boat were running out and the migrants and staff were jubilant as the deal was announced.

"Thank you, Mama," the youngsters rescued said, kissing MSF nurse Mary Jo, who has taken care of them.

They hugged their saviors – Tanguy, Clement, Antonin, Basile, Eric and Alessandro.

The agreement was made as another rescue boat, the Mare Jonio, set off for Libyan waters, the Italian left-wing collective Mediterranea which runs the ship said in a tweet.

Rescue charities have been scathing about the lack of coordination and solidarity among EU member states in dealing with migration standoffs in recent years, with tens of thousands making the perilous trip across the Mediterranean.

"We are relieved this long ordeal for the 356 people we have on board is finally over. Was it necessary to impose two weeks of excruciating wait for rescued people to be disembarked?" said Jay Berger, MSF's project coordinator onboard the Ocean Viking.

"This 14-day standoff of the Viking Ocean was shocking," Frederic Penard, director of operations at SOS Mediterranee, said in a statement.

"We hope that the ad hoc solution implemented today will transform into the predictable and sustainable disembarkation mechanism promised many times by several European Union member states," he said.

The charity said the Ocean Viking would now change crews, refuel and be resupplied before heading back to Libyan waters.

The boat had been denied entry to dock by both Malta and Italy and is just the latest in a string of migrant ship standoffs.

Italy's far-right Interior Minister Matteo Salvini has repeatedly insisted that rescued migrants can only land in Italy if other EU countries take them in.

He has been accused of demonizing migrants and leaving them to drown in the sea.

As a political crisis plays out in Rome following the break up of the coalition government, Salvini tweeted that he had been vindicated.

"As promised, we did not give the 356 migrants on the Ocean Viking permission to disembark in Italy. The safety of Italians comes first!" he wrote.

Most of the migrants on the Ocean Viking are adult men.

About two-thirds come from Sudan, with others from Ivory Coast, Mali and Senegal.

Four women and five young children, aged one to six, are also aboard. Almost 100 are under the age of 18.

The French government said it would take in 150 of those aboard.

Many were rescued from Libyan waters suffering from severe dehydration and sometimes borderline malnutrition, the boat's medical team has said.

They tell stories of fleeing conflict-torn Libya to escape ill treatment, arbitrary detention and sometimes torture.



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Migrants in limbo again after landing in Italy
Desperate migrants jump off rescue ship, seeking Italy