

UN resumes Sanaa aid distribution halted after Houthi thefts

Author:

Wed, 2019-08-21 23:43

SANAA: The World Food Programme (WFP) on Wednesday resumed distributing food in Yemen's capital Sanaa after a two-month stoppage.

The halt in aid came after UN officials found the Houthis were diverting food away from those who desperately needed it.

Dozens of people gathered at a distribution centre in Sanaa to be given flour, vegetable oil, pulses, salt and sugar.

"We are relieved. Thank God. All we can do is praise God," said one recipient, Um Ahmed.

Food distribution for 850,000 people had resumed after the WFP was allowed to "introduce the key accountability measures", its spokeswoman Annabel Symington told Reuters.

When the agreement with Houthi authorities was reached in early August, the WFP said a biometric registration process would be introduced for 9 million people living in areas under Houthi control.

The system – using iris scanning, fingerprints or facial recognition – is already used in areas controlled by the Saudi-backed government that holds the southern port city of Aden and some western coastal towns.

Meanwhile, the UN Wednesday warned that 22 "life-saving" aid programs will be forced to close in Yemen in the next two months if countries do not pay more than \$1 billion in funding that they pledged earlier this year.

In February countries pledged \$2.6 billion to help, but UN humanitarian coordinator for Yemen, Lise Grande, said less than half that had been paid.

The UN said that of 34 key aid programs only three were funded for the year and 22 "life-saving" programs will need to close in the next two months.



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US military drone shot down in Yemen UN envoy hails 'tireless' Saudi efforts on southern Yemen as STC delegation heads to Jeddah

[Jerusalem demolishes Palestinian home built without permit](#)

Author:

Wed, 2019-08-21 23:05

JERUSALEM: Jerusalem's municipality has carried out the court-ordered demolition of what it said was an illegally built Palestinian home in the city's eastern sector.

Owner Ibrahim Ragbe says the home was constructed 15 years ago without a permit and that he was trying to get it licensed. He said 13 people lived in the house.

Dozens of police officers secured the single-story home on Wednesday as an

excavator tore it down.

Jerusalem's Palestinian population has long complained that it faces discriminatory housing policies that favor Jews. They say it is virtually impossible to get a building permit and have no choice but to build without them.

The municipality says zoning issues prompted the demolition. It says it is addressing a housing crunch in the city's Arab neighborhoods with new master plans.



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Palestinians and Israeli police clash at Jerusalem holy site
US scraps West Bank conference over Palestinian protests

[Gaza Palestinians fire rocket at Israel](#)

Author:

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Wed, 2019-08-21 19:57

JERUSALEM: Palestinians in the Gaza Strip fired a rocket at southern Israel late Wednesday, the fifth in the past six days, the Israeli army said in a statement.

It did not report any casualties or damage or say where the rocket hit, but Israeli media said it had been tracked as heading for open ground and alarms were therefore not sounded in built-up areas.

The army said three rockets were launched from Hamas-ruled Gaza on Saturday night and one was fired late Friday.

There were no casualties in any of the attacks or in the retaliatory Israeli air strikes on Gaza which followed.

They were among a series of incidents along the Gaza border since the start of the month.

On Sunday the Palestinian health ministry said three Palestinians were killed by Israeli soldiers overnight in the northern Gaza Strip.

The Israeli army had said earlier that an attack helicopter and tank fired at "a number of armed suspects adjacent to the (border) fence in the northern Gaza Strip."

A week ago, a Palestinian shot at Israeli soldiers along the frontier and was killed when troops returned fire, the army and Hamas's health ministry said.

A day earlier, Israel's army said its troops shot dead four heavily armed Palestinians on the border, adding one had managed to cross and throw a grenade at soldiers.

On August 1, a Palestinian seeking to avenge his brother's death by Israeli fire entered Israel from Gaza and opened fire on soldiers, the army said.

Three Israeli soldiers were wounded and the Palestinian was killed, the army said.

Regular protests and clashes erupted along the border of the blockaded Gaza Strip in March 2018.

At least 305 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire in Gaza since then, the majority during demonstrations and clashes.

Seven Israelis have also been killed in Gaza-related violence over the same period.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is widely seen as wanting to avoid an escalation in the Gaza Strip before September 17 elections, but he also faces heavy political pressure to respond firmly.

Israel and Palestinians in Gaza, including Hamas, have fought three wars since 2008.



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Israeli warplanes hit Gaza after Palestinian rocket attack
Three Palestinians killed by Israeli soldiers at Gaza border: ministry

[Macron says will meet Iranians before G7 summit](#)

Author:

Wed, 2019-08-21 21:27

PARIS: France's president said on Wednesday he would meet Iranian officials ahead of this weekend's G7 summit and make proposals to help de-escalate tensions between Washington and Tehran.

"In the coming hours before the G7 I will have meetings with the Iranians to propose things," Emmanuel Macron told reporters.

Iran's foreign minister said earlier this week he would meet Macron and Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian in Paris on Friday. Two French diplomats said a joint meeting was likely on Friday, but that it had not been made

public due to the sensitivity of the Iran dossier.

France has sought over the summer to play a mediating role as relations between the United States and Iran deteriorate, although there has been little sign of any breakthrough.

With punishing US sanctions squeezing its economy, Iran has said it will gradually reduce its commitments to a 2015 nuclear deal with world powers until the European powers party to the accord – France, Britain and Germany – do more to ensure Tehran benefits financially from the accord.



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Iran threatens 'less secure' shipping lanes if US halts oil exports
Stena Impero owner met Iran's Zarif to urge release of UK-flagged ship

[Migrants in limbo again after landing in Italy](#)

Author:

Wed, 2019-08-21 20:48

LAMPEDUSA, Italy: Eighty-three migrants who disembarked on Italy's Lampedusa island were again in limbo on Wednesday as a European deal to redistribute

them failed to materialize and Madrid said it could hit the Spanish charity with a hefty fine for rescuing them.

The prospect of a fine comes after a protracted standoff between the Spanish NGO Proactiva Open Arms and Italy's far-right Interior Minister Matteo Salvini finally came to an end.

The boat had spent six days anchored off Lampedusa before a local prosecutor ordered the migrants be allowed to land amid a probe of Salvini for forbidding their entry to port.

Many of them had spent 19 days on board the ship after being picked up while in difficulty trying to make the perilous journey from Libya to Europe in small boats.

As they walked down the gang plank one by one to the island's shore overnight, some could be seen limping or in bandages.

Salvini, whose Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte resigned in protest at the League leader's bid to bring the government down, had forbidden all NGO rescue boats from entering Italian ports.

The last remaining charity vessel operating in the Mediterranean, the Ocean Viking, was on Wednesday still seeking a safe port for its 356 rescued migrants.

The ship operated by French charities SOS Mediterranee and Doctors Without Borders (MSF) has been holding its position for 10 days between Malta and Lampedusa, asking for a safe port.

"As maritime law stipulates, we've been asking Italian and Maltese search and rescue coordination centers for a safe port since we made our first rescue on August 9," said Frederic Penard, head of operations for SOS Mediterranee.

"For the time being we've had no reply from Italy and a rather negative one from Malta," he told AFP by phone.

The Open Arms on Wednesday sailed to Porto Empedocle on Sicily where the prosecutor ordered it temporarily seized as part of his investigation.

Spain's Deputy Prime Minister Carmen Calvo told Spanish radio, "the Open Arms doesn't have a permit to rescue."

The vessel had in April been authorized to leave Barcelona, where it was immobilized for three months, to transport humanitarian aid to Greece.

It was banned from heading to the seas off Libya, often the launchpad for migrants attempting to reach Europe, but went anyway.

A document from the directorate-general for Spain's merchant navy sent to AFP by the Proactiva Open Arms charity said it risks a fine of up to 901,000 euros (\$1 million) for violating this ban.

There were initially 147 mainly African migrants on the ship but as the days passed, some were evacuated for medical care and all minors were allowed to disembark.

Six European Union countries – France, Germany, Romania, Portugal, Spain and Luxembourg – have offered to take them all in.

Calvo said the military ship sent to Lampedusa could take charge of those migrants allocated to Spain if this agreement is implemented.

Sicily prosecutor Luigi Patronaggio intervened as part of a probe into alleged kidnapping and refusing to obey orders targeting Salvini.

Salvini hit back on Facebook about the decision to let the migrants off the boat, saying: "If anybody thinks they can scare me with the umpteenth complaint and wants a trial, they're mistaken."

A Spanish naval patrol boat, the Audaz, set off from Rota in southwestern

Spain on Tuesday on a three-day trip to Lampedusa to fetch the Open Arms migrants.

Spain had tried to break the standoff over the migrants at the weekend by offering up its southern port of Algeciras, which the NGO said could “not be achieved” due to the distance and tensions on board.

Madrid then suggested Mallorca in the Balearic Islands, nearer but still around 1,000 kilometers (600 miles) from Lampedusa.

The charity described the offer as “totally incomprehensible” and continued to demand the ship be allowed to dock in Lampedusa.



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Desperate migrants jump off rescue ship, seeking Italy