

UK-Iranian begins fresh hunger strike in Tehran jail

Author:

AFP

ID:

1560594980522695900

Sat, 2019-06-15 10:27

LONDON: A British-Iranian mother being held in a Tehran prison on sedition charges has begun another hunger strike in protest at her detention, her husband said Saturday.

Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, 40, is refusing food as she marks her daughter's fifth birthday, Richard Ratcliffe said in a statement.

His wife was arrested in April 2016 as she was leaving Iran after taking their infant daughter to visit her family. She was sentenced to five years for allegedly trying to topple the Iranian government.

"She had informed the judiciary that she has begun a new hunger strike (she will drink water) – to protest at her continuing unfair imprisonment," he said.

"This is something she had been threatening for a while. Nazanin had vowed that if we passed Gabriella's fifth birthday with her still inside, then she would do something – to mark to both governments – that enough is enough. This really has gone on too long."

A project manager with the Thomson Reuters Foundation, the media group's philanthropic arm, she denies all charges.

She previously went on hunger strike in January.

"Her demand from the strike, she said, is for unconditional release. She has long been eligible for it," said Ratcliffe.

"I do not know the response from the Iranian authorities."

He urged the Iranian authorities to release her immediately, for the British embassy to be allowed to check on her health, and, if she is not released within the coming weeks, for him to be granted a visa to visit her.

Last month, London changed its travel advice for British-Iranian dual nationals, warning them against all travel to Iran, citing Zaghari-Ratcliffe's case.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[UK](#)

[Iran](#)

[Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe](#)

UK summons Iran ambassador over case of British-Iranian aid worker Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe
Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe freed temporarily from Iranian prison: Husband

[Saudi-led Arab coalition targets Houthi sites in Sanaa](#)

Author:

Sat, 2019-06-15 13:08

The Saudi-led coalition targeted Houthi military sites in Sanaa on Saturday, including the militia's air defense systems, Al Arabiya reported.

The spokesperson of the coalition, Col. Turki Al-Maliki the operation aimed to destroy the Houthi militia's threat to regional and international security.

Al-Maliki affirmed that the targeting process was consistent with

international humanitarian law, asserting that all preventive measures were taken to protect civilians.

He said that civilians were warned not to approach the target sites in the Yemeni capital, Sanaa.

The operation came just days after Saudi Arabia's air defense forces shot down five drones launched by Houthi militia towards the southern border region of Asir.

Col. Al-Maliki said the drones were targeted at Abha International Airport and the city of Khamis Mushayt on Thursday night.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Yemen](#)

[saudi-led arab coalition](#)

Saudi Arabia tells UN Security Council Houthis responsible for Abha Airport attack
Survivors of Houthi missile attack describe moment explosion ripped through Abha airport

Tremors across Jordan as Trump plan revives old fears

Sat, 2019-06-15 00:08

AMMAN: Jordan's King Abdullah reacts angrily to any suggestion that he might accept a US deal to end the Arab-Israeli conflict that would make his country a homeland for Palestinians.

Speaking to the armed forces in March, he rejected the idea of Jordan as an alternative state for Palestinians, saying: "Don't we have a voice in the end?"

Already facing economic discontent at home, Abdullah must navigate diplomatic moves by his US allies that are upturning a regional status-quo.

After Israel's creation in 1948 Jordan absorbed more Palestinians than any other country, with some estimates that they now account for more than half the population.

Any changes to the international consensus on a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine, and Palestinian refugees' right of return to what is now Israel and the Palestinian territories, long buttressed by US policy, therefore reverberate harder in Jordan than anywhere else.

HIGHLIGHTS

- 'Deal of the Century' challenges Jordan's internal balance.
- Many Jordanians reject leaked details of plan.
- Some Jordanians hope deal could bring prosperity.

US President Donald Trump's long-promised "Deal of the Century" to resolve the conflict is still secret, though leaked details suggest it dumps the idea of a full Palestinian state in favor of limited self-rule in part of the Occupied Territories, which would undermine Palestinians' right to return.

It envisages an expansion of Gaza into part of northern Egypt, under Egyptian control, with Palestinians also having a smaller share of the West Bank and some areas on the outskirts of Jerusalem and no control over their borders, the leaks say.

Jordanian fears about what the plan portends for the region, for their Palestinian citizens, and for the politics of their own country, have been aggravated by Trump's readiness to upturn US policy.

American officials deny contemplating making Jordan a Palestinian homeland,

pushing it to take a role in governing parts of the West Bank or challenging the right of King Abdullah's dynasty to custodianship of Jerusalem's holy sites.

Disturbing signals

But Trump's approach to the issue, and recent statements by his ambassador to Israel that it had a right to annex some of the West Bank have done little to assuage Jordanian concerns.

Few subjects in Jordan are more politically charged than the role, presence and future there of Palestinians. The issue is so sensitive that the government publishes no data on how many of its 8 million citizens are also of Palestinian descent, though a recent US congressional report put it at more than half.

Despite the US denials, Jordanians fear that Trump is returning to an old Israeli theme: That Jordan is Palestine and that is where the Palestinians of the West Bank should go.

It could not have come at a worse time for the 57-year-old Abdullah, whose country is facing economic challenges that led to protests and a change of government last year.

While many Palestinians are integrated in Jordan, and many descendants of refugees have never set foot in their original homeland, some native Jordanians have never acknowledged that they will stay permanently.

They fear Trump's plan could alter the demography and politics of a nation shaped by the presence of Palestinians, who hold full citizenship but are marginalized and seen as a political threat by some people of Jordanian descent.

But Abdullah's decision that Jordan should attend an economic conference showed that despite mounting alarm at home, Amman cannot ignore pressure from richer, more powerful allies in the West and the Gulf.

Internal worries

Maintaining unity between citizens of Jordanian and Palestinian descent has been critical to the ruling family's role as a unifying force in a country where tribal and clan loyalties hold sway.

The king is already facing anger from the "Herak" opposition, drawn from Jordanians of native descent, who say Trump's plans will tear apart a state patronage system that has cemented their own loyalty to the monarchy.

Retired army officers have held small weekly protests in opposition to a deal.

"No to eroding our national identity and dismantling the state," said Saad Alaween, a prominent Herak dissident, referring to the deal.

Some warn the monarch not to accept a plan that could give their compatriots of Palestinian origin more political rights in an electoral system tilted in favor of native Jordanians.

Rumours that the plan could lead to Jordan taking in Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and Syria, or that it would merge with a rump of Palestinian territory in bits of the West Bank, have also led to alarm.

In a sign of his concerns, the king has even met lawmakers from the once outcast movement in an attempt, say officials, to win the backing of the largest opposition grouping with support in large cities and Palestinian camps.

“Trump wants to buy and sell Jordan and create a new regime. We are behind the king in opposing this,” said Muraed Al-Adaylah, head of the Islamic Action Front, the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Abdullah also inspired a shake-up in the intelligence establishment – long seen as a guardian of Jordan’s stability – to solidify the internal front and mitigate any fallout from the deal in the months to come, insiders say.

In the army – whose loyalty to the crown is deeply meshed with Jordanian national identity – there are also signs of concern.

“Jordan is a country that has sovereignty and history, and will say its word at the right moment,” said General Mahmoud Al-Frieihat, the army’s chief of staff.

Foreign pressure

Jordan’s long-term strategic and economic policy is based on close relations with the West and the Gulf – an approach that underlay its decision to make peace with Israel in 1994.

Abdullah has made repeated visits to Washington, where officials say he was not told details of the White House plan.

That has only accentuated the sense of alarm among a political establishment that sees a day of reckoning coming with Trump’s deal, two officials and a politician said.

The royal palace has pointed to demonstrations in dozens of rural towns and cities as a message to Washington that it cannot impose a solution that permanently settles Palestinians in Jordan against its will.

Jordan has traditionally turned to monarchies in the Gulf to shore up its economy. However, their focus has shifted to their rivalry with Iran, cutting financial support and leaving Jordan more exposed than ever.

“Our Gulf allies are too beholden to Washington ... to extend the level of support that can help us withstand the growing pressures,” said a senior official.

Although Jordan will join the conference to roll out the economic parts of Trump's plan, it will deliver a message there that no cash offers can replace a political solution to end Israel's occupation of the West Bank, officials say.

Still, some think economically challenged Jordan could profit from any plan that promises billions in aid and project finance.

Some businessmen have already positioned themselves to benefit and this month a prominent MP, Fawaz Al-Zubi, said Jordanians should be open-minded about anything they could gain from it.

In the camps where 2.2 million of Jordan's registered refugees live, bitter realism seems to prevail.

Ibrahim Anabtawi, a second-generation refugee with six children, said that like others in the camp he had dug up old United Nations ration cards to prove their rights in case any new deal offered compensation.

"I won't forget I am a Palestinian or give up the right of return," said Anabtawi. But he added: "I have been persecuted all this time and no one stood by us. I now want anything that this deal and Trump offers."



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Palestine](#)

[Jordan](#)

Palestinian, Jordanian leaders reject Israeli court settler decision

Abdeen Palace – a witness to Egyptian history

Author:

Sat, 2019-06-15 00:03

CAIRO: Abdeen Palace in Cairo is perhaps the most famous of Egyptian palaces. It witnessed many events from the royal era up till the emergence of the modern capital.

Khedive Ismail ordered the construction of Abdeen Palace in 1872. This palace was the headquarters of the government from 1872 till the revolution of 1952.

Today, the white, red and green salons are used to receive official delegations during their visit to Egypt. Its theater, with hundreds of gilded chairs, hosts special theater performances for visitors and guests. The palace's library contains 55,000 books.

In the palace there are many suites, such as the Belgian suite designed to accommodate the important guests of Egypt. It is named after the King of Belgium who was the first to reside there. It includes a bed that is considered a rare antique because of its decorations.

One of the palace's museums contains treasures acquired by the sons and grandsons of Khedive Ismail, who ruled Egypt after him and were fond of putting their personal touches to the palace that reflected each successive era.

The second museum is dedicated to the possessions of the family of Mohammed Ali Pasha, the Ottoman commander who ruled Egypt in the first half of the nineteenth century. The exhibits include silverware, crystal, colored crystal, and other rare artifacts.

A delegation of Egyptian parliamentarians visited Abdeen Palace last week, after its latest renovation and restoration. The visit was to support archaeological and historical tourism and the important historical value of Egypt's presidential palaces.

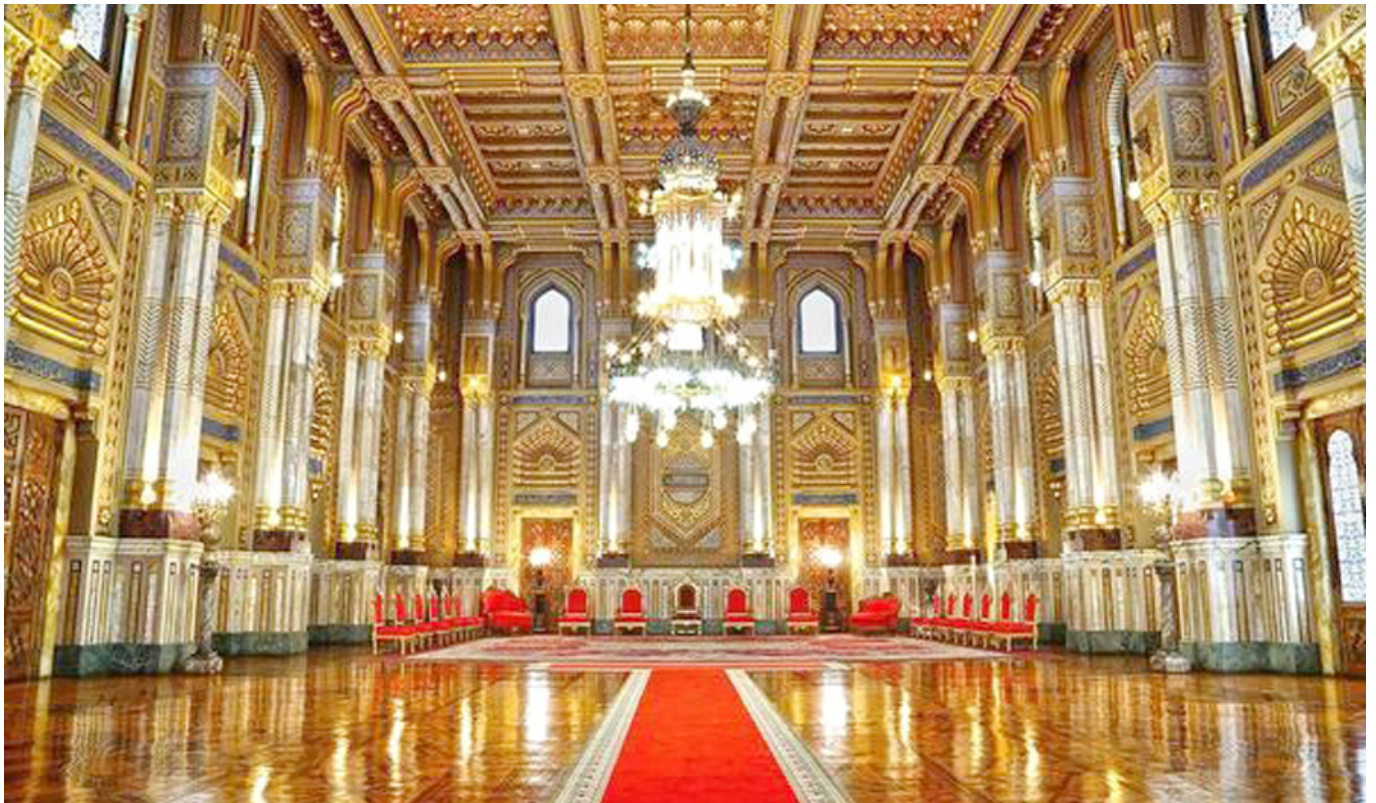
Dr. Gamal Shakra, professor of modern history at Ain Shams University, told Arab News Abdeen Palace is an important historical property and reveals the extent of the civilized development that Egypt witnessed during that period. "Everyone knows the ancient civilization of Egypt, but we need to show the world what Egypt has achieved in the modern era through Abdeen Palace," he said.

"Abdeen Palace is part of Egypt's history. The renovation of the palace turned out much more beautiful than we expected," said Mr. Osama Heikal, chairman of the Information Committee at the Egyptian Parliament.

“The style of the furniture and architecture is not found in old European countries, and the skilled labor that carried out this piece of work contributed greatly to its beauty,” said Heikal.

“Abdeen Palace is an important destination for foreign tourists, changing our image for the better. It is an opportunity for the West to learn the history of Egypt in the modern era,” said Amr Sidqi, head of the Committee of Tourism and Civil Aviation at the Egyptian Parliament.

The opening times of Abdeen Palace are 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Tickets cost 100 pounds (\$6) for foreigners and 50 pounds foreign students, 20 pounds for Egyptians or Arabs, 10 pounds for Egyptian or Arab students.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Egypt](#)

[Cairo](#)

[Abdeen Palace](#)

Mena House: Cairo's most legendary 'family hotel' A true taste of Egypt at Ramadan in Cairo's Midan Al-Hussein

[The win-win calculus of global family](#)

remittances

Author:

One Carlo Diaz

ID:

1560546172877495300

Sat, 2019-06-15 00:01

DUBAI: Irish Basco remembers all the occasions that her father was not around to attend; birthdays, family dinners, graduation ceremonies. He moved to Saudi Arabia 20 years ago when she was seven years old. At the time, the family was growing; working in the Philippines would not have been enough to meet its growing expenses. The solution was to find a job abroad and send money home regularly.

So when Basco's father packed his bags and flew to the Middle East with a heavy heart, he left behind his wife and three young children who had no idea of the adjustments they would have to go through in the years ahead.

As the world prepares to mark International Day of Family Remittances on June 16, it recognizes the sacrifices made by families such as the Bascos and the difference remittances have made in the lives of those receiving them while playing a major role in the economies of many countries.

The Middle East, especially the Gulf region, is full of stories of migration, separation from loved ones, and remittances. The narrative is as much of economic success as it is of human resilience. Economic migrants form the backbone of a flourishing remittance industry that is only projected to grow. The UN estimates there are more than 200 million migrants around the world who send money to their home countries, supporting more than 800 million family members, most of whom are in low- to middle-income countries (LMICs). World Bank data show that in 2018 remittance flows to LMICs reached \$529 billion, an increase of 9.6 percent compared to 2017 figures. This is expected to grow this year to \$550 billion, making it larger than foreign direct investment and official development assistance flows. According to the bank: "In the coming decades, demographic forces, globalization and climate change will increase migration pressures both within and across borders." One expert says the movement of people across international boundaries for work is a natural occurrence in a world where skill sets differ from one country to another.

"There are defined borders in the world, but human beings are transferring from one place to another, so it's an inherent consequence that they will have to send money to their homeland," Mahmood Bangara, chairman of the Dubai chapter of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI), told Arab News.

Global remittances have a lasting impact on the lives of families. Irish Basco, who graduated from a private university in the Philippines in 2013, said she could not have got her degree without her father's support.

"We can't deny that we experienced the good side of (migration). My father was able to provide something that the Philippines couldn't. My father worked in a factory. He pursued different side jobs just to earn more," she told Arab News by phone from Manila.

"If he hadn't gone to Saudi Arabia, we wouldn't have survived. I wouldn't

have been able to finish my education.”

But Basco said her family would never have wanted her father to leave the country “if there had been options other than migrating for work.” She said families are often pushed to the wall by circumstances.

Basco also said her father’s remittances allowed them to make a few investments.

“Expats remit money back home for a number of reasons; to support families, to earn higher rates of interest on local bank deposits, to invest in local real estate, stocks and other assets, to manage inheritance and build retirement funds,” Ambareen Musa, a UAE-based financial expert and CEO of the financial comparison website Souqalmal, told Arab News.

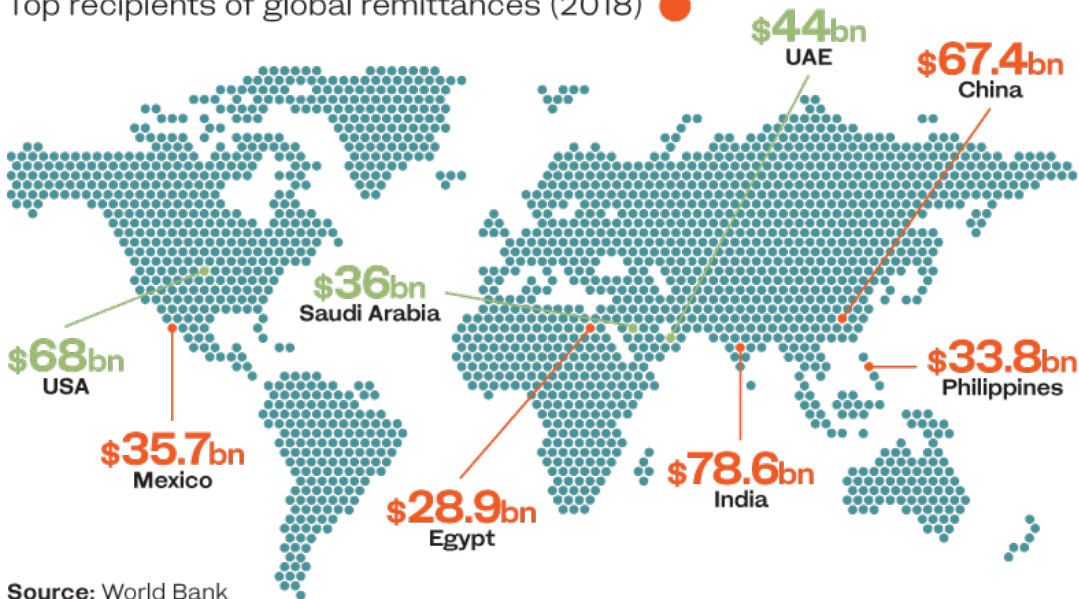
The benefits of remittances go beyond tending to the needs of families. For many developing countries, money derived from overseas transfers make up a significant chunk of their foreign-exchange earnings. “India, China, Mexico, Philippines and Egypt were the biggest remittance recipients in 2018 (in that order),” Musa said, citing World Bank data.

“India received over \$78 billion in remittances in 2018, which made up 3 percent of the country’s GDP while the Philippines received over \$33 billion, which formed a sizable 10 percent portion of GDP. These countries, like many others, rely on remittances to support their economic growth.”

The ICAI’s Bangara said remittances are a form of income for countries that can be used for domestic consumption.

GLOBAL REMITTANCES

Top sources of global remittances (2017) ●
Top recipients of global remittances (2018) ●



Source: World Bank

“They can become savings in the bank. They can be used for certain purposes including investments and property purchases,” he said. “The money benefits the receiving countries by enabling them to meet project expenses. As long it is invested in some form, the money will be available for national development.”

Although the benefits of remittances are more apparent for the receiving countries, the sending countries are also reaping rewards through the services provided by foreign workers who choose to work there, to say nothing of the remittance business itself, which is now a multibillion-dollar, transnational industry.

“Nobody will employ overseas labor to incur losses. Nobody is forced to employ foreign labor,” Bangara said, adding that the remitting countries,

such as those of the Gulf, benefit from labor migration in many ways. As to whether the nationalization programs under way in several Gulf states will affect the prospects of migrant workers and consequently the remittance industry, Bangara said: "The elimination of foreign workforce is not going to happen in the near future."

"It is true that there is a growing preference for employing domestic labor in almost all countries. But given the growth of these economies, they may continue to need the services of expatriate workers. Employment rates might be slightly affected, but there will be more projects coming up that will drive economic growth and require more manpower."

It wasn't easy growing up without a father figure, Basco said. No amount of money can replace a father's presence, she said. "I feel that even if he finally decides to retire and come home, it will be difficult to get back all those moments," she said. "But we will try."







Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[WESTERN UNION MONEY TRANSFER](#)

[Editor's Choice](#)

Oman bans expats in certain private higher education jobs
Expats welcome Saudi 'green card' but say questions need to be answered