

[Israel launches air strike on Hamas location in the Gaza Strip](#)

Sat, 2019-03-02 21:07

GAZA STRIP: Israeli military officials said on Saturday that they had struck a Hamas target in southern Gaza Strip, after balloons carrying explosive devices drifted into its airspace.

Thousands of Palestinians had been demonstrating in recent weeks on the border lines, and on Friday three people were injured, including a medic and a journalist.

More to follow.



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[Hundreds protest against child marriage in Lebanon](#)

Author:

AFP

ID:

1551548052777006500

Sat, 2019-03-02 17:29

BEIRUT: Hundreds protested on Saturday in Lebanon against child marriage, demanding lawmakers forbid unions below the age of 18, in a country where some faiths allow girls to be wed at 14.

Organized by civil society groups, the rally attracted women of all ages – and some lawmakers – who marched on parliament in the capital Beirut, an AFP photographer said.

Some carried placards with slogans reading “Not before 18” and “Stop early marriage.”

Abir Abdel Razeq, a 22-year-old who carried her young daughter in her arms, said that she married at 14.

“I hope that my daughter does not get married early, and that she finishes school – I hope that she will not marry before she is 22,” Razeq said.

The protest came as a bill designating 18 as the minimum age for marriage awaits parliament’s consideration.

Lebanon does not have nationwide laws on marriage and divorce, since these

areas are governed by the country's 18 religious communities. Elements of both the Muslim and Christian communities allow girls to be married at 14.







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Lebanon's Hezbollah suspends official over Parliament spat
Lebanon censors caricature of Khamenei in French weekly

[Algeria's Bouteflika names director for his campaign to seek a fifth presidential term](#)

Author:

Reuters

ID:

1551541931446365200

Sat, 2019-03-02 15:46

CAIRO: Algeria's president Abdelaziz Bouteflika named Abdelghani Zaalane as the new director of his campaign for a fifth term, state press agency APS said on Saturday.

The decision comes a day after tens of thousands of Algerians protested against another term in office for Bouteflika, 81, who is in Switzerland for "periodic medical checks."

A total of 183 people were injured during protests across Algeria on Friday against President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's bid for election to a fifth term, the state news agency APS said on Saturday, citing the health ministry. One person died of a heart attack, officials said earlier.

Tens of thousands of protesters called on the ailing, 82-year-old Bouteflika to abandon plans to seek re-election in an April presidential vote – Algeria's biggest anti-government rallies since the Arab Spring eight years ago.

He has not formally confirmed he will stand, although representatives have indicated he will do so. APS reported on Saturday that Bouteflika had named Abdelghani Zaalane as his campaign director.

Friday's protests were mostly peaceful but scuffles between police and protesters broke out in the evening near the presidential place in the capital Algiers.

Algiers was quiet on Saturday.

Large-scale demonstrations – rarely seen in Algeria with its ubiquitous security services – against Bouteflika's re-election move began a week ago, but Friday saw the biggest turnout yet.

Bouteflika suffered a stroke in 2013 and has been seen in public only a few times since. His re-election bid stoked resentment among Algerians who believe he is not fit to run the major oil- and gas-producing country.

Bouteflika's campaign manager had said on Tuesday he would submit his official application on Sunday, the deadline for candidates. Bouteflika, who turned 82 on Saturday, has not directly addressed the protests.

Authorities said last week he would travel to Geneva for unspecified medical checks. Swiss television said on Friday Bouteflika was at Geneva University Hospital. There was no official confirmation that Bouteflika was in the Swiss city.

Many Algerians for years avoided politics in public, fearing trouble from the security services or disillusioned as the country has been run by the same group of veterans since the 1954-1962 independence war with France.

Bouteflika has ruled since 1999 and stamped out a decade-long Islamist insurgency early in his rule. Algerians have long tolerated a political system with little space for dissent as a price to pay for peace and stability.

A weak and divided opposition faces high hurdles in mounting an electoral challenge. Since the FLN party again picked Bouteflika as its presidential candidate, several parties, trade unions and business groups have endorsed him.



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Tens of thousands of Algerians call on Bouteflika to step down 'Ballot box' to

decide if ailing Algeria president gets 5th term: PM

Lebanese government faces first public dispute between Future Movement and Hezbollah

Author:

Fri, 2019-03-01 23:28

BEIRUT: Former Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora has responded to a campaign launched by Hezbollah accusing him of corruption and demanding that he should be brought to justice.

He said: "The campaign aims to demonize all the governments headed by Rafic Hariri and attack him as well as all the prime ministers who followed him, including Saad Hariri."

"This campaign against Siniora, and therefore against Hariri's axis, has commenced before the Special Tribunal for Lebanon issues its ruling on the assassination of former PM Rafic Hariri, which five Hezbollah members are accused of and are escaping from prosecution," a source close to Siniora said.

Siniora broke his silence in a press conference on Friday, during which he attacked Hezbollah: "The biggest corruption is political corruption, and everyone who establishes smaller states within the state, controls the state's facilities, disrupts the constitutional deadline, and denies the course of law is politically corrupt."

He said: "We are looking these days at something similar to what happened during the days of the security regime 20 years ago when I was framed."

Siniora's speech reminded the Lebanese people of a campaign launched by the Lebanese-Syrian security regime against Rafic Hariri in 1998-2000.

This campaign was repeated before the assassination of Rafic Hariri in 2004-2005 and after Israel's aggression against Lebanon in 2006. The decision issued last week by the Constitutional Council to withdraw the Parliament membership of Future MP Dima Jamali was the first attempt to weaken the parliamentary bloc of PM Saad Harari.

FASTFACT

During the past two weeks, Lebanon saw attempts for preparing files under the slogan of combating corruption in order to settle scores with Hariri's axis, stirring up the political clash between Hezbollah and Hariri's axis.

The campaign against Siniora reached its peak when a Hezbollah MP reopened the file on the \$11 billion spent during Siniora's premiership, a move that the Future Movement described in a statement as paving the way to target Saad Hariri.

Siniora stressed that "the spending, whether from the budget appropriations or the treasury, was not illegal." He added: "It was fully legal under the acts of Parliament. The spending was subject to the same mechanisms stipulated in the Public Accountancy Act, beginning with the prior and subsequent monitoring and approval of the expenditure controller and the Audit Court."

He said: "Every disbursement is recorded, audited and available. Expenditures are fully recorded in the records of their ministries, in addition to being recorded in the Ministry of Finance's records, published on its website."

He revealed that the amounts Iran said it had paid to Lebanon had not been disclosed to the Lebanese state, and that when he met with Iran's ambassador to Lebanon more than once during his premiership, he asked the ambassador, but he had refused to say how much had been paid.

Siniora said: "Those who got involved in regional and international conflicts that jeopardized the interests of Lebanon and its people, took the state hostage and exposed it to risks, disrupted institutions and their constitutional deadlines, and interrupted the economic process have no right to hide in their impasse in dust that does not last and which we have enough light to dispel."

Hezbollah MP Hassan Fadlallah presented financial documents two days ago to the financial prosecutor, Judge Ali Ibrahim, who initiated an investigation by summoning an employee from the Ministry of Finance to listen to her testimony, even though this file has nothing to do with the fight against corruption or financial waste. This file is associated with "zeroing" the state's financial accounts to allow the government to begin its work and carry out projects by approving the 2019 budget law.

MP Fadlallah said in a press conference at the time: "We want to hear what the judiciary says about those who have manipulated the state's finances and its financial restrictions."

Hariri's Future TV channel launched an attack on Hezbollah on Thursday evening, referring to the corruption and wasted money linked to Hezbollah, from the smuggling operations carried out through the airport, ports and land borders.

They are estimated at billions of dollars, to being behind the production and trafficking of narcotic drugs such as Captagon, and establishing dummy companies registered with guarantor institutions, leading to the loss of billions of dollars in public money.



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Lebanon's Hezbollah suspends official over Parliament spat
Lebanon marks 14 years since Hariri assassination

[Daesh teenager Shamima Begum moved from Syria camp after death threats](#)

Author:

Fri, 2019-03-01 23:20

LONDON: A British teenager who ran away to join Daesh has been moved from a Syrian refugee camp after she received death threats, according to her

family's lawyer.

Shamima Begum, 19, and her new-born son Jerah were moved from the Al-Hawl camp in the north of the country to another site nearer the Iraqi border, The Sun newspaper reported.

Begum, who in 2015 fled east London aged 15 with two other friends to travel to Syria and marry Daesh fighters, resurfaced at a refugee camp in Syria last month. She told reporters she wanted to come home for the health of her then unborn child.

The mother, whose British citizenship has been revoked, has since said she wished she had kept a low profile.

Begum has received death threats since speaking out about her plight. She and her son are said to have been moved to another camp nearer the Iraqi border.

Begum's lawyer, Tasnime Akunjee, told The Sun that "Shamima has been moved from Al-Hawl due to safety concerns around her and her baby. We further understand that indeed she and her child had been threatened by others at the Al-Hawl camp."

Her family have written to Home Secretary Sajid Javid, asking for his help in bringing her baby to Britain and describing him as a "true innocent." They also said they plan to challenge Javid's decision to revoke Begum's British citizenship.

Begum's apparent lack of remorse has triggered criticism in Britain and even shocked her own family.



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Britain must take Daesh bride Shamima Begum back: fatherDaesh teenager
Shamima Begum will not be allowed into Bangladesh