

# Israel to demolish Palestinian murder suspect's home

Author:

Sun, 2019-02-10 22:18

JERUSALEM: The Israeli Army said on Sunday it had started preparations to demolish the West Bank home of a Palestinian suspected of killing an Israeli woman.

"Overnight, troops operated in Hebron, where the suspect in the murder of Ori Ansbacher is from," the army said in an English-language statement.

"During the operation, the troops surveyed the suspect's house in order to examine the possibility of its demolition."

The suspect was arrested over the weekend and has not yet been charged.

The body of Ansbacher, 19, was found late on Thursday in southeast Jerusalem, and she was buried the next day in her Israeli settlement of Tekoa.

Israeli security forces arrested the suspect in a raid in the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah.

The Shin Bet security service named him as 29-year-old Arafat Irfaiya from Hebron.

Both the police and Shin Bet have said investigations have so far not found conclusively whether the killing was a "terrorist attack" or from other motives.

In the runup to Israel's general election in April, however, politicians and Israeli media appeared to have no such doubts on Sunday.

"I have no doubts about the nationalist motives of the murderer," Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan told public radio.

"After so many years of suffering from terror we should know – this is a nationalist attack."

Commenting on calls to execute Palestinian militant killers, Erdan said he was in favor of applying the death penalty in certain circumstances.

"If it becomes clear that there is no possibility of rehabilitating the murderer and that he abused his victim, in such cases capital punishment should be applied," he said.

"The time has come to employ the death penalty for terrorists, as the law allows us to do," the daily Maariv quoted MP Bezael Smotrich of the far right Jewish Home party as saying.

Despite a court gag order, Israeli social media were abuzz over the weekend with what Yediot Aharonot newspaper called “graphic descriptions about the alleged nature of the murder.”

Police called on the public not to share “publications and reports, especially on social media, about the circumstances of the murder case, including irresponsible horrific descriptions.”

“We hereby clarify that those are completely baseless publications,” police said.



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Netanyahu vows to freeze Palestinian funds after Israeli teen killed  
Israel arrests Palestinian suspect in teenager's killing

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# Pope Francis praises UAE for its modernity, while maintaining its roots

Author:

Sun, 2019-02-10 19:50

DUBAI: Pope Francis has praised the UAE, describing it as a “modern country looking to the future without forgetting its roots.”

Speaking in a video message broadcast Sunday at the first day of the World Government Summit in Dubai, he said he hoped his visit to the UAE last week was the start of change.

“I carry in my heart the visit I just made to the UAE and the warm welcome I received,” he said.

“I encountered a modern country looking to the future without forgetting its roots. I saw a country seeking to transform into concrete initiatives the words tolerance, fraternity, mutual respect and freedom.”

Pope Francis’s historic visit to Abu Dhabi last week was the first by a pontiff to the Arabian Gulf and saw him lead the biggest open mass to be held in the region with a 180,000-strong congregation.

He said he returned home from a country that had risen from the desert in the hope that others could be equally successful.

“I believe it is possible,” he said.

“But only if we grow together, alongside one another, with openness and respect, willing to take on everyone’s problems.”

Addressing world governments, he spoke of political challenges, economic development, environmental protection and the use of technology.

He said he hoped the question underlying their reflections would not only be “what are the best opportunities to take advantage of?”, but rather “what kind of world do we want to build together?”

Pope Francis explained that this question pushed people to think of others rather than capital and economic interests.

“It is a question that does not look to tomorrow, but further into the future, to the responsibility weighing upon us,” he added.

“Handing on this world of ours to those who will come after us, preserving it from environmental degradation and, even before that, from moral degradation. We cannot speak of sustainable development without solidarity.”

During the Pope’s visit to the UAE he met with the Grand Imam of Al Azhar Al Sharif University and chairman of the Muslim Council of Elders, Dr Ahmed Al

Tayeb.

The pair signed a pledge of commitment to tolerance and fraternity at the end of a day which also saw the Pontiff visit the Presidential Palace of the UAE and the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque.

Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed, UAE Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, said the Pope's visit was historic and provided opportunities for the future.

"It opens a new page in the history of religions and in the dialogue of religions," he said.

"They are two people of peace but who could have ever thought that those two symbols would overcome all limits and constraints to sign a new agreement of peace to overcome violence and hatred?"

He said their meeting in Abu Dhabi last week was aimed at relaying an important message.

"As they said to the world: peace is hard to achieve but it is not impossible," he added.

"Some might wonder why those two religious symbols insist on brotherhood and the answer lies in one word: peace. Therefore, all of us should be courageous enough and assume our responsibilities to put an end to conflict and wars – we might not succeed but we will most definitely try," he said.





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## [Netanyahu vows to freeze Palestinian funds after Israeli teen killed](#)

Author:

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1549816910345972500

Sun, 2019-02-10 15:19

JERUSALEM: Nudged by rightwing political rivals after a deadly Palestinian attack on a young Israeli woman, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who seeks re-election pledged Sunday to freeze money transfers to the Palestinian Authority.

Israel collects around \$127 million a month in customs duties levied on goods destined for Palestinian markets that transit through Israeli ports and then transfers it to the PA.

The Israeli parliament last year passed legislation to partially withhold funds, in response to PA payments to families of Palestinians jailed by Israel for attacks against Israelis.

"By the end of the week, the staff-work necessary for implementing the law on deducting terrorists' salaries will be completed," Netanyahu – who faces a general election in April – told journalists at the start of the weekly cabinet meeting.

"Next Sunday I will convene the security cabinet and we will approve the necessary decision to deduct the funds. Let nobody doubt, the funds will be deducted, at the start of next week," he said in Hebrew.

Earlier Sunday, Education Minister Naftali Bennett was among rightwingers pressing Netanyahu to implement the law after a Palestinian was arrested at the weekend on suspicion of killing 19-year-old Ori Ansbacher.

"The law to offset terrorist funds passed...last July," he Tweeted. "I call on the prime minister – apply the law immediately."

Palestinian civil affairs minister Hussein Al-Sheikh said that the PA would not go along with Israel withholding any part of the tax money due.

"The Palestinian Authority will refuse to receive any cleared funds if Israel deducts a penny from it," he told AFP, speaking in Arabic.

He did not say what the PA's next step would be.

The Israeli army said Sunday it had started preparations to demolish the West Bank home of the Palestinian suspected of Ansbacher's killing, named by security officials as 29-year-old Arafat Irfaiya from the flashpoint city of Hebron on the occupied West Bank.

"Overnight, troops operated in Hebron, where the suspect in the murder of Ori Ansbacher is from," the army said in an English-language statement.

"During the operation, the troops surveyed the suspect's house in order to examine the possibility of its demolition."

Ansbacher's body was found late Thursday in southeast Jerusalem, and she was buried the next day in her Israeli settlement of Tekoa.

Israeli security forces arrested the suspect in a raid in the West Bank city of Ramallah. He has not yet been charged.

Both the police and the Shin Bet security agency have said investigations have so far not concluded whether it was a "terrorist attack" or driven by another motive.

In the runup to elections, however, politicians and Israeli media appeared to have already made up their minds.

"I have no doubts about the nationalist motives of the murderer," Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan told public radio.

"After so many years of suffering from terror we should know – this is a nationalist attack."

Commenting on calls to execute Palestinian militant killers, Erdan said he was in favor of applying the death penalty in certain circumstances.

"If it becomes clear that there is no possibility of rehabilitating the

murderer and that he abused his victim, in such cases capital punishment should be applied," he said.

"The time has come to employ the death penalty for terrorists, as the law allows us to do," the daily Maariv quoted MP Bezael Smotrich of the far-right Jewish Home party as saying.

Despite a court gag order, Israeli social media were abuzz over the weekend with what Yediot Aharonot newspaper called "graphic descriptions about the alleged nature of the murder."

Police called on the public not to share "publications and reports, especially on social media, about the circumstances of the murder case – including irresponsible horrific descriptions."

"We hereby clarify that those are completely baseless publications," it said. Sponsors of July's law on Palestinian funds wrote at the time that the PA paid around \$330 million a year to prisoners and their families, or seven percent of its budget.

Israel has withheld payments in the past, notably in response to the Palestinians' 2011 admission to the UN cultural agency UNESCO as a full member.

The PA, which has limited sovereignty in parts of the West Bank, relies heavily on outside financial aid.



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[Benjamin Netanyahu](#)

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# UN urges Lebanon's parties not to back foreign conflicts

Sat, 2019-02-09 23:02

UNITED NATIONS: The UN Security Council called on all Lebanese parties on Friday to implement a policy disassociating themselves from any external conflicts "as an important priority," a statement that appears clearly aimed at Hezbollah which has sent fighters to Syria.

The council also reiterated its call for implementation of its resolutions which "require the disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon so that there will be no weapons or authority in Lebanon" except those of the state. This is also aimed at Hezbollah militants.

The council statement issued on Friday night welcomed the Jan. 31 announcement of a national unity government in Lebanon, which broke a nine-month deadlock.

Council members encouraged all political leaders to build on the momentum of the new government's formation "to address the pressing security, economic, social and humanitarian challenges facing the country" and called on the new government to urgently implement reforms, fight corruption and strengthen accountability.

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## **FASTFACT**

**Aiming at Hezbollah militants, the UN Security Council reiterated its call for implementation of its resolutions, which require the disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon so that there will be no weapons or authority in Lebanon except those of the state.**

Rival political groups had been locked in disagreement over the makeup of a new government since May, after the country's first parliamentary elections in nine years. A breakthrough became possible after weeks of backroom deals as Lebanon's economic woes mounted.

The new government is headed by Prime Minister Saad Hariri, the Western-backed politician who has held the job since 2016. But Hezbollah, the powerful Shiite group, made significant gains at the expense of the largest Sunni party and controls three ministries including the Health Ministry.

The US administration expressed concerns about Hezbollah holding three Cabinet posts and called on the new government to ensure that group is not



supported by the ministries' resources.

Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah said on Wednesday the group would defend Iran in the event of war with the US.

He said the so-called axis of resistance, led by Iran, is the strongest it has ever been.

The axis groups the Syrian government of Bashar Assad with Shiite militias in Iraq and Hezbollah.



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New Lebanon government calls for 'painful economic reforms' After months of deadlock, Lebanon has new government

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[Seeking influence, Egypt's El-Sisi to](#)

# chair African Union

Author:

Sat, 2019-02-09 23:06

CAIRO: Nearly six years after the African Union (AU) shut it out in the cold, Egypt will take the organization's helm – and strengthening multilateral powers is unlikely to be on the agenda.

Cairo's tenure "will probably concentrate on security and peacekeeping," said Ashraf Swelam, who heads a think tank linked to the country's Foreign Ministry.

Incoming AU chair President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi will likely focus less on "financial and administrative reform" than his predecessor, Swelam added.

Such reform was the cornerstone of outgoing AU chairman Paul Kagame's year in the role.

The Rwandan president has pushed for a continent-wide import tax to fund the AU and reduce its dependence on external donors, who still pay for more than half the institution's annual budget.

The near year-long lock out from the AU came after Egypt's army deposed President Muhammad Mursi, who in 2012 had become the country's first democratically elected president.

El-Sisi is due to take the helm at the AU's biannual heads of state assembly, which takes place on Feb. 10 and 11 at the AU's gleaming headquarters in Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa.

As usual, the continent's multiple security crises will be high on the VIPs' agenda.

The single market is a flagship of the AU's "Agenda 2063" program, conceived as a strategic framework for socioeconomic transformation. However, the trade pact has met resistance from South Africa.

El-Sisi will therefore need to push hard for ratification of this accord, if it is to come into effect. Rwanda's ambitious funding proposal will also likely be on the table.

But it has met resistance not only from Egypt, but other member states, so may fail to pass.

Reform of the AU Commission is an even more sensitive topic. In November 2018, most states rejected a proposal to give the head of the AU's executive organ the power to name deputies and commissioners.

But the Egyptians are "fully engaged" in pushing other AU reforms, according to an AU official.

One key initiative backed by Cairo is the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA), an initiative agreed by 44 of 55 member states in March 2018.

For Elissa Jobson, head of Africa advocacy at the International Crisis Group, El-Sisi can be expected to “use the presidency to increase his country’s standing among other African states.”

“This is not a departure from previous administrations,” particularly that of the outgoing chairman, she added.

“Kagame showed that the presidency – for a long time considered to be merely a figurehead – can be used to promote national interests and boost a leader’s international profile,” Jobson said.

The AU official – who requested anonymity – said Rwanda’s president will remain a point person for the organization’s broad reform agenda, despite handing over the chair.

But there are major limits to the power wielded by the post of AU chairman.

Kagame suffered a crushing disavowal by the AU after expressing “serious doubts” about the results of Democratic Republic of Congo’s recent presidential election, which was officially won by Felix Tshisekedi.

While also disputed by the Catholic church, the results were validated by DRC’s constitutional court and saluted by continental heavyweights South Africa, Kenya and Egypt.

For Liesl Louw-Vaudran at the Institute of Security Studies, El-Sisi wants Egypt to be considered part of Africa, not just the Arab world – but that will require work.

“North African countries have a reputation of looking in a different direction than Africa, and Egypt will have to overcome that stereotype,” she said.

The AU’s theme for this summit is “Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons” presented within a security context.

Cairo is casting itself as a champion in the battle against illegal immigration – and as a model for hosting refugees on its soil.



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African Union urges Congo to suspend final election results  
Egypt opposition rejects move to extend El-Sisi's rule