

Israel's Netanyahu to eject foreign observers in flashpoint Hebron

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HEBRON, West Bank: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Monday he would eject a foreign force set up to help safeguard Palestinians in a flashpoint city in the occupied West Bank, accusing the observers of anti-Israel activity.

"We will not allow the continued presence of an international force that acts against us," Netanyahu said in a statement announcing that the Temporary International Presence in Hebron's (TIPH) mandate would not be renewed. The statement did not elaborate on the alleged misconduct of TIPH, which draws staff from Norway, Italy, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey. The TIPH website says the force works on six-month mandates but did not specify when the current one expires.

A force spokesman declined comment. Palestinians denounced the move.

"The Israeli government's decision means it has abandoned the implementation of agreements signed under international auspices, and given up its obligations under these agreements," said Nabil Abu Rudeineh, spokesman for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, whose peace talks with Netanyahu stalled in 2014. Conservative Israeli commentators had accused the TIPH of agitating against Jewish settlers who live under heavy Israeli army protection in Hebron, a biblical city with an overwhelmingly Palestinian populace.

The TIPH was set up after a settler killed 29 Palestinians at a Hebron shrine holy to both Muslims and Jews in 1994.

Since Israel partially withdrew from Hebron in 1998 under interim peace deals with the self-rule Palestinian Authority, the TIPH has "observe(d) and report(ed) on breaches of the agreements (and) violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law," the force's website says.

Most world powers consider Israel's settlements in the West Bank, where Palestinians want a state, to be illegal. Israel disputes this, and the rightist Netanyahu has played up his pro-settler credentials as he seeks reelection in an April 9 ballot.

"They want to uproot us from here. They will not," he said in separate remarks on Monday at another West Bank settlement.

"There's a line of thought that says that the way to achieve peace with the Arabs is to be extirpated from our land. That is the certain path to achieving the opposite of this dream."



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Israel, Chad renew diplomatic relations: Netanyahu

[Iran likely to step up cyber espionage](#)

Mon, 2019-01-28 21:28

BRUSSELS: Iran is likely to expand its cyber espionage activities as its relations with Western powers worsen, the EU digital security agency said on Monday.

Iranian hackers are behind several cyberattacks and online disinformation campaigns in recent years as the country tries to strengthen its clout in the Middle East and beyond, a Reuters Special Report published in November found.

This month the EU imposed its first sanctions on Iran since world powers agreed a 2015 nuclear deal with Tehran, in a reaction to Iran's ballistic

missile tests and assassination plots on European soil.

“Newly imposed sanctions on Iran are likely to push the country to intensify state-sponsored cyber threat activities in pursuit of its geopolitical and strategic objectives at a regional level,” the European Union Agency for Network and Information Security (ENISA) said in a report.

A senior Iranian official rejected the report, saying “these are all part of a psychological war launched by the United States and its allies against Iran.”

ENISA lists state-sponsored hackers as among the highest threats to the bloc’s digital security.

It said that China, Russia and Iran are “the three most capable and active cyber actors tied to economic espionage.”

Iran, Russia and China have denied the allegations that their governments conduct cyberattacks.

A malicious computer worm known as Stuxnet that was used to attack a uranium enrichment facility at Iran’s Natanz underground nuclear site a decade ago is widely believed to have been developed by the US and Israel.

When Washington imposed sanctions on several Iranians in March 2018 for hacking on behalf of the Iranian government, Iran’s Foreign Ministry denounced the move as “provocative, illegitimate, and without any justifiable reason.”

In November, the US indicted two Iranians for launching a major cyberattack using ransomware known as “SamSam” and sanctioned two others for helping exchange the ransom payments from Bitcoin digital currency into rials.

Cyber activities are expected to increase in coming months, particularly if Iran fails to keep the EU committed to a 2015 landmark nuclear deal, ENISA said.



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[**Bahrain insists on footballer's extradition from Thailand**](#)

Author:

Mon, 2019-01-28 21:17

DUBAI: Bahrain insisted Monday on the extradition from Thailand of a footballer convicted for a terrorism offense.

Hakeem Al-Araibi was jailed in absentia in 2014 for 10 years on charges related to an attack on a police station in 2012.

The 25-year-old, who played for Bahrain's national youth team, fled his homeland while on bail and was granted asylum in Australia where he plays semi-professionally in Melbourne.

He was detained on an Interpol notice in November as he entered Thailand for a vacation.

“Al-Araibi was arrested in Thailand and proceedings to extradite him to Bahrain are in process so that he can serve his sentence,” a Bahraini government statement said.

“He had all the rights and opportunities to defend himself in the criminal case, in which some of the suspects with him were acquitted by the court,” Bahrain’s interior minister Sheikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al-Khalifa said in the government statement.

He added that Al-Araibi may appeal the verdict if he is returned to Bahrain.

The minister said Al-Araibi, who was allowed to travel with the national soccer team while on bail, had fled to Iran from Qatar “never to return.”

Sheikh Rashid criticized what he described as “external interference” in Manama’s internal affairs.

“Those who speak now of Al-Araibi having been mistreated and those who question the integrity of Bahrain’s courts ignore the fact that Al-Araibi was released on bail of 100 dinars by the courts,” he said.

The footballer denies the charges against him and the Australian government have called for his release.



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[Palestinian president decides to change his government](#)

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Sun, 2019-01-27 21:56

RAMALLAH: Palestinian officials say President Mahmoud Abbas has decided to shake up his government.

The move is the latest sign of failure in more than a decade of attempts to reconcile with the rival Hamas movement.

The officials say Abbas appointed a four-member committee from his Fatah movement on Sunday to consult with political factions about forming a new government.

The three officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were discussing internal deliberations.

The official Wafa news agency said Fatah had decided to form a political government to replace the current Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah's Cabinet of technocrats.

Hamdallah's government was formed in 2013 following a power sharing agreement with Hamas. But the government couldn't assume its responsibilities in the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip ruled due to deep disputes.



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King Salman tells Abbas of Kingdom's unwavering support for Palestinian rights
UN envoy condemns settler violence after Palestinian killed

[Syrian children in focus at Sarajevo museum on war and childhood](#)

Author:

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Sun, 2019-01-27 14:01

SARAJEVO: Toys, house keys and diaries hang suspended from the ceiling or sit on plain white pedestals at Sarajevo's War Childhood Museum in a simple tribute to the children living in the shadow of the war in Syria.

Driven by memories of his own childhood during the Balkans conflict in the 1990s, founder Jasminko Halilovic has made the museum a treasure trove of

personal items donated by those who were children then too. He now wants to turn it into the world's biggest archive on wartime childhoods. Sunday's exhibition relied on items donated by children in Syrian refugee camps in Lebanon. A colorful keychain in the shape of sandal was given to the museum by 15-year-old Marwa.

"The keys opened the doors to the most beautiful house I have ever seen. My room had pink and green walls. Unfortunately, the house burned during the war, so we don't have the house anymore," she wrote.

According to UNICEF, there are 2.5 million Syrian refugee children living outside Syria and 2.6 million internally displaced.

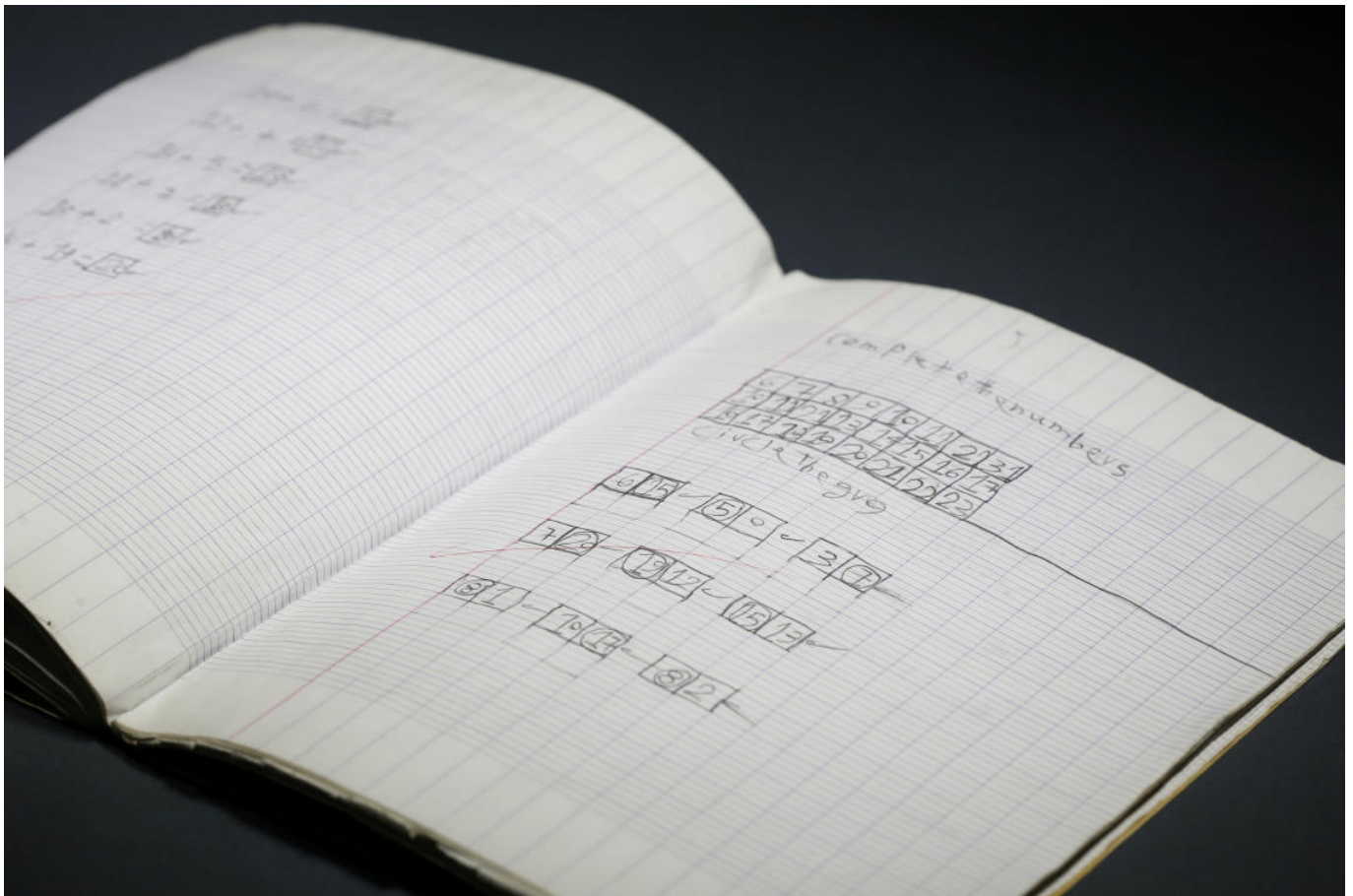
"We want to show that war children are not only the passive victims, as we often see them, but also resilient survivors," Halilovic said. Having amassed more than 4,000 exhibits and over 150 hours of a video archive of oral history interviews, his team started collecting personal items from children affected by other wars, such as Syria, Ukraine and Afghanistan.

The Syrian collection was assembled with the help of Abed Moubayed, 35, from Aleppo, during his two-month internship with the museum, part of his master degree program in post-war recovery at the University of York.

"This is a chance for the Syrian children to raise their voices and tell the whole world about their experience and suffering. It is really important to show that history is repeating itself and we, all of us, need to do something to stop it," Moubayed, who left Syria in 2012, told Reuters.

"Syrian children have no idea what the future holds for them and you can see it from their stories."

The Bosnian 1992-95 war, which claimed 100,000 lives and displaced more than 2 million people, was Europe's bloodiest since World War Two.







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