

Nobel laureate Murad to build hospital in her hometown in Iraq

Author:

Reuters

ID:

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Fri, 2018-12-14 23:43

SINJAR, Iraq: Nadia Murad, an Iraqi Yazidi woman held as a sex slave by Daesh militants who won this year's Nobel Peace Prize, said on Friday she intended to use the prize money to build a hospital for victims of sexual abuse in her hometown.

The Yazidi survivor was speaking to a crowd of hundreds in Sinjar, her hometown in northern Iraq.

"With the money I got from the Nobel Peace prize, I will build a hospital in Sinjar to treat ill people, mainly widows and women who were exposed to sexual abuses by Daesh militants," she told the crowd and gathered journalists.

She thanked the Iraqi and Kurdistan governments for agreeing to her plan and said she would be contacting humanitarian organizations "soon" to start construction.

Murad was awarded the \$1 million prize alongside Congolese doctor Denis Mukwege for their efforts to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and armed conflict.

She was one of about 7,000 women and girls captured in northwest Iraq in August 2014 and held by Daesh in Mosul, where she was tortured and raped. She escaped after three months and reached Germany, from where she campaigned extensively to appeal for support for the Yazidi community.

The Yazidi area in Sinjar had previously been home to about 400,000 people, mostly Yazidis and Arab Sunnis.

In a matter of days, more than 3,000 Yazidis were killed and about 6,800 kidnapped, either sold into slavery or conscripted to fight for Daesh as the religious minority came under attack.



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[Nadia Murad](#)

Nobel Peace Prize winner Murad urges world to fight genocide
Nobel laureate returns to Iraq, pledges to work for peace

[Israel destroys house of Palestinian charged with killing soldier](#)

Author:

Reuters

ID:

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Sat, 2018-12-15 10:17

EL AMARI REFUGEE CAMP, West Bank: Israeli forces on Saturday demolished the family home of a Palestinian charged with killing an Israeli soldier in the occupied West Bank, the military and witnesses said.

Israel says Islam Abu Humaid, 32, threw a 40 pound (18 kg) marble plate from a rooftop, killing an Israeli special forces sergeant, Ronen Lubarsky, 20, during a May arrest raid in El Amari refugee camp in the Palestinian city of

Ramallah.

Israeli forces arrived at the El Amari camp before dawn on Saturday, sealed off the four-story Abu Humaid house and destroyed it, the military said in a statement.

The Abu Humaid family home has been destroyed before and rebuilt. Two other Abu Humaid sons are in Israeli custody, charged with the killings of five Israelis, and another two face lengthy incarceration for serious security offenses.

A sixth Abu Humaid son was killed by Israeli forces in 1994 after himself being involved in a deadly ambush against an Israeli intelligence officer in the West Bank.

According to the indictment against him, Islam Abu Humaid told interrogators that he wanted to avenge the injury of one of his brothers in a previous Israeli army raid.

"What can we do? This is an enemy who thinks that by doing such actions they will terrorize us and make us fear them," said Islam's mother, Latifa Abu Humaid.

"On the contrary, our animosity becomes stronger, and with it our perseverance and strength."

Israeli rights groups have criticized family-home demolitions of Palestinian attackers as acts of vengeance and collective punishment.

Israel's Supreme Court has largely upheld the demolition policy. Israeli officials have termed it both punitive and a deterrence to potential attackers.

"The IDF (Israel Defense Forces) will continue operating in order to thwart terror and maintain security in the area," the military said.

The Palestinian Foreign Ministry condemned the demolition.

Tensions flared this week in the West Bank with a string of Palestinian attacks that killed an Israeli baby and two Israeli soldiers and Israeli forces shot dead four suspected Palestinian assailants.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Thursday that in response to the attacks, slated demolitions would be sped up.

Peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians broke down in 2014.



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Lebanese wary as Israel destroys Hezbollah border tunnels
Australia recognizes west Jerusalem as capital of Israel

[Turkey vows to keep striking PKK targets in Iraq](#)

Author:

Associated Press

ID:

1544864565280312000

Sat, 2018-12-15 (All day)

ISTANBUL: Turkey says it will continue to defend itself against terrorists after its strikes against Kurdish militants in northern Iraq sparked criticism from Baghdad.

Turkish Foreign Ministry spokesman Hami Aksoy said Saturday that Turkey expected neighboring Iraq to fulfill its responsibilities in combatting the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK. He says Turkey will invoke its "legitimate

right to self-defense” if Iraq “does not do what’s necessary.”

Iraq summoned Turkey’s ambassador on Friday to protest Turkish air raids on Iraq’s Sinjar and Makhmour mountains, where the PKK operates. The group has waged an insurgency inside Turkey for more than three decades but also fought against the Daesh group in Iraq.

The Turkish Defense Ministry says Thursday’s strikes targeted PKK bases that supply Kurdish positions in northern Syria.



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[Kurdistan Workers’ Party](#)

Turkey targets military over alleged Gulen links
Turkey will enter Syria’s Manbij if US doesn’t remove YPG fighters: Erdogan

[Syrian refugees remain skeptical about return](#)

Author:

Menekse Tokyay

ID:

1544822367566212000

Sat, 2018-12-15 00:19

ANKARA: While Moscow and Damascus urge the repatriation of Syrian refugees based on improving living conditions in the country, their call seems largely unheard by Syrians who think that the conditions on the ground are not yet encouraging enough for them to return.

Just in November 2018, some 10,232 Syrians have been caught by Turkish border troops crossing illegally into Turkey.

Experts underline that the repatriation process should be carried out voluntarily and with consideration for the socio-economic, political and security risks during the restoration process of the country. Otherwise, it may be premature.

The Syrian regime recently set up a coordination committee for the repatriation of displaced Syrian nationals to their original cities and towns.

Moscow also prepared a plan in July for coordinating the return of Syrian refugees to safe areas in their homelands. The plan was based on the establishment of working groups with Amman and Beirut, with the presence of US and Russian officials.

The reopening of the Nassib border crossing between Syria and Jordan in mid-October has also encouraged Assad government to issue calls for the Syrian nationals to return home.

Following the seven-year-long civil war, about 5.6 million Syrians are believed to have fled abroad to neighboring countries, mostly to Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, while some preferred to set off for a new life in Europe. About 114,000 of them have been repatriated this year, according to data announced by Moscow.

The risk of facing maltreatment when they return to government-held areas also caused concern among Syrian refugee communities.

The UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) has announced that since October more than 700 returnees, mostly from Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, have been arrested and 230 of them were detained in government-controlled parts of Syria.

Omar Kadkoy, a Syrian-origin researcher on refugee integration at Ankara-based think tank TEPAV, thinks that conditions for repatriation aren't ripe yet.

"Many Syrians link the return to political change, but status quo has the upper hand. Plus the risk of being drafted to military, the non-functioning economy, and the lack of safety despite all the recent developments create unappealing conditions for return," he told Arab News.

To encourage the return of Syrians, Assad regime has recently offered an amnesty for army deserters who will allegedly not be punished but will still have to serve the mandatory two years of military service.

However, those who joined opposition groups against regime forces are exempted from the amnesty, sparking concerns that it aims to attract only Assad supporters home.

According to Kadkoy, who has been living in Ankara for four years, the tempo of life is faster and harder in Turkey, but better compared to where Syrians come from and Syrians are getting used to this complex environment.

"This means they're settling down after seven years and building their

future: Kids in schools and universities, parents filling different layers of the labor market, and flourishing businesses,” he noted.

Syrian entrepreneurs in Turkey established 151 new companies in October mainly in the wholesale sector. Concentrating their activities in Istanbul, they invested about 34 million Turkish liras (about \$6.3 million) and opened employment opportunities to many.

On the other hand, thousands of Turkish families reportedly began filing requests to adopt orphan Syrian children in Turkey. There are currently about 1 million Syrian refugee children of school age in the country.

According to Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch, there are three major factors preventing many Syrian refugees from feeling that it is safe for them to return home.

“First, the Assad government is continuing to seize and demolish homes in areas that had been held by anti-government forces, meaning that for many Syrian refugees there is no home to return to,” Roth told Arab News.

Second, Syrian prisons remain full of people vulnerable to torture and execution.

“Few will want to return home if they face a serious risk of detention,” Roth noted, adding that the Assad government has not accounted for the thousands who have “disappeared” in its prisons, many of whom have been killed or died due to horrible treatment.

Roth also said that there has been no accountability whatsoever for the Assad government’s deliberate strategy of bombing or besieging and starving civilian areas.

“Few will have any confidence that such atrocities will not resume if there has been no justice for the senior officials who directed them,” he added.

Ammar Hamou, a Jordan-based Syrian journalist, thinks that although Syria and Russia are trying to send assurances to Syrian refugees to encourage them to return, in fact the policy of the Syrian regime is contrary to official statements.

“The country is still in the grip of security, arrests are present, and reserve recruitment exists. One of my friends is a refugee in Jordan. He visited Syria two weeks ago, and when he decided to return he was surprised that he was wanted for military service,” he told Arab News.



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[UN Yemen envoy pushes Security Council for robust truce monitoring](#)

Fri, 2018-12-14 16:04

JEDDAH: A robust monitoring regime is urgently needed in Yemen's port city of Hodeidah to oversee compliance by the warring parties with an agreed ceasefire in the region, United Nations Yemen envoy Martin Griffiths told the Security Council on Friday.

The Iranian-aligned Houthis and the Arab Coalition-backed Yemen government of President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi agreed on Thursday to stop fighting for Houthi-held Hodeidah and withdraw their troops, the first significant breakthrough for UN-led peace efforts in five years of conflict.

"A robust and competent monitoring regime is not just essential, it is also urgently needed and both parties have told us they would very much welcome it and indeed depend on it," Griffiths told the 15-member council, adding that UN officials were already planning for such a deployment.

Such a monitoring mission needs the backing of the Security Council in a resolution, diplomats said.

Griffiths said in a video briefing that retired Dutch Major General Patrick Cammaert had agreed to lead the monitoring component of the agreement, which took effect on Thursday when the deal was published. He said Cammaert could arrive in the region within days.

“Being present in the field soon is an essential part of the confidence that needs to go with the implementation of this agreement,” Griffiths said. The council was already discussing a British-drafted resolution to enshrine five requests made by UN aid chief Mark Lowcock – one of which was for a truce around facilities needed for aid and commercial imports – and diplomats said that would now be reworked to endorse the agreement reached in Sweden. “We hope to be able to work expeditiously with colleagues to bring about a Security Council resolution which will give the firmest possible support to what has been achieved so far,” British UN Ambassador Karen Pierce told the council.

“As requested we will of course want – with colleagues – to address the monitoring requirements,” she said.

“The UN will take on a leading role in supporting Yemen Red Sea Ports Corporation in management and inspections at Hodeidah, Salif and Ras Issa,” Griffiths said. “The UN ... has developed a plan seeking specific support from member states in the port.”

Meanwhile, in a statement by Saudi Arabia’s King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the Kingdom backed “the agreements reached in Sweden in UN-sponsored talks between a delegation of Yemen’s legitimate government and the Houthi rebels,” the official SPA news agency reported.

“The Kingdom remains engaged in the search for a political solution in Yemen which guarantees the security and stability of the country,” the statement said.

The statement also called on the Iran-aligned Houthis to “embark on this path” toward a political solution.

Saudi Arabia’s Foreign Ministry also said on Friday that it welcomed the agreement between Yemen’s internationally recognized government and the Houthi militia.

The ministry said that the Kingdom was committed to reaching a political solution that guarantees the security and stability of Yemen.

The handing over of the port of Hodeidah to the control of the United Nations will help to alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni people, the ministry stressed.



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UN Development Program team praises Saudi aid drive in YemenUN’s

Guterres: Saudi Arabia’s crown prince contributed to reaching Yemen agreement