

Israeli security crackdown will not end violence, political solution is needed, experts say

Author:

Tue, 2022-05-10 20:45

RAMALLAH: Israel has significantly escalated its security crackdown on the West Bank and East Jerusalem in an attempt to prevent Palestinian attacks, according to security experts.

It is doing this, they say, by stepping up arrests, using excessive force, demolishing the homes of suspects, and reinforcing its military presence across the West Bank and along the 1,200-kilometer segregation wall that separates the territory from Israel.

However, these measures will not work, the experts told Arab News, without a political process that offers Palestinians hope that the Israeli occupation will end.

Continuing Palestinian attacks have led to a dispute between the Israeli political and military establishments as there is no specific Palestinian culprit to blame and target in response to the attacks. This was also the case during the second Palestinian Intifada and Operation Defensive Shield in 2002.

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett has demanded that Hamas pay the price for incitement, in particular a speech by its leader, Yahya Sinwar, that he blamed for motivating the recent attacks. Meanwhile, military officials proposed the launch of a large-scale military operation against Jenin and surrounding villages on the grounds that most of the attackers came from there.

Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz threatened the Palestinians, saying: "Without security stability, the Palestinian economy will be damaged, the steps we have taken will collapse, and the land from where the perpetrators come will be shaken."

Israeli security officials expect the wave of Palestinian attacks to continue for a several weeks. Security agency Shin Bet is finding it difficult to confront the threat because the attackers are not posting messages on social media before carrying out attacks.

On Tuesday, the first anniversary of the start of last year's war in Gaza, described by Hamas as the 'Sword of Jerusalem Battle,' Palestinian factions confirmed their continued readiness to resist the Israelis.

The Palestinian Islamic Jihad movement said: "The 'Jerusalem Sword' battle constituted an important chapter in the history of the conflict with the

Zionist enemy, who thought that his hand was free in Jerusalem and that his policies and plans had provided the opportunity to impose temporal and spatial division at Al-Aqsa Mosque and to displace our people in Sheikh Jarrah (a neighborhood in Jerusalem).

“The resistance imposed equations and rules of engagement that made Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa its top priorities.”

The Israeli army is preparing for the possibility of escalations in hostilities on upcoming dates that are of special significance to Palestinians, including: May 15, the anniversary of the Palestinian Catastrophe (Nakba); May 29, the anniversary of the occupation of Jerusalem, when settlers organize a march; and June 5, the anniversary of the occupation of the West Bank, Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and the Syrian Golan Heights.

Ghassan Al-Khatib, a Palestinian political analyst, told Arab News that the violent reactions by Palestinians had been provoked by Israeli actions against them that have reached unprecedented levels.

“Provocations by Israeli extremist right-wingers at Al-Aqsa in Jerusalem, and a free hand given to settlers in the West Bank to attack the Palestinians and their properties, have caused Palestinian outrage,” he said.

“The problem is that the current Israeli government is fragile and is forced to make concessions to settlers and Israeli right-wing parties, whether regarding Al-Aqsa Mosque or in the West Bank, in addition to the economic hardships the Palestinians are experiencing.

“The solution to the problem of violent Palestinian reactions is not by using military force, but rather by mitigating provocations against the Palestinians, improving the economic situation and giving them hope for a political future.”

Israeli authorities launched a massive crackdown in East Jerusalem in April. Police arrested 894 Palestinians, imposed home-confinement orders on 37 others, banned 590 people from Al-Aqsa Mosque, injured 463 people, and demolished one house, according to a report issued by Jerusalem Governorate.



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Arab League chief slams Israeli PM's Jerusalem statements
Palestine and Israel on the verge of a new escalation

[Pope Francis extends 'unfailing friendship' to Coptic Christians](#)

Tue, 2022-05-10 19:17

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis has confirmed to all Coptic Christians his "unfailing friendship in Christ," and pledged engagement for "full visible communion" between the two churches.

The leader of the Catholic Church made the commitment in a message on the ninth Coptic-Catholic Friendship Day to Tawadros II, the pope of Alexandria and patriarch of the See of St. Mark, who lives in Egypt.

Francis expressed his "heartfelt gratitude for the spiritual bonds uniting the See of Peter and the See of Mark. May we continue our pilgrimage of Christian fraternity, especially in preparation for next year's celebration

of the 10th anniversary of our memorable meeting in Rome and of the 50th anniversary of the historic encounter between Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III.”

Tawadros II met with Francis in the Vatican on May 8, 2013. That was the second gathering of popes in Italy in 1,500 years.

The last visit of a Coptic pope to the Vatican occurred on May 10, 1973, when then-Pope Shenouda III and then-Pope Paul VI signed a Christological declaration to initiate ecumenical dialogue between the two Christian churches.

Francis told Tawadros II that “friendship is the surest way to achieve unity” between Christians, and wished to continue “the journey towards full visible communion.”

“As we approach the Feast of Pentecost, I pray that the Holy Spirit will unite us ever more and bestow his gifts of consolation upon our suffering human family, especially in these days of pandemic and war.”

Unofficial figures estimate the percentage of Copts in Egypt at 10 to 15 percent of the population. The Coptic Orthodox Church has stated it has 20 to 25 million members.



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Pope expresses 'pain' over attack on Coptic Christians in Egypt
Egypt's Coptic Christians celebrate Assumption of Mary amid pandemic

Outrage over Israeli PM's remarks on sovereignty over Al-Aqsa compound

Mon, 2022-05-09 23:06

RAMALLAH: Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's statements rejecting outside interference in the management of the affairs of Al-Aqsa Mosque on Sunday sparked outrage among Jordanians and Palestinians.

The position was seen as a denial of the 1994 Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty that gave Jordan a role in managing and supervising Islamic and Christian sanctities in Jerusalem.

"We reject any foreign interference," declared Bennett as he retracted agreements between Israel and Jordan on managing Al-Aqsa Mosque's compound and preventing incursions by Jewish settlers into its courtyards.

Bennett said at the beginning of a Cabinet meeting on Sunday that "decisions regarding Al-Aqsa Mosque and Jerusalem will be taken by the Israeli government."

He also claimed Israel would continue to maintain respectful treatment toward people of all religions in Jerusalem.

The Palestine Committee of the Jordanian Parliament denounced the prime minister's statements regarding Israel's sovereignty over Al-Aqsa as "irresponsible" on Sunday, and it called on Bennett "not to test the patience of two billion Muslims."

The committee condemned Bennett's statement as working to ignite the region in religious conflict, calling it a coup against the historic reality of Al-Aqsa Mosque and Jerusalem.

Jordanian MP Mohammed Al-Zahrawi called Israel a colonial occupying power that practices terrorism and criminality against Palestinian people, and which lacks religious, historical or legal legitimacy in Jerusalem.

The Palestine Committee reiterated Jordan's rejection of the temporal and spatial division of Al-Aqsa, and stressed Jerusalem will remain the capital of Palestine.

Jordanian and Israeli officials had agreed to meet after Ramadan to discuss arrangements around Al-Aqsa Mosque, but the Islamic Awqaf in Jerusalem told Arab News that "no structures have taken place regarding such meetings."

Azzam Al-Khatib, the director of the Islamic Awqaf, told Arab News he had not been informed about any meetings or visits.

Foreign tourism visits to Al-Aqsa have been agreed upon between Jordan and Israel, but without permitting religious rituals, as many Jewish settlers have attempted on numerous occasions.

As part of the Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty, it was agreed Jordan would retain its unique role in the mosque complex, with each party providing access to places of religious and historical interest. The two parties also agreed to work together to strengthen relations between the three monotheistic religions, to work for religious understanding, moral commitment, freedom of worship, tolerance and peace.

Palestinians, meanwhile, are demanding Israeli authorities remove a model of a temple, located at the entrance to the Mughrabi Gate, through which extremist Jewish settlers enter the compound, on the basis that it serves as a reminder of their goal to replace the Dome of the Rock.

"Bennett is wrong, and there is an agreement between Israel and Jordan, which gives Jordan a unique role in Al-Aqsa," prominent Israeli peace activist Gershon Basking told Arab News.

He added the Jordanian Awqaf should be strengthened, enlarged, and empowered, and proper coordination between the Awqaf and the Israeli police should enable a situation whereby the police do not need to enter the compound.

Non-provocative visits by non-Muslims should be allowed and even encouraged, said Baskin, adding that the Awqaf members should facilitate these visits and use them to talk about Islam and the holy places.

Bennett's statements came in response to the head of the United List, Mansour Abbas, who said on May 7 that his party's position was dictated by understandings between Israel and Jordan regarding the holy sites in Jerusalem.

The United List had announced earlier on Sunday that its members would not participate in the vote on a bill proposed by the Likud party to dissolve the Knesset next Wednesday.

According to Israeli media, the fear among right-wing parties in Israel is that the Joint List will decide to vote against the dissolution of the Knesset and drop the proposal, making it impossible to present another such proposal for six months.



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Arrests, injuries as baton-wielding police target Palestinian Al-Aqsa protest
Several injured in Al-Aqsa clashes on last Friday of Ramadan

[Nearly 60% Lebanese diaspora voter turnout for parliamentary elections](#)

Mon, 2022-05-09 22:50

BEIRUT: There was almost a 60 percent voter turnout for Lebanon's diaspora ahead of parliamentary elections on May 15, officials said Monday.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that between 128,000 and 130,00 Lebanese expatriates out of 225,000 registered voters had cast their ballots.

The percentage of expat voters in 2018 was close to 56 percent when about 46,000 out of 82,000 registered voters cast their votes.

Observers of the electoral process said the expat turnout "did not live up to

expectations because the people who registered to vote abroad had a personal desire to vote, but it seems that many of them abandoned that later.”

The expat elections that began on Friday in Iran ended at dawn on Monday in the last polling station on the US West Coast.

The highest turnout was recorded in Syria, reaching 84 percent, while the lowest was in Iraq.

“This percentage of the electoral cycle is good,” said Hadi Hashem, director of expat affairs at the ministry.

He described the electoral process abroad – the second of its kind after the 2018 elections – as “the largest logistical operation in the modern history of Lebanon, which involved 58 countries, 205 mega-centers, 598 polling stations, more than 2,000 employees, and 250 diplomats who worked day and night nonstop.”

The overseas ballots will be sent to Beirut for counting when polls close after nationwide voting on Sunday.

The electoral process will choose 128 MPs, and the percentage of polling abroad presents the candidates with a challenging week to mobilize their supporters for Sunday’s elections.

The ministry waited for the return of the ballot boxes from abroad on Monday via DHL by air, except for the Russia box.

Lebanon’s ambassador to Moscow Shawki Bou Nassar is personally taking it to Beirut at dawn on Tuesday because DHL does not deal with Russia.

The ballot boxes will be deposited in the Central Bank in preparation for sorting on Sunday night.

According to preliminary disclosures on the voter lists, the percentage of voters in the UAE and France reached about 70. It was 59 percent in Germany. In Britain it was 75 percent, in North America it was around 50 percent, and it was around 54 percent in Australia.

Observers expected that the current week in Lebanon would be electorally hot in preparation for holding the polls for state employees on Thursday, followed by the elections for the general public on Sunday.

Those taking part in the polls have begun calculating the impact of the expat vote and whether the volume of participation might upset equations and produce unexpected results.

The head of the electoral machine for the “Beirut Confronts” list, former MP Salim Diab, told Arab News that the electoral machines could not capture the trends of voters through the expat ballot boxes.

“What we have now are numbers about the voting percentage, not who the voter voted for. It is difficult to know that now. But everyone tends to bring

about change.”

Diab said that former Prime Minister Saad Hariri, who suspended the political activities of his Future Movement party, had given people the freedom to choose whomever they found appropriate and provided them with many options through the electoral lists.

“However, according to our follow-up to the mood of voters in Beirut, the battle has become between two or three lists. This battle requires a lot of effort from now until next Sunday,” he added.

On Thursday, 15,000 employees from official institutions are scheduled to vote.

It is unclear to what extent their worsening living conditions will affect their choices in light of the collapse in the value of their salaries and the devastation of their living standards.

However, thousands of them are affiliated with traditional parties or have been employed by these parties in government institutions.

The Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections said its observers recorded “cases of pressure on voters by some political parties, which led to some problems in more than one place.”

LADE’s report on Monday summarized alleged violations during the expat elections.

Among those who committed this kind of violation were the “Amal movement, Hezbollah, the Free Patriotic Movement, the Lebanese Forces Party, and the Islamic Charitable Projects Association.”

The intensity of polling abroad was concentrated on the lists of Beirut’s first and second districts, the third northern district, and the Chouf and Aley districts, which observers believed to be in the interest of the change and opposition forces, despite attempts by those in authority to play the partisan and sectarian cards.

This polarization will be evident on Tuesday when Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, the candidate at the head of a list of the Amal Movement with Hezbollah in the south, will speak.

Hezbollah secretary-general Hassan Nasrallah is urging the party’s supporters in the south, the southern suburbs of Beirut, and Baalbek-Hermel to back the party and its allies.

He claimed that the electoral battle was “a fateful battle for the resistance and its weapons in the face of foreign agendas hostile to the axis of resistance in Lebanon and the region.”





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More Lebanese expats vote in national election
Lebanese parliamentary elections: Second phase of expat voting scheduled for Sunday

[Yemeni government vows to uphold UN-brokered truce despite Houthi violations](#)

Author:

Mon, 2022-05-09 22:54

AL-MUKALLA: Yemeni Foreign Minister Ahmed Awadh bin Mubarak said on Monday that his government is committed to supporting the current UN-brokered truce and alleviating the suffering of Yemenis, despite the ongoing Houthi violations across the country.

The minister reiterated his government's pledges under the truce to stop

hostilities and facilitate the arrival of fuel ships to Hodeidah seaport and the resumption of flights from the Houthi-controlled Sanaa airport, urging the international community to order the Houthis to stop threatening the truce.

“We renew the government’s commitment to implement the truce with all its elements without cherry-picking, even though the continuing military violations (by the Houthis),” he said in a statement.

The truce that went into effect on April 2 suffered a heavy blow on April 24 after the first commercial flight scheduled to take off from Sanaa airport was postponed indefinitely after the Houthis insisted on adding passengers with passports issued by the militia.

The internationally recognized Yemeni government said that the Houthis exploited the truce to transport heavy weapons and military vehicles to flashpoint sites outside the central city of Marib and are expected to generate 90 billion Yemeni riyals (\$90 million) from selling the 18 fuel ships that were allowed to enter Hodeidah seaport during the cessation of hostilities.

“Through cherry-picking terms of the truce, the Houthi militia proved that their priority is to collect funds to finance the war machine and enrich its leaders,” the Yemeni minister said.

Earlier this month, Yemen’s Information Minister Muammar Al-Eryani accused the Houthis of breaching the 2018 Stockholm Agreement with the government by looting revenues from oil sales that were supposed to be used for paying the salaries of public servants in the Houthi-controlled areas, adding that the predicted 90 billion riyals of revenues from the oil sales during the truce would be enough to pay the salaries of thousands of government workers for three months.

The Houthis have not paid the salaries of government employees since September 2016 after Yemen’s former President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi relocated the headquarters of the central bank from Sanaa to Aden to stop the Yemeni militia from plundering its reserves.

Meanwhile, three Yemeni soldiers were wounded after the army shot down an explosives-laden drone launched by the Houthis south of Marib.

A local military official told Arab News on Monday that the Houthis fired the drone at a gathering of government troops and mounted an attack in a bid to seize control of Radaha mountain in Marib.

“Their attacks and mobilization of forces are still going on during the truce. We foiled their attack on Radaha,” the official, who preferred to be unknown, said.



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Saudi ambassador to Yemen meets UN envoy in Riyadh
GCC Sec-Gen reaffirms support for efforts aimed at enhancing security and stability in Yemen