

Syria camp clashes with Daesh leave three dead: Monitor

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BEIRUT: Three people were killed in clashes between Daesh group fighters and Kurdish forces in a northeast Syria camp housing relatives of extremists, a war monitor said Tuesday.

Around 56,000 people live in Al-Hol, an overcrowded Kurdish-run camp for displaced people that has been plagued by murders and regular escape attempts, according to the United Nations.

The camp hosts about 10,000 foreigners, including the wives and children of Daesh fighters who are detained in a high-security annex guarded by Kurdish forces.

"Violent clashes between security forces responsible for the camp and Daesh cells" broke out on Monday night, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

The clashes "resulted in the death of a woman and a child (...) and the killing of one member of a Daesh cell," the Observatory added.

Four women and six children were also injured in the fighting, said the Britain-based monitor, which relies on a wide network of sources inside Syria.

Kurdish Asayish security forces said that clashes started after members of an armed "cell" attacked one of their patrols in Al-Hol.

The perpetrators used kalashnikovs, pistols and rocket-propelled grenades during the attack, the Asayish said in a statement.

The Asayish did not identify the attackers but said they were hiding among Daesh relatives held in the camp.

"Our forces managed to kill one of the cell members," the statement said.

Kurdish forces warned last week that a lack of international support risked allowing for a militant resurgence, as they marked three years since the declared defeat of Daesh's so-called caliphate.

Kurdish authorities have repeatedly called on Western countries to repatriate their nationals held in northeast Syria, but most have been reluctant due to fears of a domestic political backlash.



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Kurds say 53 Daesh members arrested in Syria's Al-Hol camp
Release of Syrians from Al-Hol camp sparks concern for regional security

[Jordan's King Abdullah reiterates two-state Palestinian solution in talks with Israel's Gantz](#)

Author:

Reuters

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Tue, 2022-03-29 13:01

AMMAN: Jordan's King Abdullah on Tuesday met with Israeli Defence Minister

Benny Gantz in Amman, just one day following the Jordanian monarch's meeting with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in Ramallah.

The meeting was part of King Abdullah's efforts to create a new horizon to achieve just and comprehensive peace on the basis of the two-state solution, according to a Jordanian Royal Court statement.

The King reiterated the need to respect and preserve the historic and legal status quo of Jerusalem and to remove all obstacles hindering the freedom of worship in the old city ahead of the holy month of Ramadan, the statement said.

Jordan has been the custodian of Jerusalem's Islamic and Christian holy sites since the 1920s. The Jordanian custodianship was reaffirmed in the peace deal with Israel in 1994.

The Israeli media quoted a statement from Gantz's office saying that the defense minister discussed with the king the steps that Israel intends to take ahead of Ramadan in order to preserve freedom of worship in Jerusalem and the West Bank. Gantz also discussed security coordination during the holy days as well as additional steps that could be taken to improve the lives of Palestinians.

King Abdullah and Gantz also met in Amman in January this year, marking the first high-profile Jordanian-Israeli meeting in years. The meeting followed the strained Amman-Tel Aviv relationship during Benjamin Netanyahu's premiership.

The king's meeting with Gantz also came just one day following an official visit of the Jordanian monarch to Ramallah for a meeting with Abbas, the first since 2017. He stressed the need to maintain calm in the occupied West Bank and to respect the rights of Muslims to worship at Al-Aqsa Mosque without provocation or interference, the Royal Court said.

A well-informed Jordanian source told Arab News on Tuesday that the Israeli President Isaac Herzog will visit Jordan on Wednesday for a meeting with King Abdullah.

The Israeli media also unveiled a meeting last week in Amman between Israel's Public Security Minister Omer Bar-Lev and Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi to discuss security arrangements ahead of Ramadan.

In remarks to Arab News, political analyst Amer Sabaileh said that Jordan has recently intensified its coordination with the Israelis and Palestinians in a bid to cool rising tension in Jerusalem and the occupied West Bank ahead of Ramadan.

Sabaileh explained that Jordan seeks to avoid tension in the occupied territories during the holy month that could trigger another escalation similar to events of May last year which culminated in Israel launching a large-scale military operation on Gaza.

Tensions erupted last Ramadan when Israel tried to expel Palestinian families

from the East Jerusalem's Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood.

The security escalation in the West Bank and Gaza triggered massive rallies and protests in Amman near the Israeli embassy and elsewhere across the kingdom.

According to Sabaileh, the Amman-Tel Aviv relationship has enjoyed a "noticeable" improvement since Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett came to office.

He explained that Jordan is seeking to capitalize on this improved relationship with Israel to push for new peace talks between the Palestinians and Israelis.



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Jordan's king lands in Ramallah on rare trip to meet Abbas
Negev Summit aimed at promoting peace: Egypt

120 million euros frozen in Lebanese laundering probe

Author:

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Mon, 2022-03-28 17:53

THE HAGUE: France, Germany and Luxembourg have seized properties and frozen assets worth 120 million euros (\$130 million) in a major operation linked to money laundering in Lebanon, the EU's justice agency said Monday.

The seizures are linked to a probe launched by French investigators last year into the personal wealth of Riad Salameh, the central bank chief in crisis-hit Lebanon.

"Five properties in Germany and France were seized as well as several bank accounts" were frozen, Eurojust said in a statement.

The Hague-based Eurojust said the operation on Friday was directed against five individuals who were suspected of embezzling public funds in Lebanon of more than \$330 million and five million euros, respectively, between 2002 and 2021.

The five suspects include Salameh, a former Merrill Lynch banker and members of his family, a source close to the probe told AFP.

Prosecutors are probing Salameh's alleged links to criminal association and money laundering, judicial sources said, following a similar move by Switzerland.

A Lebanese judge last week charged Salameh with "illicit enrichment" and money laundering after he failed to attend a court hearing for the fifth time.

Legal proceedings opened against Salameh after complaints filed by anti-graft groups in April last year, supported by a group of Lebanese citizens who lost money since the crisis hit the country in 2019.

Friday's seizures also include three properties in Germany, valued at 28 million euros as well as other assets worth seven million euros.

In France, two Paris properties valued at 16 million euros as well as a bank account with 2.2 million euros were seized.

In Luxembourg, around 11 million euros were frozen in another bank account, Eurojust said.

The agency did not give any details on the suspects, saying "they are assumed to be innocent until proven guilty."

In post since 1993 and once hailed by political and business leaders, Salameh has been repeatedly accused by the government of former caretaker Prime Minister Hassan Diab of being responsible for the collapse of the Lebanese pound.

The Lebanese public suspect him and other high officials of transferring money abroad during a 2019 uprising, when ordinary people were prevented from doing so.

The 71-year-old financial official has defended himself, saying he believed he was being made the scapegoat for the Middle Eastern country's financial woes.

His lawyers too have called for the opening of a judicial probe, saying "it will give us access to the file" the contents of which "we contest entirely." "We will exercise our full remedies" in the case, Salameh's French lawyer Pierre-Olivier Sur said.



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Motives unknown after fiance confesses to Lebanon quadruple murderConcern in Lebanon over judicial decisions targeting opponents of Hezbollah, Free Patriotic Movement

[Israeli security fears heightened in wake of Daesh killing of 2 policemen](#)

Author:

Mon, 2022-03-28 20:00

GAZA CITY: Security fears were on Monday heightened in the wake of Sunday's killing by Daesh gunmen of two Israeli policemen in the city of Hadera just hours ahead of a key meeting of foreign ministers.

The two assailants involved in the shooting were shot dead at the scene.

The incident followed stabbings last week in Beersheba that left four Israelis dead. Daesh has claimed responsibility for both terror attacks which have rocked security services working to ease tensions in Palestine.

On Monday, the foreign ministers of Egypt, the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, Israel, and the US held a summit in Israel to discuss the Palestinian issue and other regional matters. The same day, Jordan's King Abdullah visited the West Bank city of Ramallah.

Political leaders recently discussed the beefing-up of security measures in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in preparation for the month of Ramadan.

The Israeli government also agreed to increase from 10,000 to 20,000 the number of Palestinian workers from Gaza allowed to enter Israel, while easing import restrictions on certain goods.

Israeli army radio said that Israel's government coordinator in the Palestinian territories, Ghassan Alyan, had recently travelled to Cairo for security talks with Egyptian officials, and Israel was also reportedly set to press ahead with pre-coronavirus pandemic plans to allow Palestinians in the West Bank to visit Jerusalem.

Events last year in Jerusalem and the city's eastern Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood led to violence and contributed toward a fourth conflict between Gaza and Israel and security talks are aimed at avoiding a repeat of tensions this year.

Mostafa Ibrahim, a writer on Israeli affairs, told Arab News that Israel currently wanted to avoid any confrontations with the Palestinians. "It is clear that there is an Israeli desire, backed by American pressure, to calm the situation in the Middle East in light of the Russian-Ukrainian war," he said.

The Hebrew newspaper, Yedioth Ahronoth, said that the Israeli security system faced a number of challenges in the run-up to the month of Ramadan, adding there were real fears in Israel of an escalation of violence in the Palestinian territories.

Ramadan coincides with the revival of Land Day on March 30, Palestinian Prisoners' Day on April 17, the anniversary of the Great March of Return, and in May the first anniversary of last year's Gaza conflict, and Nakba Day on May 15. All the events had the potential to spark confrontations.

And the newspaper claimed that Hamas was attempting to destabilize security and calm in the West Bank and Jerusalem, while maintaining them in the Gaza Strip.

"Hamas realizes that the escalation creates a security problem for Israel at the tactical level. At the strategic level, it threatens and undermines the legitimacy of the Palestinian Authority," it reported.

However, despite underlying tensions, it did not predict any fresh flare ups in Gaza, Sheikh Jarrah, or at Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Ibrahim said recent international visits and dialogue would help contribute toward maintaining calm.

“The recent Israeli facilities – despite their limitations – and the various international pressures, the desire of Arab countries to focus on the global crisis following the war in Ukraine, and negotiations with Iran, have contributed to pushing the Palestinian areas to maintain calm,” he added.



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Two Israeli police killed in Daesh gun attack
Daughter of Daesh victim to confront killer in US court

Motives unknown after fiance confesses to Lebanon quadruple murder

Mon, 2022-03-28 19:56

BEIRUT: The motives behind the horrific quadruple murder in Lebanon of a mother and her three daughters are still unclear.

The killings in Ansar, committed 20 days ago by Hussein Jamil Fayyad but discovered last week, are being described as the most serious murders in recent years in Lebanon.

Basma Abbas, along with her daughters Rima, Tala and Manal, were slain in a premeditated attack, leading to a surge of public anger in the country and calls for the two killers to be executed.

A funeral ceremony on Sunday morning in Ansar was attended by the father of the girls and Abbas' ex-husband, Zakaria Sawafi, who also serves as the town mayor.

Sawafi helped in the discovery of the crime after he raised the alarm following the disappearance of his daughters.

Together with Ansar residents, Sawafi pushed for the arrest of a suspect who was last seen with the four victims on the last day they were seen alive. However, after being arrested, that suspect was released following an investigation.

According to new details, on March 2, the three siblings and Abbas left their home in Ansar on a stormy night accompanied by 35-year-old Fayyad, reportedly the fiance of one of the daughters.

He was arrested and interrogated in Ansar about two weeks after the murders took place.

A relative of the victims said that the public prosecutor in Nabatiyeh, judge Ghada Abu Alwan, had interrogated Fayyad, but later released him.

A judicial source said that preliminary investigations into Fayyad's activities did not result in any charges.

But soon after his release, Fayyad fled to Syria. Last week, he was encouraged to return to Ansar by relatives, when he was ambushed and arrested by Lebanese military intelligence.

During his interrogation, contradictions in his statement and phone data were discovered.

Fayyad later confessed to the crime, noting the involvement of a Syrian national accomplice and revealing the location of the four corpses.

On March 25, specialized teams went to inspect the location – a valley that is difficult to reach to due to its rugged terrain.

Four bodies were discovered inside a cave between the towns of Ansar and Zrariah.

Fayyad admitted that he had carried out the mass murder of the family and buried them in the cave.

He lured the victims to the location under the pretense of showing them land that he planned to buy.

Together with his accomplice, he killed the victims using a hunting weapon and covered their corpses with stones, dirt and concrete.

But despite Fayyad's confession, he has not explained his motive for carrying out the murders.

On Sunday night, activists on social media circulated pictures of Hassan Al-Ghanaj, the Syrian accomplice in the crime.

Images showed him bleeding after men from the Lebanese Nasser Al-Din family managed to lure him from Syrian territory to the Lebanese border through illegal crossings.

He was severely beaten and handed over to Lebanese authorities. Footage showed scenes of celebration in Lebanon's northern Bekaa region over the arrest of Al-Ghanaj.

Fayyad's family repudiated the killers in a statement, condemning the crime.

Safawi said that he refused to accept "the law of the jungle and any retaliatory and irresponsible behavior."

However, Ansar residents have called on the Lebanese president to "actually execute the murderer, not to sentence him to death and suspend the execution, as is customary."



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