

Houthis accused of abusing women with moral policing

Wed, 2022-03-09 20:09

AL-MUKALLA: Yemen's information minister on Wednesday accused the Iran-backed Houthis of human rights abuses against women in areas under their control, described by one victim as "a hell," in the wake of a new report prepared by a prominent Yemeni rights organization exposing grave violations committed by the militias against females.

Muammar Al-Eryani said the Houthis have abducted and imprisoned women, raided their homes, restricted movement and expression, raped many of them inside their detention centers, and abducted their husbands.

Commemorating International Women's Day, Al-Eryani called on international rights groups and women advocacy organizations to name and shame the Houthis, and to push for the criminal prosecution of their leaders.

"The war triggered by the Houthi coup militia left unspeakable human tragedies for women. Thousands of them lost their husbands on battlefronts, thousands of women's relatives were abducted & forcibly disappeared, millions of women were displaced with their children in camps and abroad," Al-Eryani tweeted.

Mwatana, a local human rights organization, has issued a new report that highlights the violations committed by the Houthis against Yemeni women in Sanaa and other areas under their control.

It accused the Houthis of intensifying its crackdown on women by banning them from traveling without a male relative, expelling them from work, prohibiting them from integrating with men, and preventing them from obtaining contraception.

"Ansar Allah's dangerous and disgraceful efforts to restrict women's rights undermines the gains Yemeni women worked for decades to (achieve), and undermines their presence in public space," said Radhya Al-Mutawakel, chairperson of Mwatana for Human Rights, using the Houthi movement's official name.

"Ansar Allah should stop this ideological targeting of women, Yemeni women don't need guards of virtue; they need their rights respected, and accountability for all those who violate them."

Based on the accounts of many victims of the Houthi crackdown, the organization said that members of the militia insulted a group of women and briefly detained them for moving between cities without a male relative companion, known as a mahram.

"They referred to us as a 'prostitution cell.' There were seven armed men who verbally harassed us, put us under terrible psychological pressure for six

hours, took our passports, prevented us from getting out of the car, and searched our phones, computers and bags. It was a moment of hell," a woman, who preferred to remain anonymous, told the organization. She said the Houthis released them only after they had signed a written pledge that she and her friends would not travel without a mahram again.

The Houthis also raided several restaurants, cafes and parks in Sanaa and other areas under their control to impose gender segregation and detain female workers.

The organization said that in January last year 30 women lost their jobs in Sanaa after the Houthis raided their restaurant, abducted the owner and asked him to dismiss female workers who were allegedly "wearing make-up and talking to men."

The organization said the Houthis denied women access to reproductive health services, including contraceptive pills, without the permission of their husbands; and restricted the distribution of condoms on religious grounds, which forced many women into seeking abortions.

"I came to the health center to pick up my contraceptive pills. They refused to give them to me and asked me to bring my husband so he could give his approval. This is a significant burden," a 37-year-old housewife from Hajjah province told the organization.

As part of the continuing morality campaigns, the Houthis have banned singing at weddings and public places, abducted women who wear tight clothes in public places and harassed singers, artists and actresses.

The Houthis are still holding Entesar Al-Hammadi, a Yemeni actress, who was abducted from a street in Sanaa early last year, for allegedly violating Islamic dress codes.



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Yemeni women's living conditions difficult under Houthis Poor economy and war forcing Yemeni women to break with tradition and become breadwinners

[Lebanon's president honors military women](#)

Author:

Tue, 2022-03-08 23:40

BEIRUT: Lebanese President Michel Aoun celebrated female army soldiers and officers on International Women's Day as a delegation visited him at the Baabda Palace.

"I can see the fruits of the efforts made to integrate women into this military institution; something that was impossible in the past," Aoun said.

He added: "The number of women in the army is steadily increasing in a patriarchal society that was not ready to believe women can succeed in a field previously reserved for men."

Aoun called for further efforts to make sure women enjoy the same rights as men. "Today, women practice various functions in society; they are doctors, scientists, judges and so on. But they are yet to attain their full rights in one field: Politics, and having equal representation in Parliament. We strive to achieve this."

The commander of the Presidential Guard Brigade, Brig. Gen. Bassam Al-Helou, who accompanied the delegation, said: "These female soldiers are the elite members of the Lebanese Army, and they work in all departments of the Presidential Guard Brigade and the Presidency's Directorate-General."

Lebanon's sixth official periodic report was presented before the UNHCR follow-up committee in February to discuss the extent to which the country has implemented the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

It revealed notable progress in integrating women into institutions, especially in the military. A Gender Department was also established for the first time in the army.

The report read: "A remarkable increase in women's enrolment in army ranks was recorded over the past year. In 2022, 51 female officers out of 110 cadets will graduate from the Military College, and their number will increase to 55 out of 108 cadets in 2023, a number of whom will join the naval and air forces."

Minister of State for Administrative Reform Najla Riachi said on Tuesday: "Despite the positive breakthroughs women have achieved in assuming leadership positions in the political arena, progress in this field is still limited. Serious consideration must be given to the reasons that still, unfortunately, impede the achievement of complete equality between women and men."

Riachi added: "We must overcome such obstacles, in compliance with the preamble of the constitution, which stipulates that all citizens are equal in rights and duties without discrimination. This is crucial if we are to meet the fifth goal of the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030, which Lebanon pledged to implement."

FASTFACT

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International Women's Day in Lebanon was overshadowed by growing crises over food security, and medicine and fuel shortages. Still, Lebanese officials, including Prime Minister Najib Mikati, Interior Minister Bassam Mawlawi and Environment Minister Nasser Yassin celebrated Lebanese women on Tuesday.

National Commission for Lebanese Women head Claudine Aoun said: "With the support of civil society institutions and international organizations, the commission is following up on the government's implementation of a national action plan we had drawn up, despite the difficulties it faces at the financial, health and supply levels."

Meanwhile, the National Federation of Employees' and Workers' Unions was explicit in pinpointing the obstacles still facing Lebanese women in light of the economic crisis.

It warned that Lebanese women are subjected to the "worst forms of exploitation" as a result of the crisis and financial collapse, and that the state and ministries were failing to provide women with any support or social security.

"Today, some Lebanese women work more and get paid less, while others have been pushed into unemployment."



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Gas queues in Lebanon as fears mount over food security
State losing stature, crime rising as economic gloom envelops Lebanon

Israel says it is prepared to host up to 25,000 Ukrainians temporarily

Author:

Reuters

ID:

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Tue, 2022-03-08 20:28

JERUSALEM: Israel said on Tuesday it was ready to take in up to 5,000 Ukrainians fleeing Russia's invasion and allow 20,000 other Ukrainians who arrived prior to the fighting to remain temporarily.

The policy was outlined by Interior Minister Ayelet Shaked at a news conference, in which she also said Israel was bracing for the possible influx of tens of thousands of Ukrainians whose Jewish heritage affords them immigrant status under Israeli law.

"Israel will host temporarily about 20,000 Ukrainian citizens who resided, most of them illegally, in Israel before the fighting broke out," Shaked said, in a reference to visitors and workers, such as caregivers for the elderly, who overstayed their visas.

"In addition, if, God forbid, the battles don't end within a reasonable time, we will allow them to work in Israel," she said.

Shaked said the up to 5,000 Ukrainian citizens allowed in to escape the current fighting would receive a three-month visa and be allowed to seek employment if the situation did not change in Ukraine.

The European Union said on Tuesday its member states had so far taken in two million refugees fleeing the Russian invasion and expected millions more to follow.

Israel has been engaged in diplomatic efforts to try to end the war in Ukraine. Last week, Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett held talks in Moscow with Russian President Vladimir Putin and spoke by phone with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy.

Putin and Bennett discussed the conflict in Ukraine again, by telephone, on Tuesday.

In a readout of the call, the Kremlin said Putin had told Bennett about Moscow's assessment of the third round of talks between Russian and Ukrainian officials that took place on Monday.



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Israeli PM vows more Ukraine talks, even if prospects 'not great'Israeli PM Bennett meets Putin in Moscow to discuss Ukraine crisis

[Prince Hamzah pens letter of apology to Jordan's King Abdullah for involvement in sedition case](#)

Tue, 2022-03-08 19:37

AMMAN: Jordan's Prince Hamzah has written to King Abdullah apologizing for his misconduct, admitting his mistakes, and seeking forgiveness for his involvement in the country's high-profile sedition case.

In the letter, dated March 6, the prince, a half-brother of the Jordanian

monarch, said that he took responsibility for his wrongdoings.

"I apologize to our Jordanian people and our family (Hashemite) for these mistakes," Prince Hamzah wrote in the letter, a copy of which was received by Arab News.

The prince has not been seen in public since April last year following the government's announcement of his involvement in the sedition case with former Royal Court chief Bassem Awadallah, and Sharif Hassan bin Zaid, a distant relative of the royal family.

Convicted of attempting to undermine the regime, Awadallah and Bin Zaid were each sentenced by Jordan's State Security Court to 15 years of hard labor after the hearing was told the pair had plotted to cause unrest and sedition by exploiting certain internal and external incidents.

"What happened was a criminal plotting from the suspects in fulfillment of their hidden desires and was targeting the existing regime. The court had clear and convincing evidence of the crime."

Jordanian authorities said at the time that Awadallah, Bin Zaid, and Prince Hamzah were attempting to destabilize the country in collaboration with "foreign entities."



بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

والصلاة والسلام على أشرف الخلق والمرسلين، سيدنا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه أجمعين،

أخي جلالة الملك عبدالله الثاني ابن الحسين المعظم، حفظه الله ورعاه،

أبعث إلى جلالتك بأطيب مشاعر الاحترام والتقدير، داعياً الله أن يحفظ جلالتك ويديم عليك موفور الصحة، وأن يعزز ملكك ويديمك ذخراً لوطننا وأسرتنا.

لقد مر أردننا العزيز العام الماضي بظرف صعب، وفصل مؤسف تجاوزهما الوطن بحكمة جلالتك وصبرك وتسامحك. ووفرت الأشهر التي مرت منذ ذلك الوقت فرصة لي لمراجعة الذات، والمصارحة مع النفس، ما يدفعني إلى كتابة هذه الكلمات إلى جلالتك، أخي الأكبر، وعميد أسرتنا الهاشمية، أملاً طي تلك الصفحة في تاريخ الأردن والأسرة.

أخطأت يا جلالة أخي الأكبر، وجل من لا يخطئ. وإنني إذ أتحمل مسؤوليتي الوطنية إزاء ما بدر مني من مواقف وإساءات بحق جلالة الملك المعظم وبلدنا خلال السنوات الماضية وما تبعها من أحداث في قضية الفتنة، لامل بصفحك الذي اعتدنا عليه من جلالتك.

اعتذر من جلالتك ومن الشعب الأردني ومن أسرتنا عن كل هذه التصرفات التي لن تتكرر بإذن الرحمن الرحيم.

وأؤكد، كما تعهدت أمام عمنا صاحب السمو الملكي الأمير الحسن بن طلال، حفظه الله، أنني سأسير على عهد الآباء والأجداد، وفيما لإرثهم، مخلصاً لمسيرتهم في خدمة الشعب الأردني، ملتزماً بدستورنا، تحت قيادة جلالتك الحكيمة.

حفظ الله جلالتك قائداً ملهماً، وأخاً رحيماً، ويسر لجلالته ولولي العهد سمو الأمير الحسين بن عبدالله الثاني كل التوفيق في خدمة الأردن الغالي وقيادة مسيرته التي ستبقى إن شاء الله مسيرة عز وفخر وإنجاز.

والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته،

أخوك

حمزة بن الحسين

عمان

٦ آذار ٢٠٢٢

On the directives of King Abdullah, the prince's case was settled within the Hashemite family.

The Jordanian Royal Court published a letter signed by Prince Hamzah on April 3, in which he vowed allegiance to the monarch and confirmed that he would

act “always for His Majesty and his crown prince to help and support.”

Declaring his love and appreciation for his eldest brother, Prince Hamzah vowed allegiance to King Abdullah in his latest letter, and said: “I write to Your Majesty with my deepest respect and appreciation, and I pray that God protect you and grant you good health and that you remain a pillar of strength for our nation and our family.

“I will follow in the footsteps of our forefathers, and remain loyal to their legacy, devoted to their path of service to the people of Jordan, and committed to our constitution, under Your Majesty’s wise leadership.

“I have erred, Your Majesty, and to err is human. I, therefore, bear responsibility for the stances I have taken and the offences I have committed against Your Majesty and our country ... I seek Your Majesty’s forgiveness, knowing that you have always been very forgiving,” the prince added.

The Royal Court said on Tuesday that the letter was sent following a meeting between King Abdullah and Prince Hamzah on Sunday evening at the prince’s request, in the presence of Prince Feisal and Prince Ali.

It also described Prince Hamzah’s acknowledgment of his mistake and apology as a “step in the right direction on the path to regaining his role as other royal family members, in the service of Jordan.”



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Jordan's former royal court chief charged in Prince Hamzah sedition case
Prince Hamzah 'in my care' at his palace: Jordan King Abdullah II

[Qatar steps up its mediation role in US-Iran nuclear negotiations](#)

Tue, 2022-03-08 19:21

LONDON: Qatar has stepped up its role as a mediator in the negotiations between the US and Iran about the future of the latter's nuclear program.

After nearly a year of EU-brokered talks in Austria, officials said time is running out to strike a deal.

At the request of Tehran and Washington, Doha has been acting as an intermediary in the talks, which are taking place in Vienna, delivering messages between the parties and seeking to allay Iranian fears that the US might pull out of the deal in the future.

Those concerns stem from the Trump administration's sudden withdrawal in 2018 from the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, also known as the Iran nuclear deal. The agreement was the result of a lengthy and intense diplomatic process between Iran and the US, Russia, China, the UK, France, Germany and an EU delegation.

Qatari officials have also been working to facilitate direct talks between Washington and Tehran, should a deal be reached, to ensure that any outstanding issues, such as prisoner exchanges and additional sanctions relief, can be addressed in the future, a diplomat briefed on the talks told The Financial Times.

"Both sides really need a deal and there's a willingness on both sides but the biggest problem is trust," the diplomat said. "They each think the other side doesn't want it, which is not legitimate."

An Iranian official refused to discuss Doha's role in the process but said Qatar "and one or two other countries have brought messages (from the US) in some cases."

Western officials are pressuring Iran to agree to a deal within days, warning that if this fails to happen the already-ailing agreement will be redundant because of advances Tehran has made in its nuclear program. Iran has been

enriching uranium to ever-higher levels for several years and has progressed with other aspects of nuclear-arms production since the 2015 deal began to break down.

In February, the Wall Street Journal reported that Iran had significantly decreased its breakout time – the time required to produce enough uranium for a single nuclear bomb – to much less than a year, threatening to undermine a core tenet of the original deal.

The parties are said to be close to an agreement but some outstanding issues have yet to be resolved. The Financial Times reported that a demand by Moscow at the weekend for guarantees that US sanctions, imposed on Russia after Vladimir Putin ordered the invasion of Ukraine, will not impede its trade with Iran has threatened to complicate the negotiations and further added to the sense of urgency.

But the parties have also said that they will continue to negotiate “if they reach an agreement.”

The diplomat said: “The biggest mistake with the 2015 deal was the talks stopped after it was signed. Initially, neither side trusted one another and needed signs of good faith but now there are positive movements. The Iranians now see Biden as someone they can negotiate with.”

The resolution last year of a diplomatic feud between Qatar and a number of Gulf nations, including Saudi Arabia, has allowed Doha to build on its reputation as a regional intermediary and diplomatic interlocutor. It assisted in peace talks between the US and the Taliban prior to the latter’s takeover of Afghanistan, and was designated a “major non-NATO ally” by Washington in January this year.

Since the start of the Ukraine crisis, Qatar’s importance to the West has once again spiked, as it is one of the largest global producers of Liquid Natural Gas and so a potential source to replace dwindling Russian gas supplies to Europe and North America.

Ali Vaez, an expert on Iran at international think tank Crisis Group, told The Financial Times that a major issue with intermediaries at the Vienna talks has been that there was no one both sides fully trust to “share things they were not comfortable with.”

But Rob Malley, the US’s top negotiator, has for a long time had a “very good relationship” with Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, Qatar’s foreign minister, Vaez explained.

“Qatar’s relationship with Iran changed post the regional embargo and so all the stars aligned for the Qataris to step in,” he added.

“There was no one else who had the personal ties to both sides and was better placed geostrategically at this point in time to play the role.”



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Iran's Raisi, Qatar's Emir sign bilateral accords in Doha
Iranian minister 'ready to fly to Vienna' to sign new nuclear deal