

Houthi death penalties condemned by Yemeni government, activists

Author:

Wed, 2022-02-23 22:14

AL-MUKALLA: Government officials, human rights activists and journalists on Wednesday strongly condemned the death sentences handed down to Yemenis by the Iran-backed Houthis.

The Specialized Criminal Court in Sanaa, which is controlled by the Houthis, on Tuesday sentenced to death three people, including a school principal, on charges of colluding with the Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen and the Yemeni government.

Fahed Al-Salami, who runs Al-Nahdah private school in Sanaa, Sadeq Mohammed Al-Majedi and Khaled Ahmed Al-Oulefi were found guilty of forming five military units of hundreds of fighters to undermine security in Houthi-controlled areas, sending the locations of military sites to the coalition, and receiving training and military support from the government in the central city of Marib.

The court also handed down jail terms to 10 other people, including a journalist at Yemen's official news agency, who were abducted in 2015 and 2016.

Yemeni officials and activists said that all 13 people had been abducted from their homes or offices in Sanaa and tortured by the Houthis.

Majed Fadhail, deputy minister of human rights and part of a government delegation involved in prisoner swap talks with the militia, told Arab News on Wednesday that the abductees were on the government's list of people who would be swapped with Houthi prisoners.

He accused the Houthis of using judicial bodies in areas under their control to get rid of their opponents.

"Those abducted academics, teachers, journalists and doctors are facing trumped up charges," Fadhail said. "The judicial system is no longer effective and the Houthis are using it as a tool to silence their challengers."

Fuad Al-Mansouri, a Yemeni human rights activist, told Arab News that the trials of abducted people and the death sentences handed down to them showed that the Houthis would not tolerate dissent.

"Those are purely politically motivated verdicts, targeting their political opponents," he said.

Al-Mansouri, his wife and fellow activist Zafaran Zaid were last year sentenced to death in absentia by a Houthi court over allegations that they

helped activists to flee Houthi-controlled areas.

“With these verdicts, the militia says you must be a Houthi or loyal to the movement or you will be jailed, displaced, sentenced to death or you will be abducted,” Al-Mansouri said.

Nabil Al-Osaidi, a member of the Yemeni Journalists’ Syndicate, condemned the jail sentence given to Yemeni journalist Nabil Al-Sedawi, and demanded the militia “immediately and unconditionally” free him.

Since the Houthis seized power in Yemen in late 2014, thousands of people, including politicians, activists, journalists and security and military officials have been forced to flee Sanaa and other areas.

The Houthis harassed their families and sentenced them to death, froze their bank accounts and confiscated properties.

Meanwhile, Yemeni activists and local media reports said the Houthi authorities fired the principal of Manarat Sanaa International School in Sanaa for allegedly arranging a cultural activity that “violated Islamic norms.”

A video posted online shows several girls dressed in traditional attire dancing on a stage at their school in front of a jubilant audience.

“Ignorant and clueless outsiders (sometimes elite Yemenis who like to fit in) accuse us Yemenis who stand up to the Houthis of being ‘biased’ when all we are trying to do is defend our country against a supremacist, radical and violent group,” Nadwa Al-Dawsari, a Yemeni conflict analyst, said on Twitter, criticizing the Houthis for harassing the school’s principal and students.



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[El-Sisi affirms Egypt's keenness on Kuwait, Gulf's stability and security in confronting internal and regional challenges](#)

Author:

Wed, 2022-02-23 00:49

LONDON: President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi on Tuesday affirmed Egypt's keenness on the stability and security of Kuwait and all the Gulf states in the face of internal and regional challenges, as an integral part of the Egyptian national security

Speaking during a meeting with Kuwait's Emir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, El-Sisi said his country was also keen to strengthen and diversify the frameworks of joint bilateral cooperation in the political, security, economic and commercial fields, Egyptian Presidency Spokesman Bassam Rady said.

Sheikh Nawaf expressed his appreciation for Egypt's efforts in support of Kuwaiti affairs at all levels, as well as the Egyptian community's contribution to the construction and development process in Kuwait in various fields.

He said in the coming period, Kuwait will increase investments in Egypt and exploit the opportunities available there, and praised Cairo's role in strengthening the mechanisms of joint Arab action in facing the current crises and challenges in the region.

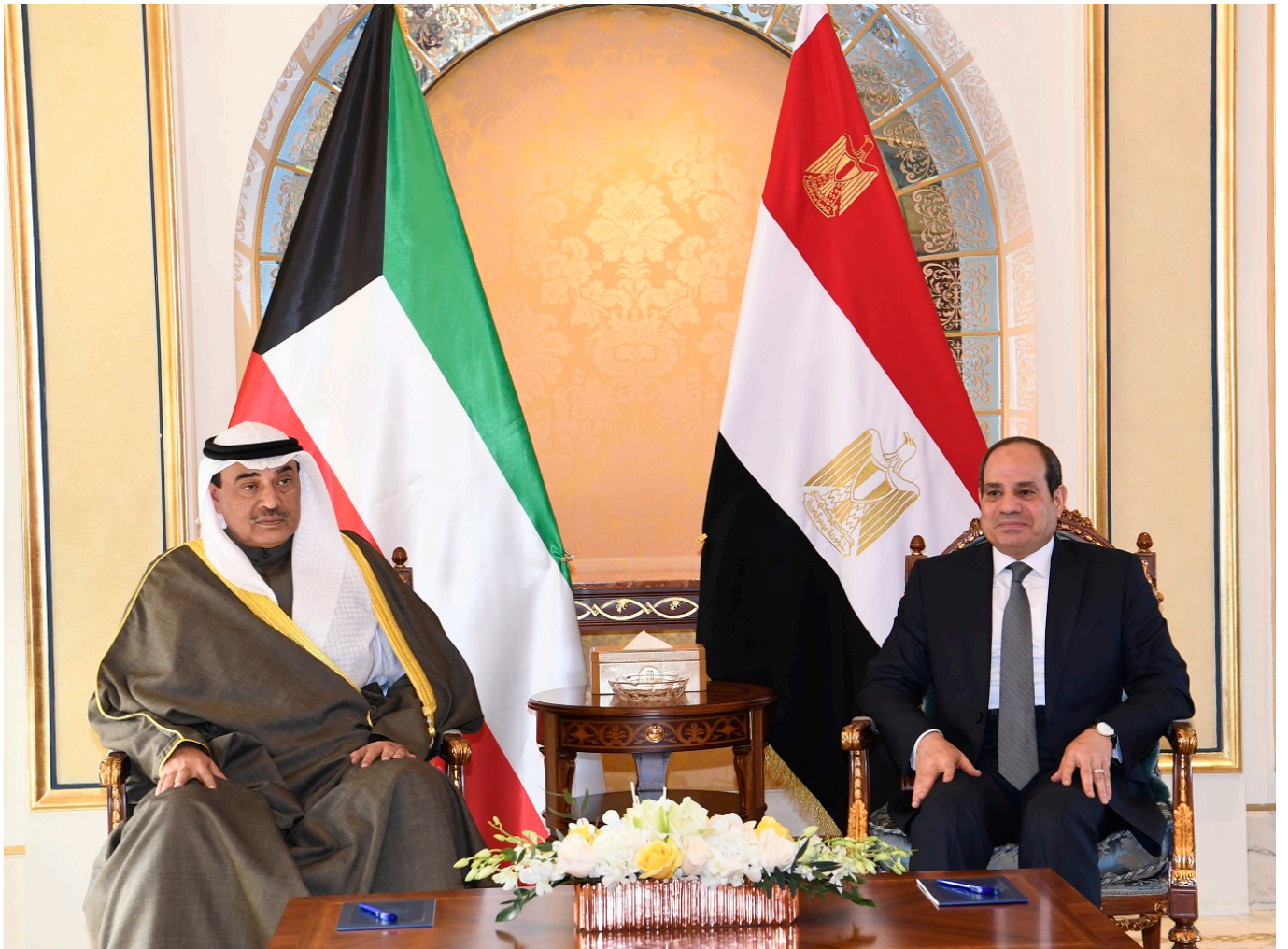
Rady said the meeting discussed a number of Arab and regional issues of common interest, as well as developing Egyptian-Kuwaiti cooperation, especially in light of the upcoming 13th session of the Egyptian-Kuwaiti joint committee in Cairo and the joint consular committee between the two countries.

The spokesman said they also discussed efforts to combat terrorism and extremist ideology and spread a culture of tolerance and moderation in the region and agreed to jointly coordinate to confront challenges to promote peace and stability.

During his official one-day visit to Kuwait, El-Sisi also held talks with Crown Prince Sheikh Meshaal Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Sabah.

Kuwaiti Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah said that the discussions were held in “a cordial atmosphere, reflecting the depth of the strong brotherly relations between Kuwait and Egypt,” Kuwait News Agency reported.





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[Archaeologists find 9,000-year-old shrine in Jordan desert](#)

Author:

By OMAR AKOUR | AP

ID:

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Tue, 2022-02-22 23:06

AMMAN, Jordan: A team of Jordanian and French archaeologists said Tuesday that it had found a roughly 9,000-year-old shrine at a remote Neolithic site in Jordan's eastern desert.

The ritual complex was found in a Neolithic campsite near large structures known as "desert kites," or mass traps that are believed to have been used to corral wild gazelles for slaughter.

Such traps consist of two or more long stone walls converging toward an enclosure and are found scattered across the deserts of the Middle East.

"The site is unique, first because of its preservation state," said Jordanian archaeologist Wael Abu-Azziza, co-director of the project. "It's 9,000 years old and everything was almost intact."

Within the shrine were two carved standing stones bearing anthropomorphic figures, one accompanied by a representation of the "desert kite," as well as an altar, hearth, marine shells and miniature model of the gazelle trap.

The researchers said in a statement that the shrine "sheds an entire new light on the symbolism, artistic expression as well as spiritual culture of these hitherto unknown Neolithic populations."

The proximity of the site to the traps suggests the inhabitants were specialized hunters and that the traps were "the center of their cultural, economic and even symbolic life in this marginal zone," the statement said.

The team included archaeologists from Jordan's Al Hussein Bin Talal University and the French Institute of the Near East. The site was excavated during the most recent digging season in 2021.



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[Israel accuses Iran of providing munitions for drones supplied to Venezuela](#)

Author:

Reuters

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Tue, 2022-02-22 22:00

JERUSALEM: Israel accused Iran on Tuesday of planning to arm drones supplied to Venezuela with precision-guided munitions, remarks that appeared aimed at raising American alarm as world powers try to conclude a new nuclear deal

with Tehran.

Venezuela said in 2012 that Iran was helping it build drones for self-defense. The two countries, both OPEC members and long at loggerheads with Washington, also cooperate on oil exports.

Briefing US-Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz showed photographs of what he described as an Iranian MoHajjer UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle) in Venezuela.

“Our assessments show that Iranian PGMs (precision-guided munitions) are being delivered for these UAVs and other similar models,” Gantz said.

“I can tell you that in my meetings with partners from around the world, including African and Latin American partners, I heard extreme concern about Iranian support for terrorism.”

Iran denies supplying military drones to any of its allies and has denied seeking nuclear arms or supporting terrorism. Venezuela’s information ministry did not immediately reply to an email seeking comment on Gantz’s remarks.

Israel supported the 2018 withdrawal of the United States from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal and, with Washington now taking part in negotiations to revive the pact, has urged caution.

“A nuclear deal, if signed with Iran, does not mark the end of the road,” Gantz told the Conference of Presidents of Major American Organizations. “We need to have offensive capabilities and a set of sanctions ready in our back pockets in case Iran violates a future agreement.”



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[Abbas-led PA strips outspoken critic of diplomatic passport](#)

Author:

Tue, 2022-02-22 21:07

RAMALLAH: The Palestinian Authority has withdrawn the diplomatic passport of Nasser Al-Kidwa, a former senior diplomat, over his opposition to the policies of President Mahmoud Abbas.

Al-Kidwa, 68, nephew of the late president Yasser Arafat, told Arab News from France that the withdrawal of his diplomatic passport took place shortly after Abbas announced an amendment to the diplomatic law on Feb. 6.

The diplomatic passport had been replaced with an ordinary document, with a change of profession from diplomat to dentist, he said.

Al-Kidwa represented the Palestine Liberation Organization at the UN from 1986 to 1991. He was appointed as permanent observer of the PLO at the UN until 2004, then served as foreign minister of the PA from 2005 to 2006 until Hamas won legislative elections and the Abbas-led Fatah was defeated.

He graduated as a dentist in 1979, but never worked professionally in the field. A "dentist" classification on a passport normally requires membership of Palestine's dental association.

Al-Kidwa expressed concern that the details of his last passport would be lost, leaving him unable to enter the Palestinian territories, which are controlled by Israel.

He warned that the PA move was "part of a series of actions that reflect the current Palestinian leadership's style of work, which violates laws and does not prioritize national interests – and aligns with Israeli desires, that is no logic, no respect for laws, and no public interest."

Critics have warned of the risks of Abbas' "decision by decree" style, which they say has led to an autocratic system in Palestine.

The new amendment to the law allows Abbas to reward loyalists with diplomatic passports, opponents claim. Categories of people eligible for the special

passport have been expanded, while critics have been suppressed through the withdrawal of their own diplomatic passports.

In addition to his Palestinian passport, Al-Kidwa has a French passport by virtue of his French wife, but has only used it to enter that country.

“In the last amendment to the law on granting the diplomatic passport, the president gave himself the absolute right to grant the passport to anyone he wants and withdraw it from anyone he wants, even though deciding on it is the work of the Foreign Ministry and not the president, and this cannot be legal,” he told Arab News.

Al-Kidwa added that he “does not trust” the Palestinian judicial system to retrieve his withdrawn passport, and believes that the ruling authority “dominates” the judicial system.

Palestinian legal experts told Arab News that there is a vague clause in the new law that is likely to have been used in Al-Kidwa’s case, and may further be used against Abbas’ opponents.



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Squabbling between Palestinian Authority and Hamas holds up Gaza reconstruction work