

US envoy to Yemen on GCC tour to reactivate peace efforts

Author:

Thu, 2022-01-20 00:50

RIYADH: US envoy to Yemen Tim Lenderking held talks with the head of the Gulf Cooperation Council on Wednesday in Saudi Arabia to discuss efforts to reach a political solution to the Yemeni crisis.

Lenderking is on a tour of Gulf states and the British capital, London, to reinvigorate peace efforts in coordination with the UN, senior regional government officials, and other international partners, the State Department said.

During the meeting, GCC Secretary-General Nayef Al-Hajraf stressed the importance of applying international pressure on the Iran-backed Houthi militia to end its terrorist activities and seriously engage in the Yemen peace process.

The two sides discussed regional and international efforts to reach the political solution sought by the bloc, in accordance with the GCC initiative and its Executive Mechanism, the outcomes of the Yemeni National Dialogue Conference and UN Security Council resolution 2216.

Al-Hajraf praised Washington's significant role and the efforts of the US envoy to end the Yemeni war, and the humanitarian and development assistance it provides to the Yemeni people.

He also strongly condemned the continued targeting of civilians and civilian targets with missiles and drones in Saudi Arabia, as well as the cowardly terrorist attack that targeted Abu Dhabi International Airport on Monday, killing three people.

Al-Hajraf said it constitutes a terrorist act, a flagrant violation of international law and a threat to regional security and stability.

During his tour, Lenderking "will press the parties to de-escalate militarily and seize the new year to participate fully in an inclusive UN-led peace process," the State Department said.

He will also call on donors to provide additional funding to mitigate the dire humanitarian and economic crises facing Yemenis, after the UN had said that around \$3.9 billion is needed this year to help millions of people in the war-torn country.



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[Gulf Cooperation Council \(GCC\)](#)

[Nayef Al-Hajraf](#)

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UN envoy to Yemen in Riyadh for talks with GCC, Saudi officials
Saudi deputy defense minister: Houthis are using false promises to deceive, recruit
Yemenis

[Sudan protester shot dead as US envoys visit](#)

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Wed, 2022-01-19 00:43

KHARTOUM: Sudanese security forces shot dead an anti-coup protester on Wednesday as American diplomats visited Khartoum seeking to help end a crisis which has claimed dozens of lives and derailed the country's democratic transition.

For two days shops have shuttered and protesters have blockaded streets in a civil disobedience campaign to protest the killing of seven people during a demonstration on Monday, one of the bloodiest days since the October 25 military coup.

The latest killing took place in Khartoum's twin city of Omdurman where protesters opposed to the coup had set up barricades.

Pro-democracy medics from the Doctors' Committee said the protester was shot in the torso "by live bullets of the (security) forces."

Witnesses also reported the use of tear gas by security forces in Omdurman and eastern Khartoum.

The death brings to 72 the number of people killed in a security crackdown against protesters who have taken to the streets – sometimes in the tens of thousands – calling for a return to the country's democratic transition and opposing the latest military putsch.

Protesters have been shot by live rounds and hundreds have been wounded, according to the Doctors' Committee.

The Forces for Freedom and Change, the leading civilian pro-democracy group, called for more protests on Thursday in Khartoum "in tribute to the martyrs," and nationwide on Friday.

Before the latest fatality, US Assistant Secretary of State Molly Phee and special envoy for the Horn of Africa, David Satterfield, held meetings with the bereaved families of people killed during the protests, the US embassy said.

They also met with members of the Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA), an umbrella of unions which were instrumental in protests which ousted president Omar Al-Bashir in April 2019, as well as the mainstream faction of the Forces for Freedom and Change.

Its spokesman Wagdy Saleh said they pleaded for "an end to the systematic violence toward civilians" and a "credible political process."

The diplomats are scheduled to meet with others including military leaders and political figures.

"Their message will be clear: the United States is committed to freedom, peace, and justice for the Sudanese people," the US State Department said ahead of the visit.

The diplomats held earlier talks in Saudi Arabia with the "Friends of Sudan" – a group of Western and Arab countries favoring transition to civilian rule.

In a statement, the group backed a United Nations initiative announced last week to hold intra-Sudanese consultations to break the political impasse.

"We urge all to engage in good faith and reestablish public trust in the inevitable transition to democracy," the group said.

"Ideally this political process will be time-bound and culminate in the formation of a civilian-led government which will prepare for democratic elections."

While the US diplomats visited, coup leader General Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan announced that vice-ministers – some of whom served before the coup and some appointed after – would now become ministers.

A statement from his office called it a "cabinet in charge of current

affairs.”

But it has no prime minister, since the civilian premier Abdalla Hamdok resigned in early January after trying to cooperate with the military. As part of the civil disobedience campaign, judicial workers including prosecutors and judges said they would not work for a state committing “crimes against humanity.”

University professors, corporations and doctors also joined the movement, according to separate statements.

Sudan’s authorities have repeatedly denied using live ammunition against demonstrators, and insist scores of security personnel have been wounded during protests. A police general was stabbed to death last week.



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Sudanese barricade streets, staging rallies in protest against coup
Friends of Sudan convene in Riyadh to discuss ways to assist UN mission

Jailed French tourist to appear in Iran court on spying charges

Author:

Reuters

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Wed, 2022-01-19 15:56

DUBAI: A jailed French tourist in Iran, Benjamin Briere, will appear before a Revolutionary Court on Thursday on spying charges, his lawyer said on Wednesday, over a year after his arrest while operating a remote-controlled mini helicopter in a desert area.

“Benjamin will attend the court to be tried for spying and acting against national security charges,” one of his lawyers Saeid Dehghan told Reuters. Briere has been held since May 2020, when he was arrested after flying a helicam – a remote-controlled mini helicopter used to obtain aerial or motion images – in the desert near the Turkmenistan-Iran border. He was charged with espionage and “propaganda against the Islamic Republic.”

His trial comes as the United States and parties to Iran’s 2015 nuclear deal including France are trying to restore the pact, which was abandoned in 2018 by then-US president Donald Trump. Iran’s elite Revolutionary Guards have arrested dozens of dual nationals and foreigners in recent years, mostly on espionage charges.

Rights activists have accused Iran of arresting dual citizens and foreigners to try to win concessions from other countries. Tehran denies holding people for political reasons.



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Jailed french tourist in Iran, Benjamin Briere, faces spying charges, lawyer saysIran arrested French tourist nine months ago, says his lawyer

[Houthi terror chief among 20 killed as coalition strikes back](#)

Wed, 2022-01-19 02:22

JEDDAH: A Houthi terrorist chief was one of about 20 people killed on Tuesday when airstrikes by the Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen struck militia targets in Sanaa.

Abdullah Qassim Al-Junaid, the head of the Iran-backed militia's aviation academy, had been sentenced to death in his absence by a court in Marib last year on charges of staging a military coup and committing war crimes.

Tuesday's airstrikes targeting Houthi camps and strongholds in the Yemeni capital were the heaviest in nearly three years. They followed a Houthi drone attack on Monday on an oil storage depot on the outskirts of UAE capital Abu Dhabi, in which three people died, and the launch of eight armed drones from Yemen to Saudi Arabia, which the Kingdom's air defenses intercepted and destroyed.

After Monday's drone strike the UAE said it reserved the right to respond to "terrorist attacks and criminal escalation," and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan agreed in a phone call to "jointly stand up to these acts of aggression."

Opinion

This section contains relevant reference points, placed in (Opinion field)

The US vowed to hold the Houthis accountable for the attack, which was also condemned by the UN, the EU, Britain and France, and throughout the Gulf and the wider Middle East, including Israel.

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett sent a letter of condolence to Abu Dhabi's crown prince, offering "security and intelligence support in order to help you protect your citizens from similar attacks."

Bennett said: "I have ordered the Israeli security establishment to provide their counterparts in the UAE with any assistance, should you be interested. Israel is committed to working closely with you in the ongoing battle against extremist forces in the region, and we will continue to partner with you to defeat our common enemies."

The attack on Abu Dhabi came as the Houthis suffered a series of military defeats in the Yemen war, including a lengthy battle in which they were driven out of Shabwa province by the UAE-trained Giants Brigades. That defeat dealt a blow to the Houthis' campaign to capture the battleground province of Marib, the government's last stronghold in the north.

"There is no end in sight for the Yemen war," said Elisabeth Kendall, a researcher at the University of Oxford's Pembroke College. "Rather, the conflict is escalating."

However, she added: "The UAE will not rush to a knee-jerk reaction. It has invested heavily in Yemen, particularly in new political and military infrastructure in the south. It is unlikely to veer from its long-term strategy... on the basis of a provocation."



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[Abdullah Qassim Al-Junaid](#)

Giants Brigades discover cache of mines, explosive devices smuggled by Houthis under guise of UN aid
UAE calls for UN Security Council session over Houthi attack on Abu Dhabi

Sudanese barricade streets, staging rallies in protest against coup

Wed, 2022-01-19 00:22

KHARTOUM: Sudanese shuttered shops and barricaded streets with burning tires and rocks on Tuesday, staging angry rallies to protest against one of the bloodiest days since a coup derailed the country's democratic transition.

Security forces on Monday opened fire killing at least seven people as thousands marched against the army's Oct. 25 takeover, taking the total number killed in a crackdown since the coup to 71, according to medics.

"No, no to military rule," protesters chanted in southern Blue Nile state, where some carried banners daubed with the slogan "No to killing peaceful protesters," said witness Omar Eissa.

The protests come as Washington ramps up pressure in a bid to broker an end to the months-long crisis in the northeast African nation, with top US diplomats expected to arrive in the capital Khartoum for talks.

Sudan's main civilian bloc, the Forces for Freedom and Change, called for two days of civil disobedience to begin on Tuesday.

"Shop closed for mourning," said a series of small signs posted on the closed outlets at the sprawling Sajane construction supplies market in Khartoum. One of the merchants, Othman El-Sherif, was among those shot dead on Monday.

Protesters – sometimes numbering in the tens of thousands – have regularly taken to the streets since the coup led by Gen. Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan nearly three months ago.

The military power grab derailed a fragile transition to civilian rule following the April 2019 ouster of autocrat Omar Bashir, with Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok resigning earlier this month warning Sudan was at a "dangerous crossroads threatening its very survival."

After Monday's deaths, the UN special representative Volker Perthes condemned the use of live ammunition, while the US Embassy criticized "violent tactics of Sudanese security forces," the latest such appeals by world powers, which have not curbed a rising death toll. On Tuesday, police fired tear gas at dozens of protesters setting up roadblocks in east Khartoum.

In several other parts of Khartoum, many pharmacies and other shops were shuttered.

Sudan's University for Science and Technology suspended all activities as part of civil disobedience, according to an official statement.

Outside the capital, hundreds of protesters also staged demonstrations in other cities, witnesses said.

"We took to the streets to protest the massacre that the security forces committed in Khartoum yesterday," said protester Hassan Idris, in the eastern state of Kassala.

Al-Burhan on Tuesday formed a fact-finding committee to probe Monday's violence, with its findings to be submitted within 72 hours, Sudan's ruling Sovereign Council said in a statement.

It comes as US Assistant Secretary of State Molly Phee and special envoy for the Horn of Africa, David Satterfield, were expected in Khartoum, where they would "reiterate our call for security forces to end violence and respect freedom of expression and peaceful assembly," spokesman Ned Price said.

On Monday, Sudan's police said they used "the least force" to counter the protests, in which about 50 police personnel were also wounded.

Sudan's authorities have repeatedly denied using live ammunition against demonstrators, and insist scores of security personnel have been wounded during protests. A police general was stabbed to death last week.

On Tuesday the "Friends of Sudan" – a group of Western and Arab nations calling for the restoration of the country's transitional government, and which includes the US, EU, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and the UN – held talks in Saudi Arabia.

"Deep concern about yesterday's violence," the UN envoy Perthes said on Twitter, after attending the meeting via video link.

"International support and leverage is needed. Support for political process needs to go along with active support to stop violence."

The EU foreign policy chief said Sudan's military rulers have shown an unwillingness to negotiate a peaceful settlement to the country's ongoing crisis.

EU foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell said that repeated calls for Sudanese authorities to refrain from violence against protesters "have fallen on deaf ears."

Borrell said the ongoing crackdown, including violence against civilians and the detention of activists and journalists, has put Sudan on "a dangerous path away from peace and stability." He urged the military authorities to de-escalate tensions, saying: "avoiding further loss of life is of the essence."

The crackdown, Borrell said, also risks derailing UN efforts to find a peaceful solution to the crisis.

The protest groups, which have continued to mobilize protesters against the coup, have rejected negotiations with the generals. They insist on handing over power to a fully civilian government to lead the transition.



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Sudanese forces open fire on anti-coup protesters, killing 7 Sudan to establish anti-terrorism force – Sovereign Council