

[Cross-border Syria aid gets 6-month extension sans new UN vote](#)

Wed, 2022-01-12 00:10

NEW YORK: Cross-border humanitarian aid to northwest Syria – not green-lit by Damascus – remains “essential,” the UN said, as the measure was de facto extended for six months without a new Security Council vote.

The council had previously renewed the authorization allowing aid into rebel-held areas in the country’s northwest “for a period of six months ... until 10 January 2022,” through the crossing at Bab Al-Hawa on the Syrian border with Turkey.

The text provided for “an extension of an additional six months, that is, until 10 July 2022,” subject to a report by the UN secretary-general.

For the West, the renewal to July had been interpreted as automatic, while Russia had raised the possibility of requesting a new Security Council vote, though it has not taken that step.

In his December report, UN chief Antonio Guterres had stressed the impossibility of replacing at this stage the cross-border mechanism for one that crossed front lines from Damascus. Moscow favors this method as recognition of the Syrian government’s sovereignty over the whole country.



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Gaps remain in Syrian regime response to chemical weapon concerns, UN
hears Syrians seek word of loved ones missing in regime jails

[Sudanese medics shaken by attacks on hospitals treating protesters](#)

Author:

Tue, 2022-01-11 23:29

KHARTOUM: On the afternoon of Dec. 30, security forces banged on the windows of Khartoum Teaching Hospital then fired tear gas into an emergency room packed with protesters injured in a nearby demonstration.

“We were around the corner trying to hide, it came right past our heads,” said a nurse who asked to withhold her name for fear of retribution. “We couldn’t breathe and had to rush out.”

Attacks on medical facilities seen during an uprising in Sudan three years ago have re-emerged during rallies against an October coup.

Hundreds of protesters have been injured since the coup, mainly from live gunshot and tear gas canisters, and at least 63 have died, according to the Central Committee of Sudanese Doctors, a medics’ union aligned with protesters.

Military leaders justify their coup as saving Sudan from chaos.

In a statement, the Khartoum State security committee expressed regret at the “violations” of hospital grounds and committed to providing high-ranking officers inside facilities to monitor any breaches.

Assaults on medical facilities have centered on hospitals which lie along main protest routes and routinely treat injured protesters.

FASTFACT

Patients and their friends and relatives have also been assaulted and arrested inside the hospital, and security forces have chased protesters into wards.

Near Khartoum Teaching Hospital, security forces have repeatedly tried to disperse protesters and chase them down side streets as they march toward the

presidential palace, about 1.2 km away.

Khartoum Teaching Hospital has been attacked with tear gas three times, said its director Dr. Elfatih Abdallah. "This is immoral, inhumane, and not acceptable at all," he said, pointing at a circular dent in the wall caused by a tear gas canister.

Patients and their friends and relatives have also been assaulted and arrested inside the hospital, and security forces have chased protesters into wards, said deputy hospital director Emad Mamoun.

Asked for comment, a police official who requested not to be named said: "We do not assault any doctors and doctors are well-respected by us as we consider them colleagues. We do not assault citizens as our role is to protect them."

Medics say it is not always clear which part of Sudan's security apparatus is responsible. They say that even when security forces do not enter the hospital, tear gas is often fired nearby, making it difficult to work.

CCSD has accused security forces of besieging hospitals and blocking the entrance and exit of ambulances during protests.

On Sunday, medics marched in lab coats to submit a report to the office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights documenting more than 20 alleged incidents of security forces impeding medical care across the country since the coup.

Norwegian Ambassador Therese Loken Gheziel said attacks would impede the international community's engagement with authorities. "Trust has to be rebuilt, people need to see justice, and the violence has to stop. Then we can facilitate consultations," she said.



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UN starts talks in Sudan to resolve post-coup crisis
Second Sudanese protester dies after Sunday protest – medics

[Iraq's Shiite divide makes forging government tough task](#)

Author:

Tue, 2022-01-11 23:17

BAGHDAD: Three tense months after legislative elections, Iraq's parliament has finally held its inaugural session – but opening debates swiftly descended into furious arguments between Shiite factions.

In multi-confessional and multi-ethnic Iraq, the formation of governments has involved complex negotiations ever since the 2003 US-led invasion toppled dictator Saddam Hussein.

Parliament only met for the first time since the October 10 vote on Sunday, after Iraq's top court rejected a complaint of electoral irregularities filed

by the Shiite and pro-Iran Hashd Al-Shaabi, a former paramilitary alliance.

Political analysts warn there are still several hard steps ahead before the formation of a new government.

Iraq is trying to emerge from almost two decades of conflict but is mired in corruption, economic crisis, with threats of violence lingering.

The newly elected members of parliament met for a swearing-in ceremony and to elect their speaker, but the debate soon turned ugly.

Videos filmed by MPs showing lawmakers becoming verbally aggressive with each other, highlighting divisions between Shiite groupings.

Iraq's post-election period has been marred by high tensions, violence and allegations of vote fraud.

One of parliament's first tasks must be to elect the country's president, who will then name a prime minister tasked with forming a new government.

Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr, who once led an anti-US militia and who opposes all foreign interference, has repeatedly said that the next prime minister will be chosen by his movement.

It won the largest share with 73 out of the assembly's 329 seats, more than a fifth of the total.

But the Coordination Framework, including pro-Iran groups such as the Fatah (Conquest) Alliance, the political arm of the pro-Tehran Hashd Al-Shaabi, insist their coalition is bigger. The Coordination Framework claimed they can muster the backing of 88 lawmakers to make them the largest bloc.

That prompted fury from Sadr's movement. In the ensuing chaos, MP Mahmud Al-Mashhadani, the oldest member of parliament who was therefore chairing the opening session, was taken ill.

One lawmaker alleged Mashhadani was "attacked," state media said he fainted, and he was rushed to hospital where he was reportedly in a stable condition.

When the parliamentary session resumed an hour later, lawmakers reelected as speaker influential Sunni MP Mohammed Al-Halbussi of the Taqadom party.

Coordination Framework MPs boycotted the vote.

No single party holds an outright majority, so the next leader will be voted in by whichever coalition can negotiate allies to become the biggest bloc.

In previous parliaments, parties from Iraq's Shiite majority have struck compromise deals to work together and form a government.

But Sadr has hinted he prefers an alliance with Sunni groups including Taqadom as well as the Kurdistan Democratic Party.

"In theory, they could push through and have their president elected and

their prime minister designated," said political scientist Hamza Haddad.

One leader in the Shiite Coordination Framework, speaking on condition of anonymity, admitted that if Sadr presses ahead with a coalition including Sunni parties and the KDP, they will be able to choose the government.

However, if Sadr works with Shiite parties as in past parliaments, then the Coordination Framework "will have the upper hand," the leader added.

If the Coordination Framework had a choice, a leading contender would be ex-prime minister Nuri Al-Maliki, a figure close to Iran whose own group won 33 seats.

Maliki would be unthinkable for Sadrists.

They, however, have not put forward any name to replace current Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi, who has not clearly said whether he wants to remain in power.

Al-Khadimi, a former intelligence chief, is Shiite like all his predecessors. He was confirmed in the last parliament by a coalition of Shiite-majority lawmakers.

"As long as the two Shiite sides remain divided, that could lead to more violence," the political analyst Haddad said.

There has already been unrest following the election.

Al-Kadhimi escaped unhurt when an explosive-packed drone hit the prime minister's residence in November during what his office called an "assassination attempt."

No group has claimed the attack.

"It is difficult to see either side quietly allowing the other to lead a government formation without the other," Haddad added, noting that both Sadr and the Conquest Alliance have armed backers.

"The biggest fear would be fighting," he said.



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Iraq takes back 111 Daesh-linked families from SyriaIraqi parliament holds first session, elects speaker

[Libyan security forces break up protest sit-in by migrants](#)

Author:

Mon, 2022-01-10 23:59

SHARM EL-SHEIKH: Libyan security forces raided and violently broke up a protest sit-in by migrants outside a shuttered UN community center in the capital of Tripoli, activists and migrants said on Monday.

The troops came on Sunday night, smashed up the protest site and arrested hundreds, said activist Tarik Lamloum. Those detained were sent to a detention center in the nearby town of Ain Zara.

Others managed to flee from the raid, he said.

Lamloum, who works with the local Belaady Organization for Human Rights, said at least one migrant community leader was shot during the raid.

The migrants, including women and children, had camped outside the center in Tripoli since October, seeking protection following a massive crackdown on migrants, and demanding better treatment at the hands of Libyan authorities.

Aiysha, a Sudanese migrant, was part of the sit-in protest along with her family since October. The mother of two said police beat and detained migrants. She was among those detained.

"We were caught off guard," she said, speaking by phone from the detention center in Ain Zara. She gave only her first name, fearing for her safety.

"They burned the tents, burned everything."

The Norwegian Refugee Council and the International Rescue Committee said more than 600 migrants were detained in the raid.

"This is the culmination of a disastrous situation that has deteriorated" since the mass detention of migrants in October, said Dax Roque, the NRC's Libya director.

Both groups urged Libyan authorities to immediately release those detained and provide them protection from further violence.

A government spokesman did not answer phone calls and messages seeking comment.

In the October crackdown, Libyan authorities rounded up more than 5,000 migrants, including hundreds of children and women – dozens of them pregnant, according to the United Nations.

Authorities at the time described it as a security operation against illegal migration and drug trafficking.

The detained migrants were taken to overcrowded detention centers, prompting an outcry from the UN and human rights groups.

Libya has been engulfed in chaos since a NATO-backed uprising toppled and killed Muammar Qaddafi in 2011.

The country has in recent years emerged as the dominant transit point for migrants fleeing war and poverty in Africa and the Middle East, hoping for a better life in Europe.

Traffickers have exploited the chaos and often pack desperate families into ill-equipped rubber or wooden boats that stall and founder along the perilous Central Mediterranean route. Thousands have drowned along the way, others have been intercepted and returned to Libya.

Those detained on land and others returned to shore are often taken to government-run detention centers, rife with torture, sexual assault and other abuses. UN-commissioned investigators said in October that abuse and ill treatment of migrants at sea, in detention centers and at the hands of traffickers in Libya amount to crimes against humanity.



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Libya's peace remains fragile as election disputes defy resolution
Libya's chief prosecutor orders culture minister jailed

[Israel weighs extending detention of sick Palestinian teen](#)

Author:

Mon, 2022-01-10 23:50

JERUSALEM: Israel is considering whether to extend the detention of a 17-year-old Palestinian with a rare neuromuscular disorder who has been held without charge for nearly a year in what authorities refer to as administrative detention, his father said on Monday.

The use of administrative detention has galvanized demonstrations across the occupied West Bank in recent months as several adult prisoners have gone on hunger strike to protest being held for months or years without charge.

Some have secured their release after months of fasting that left them

hospitalized and at risk of permanent neurological damage.

Israel says administrative detention, which is rarely used for minors, is needed to prevent imminent attacks or to detain dangerous militants without disclosing sensitive intelligence. Rights groups say it further denies due process to Palestinians already living under military rule.

Amal Nakhleh, who was detained in January 2021, is one of just a handful of minors being held in administrative detention.

He had a tumor removed from his lung in 2020 and suffers from myasthenia gravis, a nerve disorder that causes severe muscle fatigue.

His father, Muamar, says Israel has renewed Amal's detention three times over the past year without saying why he is being held or accusing him of any crime.

"There's no legal justification to hold him, there's been no charge," he said. "They just say they have secret files."

He says his son requires regular hospital visits for testing and needs a calm environment. At a court appearance on Monday, he was told that authorities need a few more days to decide whether to renew his son's detention.

"I saw him today," he said.

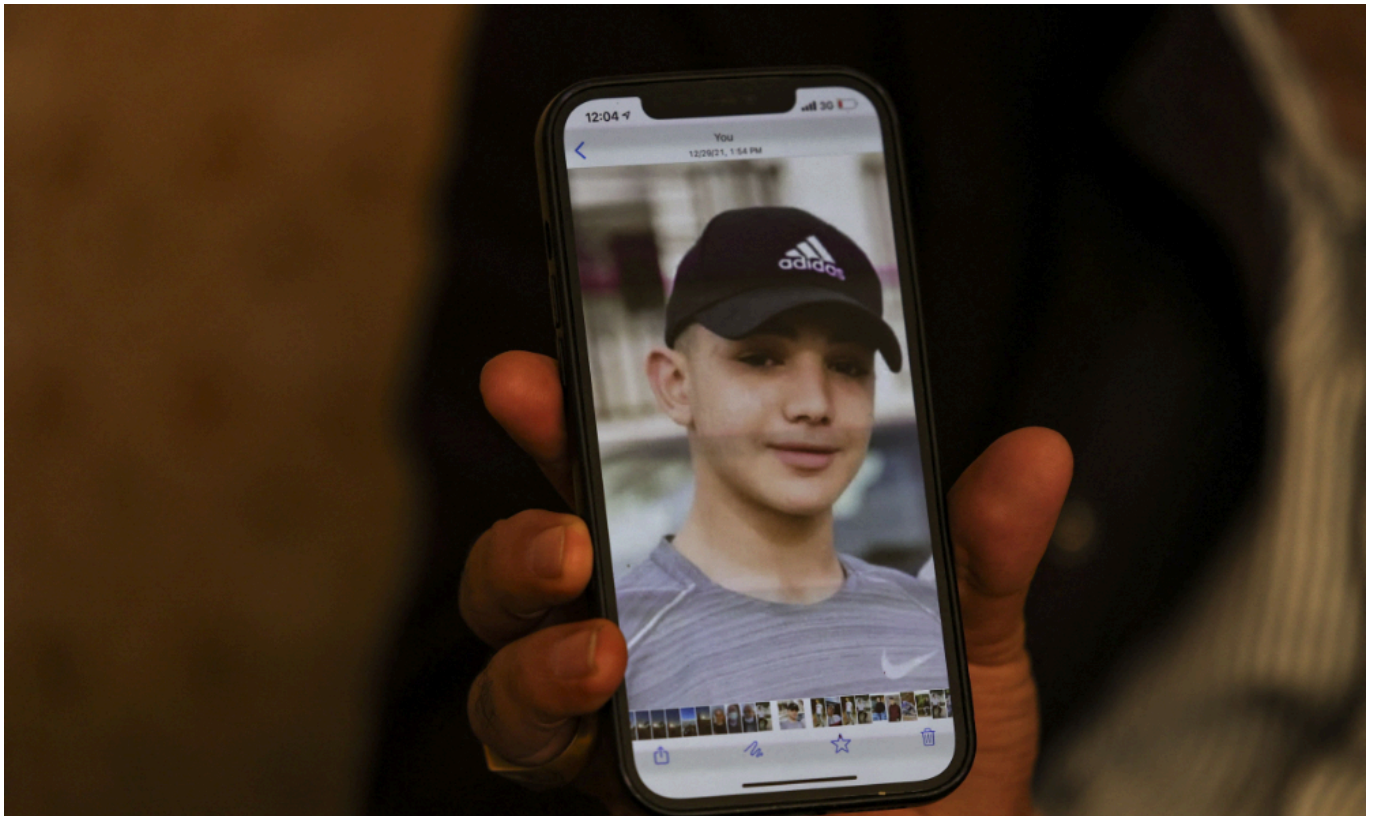
"He couldn't move his lips, he couldn't move his eyes, he couldn't smile. These are symptoms of the disease ... We are very worried about his health situation."

The Israeli military and Israel's Shin Bet internal security service did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Jessica Montell, the director of HaMoked, an Israeli rights group that advocates for Palestinian detainees, says Israel was holding six minors in administrative detention as of September, when her group received a response to a freedom of information request.

Around 500 Palestinian adults are currently being held in administrative detention.

"Administrative detention should be reserved for extremely rare cases," Montell said. "It should not be used in this wholesale way that Israel makes use of it, not for adults and definitely not for a sick child."



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Palestinian teen facing East Jerusalem eviction arrested after stabbing
Palestinian teenager shot dead by Israeli guard