

EU diplomat visits threatened Sheikh Jarrah home

Mon, 2021-12-20 22:53

AMMAN: The head of the EU Mission to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Sven Kuhn von Burgsorff, visited the home of the Salem family, that is currently facing eviction, on Dec. 28.

The EU official made a strong public appeal, calling on Israel to call off the eviction, asking: "How on Earth is it possible that a family is evicted on Christmas in the middle of the winter?"

The EU delegation ran a photo on Twitter, adding: "Members of Nassar family continue gathering on their land in the neighborhood of #SheikhJarrah in the occupied #Jerusalem after Israeli settlers placed barbed wires around the land in an attempt to seize it. #SaveSheikhJarrah."

Israel has been waging a concerted campaign to take over as many homes as possible in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of occupied East Jerusalem to turn it into a Jewish area.

Fatmeh Salem, 69, who was born in the family home and has lived there all her life, said she had paid rent to the Jordanian government for the house since the 1950s.

The Israeli-controlled administration of absentee properties is a major enabler of Jewish settler groups, while Palestinians who lost homes in West Jerusalem and live now in East Jerusalem are not even allowed to have their homes back.

FASTFACT

The last evictions in Sheikh Jarrah took place in 2017.

On Dec. 19, the opposition Israeli website Plus972 gave details of what occurred while their reporter visited the Salem family in Sheikh Jarrah early this month.

"Fatmeh was home when she heard banging on her front door last week," it reported. "She opened it and saw Jerusalem Deputy Mayor Aryeh King, holding a telephone and filming her.

"Next to him stood Yosef – from the municipality and King's No. 2 official – claiming he had purchased the rights to the land from a Jewish family that lived in the home before 1948.

"'This is my home,' the official said and handed her an eviction notice.

“‘Seriously?’ she asked.

“‘Yes, this is our house and we will get it back,’ Yosef replied.”

Plus972’s reporter continued: “Our conversation is cut off by noise coming from outside. Young, English-speaking Jews have arrived with metal fence posts. Fatma (Fatmeh) storms out to confront them: ‘What are you doing?’ she asks, as they begin to fence in a plot of the land adjacent to Fatma’s home, which is currently used as a parking space for two residents of the neighborhood, as well as a settler who moved to Sheikh Jarrah two years ago.

“Palestinians arrived, and a verbal altercation broke out. ‘How can I get into my home? Why are you doing this?’ Fatma yelled at them.

“The man who took charge of the fencing was Haim Silberstein, one of Aryeh King’s associates, who was wearing a suit and demanded we not film him.

“The police arrived ... and upon seeing legal papers showing the settlers had no right to build the fence, ordered the construction be stopped.”

Fatmeh then told the Plus972 reporter: “This is the beginning of our expulsion.”

An hour later, the reporter continued, King himself arrived at the home.

“He stood before the family and said: ‘Soon there will be a neighborhood for Jews here, thank God,’ before reciting the names of the various Palestinian neighborhoods in Jerusalem that he has already helped Judaize,” the reporter added.

The last expulsion in Sheikh Jarrah took place in 2017 against members of the Shamaneh family.

Back then, Aryeh King was reportedly directly involved through his organization, the Israel Land Fund, which assisted in taking over the Shamaneh’s home.



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UN urges Israel to stop demolitions and evacuations in Sheikh Jarrah in West Bank
Illinois congresswoman slams Iron Dome funding and 'theft' of Sheikh Jarrah homes

[Arab coalition launches strikes on military targets at Sanaa airport](#)

Mon, 2021-12-20 21:30

RIYADH: The Arab coalition said it is launching "precise and limited" air strikes on legitimate military targets at Sanaa airport on Monday.

The strikes are a response to Houthi threats and the militia's use of airport facilities to launch cross-border attacks, the coalition said.

The military targets at Sanaa airport included six sites that were being used to organize drone attacks.

The coalition added that it had lifted protection off specific sites at Sanaa airport in accordance with international humanitarian law.

Earlier, the coalition asked civilians to immediately evacuate the airport.

It called on the workers of international and humanitarian organisations in the airport to immediately evacuate as it has taken “legal measures to deal with the threat operationally.”

Spokesman Brig. Gen. Turki Al-Maliki told Al Arabiya TV that the coalition had informed the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of its intention to strike an hour before the airport was hit.

He added that the coalition makes sure that there is no collateral damage to civilians during strikes and that it has a consistent policy and defense strategy in Yemen.

The coalition will respond firmly to the militia’s futile targeting of civilian objects, Al-Maliki said.



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Yemen: 100 Houthis killed, vehicles destroyed in coalition air raids in Marib
Iran must end its 'lethal' support to Houthis, US envoy tells UN

[Animal group finds loving homes overseas for Syria's stray cats, dogs](#)

Mon, 2021-12-20 19:34

DUBAI: Syria might not be the first place people think of when looking to adopt a stray dog or cat, but Dutch student Celine de Jong recently did just that and she could not be more pleased.

It all started with an internet search that led De Jong, who volunteers at an animal ambulance service, to the Facebook page of the Syrian Team for Animal Rescue.

Established five years ago, the nonprofit organization provides shelter for nearly 2,000 cats and dogs in southern Syria. Its Facebook page has more than 100,000 followers.

"They're having a hard time in Syria, also the animals," De Jong told Arab News from Assendelft, about 15 km northwest of Amsterdam.



Dutch student Celine de Jong with her two-legged cats Zaina and Holly.
(@syrianteamanimalrescue)

“Star has a lot of cats and dogs that have been hit by cars or shot at. Many have missing legs. We have disabled cats in Holland, but not stray animals. I

wanted to adopt a stray cat.”

De Jong contacted the Star team and this month her new pets – two-legged cats Zaina and Holly – arrived at their new home in the Netherlands.

Although the adoption process took almost six months to complete, as the animals had to have a rabies shot and a blood test, which then had to be approved by a laboratory in Europe, De Jong said it was worth the wait.

“You’re really saving their lives,” she said, adding that she hopes one day Zaina and Holly will be able to be fitted with prosthetic legs.

De Jong and her mother Petra traveled to Beirut to collect the animals, where they were taken after leaving Syria.

The pair also met representatives from Star and donated food, medicine and toys to help other sick animals.

The De Jongs are not the only foreign family to come to Star’s aid. Its founder Hanadi Al-Mouhtaseb said other animals once cared for by Star are now living in Belgium, Germany and the US. “They’re very cooperative, there’s great humanity,” she told Arab News of the foreign adopters.

Al-Mouhtaseb began looking after injured animals at her home before setting up an open-air shelter in the Sahnaya area outside Damascus. Today, Star is run by volunteers and funded by public donations, but it is not easy.

The shelter struggles to get the veterinary equipment and medication it needs to treat its animals, many of which have serious injuries when they arrive.

While the war and political unrest in Syria has made it difficult to get support for Star, Al-Mouhtaseb said she was also trying to educate people, especially children, about the need to care about animals and not abuse them.

“If you walk up to a child and tell them what they’re doing is bad, they say, ‘Does an animal feel anything anyway?’” she said. “But if there wasn’t all this harm, we wouldn’t need an association.”















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Six killed by Daesh in Syria's Al-Hol camp this month
Western coalition in Syria shoots down menacing drone

Six killed by Daesh in Syria's Al-Hol camp this month

Mon, 2021-12-20 01:30

BEIRUT: Six people, including four women, were killed in Syria's Al-Hol camp for displaced people by Daesh in December, a Britain-based war monitor group said on Sunday.

The camp, which is controlled by the Kurdish-led autonomous administration in northeastern Syria, houses about 62,000 displaced people, including relatives of Daesh terrorists.

About 93 percent are women and children, and about half come from Iraq.

According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which has a wide network of sources in Syria, "six assassinations were committed" in the camp by Daesh cells since the start of December.

The last victim to date was shot dead on Saturday.

The victims include three Iraqis – two men and one woman – as well as two Syrian women and one woman whose identity is unknown, the observatory said. Since the start of the year, the number of killings in the camp has been on the rise.

Some 86 people were killed, including 63 Iraqi refugees who resided in Al-Hol, according to the monitor's toll.

Observatory head Rami Abdel Rahman warned that "chaos and insecurity persist within the camp," labelling it a "ticking time bomb" in comments to AFP.

In March, the Kurdish-led authorities launched a major operation in the camp during which they arrested 125 alleged Daesh members.

The UN has repeatedly warned of the deteriorating security conditions in Al-Hol, which has also seen breakout attempts in recent months.

The overcrowded camp hosts about 10,000 foreign women, children and relatives of terrorists.

Since the fall of Daesh's self-styled "caliphate" in March 2019, Syria's Kurds and the UN have repeatedly urged foreign countries to repatriate their nationals held in northeast Syria.

But most Western countries have refused to repatriate their nationals from the camp.

Calls by the Kurdish administration for the formation of international tribunals for the fighters have also been overlooked.

Meanwhile, the New York Times, citing newly obtained Pentagon documents, reported that the US air wars in the Middle East had been marked by "deeply

flawed intelligence” and resulted in thousands of civilian deaths, including many children, It said a trove of confidential documents covering more than 1,300 reports of civilian casualties undercuts the government’s portrayal of a war fought with precision bombs. Pledges of transparency and accountability, it said, had regularly fallen short. “Not a single record provided includes a finding of wrongdoing or disciplinary action,” the paper reported in what it said was the first of a two-part series. Asked for comment, Capt. Bill Urban, spokesman for the US Central Command, told the Times that “even with the best technology in the world, mistakes do happen, whether based on incomplete information or misinterpretation of the information available. And we try to learn from those mistakes. “We work diligently to avoid such harm. We investigate each credible instance. And we regret each loss of innocent life.” While several of the cases mentioned by the Times have been previously reported, it said its investigation showed that the number of civilian deaths had been “drastically undercounted,” by at least several hundred.



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Think tank warns of ‘threat’ of leaving Daesh members in ‘insecure’ Syrian camps
Western coalition in Syria shoots down menacing drone

Iran detects first case of omicron variant

Mon, 2021-12-20 00:38

TEHRAN: Iran has detected its first case of infection by the new omicron variant of the coronavirus, state TV reported Sunday.

The announcement comes as the variant spreads around the globe less than a month after scientists alerted the World Health Organization to the concerning-looking version. Iran has vaccinated some 60 percent of its population of roughly 85 million people with two doses of coronavirus vaccines.

The coronavirus has killed more than 131,000 people in Iran, the worst fatality rate in the Middle East. On Aug. 24 alone, 709 people died of the illness. The number of deaths has decreased in recent months due to the vaccination, experts say.

Iran accelerated vaccinations in recent weeks. More than 50 million Iranians have received their second shots, and 3.5 million have received the third shots.

Only 7 million Iranians had received vaccinations when President Ebrahim Raisi formed his administration in late August.

Iran generally uses the China-made Sinopharm vaccine, though the Russian Sputnik-V and the vaccine made by the British-Swedish pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca are also in use.

Iranian officials urged people who got two doses of vaccine to get their third dose as soon as possible.



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