

Israel violates international law 'because it can,' UN Security Council told

Author:

Wed, 2021-10-20 00:50

NEW YORK: Israel pursues policies in violation of international law and of UN resolutions "Because it can – no tangible cost or consequence is attached," the UN Security Council heard on Tuesday.

Daniel Levy, president of US/Middle East Project, told council members of the need to address what he called "an accountability deficit when it comes to Israel's action" as it is one of the core understandings that should guide the peace process forward.

"If the unlawful and peace negating politics of Israel continue to be met with impunity, there should be no expectation of positive change.

Also to be considered is "a legitimacy deficit in Palestinian politics," Levy said.

"The Palestinian Liberation Organization must become fully representative, inclusive and by extension better able to demonstrate strategic agency and to negotiate.

"Palestinians have a right to elect representatives to their national institutions. That requires a Palestinian leadership decision, as well as supportive, not preventive, steps by Israel and the International community.



Israeli activists of the Rabbis for Human Rights organization help Palestinian farmers harvest their olive trees in Burin village in the occupied West Bank, on Oct.19 2021. (Photo by Menahem Kahana / AFP)

“We also cannot ignore or condone when existing Palestinian self-governing authorities on the ground with their limited mandate repress their own people.”

Palestinian politician, activist, and scholar Hanan Ashrawi told the ambassadors that everything must be viewed in the context of occupation.

The security council’s inability to assert its authority, Ashrawi said, has allowed “this injustice to become a perpetual tragic, human modern political and legal travesty.”

She discounted talk of confidence-building between Israel and the Palestinians as “there can be very little confidence under occupation.

“The policy of confidence-building measures is misguided because occupation brings only contempt, distrust, resentment, and resistance. The oppressed cannot be brought to trust or accept handouts from their oppressor as an alternative to their right to freedom.”

Another attempt at spreading misconception is the constant call for “balance in an unbalanced situation,” Ashrawi said.

“The mindless refrain that Israel has a right to defend itself while the Palestinian people are denied such a right is perverse, and that the occupier’s violence is justified as self-defense while the occupied are

stigmatized as a terrorist.

“Peace is not achieved by normalizing the occupation, sidelining the Palestinian question, or rewarding it by repositioning Israel as a regional superpower.

“Such an approach maintains in place the causes of regional instability while enabling Israel as a colonial apartheid to superimpose greater Israel on all of historic Palestine.”

Israel’s permanent representative to the UN Gilad Erdan strongly criticized Ashrawi’s presence at the security council meeting.

“A spokesperson for Palestinian leadership was invited to represent civil society,” giving a platform to what he called “Palestinian rejectionism.”

Erdan slammed security council meetings on the Middle East for what he called disregarding “the real threat to regional and global security: Iran.

“Iran has assembled six armies of terrorist proxies in the region and by allowing the Ayatollah regime to continue with the severe violation of their international commitments, these six terror armies will soon have an Iranian nuclear umbrella.”

Before the meeting began, Erdan told reporters in New York that such meetings have the sole aim to “bash Israel” and are a “waste of everyone’s time.

“The security council members help dig the ditch of conflict deeper,” he said.

Erdan called on council members to “stand up to Iran and demand that Palestinian leadership abandon their culture of hate. This is the only way to transform the region into a paradise of progress, prosperity, and peace.”



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Palestinians clash with Israeli police in Jerusalem Israel gives legal status to 4K in gesture to Palestinians

[UK, Arab League concerned over Iran's nuclear program](#)

Author:

Tue, 2021-10-19 23:38

LONDON: The UK shares concerns over Iran's nuclear program with Arab countries, a government official said on Tuesday. Tehran has stopped honoring some of its commitments under a 2015 nuclear deal and has been holding up negotiations aimed at reviving the landmark accord that scales back its nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief, sparking concern from the UN nuclear watchdog agency. The comments were made during a meeting in London between the UK Minister for Middle East and North Africa in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, James Cleverly, and Ahmed Aboul Gheit, secretary-general of the Arab League. The meeting dealt with developments in the region, including Iran, Syria and Libya, where Cleverly affirmed his country supports the Libyan political process.

I met too with [@arableague_gs](#) Aboul Gheit, to discuss recent developments in the region, including Iran, Libya and Syria.

The Arab League shares our concerns over Iran's nuclear programme and, like us, also supports the political process in Libya.
pic.twitter.com/ZyCWgLEDAA

– James Cleverly (@JamesCleverly) [October 19, 2021](#)

Earlier on Tuesday, Cleverly met with Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry, where he praised Egypt's role as "a key mediator in regional conflicts, and a leading partner on climate" change. He also congratulated Shoukry on Egypt's nomination to host the next UN climate change conference (COP27), adding he looked forward to President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi attendance at the upcoming COP26 conference in Glasgow

next month, and his meeting with Prime Minister Boris Johnson. "I also thanked Shoukry for Egypt's ongoing engagement in Hamas-Israeli talks," which "played a leading role in securing the cease-fire," Cleverly said. The UK and Egypt also agreed on the importance of Libya sticking to its elections timetable, he added.

I also thanked FM Shoukry for 's ongoing engagement in Hamas-Israeli talks. Egypt played a leading role in securing the ceasefire.

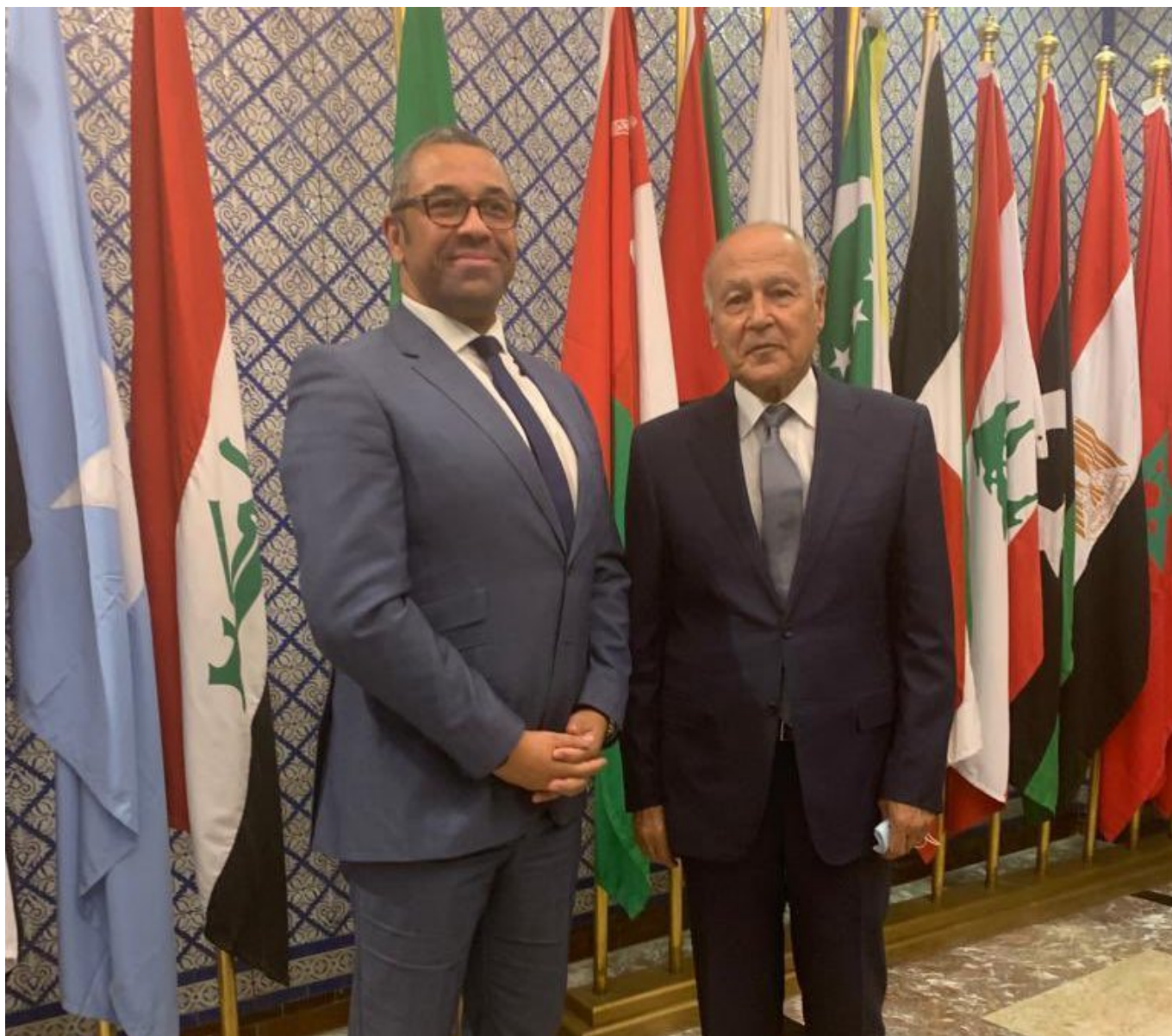
The UK & Egypt agree on the importance of [#Libya](#) sticking to its elections timetable. pic.twitter.com/tySK8gzgN6

– James Cleverly (@JamesCleverly) [October 19, 2021](#)

(With AFP)







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IAEA: Surveillance of Iran nuclear program no longer 'intact' UAE and UK foreign ministers discuss strengthening cooperation

48 Houthi militants killed near Yemen's Marib: Arab coalition

Author:

Tue, 2021-10-19 23:01

RIYADH: The Arab coalition in Yemen said on Tuesday it carried out 14 attacks targeting Houthi militia members in two districts near the strategic city of Marib in the last 24 hours.

The coalition said 48 Houthis have been killed and six military vehicles were destroyed in the military operations in Al-Jawba and Al-Kassara.

"We will continue to provide support to the Yemeni National Army to protect civilians from Houthi violations," the coalition said in a statement.

This is the ninth consecutive day that the coalition has announced strikes around Marib, reporting a total of more than 1,200 Houthi fatalities.

The previously announced bombings were in Abedia about 100 kilometers (60 miles) from Marib – the internationally recognized government's last bastion in oil-rich northern Yemen.

The strikes reported Tuesday were closer to Marib.

Al-Jawba lies about 50 kilometers from the city and Al-Kassara is about 30 kilometers northwest.

According to a government military official on Tuesday, fighting between the two sides "continues on a number of fronts but there are no major advances or changes on the ground in recent hours."

The Houthis began a major push to seize Marib in February and have renewed their offensive since September after a lull.

(With AFP)



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[Defense minister : 'Unfortunate incident, not ambush' caused Beirut protest violence](#)

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Tue, 2021-10-19 00:08

BEIRUT: The bloody gun battles that took place last week in the streets of Beirut were caused by an "unfortunate incident, not an ambush," the country's Defense Minister Maurice Selim said Monday.

Last Thursday's clashes killed seven people and wounded 32, after a protest against the judge leading the investigation into the Beirut Port explosion turned violent.

Supporters of Hezbollah and the Amal Movement, who want Judge Tarek Bitar removed from the case, carried out the protest.

Hezbollah has accused the Lebanese Forces party, which backs Bitar, of firing on the people at the protest.

But Selim told the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation: "The demonstration deviated from its course and clashes broke out. The circumstances of what happened remain to be determined by the ongoing investigation, which relies on facts and evidence to hold those responsible accountable."

The site of the armed clashes was between the Shiite-dominated neighborhood of Shiyah and the Christian neighborhood of Ain Al-Rummaneh, with machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades used.

Security footage at one of the entrances to the Ain Al-Rummaneh neighborhood went viral, upending claims about demonstrators being subjected to deliberate sniper fire from the rooftops of residential buildings.

The footage showed a member of the Lebanese army shooting at a person who insisted on bypassing the military checkpoint and entering Ain Al-Rummaneh. There was chaos when this person was shot down. People threw stones and there was an exchange of fire.

Army command said: "The soldier who fired the shots is under arrest and is being investigated by the competent judiciary."

So far, 20 people from both sides of the violence have been arrested.

Hezbollah MP Hussein Hajj Hassan accused the Lebanese Forces of "committing a massacre" against peaceful demonstrators, despite the video showing a soldier shooting at them.

"Hezbollah believes the criminal and killer to be the Lebanese Forces. But the resistance, Hezbollah and the Amal Movement will not be drawn into a civil war, as they are aware of this malicious conspiracy implemented by the Lebanese Forces," he added.

The incident has turned into a political as well as judicial dilemma.

Ministers from Hezbollah and the Amal Movement are abstaining from Cabinet sessions until Bitar is taken off the probe and until "the perpetrators and those involved in the Tayyouneh incident, the gunmen, snipers, their operators, their commanders, their chiefs, and everyone who has anything to do with this matter are brought to justice," Hajj Hassan said.

Lebanon's administration has been inoperative since last Friday. Friday was a national day of mourning, followed by the weekend.

All institutions will resume their work on Tuesday including parliament, which is holding a plenary session and restoring the immunity of MPs, especially those that Bitar had called for questioning.

MP Qassem Hashem, from the Development and Liberation bloc, denied news about an expedited draft law to establish an exceptional judicial body whose jurisdiction would look into the decisions, procedures and arrests carried out by Bitar, with the exception of the indictment he issued to reach the public trials before the Judicial Council.

"This matter contradicts the constitutional principles that we are keen to

abide by. The draft law needs a constitutional amendment and this is not on the table," Hashem said.

President Michel Aoun and Prime Minister Najib Mikati have insisted on the independence of the judiciary and have called for non-interference in judicial affairs.

It is not within the power of the Supreme Judicial Council to dismiss Bitar or to force him to take a certain course in the investigation.

However, Bitar's course of investigation is still subject to pressure.

On Monday, Lebanon's Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdul Latif Derian expressed his fear over coexistence, the National Accord Document, and the constitution.

"We should adhere to justice, but according to a clear path so that people are not divided over justice, as well as over politics" he said and warned of this "suicidal path" which everyone was "enthusiastically" jumping at.

He called it an atmosphere that reminded people of the beginning of the civil war.

"Every sane Lebanese should refrain from engaging in suicidal actions, and insist on the constitution, coexistence, and civil peace. Fighting in the street is forbidden, whatever the reason. Solutions can be reached through peaceful means, not by using uncontrolled weapons in the streets, especially in the capital, killing people and violating their sanctities."

On Sunday, Lebanon's Maronite Patriarch Bechara Boutros Al-Rai said that harming national peace and neighborliness was unacceptable, regardless of its source.

"We refuse to go back to arbitrary accusations, sectarian mobilization, attempts to isolate, compromise settlements, fabricate files against this group or that, choose scapegoats, and replace justice with revenge."

He stressed the need to abide by the law and the judiciary, and avoid political, sectarian and partisan interference. "We need to respect the judiciary's independence and let it correct what must be corrected by its judicial methods."

Al-Rai called on the Cabinet to convene, as every minister should respect judicial authority, and exercise their responsibility in the name of the Lebanese people, not in the "name of influential figures."

"Force does not frighten the believers in Lebanon. There is no weak party in Lebanon. We are all strong by our right to exist freely and our loyalty to the homeland without any interference."



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Hezbollah's Nasrallah says Beirut violence was a dangerous event Families of Beirut blast victims back judge amid pressure

[Turkey shifting Syria strategy after Kurdish militia's attacks](#)

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Tue, 2021-10-19 00:07

ANKARA: Turkey is shifting to a proxy force strategy and diplomacy with the US and Russia to counter the Kurdish People's Defense Units in Syria instead of deploying its own troops, analysts have said.

It comes after senior Turkish officials hinted at a strategy change regarding the war-torn country following deadly attacks by the militia in the Kurdish-dominated Tal Rifaat region, which targeted Turkish police officers.

The militia has also engaged in a cross-border shelling campaign against nearby Turkish villages.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that Ankara was "determined to remove all

threats in northern Syria," while Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu pledged that Turkey "would do what is necessary for its security," adding that neither the US or Russia had kept their promises to ensure the withdrawal of the militia from the Syrian border.

But the Turkish government has said that the military will pursue a "much more different campaign" in northern Syria, sparking debate over whether Ankara will engage in diplomatic talks with the US and Russia before launching possible military action.

The militia is the chief local partner of the US in its fight against Daesh in the region, while Turkey considers the Kurdish group and its political wing, the Democratic Union Party, as Syrian extensions of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, which has fought a civil war against the Turkish state for more than three decades.

In the meantime, the Syrian Liberation Front branch of the Syrian National Army said that it is "determined to clear our regions from all terror groups," including the Kurdistan Workers's Party, Democratic Union Party and Daesh.

Soner Cagaptay, director of the Turkish program at the Washington Institute, said that every time Russian President Vladimir Putin has allowed Turkey to enter Syria and seize territory from the Kurdish militia, he has demanded that Turkey end its support for rebel groups.

"This involved a land exchange with either Turkey taking territories from the YPG (Kurdish People's Defense Units in Syria) or the Bashar Assad regime taking territories from the hands of the rebels. But this new model that we are talking right now is a bit different from this one. Now, Turkish-backed troops in Syria, instead of Turkish troops, might move in to take an area from the YPG with a tacit agreement from Putin," he told Arab News.

According to Cagaptay, Ankara's broader strategy is to divide the militia-controlled zones and prevent the formation of any future political entity in the group's territory.

"The recent Erdogan-Putin deal in Sochi aimed at implementing this new model," he said.

Amid particularly sensitive times for US-Turkey relations, a growing emphasis on diplomatic channels outweighs military action, he added. Erdogan is expected to discuss the issue with US President Joe Biden on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Rome at the end of October.

After their recent meeting in Sochi, Erdogan will also talk to Putin following his meeting with Biden.

According to Ozgur Unluhisarcikli, Ankara office director of the German Marshall Fund of the US, the threat that Turkey sees in the Kurdish militia is the possibility of a Kurdish state being formed close to its borders.

"Ankara is therefore taking whatever measures it can to prevent this from happening," he told Arab News.

Unluhisarcikli said that current conditions mean that it is unsuitable for Turkey to conduct military operations against YPG-held territories in northwest or northeast Syria.

Therefore, Ankara will push diplomatic channels to proceed efficiently, he added.

"Turkey is already in a tense relationship with Russia over Syria's rebel-held Idlib province and would not like to add a new layer to these tensions. At a time when Turkey is trying to improve relations with US, it would not

like to introduce a new headache,” he said.

Meanwhile, during a press conference last week, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that the Biden administration does not support efforts to normalize relations with the Assad regime.

Experts also note that the fate of Idlib province, hosting about 4 million civilians under the control of Turkish-backed rebels, will be critical in the coming days in shaping the calculus of Turkey’s relationship with Syria, with a potential migrant influx causing domestic political worries for Ankara.

On Saturday, shelling by regime forces of the opposition-held town of Sarmada on the northern outskirts of Idlib near the Turkish border killed four people and wounded more than a dozen, according to the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.



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