

# Copper mining in nature reserve sparks debate between Jordanian government and environmentalists

Author:

Mon, 2021-08-23 23:33

AMMAN: Jordanian government officials have been embroiled in a debate regarding the decision to mine for copper in parts of the Dana Natural Reserve, one of the sites being considered by UNESCO as part of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.

Former Environment Minister Yaseen Khayyat argued that any change in the area of the reserve would cause a reevaluation of the Jordanian application to UNESCO and could lead to a refusal by the world body.

Khayyat said the mining plans could affect the environmental equilibrium in this rich environmental reserve.

The International Council for Monuments and Sites in Jordan, headed by former UNESCO goodwill ambassador Princess Dana Firas, issued an international call for protection of the reserve and called on the government to immediately reverse its decision.

The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature said it opposed any redrawing of the boundaries and that it would take "all legal and escalatory measures under Jordanian law" to protect the country's nature reserves.

Khalid Al-Irani is president of the RSCN, which is responsible for the site, and he described the announcement as a "black day" for Jordan.

Dana is Jordan's largest natural reserve, covering some 320 sq km of mountains and wadis along the Great Rift Valley.

It is home to a wide variety of plant and animal species, many of which are rare and endangered.

Environmentalists argue the decision is short-sighted, while the government insists it is necessary and will not have any lasting negative environmental effects.

Speaking at an event for World Humanitarian Day, organized by the JONAF coalition of Jordanian development agencies, former minister Yusuf Mansur called the decision "short-sighted"

The Dana Reserve was no longer emphasized as a center for tourist attractions in Jordan, said Mansur.

"We must not replace largely natural profit with little profit."

The government said that, since 2016, there had been an agreement with an international contracting company to look into the possibility of mining but that the RSCN had blocked its efforts to access the intended sites.

The government said it was well aware of the environmental importance of the nature reserve and that the mining decision would not affect it.

The government has even suggested making a piece of land available that will be equal to the one that will be cut from the reserve for copper mining.

The cash-strapped government has said that copper mining could bring in badly needed revenues to the country and will employ thousands of Jordanians.

Environmentalists and economists have questioned those claims, saying the gains would be relatively small.

Maher Hijazin, former director of the Natural Resources Authority, said that copper mining could bring in as much as JOD3 billion (\$4.23 billion) to JOD4 billion in the coming 20 years and that it would employ 1,000 Jordanians.

But the size of the revenue was questioned by Mansur.

“In 20 years, the annual revenue will be about JOD30 million,” he tweeted. “Therefore, there is no reason to be greedy.”



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Copper hits record high on higher demand hopesCopper hits 9-1/2-yr high on

tight supply, solid demand

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## Moroccan-Italian jailed for 'insulting Islam' to walk free

Author:

AFP

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Mon, 2021-08-23 23:20

RABAT: A dual Moroccan-Italian citizen jailed for three and a half years for "insulting Islam" will walk free Monday after a court gave her a suspended two-month jail term, a rights group said.

"She will be leaving prison Monday evening," a member of Morocco's Association of Human Rights in Marrakesh, Omar Arbib, told AFP.

The 23-year-old woman was arrested in June at Rabat airport when she arrived from France and sentenced later that month to three and a half years in jail. The Marrakesh appeals court on Monday overturned the sentence, handing her a suspended two-month jail term, Arbib said. A fine of almost \$6,000 euros was also scrapped.

She was convicted for "insulting Islam" after sharing on Facebook Arabic phrases imitating an extract from the Qur'an "without knowing the content because she is not fluent in Arabic," her father said at the time.

Legal proceedings began after a religious association in Marrakesh submitted a complaint against her.

Article 267 of Morocco's penal code stipulates a sentence of between six months and two years in prison for the offense of "insulting Islam," but the penalty increases to a maximum of five years if the offense is committed in public, including via electronic platforms.

Rome welcomed the news of the court's decision, with Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio thanking Italian diplomats and European Affairs Undersecretary Enzo Amendola for their work on the case, Italian news agency ANSA reported.



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## [Boris Johnson and Joe Biden agree on Kabul evacuation efforts](#)

Author:

Reuters

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Mon, 2021-08-23 22:03

LONDON: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and US President Joe Biden agreed on Tuesday to work together to ensure all those eligible to leave Afghanistan were able to, including after the initial evacuation phase ended, Johnson's office said.

“They discussed the ongoing efforts by the UK and U.S. to coordinate the rapid and safe evacuation of our nationals and those who previously worked with our governments from Kabul International Airport,” a Downing Street spokesman said after the two leaders spoke by phone.

“The leaders agreed to continue working together to ensure those who are eligible to leave are able to, including after the initial phase of the evacuation has ended.”



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## [Chad to halve its troops fighting Sahel militants](#)

Mon, 2021-08-23 01:30

N'DJAMENA: Chad has decided to recall half of its 1,200 troops battling

militants in the tri-border area of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, a spokesperson for the Chadian authorities said.

Chad deployed the soldiers in February to support a France-backed regional fight with insurgents linked to Al-Qaeda and Daesh who have destabilized swathes of territory in West Africa's Sahel region in recent years.

The decision to withdraw 600 of these soldiers was taken with the agreement of Chad's Sahel allies, Gen. Azem Bermandoa Agouna said, speaking on behalf of the Transitional Military Council in Chad. The recalled Chadian troops would be redeployed elsewhere, Agouna said.

The authorities in Chad have faced a separate conflict this year with insurgents in the north.

France has also said it plans to reduce its presence in the Sahel to around half the current level of some 5,100 soldiers, although it has given no time frame.

## **BACKGROUND**

**Chad deployed the soldiers in February to support a France-backed regional fight with insurgents linked to Al-Qaeda and Daesh who have destabilized swathes of territory in West Africa's Sahel region in recent years.**

The former colonial power has hailed some successes against the militants in recent months, but the situation is extremely fragile with hundreds of civilians killed in attacks.

Mahamat Idriss Deby, who leads the Transitional Military Council, has run Chad since his father, the former president, was killed while visiting the front line in April.

Earlier in August, Deby invited the rebels to participate in a national dialogue.

A military source said the 600 troops would be sent to Chad's northern border with Libya and Sudan to disarm rebels seeking to return to take part in these talks, which are scheduled for the end of the year.

On Saturday, Deby said the talks would not succeed unless all stakeholders were represented.



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Chad calls for world support as Sahel summit gets underway

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## [Suicide attacker targets checkpoint at Libyan desert town](#)

Author:

Mon, 2021-08-23 01:37

BENGAZI: A suicide bomber attacked a checkpoint into the Libyan town of Zella on Sunday, killing himself but causing no other casualties, a spokesman for the eastern-based Libyan National Army (LNA), which controls that area, said.

Libya has endured a decade of violence and chaos since the 2011 uprising against Muammar Qaddafi, but there have been only sporadic attacks by militant groups in recent years, mostly in remote desert areas.

Zella is a small oasis town in the desert south of Sirte located near an

oilfield of the same name.

LNA spokesman Ahmed Mismari said the attacks bore the hallmark of Daesh.

In a separate development, authorities said mains water was being restored to western Libya after a week-long cut prompted by sabotage threats from loyalists of a jailed Qaddafi-era official.

"The wells and pumps are being switched back on to gradually restore supply," the authority said on its Facebook page on Saturday. "The crisis is over."

## **FASTFACT**

**Zella is a small oasis town in the Libyan desert south of Sirte located near an oilfield of the same name.**

The announcement brought welcome relief to Libyans forced to cope without water as a summer heat wave gripped North Africa.

The water authority is responsible for a huge network of pipelines, dubbed the Great Man-Made River, which was one of the major projects of Qaddafi during his four decades in power.

It brings water from underground aquifers deep in the Sahara desert to settlements on the Mediterranean coast.

Last weekend, the water authority shut down the pipeline network in a bid to contain any damage, after loyalists of Qaddafi's brother-in-law Abdullah Al-Senussi threatened to sabotage it unless he were released.

Senussi was sentenced to death in 2015 for his role in the attempted suppression of the 2011 uprising that toppled Qaddafi.

He remains in prison in Tripoli.



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