

Israel to relax Gaza curbs amid security calm

Author:

AFP

ID:

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Fri, 2021-08-13 20:03

JERUSALEM: Israel is to authorize the entry of Palestinian traders and goods from Gaza for the first time in more than a year following an improvement in the security situation, officials said Friday.

"In light of the preservation of security stability" in the area, "1,000 merchants and 350 senior Gazan businesspeople" will be allowed into Israel from Sunday, said the Israeli military body responsible for civil affairs in the occupied Palestinian territories, COGAT.

Also, "exports from the Gaza Strip into Israel will recommence through the Kerem Shalom crossing, and imports from Israel into the Gaza Strip will be expanded – including components belonging to the transport and communications sector," COGAT said in statement.

"Equipment and goods will be allowed in for the Gaza Strip's humanitarian infrastructure, such as water and sewage," it said.

COGAT cautioned that the relaxation was "conditional on the continued preservation of the region's security."

Entry permits will be issued "only to those vaccinated against or recovered from Covid-19," it said.

A COGAT spokeswoman told AFP this would be the first time Israel was allowing Gaza traders in since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic over a year ago.

In late July, Israel expanded the fishing zone off Gaza and resumed imports into the territory for international aid projects.

A fragile truce has largely held following 11 days of deadly conflict between Israel and Hamas in May, although sporadic incendiary balloon launches from Gaza have triggered Israeli retaliatory fire.



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Israel investigating May barrage that killed 6 civilians in Gaza
A birthday gift: Israeli woman donates kidney to Gaza boy

[Spain starts returning Moroccan minors after Ceuta migration crisis](#)

Author:

Reuters

ID:

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Fri, 2021-08-13 19:08

MADRID: Spain on Friday started sending hundreds of Moroccan youths, who in May crossed into its North African enclave of Ceuta, back to Morocco after reaching an agreement with Rabat.

That was reported by Spanish media and signals to an improvement in ties

after a long row.

La Ser radio cited sources in Ceuta as saying the minors were already being transported to Morocco in small groups using vans from a sports complex converted into a makeshift reception center.

Neither officials at the foreign and interior ministries, nor at the Ceuta regional administration were immediately available.

Morocco and Spain have been involved in a dispute sparked by Spain admitting Western Sahara independence movement leader Brahim Ghali for medical treatment without informing Rabat, which led to a migration crisis in Ceuta. Most of some 10,000 migrants who crossed into Ceuta were immediately returned to Morocco, but some 700 unaccompanied minors remained in the enclave.

The influx was widely seen as retaliation for Spain's decision to discreetly take in Ghali, who returned to Algeria in June after spending more than a month in hospital in Spain. Morocco regards Western Sahara as part of its own territory.

The Algeria-backed Polisario seeks an independent state in the territory, where Spain was colonial ruler until 1975.



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Spain vows to restore order after thousands swim into Ceuta from Morocco
Mass arrivals of migrants into Spain's Ceuta, Greece's Lesbos island

[US Treasury imposes sanctions on alleged oil smuggler, companies linked to Iran's Quds Force](#)

Fri, 2021-08-13 18:18

WASHINGTON D.C.: The US Treasury Department said on Friday it was imposing sanctions on an alleged oil smuggler and companies it said provide support to the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, according to a statement.

Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) targeted Mahmood Rashid Amur Al-Habsi and a network of businesses, it said.

According to the statement, Al-Habsi partnered with senior leaders in the Quds Force and used several companies to facilitate the sale of shipments of Iranian oil to foreign customers, including buyers in East Asia.

The OFAC director Andrea Jacki said Iranian oil sales to the Revolutionary Guards "rely on important foreign intermediaries to conceal the Quds Force's involvement," with the Treasury adding that the proceeds of which go toward funding "regional destabilizing activities."

* *With Reuters*



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US slaps new sanctions on Belarus regime EU adopts legal framework for Lebanon sanctions

[Kuwait 'deeply concerned' over threat to shipping in Arabian Gulf](#)

Author:

Wed, 2021-08-11 23:57

LONDON: Kuwait has expressed its “deep concern” over the serious consequences of threatening the safety of maritime navigation in the Arabian Gulf, Sea of Oman and Arabian Sea.

The warning came in a statement issued by the council of ministers following its weekly meeting on Wednesday.

The cabinet said it supports a statement issued by the UN Security Council at a session held on Monday on maritime security, that pushed for maintaining the security of the region’s shipping lanes.

The statement comes after a flurry of attacks on tankers in recent weeks.

Two people were killed earlier this month when [drones attacked the MT Mercer Street](#) off the coast of Oman.

Iran has been widely blamed for the attack.



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Iran 'will pay price' for attack on tanker, US warns
Kuwait budget deficit surges 175 percent as revenues slump

[US lawmakers urge suspension of drone technology transfers to Turkey](#)

Author:

Wed, 2021-08-11 22:23

ANKARA: A bipartisan group of US Congress lawmakers have called for the suspension of American drone technology transfer to Turkey over concerns about Ankara's unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) weaponization program.

In a letter to American Secretary of State Antony Blinken, 27 lawmakers appealed for a temporary hold on Turkish exchanges, including export permits, pending a US State Department review.

The letter, dated Aug. 9, said: "We are writing to express our concern over Turkey's armed UAV program, which has destabilized multiple regions of the globe and threatens US interests, allies, and partners."

The use of Turkish drones in the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave during last year's conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, as well as in Syrian and Libyan civil wars, formed the main focus of the group's concerns.

The lawmakers pointed out the existence in Turkey's Bayraktar armed drones of parts and technology from American firms and US-based affiliates of foreign companies.

They asked Blinken to open an investigation into the Turkish drone industry and to reveal if its UAVs included US technologies that breached American sanctions against Turkey's Presidency of Defense Industries.

In April, Canada canceled export permits for drone technology to Turkey over its use of UAVs in the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, actions it said were inconsistent with Canadian foreign policy and end-use assurances given by Ankara. The embargoed parts included camera systems for armed drones.

Bayraktar drones used by Azerbaijan reportedly contain at least 10 parts manufactured in the US.

Samuel Ramani, a tutor of politics and international relations at the University of Oxford, told Arab News: "The ban on Turkish drones is related to Turkey's own military actions rather than Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act, which deals with military purchases from Russia and the S-400 (missile system)."

Ramani noted that the letter represented more of a symbolic frustration with Turkey rather than a concerted effort to force a policy change and was unlikely to lead to sanctions on Ankara over its drone use.

He said: "The (US President Joe) Biden administration views Turkey's influence as a check on Russia in Syria. And Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh are simply not major issues for the administration at this time.

"It won't risk US-Turkey relations over these issues, especially as it's more concerned by Russian conduct in Libya and the South Caucasus than anything Turkey has done or is doing."

Ramani pointed out that US partners, such as Morocco, were likely to be upgrading their militaries with both US and Turkish drones, and Ukraine also had Turkish drone technology.

"I think taking decisive action or deterring countries from using Turkish drones through sanctions would be counter-productive for US interests," he added.

He said the main questions to be asked were if the drones were being used offensively instead of combatting an imminent threat, and whether they were inflicting avoidable harm on civilians. "If the answer to both those questions is yes, Turkey needs to rein in its drone use."

The letter added: "Turkish actions have continued to run contrary to its responsibilities as a NATO member state, despite its ejection from the F-35 joint strike fighter program and the imposition of sanctions. These actions include the proliferation of drones."xe program during a Senate Committee on Foreign Relations hearing.xxxxlxxxx

Turkish authorities have not yet issued any official statement about the controversial letter.

Prof. Michael Tanchum, senior fellow at the Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy and a non-resident fellow at the Middle East Institute in Washington, told Arab News that the first seven months of the Biden administration had witnessed no major public flare-ups between the US and Turkey.

He said: "(Turkish) President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has attempted to strike a new tone in his relations with the Biden administration while offering no substantial compromises on the major security policy issues that divide Ankara and Washington.

“Keeping its relations with Ankara cordial and cool, the Biden administration has reciprocated Erdogan’s rhetorical gestures by not applying increased overt pressure on Turkey.”

Tanchum noted that pressure from the US Congress demanding the suspension of permits for the export of US drone technology to Turkey, if enacted upon, would end the current relationship status.

“Turkey’s adoption of the Russian-made S-400 missile defense system remains one of the principal roadblocks to improved relations from the White House’s point of view. In a Beltway game of good cop, bad cop, the Biden administration might use the permit issue to apply more pressure,” he added.

However, Tanchum pointed out that any US efforts to undermine Turkey’s drone production would not go down well with the Turkish public and could help to bolster Erdogan’s declining popularity.



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