

UN human rights office demands end to Houthi offensive in Marib

Fri, 2021-06-18 18:25

LONDON: The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNCHR) has demanded an end to the Iran-backed Houthis' assault on Marib in Yemen and criticized their cross-border missile and drone attacks on Saudi Arabia.

"We are seriously concerned at the continuing impact of fighting on civilians and the targeting of civilian objects in Marib Governorate in Yemen," UNCHR spokesperson Liz Throssell told Arab News in a human rights briefing on Friday.

"Houthi forces, also known as Ansar Allah, have been trying to seize from the Yemeni government for several months."

She highlighted a recent missile and drone attack on a compound, which housed civilian infrastructure and a mosque. The attack left eight dead and injured 30 more. Ambulances were also targeted during the attack as first responders were among the injured.

Throssell also pointed to another Houthi atrocity in Marib – the June 5 missile attack on a petrol station – which killed 21 people, including two children under the age of 13.

"Victims of arbitrary killings, including those amounting to war crimes, have a right to justice, and perpetrators of such acts, regardless of affiliation, must be held accountable," Throssell said.

"We call on all parties in the conflict to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law, including their obligation to respect the principles of distinction. It prohibits the targeting of civilians and civilian objects and infrastructure, as well as the principles of proportionality and precautions in attack."

The UN representative also addressed the Houthis' sustained assault on neighboring Saudi Arabia.

"Cross-border attacks by Ansar Allah into the territory of Saudi Arabia have also been continuing," Throssell said.

"To date, since January, Ansar Allah has launched some 128 drone strikes and 31 ballistic missiles into Saudi Arabia. While the majority of the targets have been of a military nature, civilian infrastructure, including civilian airports and industrial facilities, have been hit."

Yemen, the poorest country in the Arab world, has been embroiled in a bitter civil war since the Iran-backed Houthi rebels seized power in a 2014 coup. A Saudi-led coalition then intervened in the conflict on behalf of the UN-recognized government.

The Kingdom proposed a comprehensive peace plan, which is backed by its regional and Western partners. The coalition sees an end to the fighting, supports the delivery of humanitarian aid, and the implementation of a political solution to the conflict.

However, the Houthis have flouted the agreement and pushed forward in an attempt to capture the government-held city of Marib – an assault that has claimed the lives of many civilians.

“We urge all parties in the conflict to go back to the negotiating table and agree on a nationwide ceasefire,” Throssell said. “As has been repeated time and again, only a political solution can end this conflict.”



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Houthis fired 55 Iranian-made ballistic missiles at Marib since start of 2021: Yemen information minister8 killed, 27 wounded after Houthis launch missile, drone strikes on Marib

Israel arrests 10 Palestinians after Jerusalem clashes

Author:

AFP

ID:

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Fri, 2021-06-18 14:48

JERUSALEM: Israeli police Friday arrested 10 Palestinians during clashes at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque compound, with nine people injured as protesters hurled rocks and officers fired rubber bullets, police and medics said. An AFP reporter said about 1,000 people gathered in the compound after weekly prayers crying "God is great" and some hoisting Palestinian flags. Some demonstrators threw stones at police, who raided the site, an AFP reporter said.

"Several dozen youths began disturbing the order and throwing stones toward police," police said in a statement, adding that "10 suspects were arrested." The Palestinian Red Crescent said nine people were hurt, including three hospitalized in the confrontation, with injuries due to "beatings, rubber and sound bombs."

The confrontation came after Palestinians protested against Jewish nationalists who had marched through Israel-annexed east Jerusalem on Tuesday, chanting insults to Islam and shouting "Death to Arabs."

Al-Aqsa is the third holiest site in Islam, and is also revered by Jews as the Temple Mount, where two temples stood in antiquity.

Police confrontations with Muslim worshippers in early May escalated into the bloodiest fighting in years, with conflict erupting between Israel and Palestinian militants in Gaza.

A fragile cease-fire between Israel and Gaza's Hamas rulers came into place on May 21, ending 11 days of deadly fighting.

The Al-Aqsa compound lies in east Jerusalem, which Israel annexed in 1967, in a move most of the international community does not recognize.

Friday marked the second day of Palestinian protests.

A day earlier, police said they arrested eight people who demonstrated at the Damascus Gate, an entrance to Jerusalem's Old City, where the nationalist Jewish march had congregated.

Also on Friday, Palestinians protested near Nablus in the occupied West Bank against the expansion of a Jewish settlement on the lands of Beita village. The Red Crescent said 47 people were injured when security forces fired tear gas canisters and rubber bullets.



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[East Jerusalem violence](#)

Israeli nationalists march in East Jerusalem under heavy police presence
Israel strikes Gaza in retaliation for fire balloons

[Oman, slowest vaccinator in the Gulf, pushes campaign amid COVID-19 surge](#)

Author:

Reuters

ID:

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Fri, 2021-06-18 14:31

DUBAI: Fresh COVID-19 vaccine supplies are accelerating inoculations in Oman, which has had the slowest rollout in the Gulf due to procurement difficulties, a government health official said, as a surge in cases puts

hospitals under pressure.

"The situation is now changing, we are regularly now receiving stocks of vaccine ... the campaign again has started," Zahir Ghassan Al-Abri, of the General Directorate of Primary Health Care at Oman's Ministry of Health, told Reuters.

Since it began vaccinating in May, Oman has given at least one dose to around 15 percent of the eligible population, said Abri. Ministry of health data on Tuesday shows 720,199 doses have been given in the country of around 4.5 million people, with 184,621 people having received two doses.

Reuters analysis, based on the number of vaccinations administered per total population assuming every person needs two doses, shows Oman to be lagging far behind its neighbors.

The United Arab Emirates' more than 14 million administered doses is enough to have vaccinated about 72.6 percent of the country of around 9.8 million. Oman by comparison has administered enough to have vaccinated about 6.1 percent of the country.

Kuwait, which also experienced some procurement delays, has administered enough to have vaccinated about 21.6 percent of the country.

Abri said the slow campaign was due to supply difficulties.

"As with other countries the delivery of these vaccines has not been met through the agreed timeline for different reasons."

Oman offers the Pfizer-BioNTech and AstraZeneca vaccines. It has not approved the shot produced by China's state-owned Sinopharm, which the UAE used in its early, rapid rollout after hosting Phase III clinical trials.

Asked whether Oman plans to introduce other vaccines, including Sinopharm, Abri said they would be considered as long as they met government standards.

"The strategy adopted by the ministry of health since the beginning is selecting vaccines based on reports of efficacy and safety, as approved by research and guidelines published by different international organizations."

Cases in Oman have trended upwards since January, with a pronounced surge since a dip in early May.

It has recorded 242,723 cases and 2,626 deaths in total. On Thursday it reported 2,015 new cases.

Oman's media this week said hospitals nationwide were straining under rising cases. A main field hospital in the capital Muscat was at more than 90 percent capacity, state media said.

Aiming to vaccinate everyone 12 and over by the end of the year, Oman will on Sunday offer shots to people over 45.



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Oman reports spike in COVID-19 cases amid mass vaccination campaign
Oman COVID-19 fatalities rise in February

[Iran says nuclear talks closer to deal, Russia says time-consuming work remains](#)

Author:

Reuters

ID:

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Thu, 2021-06-17 15:45

DUBAI: Indirect talks between Tehran and Washington on reviving the 2015 Iran nuclear deal have come closer than ever to an agreement, but essential issues

remain to be negotiated, the top Iranian negotiator said on Thursday. The Islamic Republic and six world powers have been negotiating in Vienna since April to work out steps for both sides to take. The United States withdrew in 2018 from the pact, under which Iran accepted curbs on its nuclear program in exchange for a lifting of many foreign sanctions against it.

"We achieved good, tangible progress on the different issues ... we are closer than ever to an agreement but there are still essential issues under negotiations," Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi was quoted as telling Al Jazeera television.

Araqchi said Iran's presidential election on Friday would have no effect on the negotiations and the Iranian negotiating team will continue the talks regardless of domestic policy.

The sixth round of talks resumed on Saturday with the remaining parties to the deal – Iran, Russia, China, France, Britain, Germany and the European Union – meeting in the basement of a luxury hotel.

The US delegation to the talks is based in a hotel across the street as Iran refuses face-to-face meetings.

Since former US President Donald Trump pulled out of the deal and reimposed sanctions on Iran, Tehran has embarked on counter-measures, including rebuilding stockpiles of enriched uranium, a potential pathway to nuclear bombs.

"We want to make sure that what happened when Trump pulled out of the deal will not be repeated by any other American president in the future," Araqchi told the pan-Arab satellite TV network.

Russia's envoy to the talks, Mikhail Ulyanov, added a note of caution, saying progress had been made in the last few days but talks were tough.

"Some difficult and time-consuming topics still remain unresolved," he said. France's foreign ministry said on Wednesday there were still significant disagreements.

Iran's new president is expected to name his Cabinet by mid-August. Current President Hassan Rouhani's term ends on Aug. 3, a government spokesman said.



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Iran nuclear deal hangs in balance as Islamic Republic votesIran 'enriches 6.5 kg of uranium to 60 percent'

[Kuwait to allow vaccinated foreigners entry from August](#)

Author:

AFP

ID:

1623952990455064800

Thu, 2021-06-17 21:07

KUWAIT: Kuwait announced Thursday it would allow foreigners who have been fully vaccinated against the novel coronavirus to enter the country from August 1, after a months-long suspension.

The Gulf country in February banned the entry of non-citizens in a bid to limit the spread of the virus, but has started to ease some of its Covid-19 restrictions in recent weeks.

Government spokesman Tareq Al-Mizrem said foreign travelers will need to have been fully inoculated with one of the four vaccines that the Gulf country has approved – Pfizer/BioNTech, AstraZeneca, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson.

Passengers must also hold a negative PCR test conducted a maximum of 72 hours before travel, and undergo another test during a seven-day quarantine in the country, Mizrem told a press conference.

Meanwhile, only Kuwaiti citizens who have been fully vaccinated will be allowed to travel abroad from August 1, he said, although some exceptions would be made, such as for pregnant women.

Previously, Kuwaitis were required to have had at least one job in order to travel.

Mizrem also announced that Kuwait would allow access to large shopping malls, gyms and restaurants from June 27 only for those who have been fully inoculated.

“The government has decided to allow those who have received a (full) Covid-19 vaccine... to enter restaurants and cafes, gyms, salons, shopping malls more than 6,000 square meters,” said Mizrem.

Kuwait has officially recorded more than 332,000 coronavirus cases, over 1,800 of them fatal.



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Kuwait reports new cases with Indian variant of coronavirus