

Why Egypt's Hamas policy changed after Israeli-Gaza conflict

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Wed, 2021-06-16 18:45

GAZA CITY: During the recent Israeli conflict with Gaza, a shift in Egyptian policy was evident in President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi's pledge of half a billion dollars to rebuild the besieged enclave.

The unprecedented visit of the head of the Egyptian General Intelligence Service, Abbas Kamel, to Gaza, as an official envoy of El-Sisi, came as a major indication of the change in Cairo's policy toward Hamas.

The relationship deteriorated following the overthrow of former Egyptian President Muhammad Mursi, affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, in 2013. Egypt played a key role in brokering a cease-fire between Israel and Hamas on May 21 following 11 days of cross-border fighting last month that left a trail of destruction with more than 250 dead and hundreds wounded.

Cairo opened the Rafah crossing to dozens of Egyptian vehicles that entered Gaza to remove the rubble of destroyed buildings and pave the way for the reconstruction process. In addition, Cairo is also supplying goods to Gaza in light of strict Israeli restrictions.

However, Mukhaimer Abu Saada, professor of political science at Al-Azhar University in Gaza, differentiates between the Egyptian policy toward Gaza and the official Egyptian relationship with Hamas.

He said Egypt's role in Gaza is strategic due to the factors of history and geography. As for the country's relationship with Hamas, it falls within the framework of "political tactics" to serve both sides.

Abu Saada believes the shift that appeared in the Egyptian policy toward Gaza rulers Hamas would not have taken place "without the green light from the US administration" following American President Joe Biden's first phone call to El-Sisi.

"Egypt and Hamas are beneficiaries of this transformation," Abu Saada told Arab News.

"Hamas, which has suffered greatly politically and financially after the years of estrangement that followed the overthrow of the late President Mursi, is keen to develop its relationship with the Egyptian regime."

As for Egypt, Abu Saada said, it adheres to its position as a major regional player in the Palestinian arena, being the historical sponsor of Palestinian issues.

At the same time, the Palestinian Authority (PA) is not completely satisfied with the current Egyptian policy toward Gaza and the country's openness to Hamas, he said, adding that this may be one of the main reasons behind the dialogue setback that was supposed to be launched in Cairo last Saturday.

"The PA, which has sought over the past four years to besiege Hamas politically and financially by imposing sanctions on Gaza, does not want Hamas to exploit the recent Israeli conflict in its favor through the

Egyptian gate," Abu Saada said.

Following Mursi's ouster, the Hamas-Egypt ties deteriorated to the point that it was suggested in the Egyptian media that Hamas has supported the Salafists in Sinai and helped them carry out attacks in Cairo.

Ibrahim Al-Madhoun, a political analyst close to Hamas, believes that Egypt has a great opportunity to regain its regional weight. He also thinks Hamas is ready to identify with the Egyptian side if its demands are met, especially the lifting of the siege on Gaza and the cessation of Israeli attacks on Jerusalem.

Al-Madhoun does not see Egypt making a U-turn on Hamas, but he says it has raised the degree of its interest, concentration, and ability to move in vital files.

Hani Al-Basous, professor of political science and international relations, said the current Egyptian tactic with Hamas is based on recognizing it as a fait accompli. He said the Palestinian force has great weight, gained popular Arab momentum after the latest conflict, and it should be dealt with with new mechanisms and not with a new political orientation.



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Israel-Gaza violence erupts for first time since end of last month's fighting
Egyptian actress Amina Khalil announced as United Nations Population

[Italian, Tunisian presidents meet to discuss immigration](#)

Wed, 2021-06-16 18:55

ROME: As the illegal migrant situation in the Mediterranean Sea continues to escalate – nearly 2,000 people have landed on the island of Lampedusa since Sunday – the presidents from Italy and Tunisia met in Rome to work on a solution.

Security policies “are necessary to fight against human trafficking”, but at the same time “conditions for development must be created in Africa so that people there do not feel compelled to risk their lives and emigrate to look for work or escape hunger,” Italian President Sergio Mattarella said during the meeting with Tunisian President Kais Saied.

Immigration was the key issue during Saied’s official visit to Italy, said Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio, who signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Tunisia’s Foreign Minister Othman Jerandi.

“Tunisia is a strategic partner in the Mediterranean region on immigration issues and Libya,” Di Maio said in a press conference.

Most of the migrants trying to reach Europe from North Africa depart from Tunisia and Libya. Over the past few years, Italy has provided both countries with equipment, resources, and ships in an attempt to thwart migrant crossings. But they continue to arrive on the shores of Lampedusa, located 105 miles southwest of Sicily, and on other tiny islands scattered across the Mediterranean.

“We must ask ourselves why a mother accepts for herself and her son the risk of becoming food for fish and then maybe to be exploited,” Saied said after the meeting with Mattarella.

“The problem is that there is no fair distribution of wealth between the north and the south of the world.”

In an interview with RAI, the Italian state broadcaster’s news, Saied remembered how it was the Italians who used to immigrate to his country. The roles may be reversed now but the motive remains the same.

“Those who migrate are in search of fortune, just as they were in the past,” he said.

Mattarella reaffirmed to his Tunisian counterpart “the great friendship that

binds Italy to Tunisia.” He recalled “the great friendship and primary partnership” between the two countries who share “the values of democracy, a geographical proximity, and some common history.”

He also stressed that peacemaking and stabilization in Libya represent a priority of Italian foreign policy.

“In order to achieve this, mercenaries and foreign troops must leave the country. Libya must be left to the Libyans,” Mattarella was quoted to Arab News by a source in the Italian administration.

While in Rome, Saied also met with Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi and Interior Minister Luciana Lamorgese. According to sources in the prime minister’s office, more assistance has been offered to Tunisia, but more “attention and effort in contrasting illegal migration will have to be enforced.”



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Boats carrying hundreds of migrants arrive in Italy’s LampedusaTunisian

cemetery offers living memorial to 'unknown migrants'

[Rights groups urge EU to protect life on sea route from Libya](#)

Wed, 2021-06-16 17:46

LONDON: Leading rights groups have called on the EU to protect lives on the main Mediterranean route between Libya and Europe.

Human Rights Watch (HRW), Amnesty International and the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) on Wednesday published an action plan to promote safe pathways on the precarious route from North Africa.

The 20-point plan gives guidance on how the EU could ensure safe and predictable disembarking opportunities and relocation responses for people rescued.

"It is shameful and tragic that EU countries can't agree on something as fundamental as saving lives at sea," said Judith Sunderland, HRW's associate Europe and Central Asia director. "People are drowning while European leaders squabble."

An estimated 20,000 people have died or disappeared in the central Mediterranean in the last decade. According to the UN, some 664 people have died or gone missing so far this year.

HRW accused the EU of "withdrawing responsibility," noting that the bloc has since March 2019 been withdrawing its ships from areas where unseaworthy boats carrying migrants and refugees are most likely to be.

Libya's Coast Guard has intercepted and returned to the country more than 11,700 people this year, with up to 1,000 migrants returned on June 12 alone.

People recovered and returned to Libya face being detained in "nightmarish detention centers and experiencing abysmal conditions, violence, and forced labor," HRW said.

It added that the EU should abandon its policy of assisting the return of migrants and refugees to Libya, and urgently adopt one that ensures migrants are relocated to a safe place.

HRW called for new relocation arrangements so EU member states can share the responsibility of migration from Libya more equally.

EU heads of state are expected to discuss migration policy at the next European Council meeting on June 24-25 in Brussels.



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HRW criticizes Italy, EU's Libya migrant policy
Italian island in plea for help after 600 migrants arrive in 24 hours

[Biden names Israel ambassador days after new government](#)

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Tue, 2021-06-15 19:47

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden on Tuesday nominated veteran Democrat Thomas Nides as the US ambassador to Israel, two days after the formation of a new government.

Nides, who as a senior State Department official under president Barack Obama fought attempts to cut off US funding for the Palestinians, requires confirmation from the Senate.



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Joe Biden confuses Syria with Libya repeatedly at G7

[Tunisian court releases media mogul Nabil Karoui](#)

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Tue, 2021-06-15 17:26

TUNIS: A Tunisian court on Tuesday released media mogul and former presidential candidate Nabil Karoui after he spent more than six months in custody on money laundering and tax evasion charges, his lawyer and party said.

Karoui, the owner of Nessma television channel and head of the Heart of Tunisia political party, the second largest in parliament, was detained in December for a second time for alleged money laundering and tax fraud. Video footage broadcast by local radio Mosaïque FM showed Karoui leaving Mornaguia prison, where he found his family and party members waiting outside.

In 2019, Karoui beat most candidates to reach a run-off for the presidency despite spending most of the campaign behind bars. He ultimately lost in a landslide to President Kais Saied.

His Heart of Tunisia party, which came second only to the moderate Islamist Ennahda in a parliamentary election the same year, has joined with it in giving narrow majority support to Prime Minister Hichem Mechichi's government, which has been locked in a power struggle with the president.



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Court frees Tunisian presidential candidate Nabil KarouiSaied and Karoui to face off in second round of Tunisia's presidential election