

Israel lawmakers to vote Sunday on anti-Netanyahu govt

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JERUSALEM: After weeks of political wrangling the Israeli parliament will vote Sunday on whether to install a “change” coalition and end Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s record 12 consecutive years in power.

Announcing the date for the confidence vote on Tuesday, speaker Yariv Levin, a Netanyahu ally, said “a special session of parliament” would debate and vote on the fragile eight-party alliance.

If the crunch vote hands a majority to the coalition, which is united only by hostility to Netanyahu’s rule, it would spell the end of an era.

The divisive incumbent has dominated Israeli politics for more than a decade, pushing it firmly to the right.

Since the coalition was announced last week, Netanyahu has lived up to his reputation as a ruthless political operator, piling pressure on right-wingers within its ranks to reject this “dangerous left-wing government.”

The anti-Netanyahu bloc includes three right-wing, two centrist and two left-wing parties, along with an Arab Islamic conservative party.

On paper it commands a wafer-thin majority, but Netanyahu has urged his supporters to shame right-wing lawmakers in its ranks into returning to the fold under his leadership.

If the new government is confirmed, Netanyahu’s right-wing opponent Naftali Bennett would serve as premier for two years, after which the “change” coalition’s centrist architect, Yair Lapid, would take over.

“The unity government is on the way and ready to work on behalf of all the people of Israel,” Lapid, a former television presenter, said in a statement following the announcement of the vote.

Netanyahu, who faces corruption charges that could result in jail time, has refused to go without a messy fight.

Bitter recriminations within the Israeli right and far right prompted Israeli security services to issue a rare warning against incitement online, which Netanyahu’s opponents say was a warning to the prime minister.

Opinion

This section contains relevant reference points, placed in (Opinion field)

Alarm has grown over angry rallies by supporters of Netanyahu’s right-wing Likud party, including protests outside the homes of right-wing lawmakers accused of “betrayal” for joining the coalition. Security has been stepped up for some of the MPs.

The 71-year-old prime minister has rejected allegations of incitement, saying "there is a very thin line between political criticism and inciting violence."

Bennett, who served as Netanyahu's aide before turning against him, has urged his former boss to "let go."

Should 11th-hour defections torpedo the fledgling coalition, Israel would likely have to return to the polls for a fifth election in just over two years.

The Israeli political drama is playing out as tensions with the Palestinians smolder, with police cracking down on demonstrations over the threatened eviction of Palestinian families from homes in Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem to make way for Jewish settlers.

And a planned flag march by Jewish nationalists was scrapped after police refused to authorize its contentious route through east Jerusalem citing a high risk of friction with residents – though some far-right politicians said they would demonstrate anyway.

A top Hamas official, Khalil Al-Hayya, warned Israel Monday "against letting the march approach east Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound."

"We hope the message is clear so that Thursday doesn't become (a new) May 10," he said, in reference to the start of the 11-day war which Hamas launched in response to tensions at the mosque compound, Islam's third-holiest site, which is also revered by Jews.

Netanyahu convened a late-night meeting Monday with senior government officials to discuss alternatives that could allow the march to proceed – a move that saw his opponents accuse him and his allies of working to ratchet up tensions as his grip on power grows increasingly shaky.

Public Security Minister Amir Ohana, a Likud member, said the final decision on the march would rest with him, and not the police, according to Israeli media.

Labor MP Gilad Kariv, a supporter of the coalition, called the move "another chapter in the outgoing government's attempt to leave a scorched earth."



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Vote on new Israeli government to be held in coming week
Bennett, Israel's right-wing leader tipped to be prime minister

[Hamas slammed for honoring Houthi aid to Palestine](#)

Tue, 2021-06-08 18:41

ALEXANDRIA: Yemeni human rights activists, journalists and politicians have strongly criticized Hamas for honoring the Iran-backed Houthi militia shortly after fighters launched a ballistic missile and explosive-laden drone that killed 21 civilians in the central Yemeni city of Marib.

Mouath Abu Shemala, a Hamas figure based in Houthi-held Sanaa, met on Sunday with high-profile Houthi official Mohammed Ali Al-Houthi and presented him with a Hamas plaque in recognition of the group's latest fundraising campaign for the Palestinian militant organization.

Houthi media reported that Abu Shemala thanked the Houthi movement for responding to Palestinian appeals for assistance during the latest Israeli bombardment of Gaza.

The meeting sparked outrage in the country.

Yemenis slammed Hamas for honoring the Houthi movement, which is responsible for the killing of thousands of people in the country and the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

Shouqi Al-Qadhi, a member of the Yemeni parliament, said on Twitter that he was "shocked" by the Hamas decision, demanding that it issue an "official clarification" or Yemenis would "sever ties."

He added: "We are waiting for a full clarification from Hamas about its shocking stance. Does this person (Abu Shemala) officially represent it?"

Hamadan Al-Alyae, a Yemeni journalist, accused Hamas of "betraying" Yemenis by honoring Houthi militants, who oversaw the deadly missile and drone strike on Marib.

"We waited for Hamas to issue a statement denouncing the Houthi crime of burning children in Marib. Instead, the representative of the movement went to honor one of the leaders of the gang that committed the heinous crime," he said.

Many Yemenis have long accused Houthis of exploiting the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories to recruit new fighters, pushing them to fight government forces in Yemen.

Hesham Al-Zaiady, a Yemeni news anchor, said senior Houthis view the Hamas move as recognition of their advocacy for Palestine, and will use it in Yemen to recruit more fighters.

He added: "Do you know, after this picture, how many fighters the Houthis will mobilize to fight their Yemeni brothers in Marib, Taiz and Al-Dhale, with the justification of liberating Jerusalem?"

Amer Al-Saudi, a poet, described Hamas' honoring of the Houthis as a "wound," adding that it could cause a decline in support among some Yemenis, who have long supported the movement by donating funds, and naming their children and schools after its leaders.

"Other Yemenis will not forget this wound and this vile reward of their killers," Al-Saudi said.



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UN accused of silence over Houthi aid theft
UN silence on Houthi aid truck attacks in Yemen 'unacceptable'

[Longest serving Jordanian prisoner in Israel arrives home: officials](#)

Author:

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Tue, 2021-06-08 18:55

AMMAN: The longest serving Jordanian prisoner in an Israeli jail arrived home on Tuesday, Jordanian officials said.

He completed a 20-year sentence for planting a bomb on an Israeli bus that injured more than a dozen people.

Abdullah Abu Jaber, 44, was arrested after the explosive device went off on the bus in Tel Aviv in December 2000. He was one of thousands of Jordanians who found casual work in Israel after the two countries normalized ties with a peace treaty in 1994.

Abu Jaber, who was among 22 political prisoners held in Israeli jails, headed to his parents' home in the teeming Baqaa Palestinian refugee camp near the Jordanian capital Amman, witnesses said.

Separately, foreign ministry officials said Israel had dropped charges against two Jordanians who were arrested last month for allegedly crossing the border carrying knives. The authorities had put them on trial shortly after their detention.

Jordan, which has the longest border with Israel, is a close Western ally. Last month it saw large protests against Israel's military campaign in Gaza and its crackdown on Palestinian worshippers and protesters in Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque.

Political ties between the two countries have been strained over Israel's treatment of the Palestinians, and the Jordanian government has faced growing public pressure to scrap the unpopular peace treaty.

Most of Jordan's 10 million citizens are of Palestinian origin. They or their parents were expelled or fled to Jordan in the fighting that accompanied the creation of Israel in 1948.

They have close family ties with their kin on the other side of the Jordan River in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, both captured by Israel in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.



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Jordanian parliament expels MP Osama Al-Ajarmeh for inciting riots
Jordanians march to border in solidarity with Palestinians

[Jordan's King Abdullah issues decree to end parliamentary session](#)

Author:

Mon, 2021-06-07 22:21

AMMAN: Jordan's King Abdullah II on Monday ended the current session of parliament, with experts saying the decision was not linked to recent clashes sparked by an MP.

A royal decree was issued, proroguing the non-ordinary session as of Thursday, June 10.

Clashes took place at the weekend between supporters of MP Osama Al-Ajarmeh and police in Amman's Naour suburb.

Al-Ajarmeh was expelled from the lower house on Sunday after he was accused of igniting the riots.

Four police officers were wounded in the clashes.

Naour, a stronghold of the Ajarmeh tribe, was quiet on Monday, with no violence reported.

The lower house held a brief emergency session on Sunday during which a majority of MPs voted in favor of expelling Al-Ajarmeh.

The MP appeared in a number of recent videos insulting King Abdullah II, state institutions and threatening to establish a "radical Jordanian right wing" of tribes and ex-army figures to "purify Amman of the liberal elite" whom he accused of being behind the country's woes.

Of the 130-member lower chamber, 108 MPs voted in favor of expelling Al-Ajarmeh.

Parliamentary experts said the royal decree to prorogue the 19th parliament was merely a procedural constitutional requirement that happened to coincide with the upheaval.

“Under the constitution, the parliament’s session should not last for more than six months,” Majed Al-Amir, a parliamentary journalist, said. He added that the legislature began the non-ordinary session on Dec. 10 so the six-month deadline fell on June 10.

The remarks were echoed by political commentator Khaled Qudah, who described the king’s decision to prorogue parliament as a “routine procedure and a constitutional requirement.”



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Jordanian parliament expels MP Osama Al-Ajarmeh for inciting riots
Jordanian security personnel injured in clashes with tribal supporters of MP

[Houthi-run court starts trial of abducted Yemeni model](#)

Author:

Mon, 2021-06-07 21:58

ALEXANDRIA: A Houthi-run court in Sanaa has started the trial of a Yemeni model who was abducted by the Iran-backed militia.

Entesar Al-Hammadi was seized by the Houthis on Feb. 20 along with two other women. Their capture and imprisonment has triggered local and international condemnation.

Legal activist Abdul Wahab Qatran said the court had refused to give her lawyer the case documents, including the charges against her.

Her lawyer, Khaled Mohammed Al-Kamal, declined requests from Arab News to comment on the trial, citing the court's ban on media coverage of the case.

The Houthis have not officially commented on the case or the charges, but rebel-affiliated media outlets reported that she was taken due to information about her involvement in a drug and prostitution ring.

Local and international right groups said the rebels forced Al-Hammadi into confessing and that the abduction was part of a Houthi crackdown on liberal voices that challenged the group's radical views.

Al-Hammadi had boasted about her dream of becoming an international model and posted images of her in traditional Yemeni dress.

Angered by intense media coverage of the abduction, the Houthis dismissed a prosecutor who ordered Al-Hammadi's release after questioning her, threw the model into solitary confinement and verbally and physically abused her.

They also stepped up their intimidation and harassment of local activists, lawyers, and judges who demanded the women be freed.

Last week the Houthis fired Al-Kamal from his job at the Capital Secretariat, a compound hosting government offices, where he has been working for 20 years to force him to drop the case. Al-Kamal said on social media that his boss told him he was suspended, without giving an explanation.

Qatran and Ahmed Hashed, a member of the Houthi-controlled parliament and an outspoken critic of the militia, have reported receiving death threats.

Yemeni human rights activists have accused the Houthis of using judicial bodies in areas under their control to decriminalize their abduction of activists, artists and critics of the group.

Huda Al-Sarari, a lawyer and the director of the Defense Organization for Rights and Freedoms, has been following the model's case since the outset. She said the Houthis' measures against the model showed that she would not be released soon.

"In light of the repression, the confiscation of rights and freedoms, and the use of the judiciary to legitimize their crimes, it is difficult for the Houthi authorities to release victims with the current local pressure mechanisms," she told Arab News.

She urged international women's organizations to cooperate with their Yemeni counterparts for more aggressive campaigns to ensure the abducted women were released.

The militia did not adhere to international human rights laws, she added, calling for the international community to impose more sanctions on Houthis who abducted and abused Yemenis.

"Unfortunately, delays in securing the release of the model are not due to the weakness of the advocacy. The Houthi authority is not subject to any pressure and is intransigent in these matters. They are first and foremost a militia that does not respect international agreements, resolutions or advocacy mechanisms."



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Who is Entesar Al-Hammadi, the Yemeni model kidnapped by the Houthis? Houthis sought to recruit me as spy, abducted Yemeni model says from prison