

US says Yemen's Houthis bear 'major responsibility' in conflict

Author:

Reuters

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Fri, 2021-06-04 11:59

WASHINGTON: The United States on Friday blamed Iran-backed Houthis for the failure of a cease-fire to take hold in Yemen on Friday and accused them of not taking other steps toward ending the brutal conflict.

"While there are numerous problematic actors inside of Yemen, the Houthis bear major responsibility for refusing to engage meaningfully on a cease-fire and to take steps to resolve a nearly seven-year conflict that has brought unimaginable suffering to the Yemeni people," the State Department said.

The US special envoy for Yemen, Tim Lenderking, returned on Thursday from a trip to Saudi Arabia, Oman, the United Arab Emirates and Jordan, where he discussed the humanitarian and economic crisis in Yemen with government officials, Yemenis and international partners, the department said in a statement.

Since taking office in January, US President Joe Biden has made Yemen a priority and appointed Lenderking to help revive stalled UN peace efforts. After Lenderking returned from a visit last month, the State Department accused the Houthis of worsening Yemen's humanitarian crisis by attacking Marib, the last northern stronghold of the legitimate government that the Houthis drove out of the capital.

The situation has not changed.

"The Houthis continue a devastating offensive on Marib that is condemned by the international community and leaves the Houthis increasingly isolated," the State Department said.

Lenderking had talked to Yemenis about strengthening "inclusive processes" that could help citizens discuss the country's future and increase efforts toward peace, it said.



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Failure of UN talks with Yemen's Houthi militia on Safer tanker 'not surprising' – information minister UN Security Council to discuss Yemen oil tanker impasse

[Russia says Sudan has not pulled out of agreement on Russian navy](#)

Author:

Reuters

ID:

1622819802261052000

Fri, 2021-06-04 15:13

MOSCOW: Sudan has not pulled out of an agreement with Russia to set up a Russian naval facility in the country, Interfax news agency reported, citing deputy foreign minister Mikhail Bogdanov.

“I think a compromise can always be found,” Interfax quoted Bogdanov as saying on Friday. “They have not denounced the agreement, have not withdrawn their signature, they said some questions have emerged,” he said. Sudan said earlier this week it was reviewing an agreement to host a Russian naval base on its Red Sea coast, which was reached by President Omar Al-Bashir before he was toppled by a popular uprising in 2019.



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Sudan says reviewing naval base deal with RussiaBelarus leader seeks Russian support amid showdown with EU

[Honduras to open embassy in Jerusalem this month](#)

Author:

AFP

ID:

1622811147700330800

Fri, 2021-06-04 06:15

TEGUCIGALPA: Honduras will open an embassy in Jerusalem this month, the country's president said Thursday, in a bid to build closer ties with Israel after decades of operating in Tel Aviv.

The central American nation previously opened a commercial office in Jerusalem, breaking a decades-long policy of neutrality in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Israel is set to open a diplomatic office in Tegucigalpa, Honduras's capital city, in response.

"We are going to formalize what we have already carried out step by step, which is the installation of our embassy in Jerusalem," President Juan Orlando Hernandez said.

He added that the move "will empower us on the agricultural side, in the field of innovation and in the field of tourism."

Honduras has had difficulty obtaining Covid-19 vaccines to control a pandemic that has overwhelmed hospitals, but in February obtained 5,000 Moderna jabs donated by Israel.

The country has the second largest Palestinian community in Latin America, second only to Chile.

It joins a small but growing number of nations with embassies in Jerusalem, including the United States, Kosovo, and its central American neighbor Guatemala.

The status of the city remains one of the biggest flashpoints in the long-running Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Palestinians claim east Jerusalem as the capital of their future state, and most countries have their embassies in Tel Aviv.



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Honduras recognizes Jerusalem as Israel's capital
Palestinians to file complaint over Honduras Jerusalem move

[Turkish 'sea snot' plague prompts cholera fears](#)

Thu, 2021-06-03 21:52

LONDON: A mucus-like substance known as "sea snot" is blanketing the shores near Istanbul after covering huge areas of the Marmara Sea, threatening sea life and prompting warnings that it could bring deadly diseases in its wake.

The problem is particularly acute in the Gulf of Izmit, southeast of the city, with fishermen unable to work because they cannot operate motors or nets in the sludge.

The brown, viscous substance is a mixture of fat, carbohydrates and protein emitted by tiny phytoplankton, which multiply rapidly when chemical pollutants and sewage are pumped into the water.

It kills sea life by blocking out vital sunlight and, as it sinks, coats the sea floor and accelerates the decomposition of creatures.

The phytoplankton responsible grow out of control when nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus are widely available in seawater. Rising sea temperatures add to the problem.

Divers have reported large numbers of fish dying, and say that marine life has been forced to seek refuge in small holes or other forms of aquatic shelter.

Experts have also warned that the substance provides fertile ground for dangerous bacteria, including cholera.

Istanbul has suffered from frequent cholera epidemics in its history. The most recent, in 1970, left 50 people dead and thousands more infected.

Cholera usually strikes countries with poor sanitation and water hygiene infrastructure. Victims commonly experience vomiting, diarrhea and muscle fatigue.

Turkish Environment Minister Murat Kurum said that a 300-strong team had been sent to tackle the "sea snot" problem.

However, the rapidly multiplying plankton quickly recovered from attempts to sweep it away.

Muharrem Balci, a marine biology expert at Istanbul University, said: "A short-term solution is very difficult, I would say impossible.

"The first thing to do is to reduce run-off and associated pollution, then international cooperation is needed for the improvement and protection of marine life in the Mediterranean and Black Sea ecosystems, which are connected to the Marmara Sea through the Turkish straits."



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Turkey facing 'sea snot' invasion on popular shorelines Sea pollution threatens livelihood of fishermen

[Egypt's local production of Sinovac vaccine to begin by end of June](#)

Author:

Zaynab Khojji

ID:

1622745772133080800

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CAIRO: Egypt's local production of the first batch of the Chinese Sinovac coronavirus vaccine will start by the end of June, according to Health Minister Hala Zayed.

Khaled Mujahid, the Ministry of Health and Population's spokesman, said once the production of the first batch is completed, it will be sent to the Egyptian Drug Authority for analysis.

Mujahid said Chinese experts were currently in Egypt to supervise the

manufacturing process and transfer expertise to both the Egyptian Holding Co. for Biological Products and Vaccines (VACSERA) and the Egyptian Drug Authority.

He said Egypt is one of the first countries in the world to manufacture the Sinovac vaccine following an agreement reached in April, and stressed clinical trials had been conducted on the jab and that competitive prices were fixed in the agreement.

Sinovac's efficacy, he added, was 91 percent based on clinical studies conducted in Brazil, Chile, Turkey, Indonesia, China, Hong Kong and the Philippines. Second doses, he said, will be administered 21 days after first doses.

The ministry has allocated more than 400 centers nationwide and urged citizens – especially the elderly and those with chronic diseases – to register to get the jabs.

The government has also approved 179 new facilities to provide doses for those who work abroad and have filed requests for vaccination.

More details about their locations will be shared on the ministry's website to ease the process. Requests for vaccine certificates for travel are also being addressed.

The ministry announced that mobile medical clinics will be stationed in front of post offices in all governorates to vaccinate pensioners from the first until the 10th of each month.

These clinics are equipped with two data entry points to electronically register pensioners, and devices to check blood pressure and blood sugar before administering the vaccine.



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Egypt to locally produce 2m doses of China's Sinovac jab