

Egypt, Sudan to hold joint drill amid Ethiopia Nile dispute

Author:

AP

ID:

1621619432136913000

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CAIRO: Egyptian military forces arrived in the Sudanese capital of Khartoum ahead of a joint drill amid mounting tensions with Ethiopia over a decade-long Nile water dispute, Sudan's state-run news agency reported Friday. The dispute focuses over the controversial dam that Ethiopia is building on the Blue Nile, the Nile River's main tributary. Egypt and Sudan want an international agreement to govern how much water Ethiopia releases downstream, especially in a multi-year drought, fearing their critical water shares might be affected.

According to Sudan's state-owned SUNA news agency, Sudanese and Egyptian forces will hold the maneuvers dubbed "Guardians of the Nile" from mid-next week to the end of the month aimed at "strengthening bilateral relations and unifying methods on dealing with threats that both countries are expected to face."

The report did not say how many troops would participate. Apart from those that landed at Khartoum Air Base, another contingent of soldiers and army vehicles were expected to arrive by sea.

Last November, Egyptian and Sudanese commando units and air forces held the drill dubbed "Nile Eagles-1" – the first joint military exercises since the ouster of Sudanese autocrat Omar Al-Bashir in 2019.

Talks with Ethiopia stalled in April; international and regional efforts have since tried to revive the negotiations over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam without success.

In March, Egypt's President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi warned that his country's share of the Nile waters was "untouchable" and that there would be "instability that no one can imagine" in the region if Ethiopia fills the reservoir without an international agreement.

Egypt and Sudan argue that Ethiopia's plan to add 13.5 billion cubic meters of water in 2021 to the dam's reservoir is a threat to them. Cairo and Khartoum have called for the US, UN, and the European Union to help reach a legally binding deal. The agreement would spell out how the dam is operated and filled, based on international law and norms governing cross-border rivers.

Egypt relies on the Nile for more than 90 percent of its water supplies. Ethiopia says the \$5 billion dam is essential, and that the vast majority of its population lacks electricity. Sudan wants Ethiopia to coordinate on the dam's operation to protect its own power-generating dams on the Blue Nile. The Blue Nile meets the White Nile in Khartoum, before winding northward through Egypt into the Mediterranean Sea.



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Ethiopia rejected 15 Egyptian ideas to resolve Nile dam dispute: Water minister
Sudan warns of legal action against Ethiopia over dam

[**OIC calls for two-state solution despite cease-fire announcement**](#)

Author:

Zaynab Khojji

ID:

1621613082066258300

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The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) said on Friday that despite the cessation of Israeli hostilities and the cease-fire in Gaza, achieving lasting peace must be based on a two-state solution, dialogue and the relevant UN resolutions.

The establishment of an independent state of Palestine with 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital was paramount to achieving just, lasting and comprehensive peace, the OIC said.

The OIC's secretary-general affirmed the organization's rejection and condemnation of continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian land including East Jerusalem and the establishment of an apartheid system in it through building settlements, destroying Palestinian property, building an expansion wall, confiscating land, homes and properties, and forcibly evicting and displacing Palestinians from their homes and land.

Dr. Yousef Al-Othaimen also confirmed the OIC's concern about Israeli threats to evacuate hundreds of Palestinian families from their homes in occupied East Jerusalem by force, including families in Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan.



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Israel, Hamas cease fire but Jerusalem clashes break out
China offering cash, vaccines to people in Gaza

Turkey extends detention of civil society leader Kavala

Author:

AFP

ID:

1621607228895649900

Fri, 2021-05-21 17:32

ISTANBUL: Turkish civil society leader Osman Kavala on Friday compared his treatment to a Nazi stage trial as a court extended his detention without a conviction despite global appeals for his release.

Kavala has been facing a myriad of shifting charges and has remained in pre-trial detention in a high-security prison on the outskirts of Istanbul for nearly four years.

The Parisian-born philanthropist's case has turned into an emblem of the political repressions that followed a failed 2016 coup attempt against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

He will be jailed for life without the possibility of parole if found guilty of alleged offenses that include spying and attempts to overturn the constitutional order.

"Osman Kavala has been behind bars for nearly 1,300 days, even as the European Court of Human Rights demanded his release a year and a half ago," said a joint Franco-German statement issued by the French embassy ahead of Friday's hearing.

"Turkey's treatment of Osman Kavala... (is) not worthy of a country governed by the rule of law or a long-standing member of the Council of Europe."

The two countries' council generals were among several Western diplomats attending at the criminal court hearing in Istanbul.

The court rejected an appeal to release Kavala by a majority decision and scheduled the next hearing for August 6.

Friday's hearing put the 63-year-old on trial again on charges of which he and others had already been acquitted in February 2020.

The case stemmed from 2013 protests that began in defense of a small park in Istanbul before snowballing into a national protest movement that was eventually harshly dispersed by the police.

Kavala was acquitted of financing and organizing those protests.

But he was rearrested before he could return home and later charged with new offenses linked to the failed 2016 coup attempt.

A court then overturned his acquittal in the case linked to the 2013 protests and merged the two trials into one.

"The charges against me keep changing," Kavala told the court in a statement released by his support team.

It is "like a baton handed over in a relay race, with various judges and courts carrying over my arrest, refraining from dropping it to the ground."

He added that the espionage charge in particular "resembles the concept of 'Landesverrat' (treason) which was also utilized for charges of espionage in

Germany during the Nazi period.”

A few dozen Kavala supporters rallied outside the court room under the rain as the first hearing in his case since February got underway.

“Kavala, who is still in prison as a political prisoner despite there being no concrete evidence against him, should be released,” said protester Akif Burak Atlar.



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[Israeli security cabinet approves cease-fire with Hamas in Gaza:](#)

Thu, 2021-05-20 22:19

JERUSALEM: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Security Cabinet approved a unilateral cease-fire to halt an 11-day military operation in the Gaza Strip on Thursday.

The decision came after heavy US pressure to halt the offensive, was formally proposed by Egypt and will be “mutual and unconditional,” an official said.

Israeli media reported that the truce was approved on the basis of what one official was quoted as calling “quiet in exchange for quiet.”

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[In most inflammatory action since Babri Masjid demolition, Indian Muslims fearful as another mosque razed](#)

Author:
Sanjay Kumar
ID:
1621537398797202600
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NEW DELHI: Fear has gripped the Muslim community in northern India after a local administration defied a court order and razed a century-old mosque in Uttar Pradesh.

The demolition of the 112-year-old mosque in the town of Ram Sanehi Ghat in

the Barabanki district was one of the most inflammatory actions against the state's Muslim community since the razing of the 16th-century Babri Masjid by a Hindu mob in the neighboring town of Ayodhya in 1992.

Despite a high court decision staying any kind of demolition until May 31, the local administration bulldozed the building on Monday after declaring it an "illegal structure."

"This was a mosque where people have been offering prayers for decades, and the demolition has sent shock waves among people fearing arrests and reprisals from the administration for resisting the action," one of the mosque's committee members, Mohammed Nasim, told Arab News on Thursday.

"What was the urgency to demolish it when the whole state is fighting a grim battle against the pandemic? he said.

Uttar Pradesh, India's largest and most populous state, is governed by Yogi Adityanath, a politician from the country's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), known for his anti-Muslim sentiment.

The local administration denied any wrongdoing, saying there was no mosque at the demolition site.

"I am not aware of any mosque being demolished," Barabanki District Magistrate Dr. Adarsh Singh told Arab News. "It was an illegal residential property."

But Zufar Farooqui, chairman of the Uttar Pradesh Central Sunni Waqf Board, questioned the magistrate's claim: "The mosque has been standing in front of the residence of the Subdivision District Magistrate for years. This cannot be denied. How did the mosque become an illegal structure? It is registered with Sunni Waqf Board."

On March 15, the district administration asked the mosque committee to clarify the issue of its ownership. The committee said it had submitted all the required documents and on the same day moved the high court fearing that the mosque might face "imminent demolition." The court said the district administration was only seeking documentation.

Next month, on the grounds of a rapid surge in coronavirus disease (COVID-19) infections in the state, the Allahabad High Court ruled on April 24 that any order of eviction, dispossession or demolition would remain suspended until May 31.

As bulldozers entered the site on Monday, the incident sent shock waves among the Muslim community, which constitutes nearly half of the town's population of 30,000.

"To create fear, the local administration filed a case against 28 people and then released them. One was booked under the draconian National Security Act," Nasim said.

Nasim's neighbor, Israr Ahmad, told Arab News that people did not hold

protests when the demolition was taking place for “fear of arrest.”

“We are scared. We are not allowed to go near the site,” Ahmad said. “Our only hope is that the high court takes note of that.”

As the pandemic wreaks havoc in the state, observers question the timing and intention of the demolition drive, with some suggesting that its purpose was to distract attention from the administration’s failures in its response to the COVID-19 crisis.

“The failure to manage the pandemic has impacted the BJP’s core voters, and they are again resorting to divisive politics to sway voters before the next election,” Deepak Kabir, a social activist from the state capital of Lucknow, told Arab News.

According to Lucknow-based political analyst Asad Rizvi, the demolition was “a planned attack on the mosque,” as Ayodhya and Barabanki are neighboring districts.

“The BJP government both in the center and the state is facing unprecedented criticism for its handling of the second wave of COVID-19,” he said. “This is an attempt to divert the attention of the people away from their failure when they know that they are going to have state elections within nine months.”



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In most inflammatory action since Babri Masjid demolition, Indian Muslims fearful as another mosque razed