

CAIRO (Reuters) – An Egyptian court on Saturday recommended the death penalty for two monks after they were convicted of murdering a bishop at a monastery last year. The judge referred the case of Wael Saad and Ramon Rasmi Mansour to the grand mufti, Egypt's top Muslim religious authority, who must review all death sentences and usually approves them. Mansour wept after the ruling, a witness said. Saad, known by his monastic name Isaiah al-Makari and Mansour, known as Faltaous al-Makari, were convicted over the July killing of Bishop Epiphanius, 64, the abbot of Saint Macarius Monastery, some 110 km (70 miles) northwest of Cairo.

Hezbollah:

# U.S. Seeks to Prevent Displaced Syrians From Returning Home



Syrian refugees depart from Lebanon as they are waiting in buses sent by Syrian authorities at al-Dabbousiya border crossing on December 24, 2018.

BEIRUT (Press TV) – A high-ranking member of the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement has warned about a U.S. plot to prevent the return of Syrian refugees to their homeland so that the displaced people could be used as a pressure “lever” against the Damascus government.

“Tens of thousands have already returned to Syria, and are now living normal lives. Why do some people in Lebanon are standing

against the return of displaced people?” Hezbollah Deputy Secretary General Sheikh Naim Qassem said on Saturday.

He said there was a global scheme, spearheaded by Washington, which sought to prevent the return of Syrian refugees under the pretext that the situation in the Arab country was still unstable.

“After they failed to advance their projects through support for militant groups, they have

now organized this conspiracy,” Sheikh Qassem pointed out.

The senior Hezbollah official underlined that the U.S. was harming Lebanon through the issue of displaced Syrians as it wanted the Beirut government to remain at the minimum level of efficacy.

Sheikh Qassem, however, said “some political parties in Lebanon will frustrate this scheme, and will sustain the country’s sovereignty.”

“I want to ask those who do not want the return of Syrian: What is your justification? If you are referring to the Lebanese Constitution, the Constitution makes mention of privileged relations with Syria. If you are talking about Lebanon’s interests, then it is in the country’s best interests that the refugees return to their country. We have a very difficult economic and social situation...” the Hezbollah deputy secretary general added.

On January 20, Lebanese President Michel Aoun urged world powers to “make all efforts” to help the repatriation of Syrian refugees as Damascus forces continue to liberate the country from the clutches of foreign-sponsored terrorist groups.

“Lebanon calls on the international community to make all efforts possible and provide suitable conditions for a safe return of displaced Syrians,” Aoun told an Arab economic summit in Beirut.

Lebanon’s official National News Agency reported on December 24 last year that more than 1,000 Syrian refugees had returned to their homeland from various areas in Lebanon.

The return of refugees took place in the southern Lebanese cites and districts of Tripoli, Arsal, Tyre and Nabatieh, and under the supervision of Lebanon’s General Security in cooperation with the UN refugee agency.

## Yemeni Forces Kill, Injure Over 30 Saudi-Backed Militants in Sana’a



Yemen’s army and fighters from popular committees made gains in their fight against Saudi-backed mercenaries in Sana’a province, managing to kill and injure over 30 militants and liberate new areas.

SANAA (Dispatches) – Yemen’s army and fighters from popular committees made gains in their fight against Saudi-backed mercenaries in Sana’a province, managing to kill and injure over 30 militants and liberate new areas.

More than 30 Saudi-sponsored mercenaries were killed and injured in the Nihm district in Sana’a after Yemeni troops launched retaliatory attacks against their sites, a military official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Saba news agency on Saturday.

The military camps were located in the areas of Hareeb Nehm, Qarn and Dhaboua, the source added.

He further said the army seized a large quantity of weapons belonging to the mercenaries during the attack and the rest of the militants fled the battlefield.

A day earlier, a high-ranking Yemeni military commander loyal to Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, the former president, was killed when army soldiers and allied fighters from the Houthi Ansarullah movement launched a surprise attack in the mountainous northwestern province of Sa’ada.

Brigadier General Salih Balaidd al-Marqashi, a commander of pro-Hadi operations in Baqim district, was killed along with a dozen Hadi loyalists on Friday as Yemeni troops and their allies mounted an assault in the

Murabba Shaja area near Saudi Arabia’s southern border region of Najran.

Colonel Ahmed Abu Hadi, commander of the First Division of the pro-Hadi Special Forces Brigade, and dozens of pro-Hadi militiamen lost their lives on February 8, when Yemeni troops and Ansarullah fighters carried out a similar attack east of Harad district in the northwestern province of Hajjah.

The attack against the Saudi-led forces came in retaliation for the continued massacre of civilians and destruction of Yemen’s infrastructure by the coalition led by the Riyadh regime.

Yemeni people have been under massive attacks by the coalition for more than three years but Riyadh has reached none of its objectives in Yemen so far.

Since March 2015, Saudi Arabia and some of its Arab allies have been carrying out deadly airstrikes against the Houthi Ansarullah movement in an attempt to restore power to fugitive former president Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi, a close ally of Riyadh.

The Yemeni Ministry of Human Rights announced in a statement on March 25 that the war had left 600,000 civilians dead and injured until then. The war and the accompanying blockade have also caused famine across Yemen.

## Qatar to Skip EU-Arab League Summit

DOHA (Dispatches) – Qatari Emir Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani will not attend the first EU-Arab League (AL) summit, slated to begin in Egypt, despite receiving an invitation from Cairo because Egypt’s message violates international protocol at several levels, a source in the Qatari Foreign Ministry says.

“Qatar has received an invitation to the EU-AL summit, which will take place in Egypt... The invitation received from Egypt breaches international protocol with

its language and format”, the source said.

According to the source, unlike invitations to other Arab countries, Qatar’s invitation was not addressed to the country’s leader personally and was not sent to Qatar’s permanent mission to AL but was forwarded to the Greek Embassy in Doha instead.

“The style of the message resembles that of a reminder of the summit and is inconsistent with an official invitation”, the source added.

The source described Egypt’s actions as “unprofessional” but noted that Qatar’s permanent representative to the Arab League would, nonetheless, participate in the summit since Doha is committed to cooperating with its partners from the European Union and to common activities with other Arab states.

The two-day EU-AL summit will be held in the Red Sea resort city of Sharm El-Sheikh.

The ongoing crisis in relations between Qatar and Arab

countries prompted the Qatari emir last December to boycott another major event in the Arab world — the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council in Riyadh.

In June 2017, Egypt became one of four Arab League members — the others being Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates — that broke off diplomatic relations with Qatar and imposed an economic blockade on the country after accusing Doha of supporting terrorism.

## Father of Woman Who Joined Daesh Sues Trump Administration

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – The father of Hoda Muthana, the Alabaman woman who fled the country to join the Daesh terrorist group, is suing the Donald Trump administration seeking his daughter’s return to the U.S.

Ahmed Ali Muthana has filed a lawsuit claiming that his daughter is a U.S. citizen and should be allowed to return to the country with her 18-month-old son, according to The Associated Press.

Hoda Muthana, 24, who was born in New Jersey, traveled to Syria to join Daesh in 2014. The Barack Obama administration revoked her passport in 2016 on the grounds that her father was a Yemeni diplomat, she was not automatically considered a U.S. citizen at birth.

The family’s lawsuit claims that Ahmed Ali Muthana was no longer a diplomat by the time his daughter was born. Hoda Muthana’s parents became naturalized U.S. citizens.

Lawyers for Hoda Muthana said in a statement that she has “accepted full responsibility” for her actions and expects to be charged with supporting terrorism if she returns to the U.S.

“In Ms. Muthana’s words, she recognizes that she has ‘ruined’ her own life, but she does not want to ruin the life of her young child,” they said, according to the AP.

President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo stated this week that Muthana is not a U.S. citizen and should not

be allowed to return.

Muthana, who is currently in a refugee camp in northern Syria with her son, has pleaded with the U.S. government to allow her to return, saying she regrets joining the terrorist group. She was married three times to Daesh terrorists and became a prominent online recruiter for the group.

“I hope they excuse me because of how young and ignorant I was. Now I’m changed. Now I’m a mother and I have none of the ideology and hopefully everyone will see it when I come back,” she told ABC News in an interview, adding, “I hope America doesn’t think I’m a threat to them and I hope they can accept me.”

## 1 Policeman, 3 Daesh Terrorists Killed in Central Iraq

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – A policeman and three Daesh terrorists were killed Saturday in clashes between Iraqi security forces and the terrorists in Iraq’s northern central province of Salahudin, a provincial security source said.

The incident took place around midnight when Daesh terrorists attacked police outposts near the al-Namil village in south of the town of Shirqat, some 280 km north of the Iraqi capital Baghdad, killing a policeman and wounding another, Col. Mohammed al-Bazi from Salahuddin provincial police command told Xinhua.

The terrorists seized some of the police outposts, but reinforcement police force and local paramilitary tribal fighters at dawn carried out a counter

attack and drove out the Daesh terrorists from the outposts after killing three of them, he said.

The attackers launched their attack from the nearby mountain of al-Khanouga and returned to their hideouts in the mountain, which has been a safe haven and a launching pad for their attacks that targeted the security forces and civilians, he added.

The security situation in Iraq has been dramatically improved after Iraqi security forces declared they had fully defeated Daesh terrorists across the country late in 2017.

However, the terrorists have since regrouped in urban, desert and rugged areas, carrying out guerilla attacks against security forces and civilians despite recurrent operations to hunt them down.