

Ex-Bagram Inmates Recount Abuse, Torture by U.S.

BAGRAM (Dispatches) – The United States set up the Parwan Detention Facility, known as Bagram, or Afghanistan’s Guantanamo, in late 2001 to house armed militants after the Taliban launched a rebellion following its removal from power in a military invasion.

The facility located within the Bagram airbase in the Parwan province was meant to be temporary. But it turned out otherwise. It housed more than 5,000 prisoners until its doors were forced open, days before the Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan on August 15.

Hajimumin Hamza walks through a long, dark corridor and carefully inspects the area as if he has never seen it before. Today, the 36-year old bearded man in a black turban and a traditional two-piece garment is a guide to fellow Taliban militants in the place whose name he would rather forget. His eyes stop at a solitary chair standing on the pathway.

“They used to tie us to this chair, our hands and feet, and then applied electric shocks. Sometimes they used it for beatings, too,” Hamza says, recounting the torture he underwent during his captivity in Bagram prison between 2017 and



Previous inmates and Taliban members inspect the chair which was used for torturing prisoners.

the onset of the fall of Kabul last month, when he managed to escape.

Sultan, who was jailed at Bagram between 2014 and August 2021, says he lost his teeth during what came to be known as enhanced interrogation techniques that rights groups say amounted to torture and violated international law. The 42 year-old, who does not share his surname, opens his mouth to demonstrate the damage.

The group of Taliban members passes a large plaque located at the prison’s wall with the words of the

Geneva Convention in English and Dari but nobody cares to read it.

“The following acts are and shall remain prohibited at any time and in any place whatsoever (...). Violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture,” it reads.

But they all know that in Bagram, none of these rules applied. As the former prisoners say, if you entered Bagram, there was no way out. And if you were not an enemy fighter before landing there, you would

surely leave as one.

None of the thousands of inmates who passed through the site over the 20 years of the American war, received the status of prisoner of war.

In 2002, after the death of two Afghan prisoners in detention, the center came under scrutiny and seven American soldiers faced charges. The abuses, however, continued and soon became part of the “Bagram handbook”.

Hamza remembers much more than the electric shocks. Hanging upside down for hours. Water and tear gas being poured on sleeping prisoners from the bars on a cell’s ceiling. Confinement in tiny, windowless, solitary cells for weeks or months with either no light or a bright bulb switched on 24/7.

According to the former inmates, none of those who experienced solitary confinement, the so-called “black jail”, whose existence the U.S. has denied, left the cells psychologically healthy.

Hamza joined the Taliban at the age of 16 following the U.S. invasion. In his eyes, the Americans were invaders occupying his land. He saw fighting against them as his duty as a Muslim and Afghan.

tinues to sell oil.

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, Iran earned \$30 billion in net oil export revenues in 2019.

Shatz says if the Biden administration decides to end the waiver, one effect would be to cut off third parties involved in the purchase or sale of the fuel from the U.S. financial system.

“It would likely discourage businesspeople in the Persian Gulf from facilitating any transactions,” but individuals from countries like China or Russia could step in to fill the void, Shatz said.

JCPOA’s... (Continued From Page 2)

urging Iran to return to the talks instead of pressuring the U.S. as the party that violated the nuclear pact.

“All parties should know that the JCPOA needs to have tangible outcomes for Iran, and we should see the removal of the illegal sanctions in practice,” Amir-Abdollahian said. “All parties should prove their commitment to the JCPOA by taking firm steps.”

He also reiterated Iran’s readiness to halt its “remedial measures”, which Tehran took in response to the U.S. withdrawal, should the other parties begin to honor their commitments in a verifiable manner.

“It is not difficult for the Americans to live up to their commitments under the JCPOA and for the three European countries to end their inaction,” Amir-Abdollahian stated.

For his part, Borrell said the JCPOA’s success is very important not just for Iran and the other parties, but for the region and the entire world as well. The JCPOA’s failure is not good for any party, he stressed.

Borrell said Washington’s responsibility with regard to creating the current situation is clear, but at the same time, all sides should cooperate in order to reach an agreement acceptable to all parties.

Amir-Abdollahian also met with his German counterpart Heiko Maas and stressed the necessity of engaging in “result-oriented” talks.

“The Iranian people rightly expect that the economic benefits of the JCPOA, which have not been realized due to the negligence of the other parties, would be guaranteed this time,” he said.

The minister said the Americans need to understand that the Vienna talks are not intended for a new agreement, but rather, for making sure that the U.S. fully returns to the JCPOA and honors its commitments under the deal and under UN Security Council Resolution 2231.

“Unfortunately what we see in the policies of the current U.S. administration follows the Trump administration’s approach of imposing illegal sanctions,” he added.

Amir-Abdollahian also voiced the Raeisi administration’s seriousness in implementing the Iranian parliament’s December law on reducing Iran’s nuclear commitments under the JCPOA, saying Europe’s different pretexts for not fulfilling its obligations are unacceptable.

The other side should come to Vienna with necessary flexibility and understanding with regard to the new circumstances arising from the change of administration in Iran, he said.

In yet another bilateral meeting in New York, Amir-Abdollahian met his Austrian counterpart Alexander Schallenberg to discuss bilateral and international issues.

“Europe-Iran relations must not be subject to the U.S.’s unconstructive behavior and attitude toward Iran,” he said.

He said the Raisi administration is ready to improve the country’s relations with Austria to the highest level, particularly its monetary and economic relations.

In a meeting with Switzerland’s Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis, Amir-Abdollahian said the U.S. has no choice but to fully reconsider its approach and behavior toward Iran.

“Both the American and the European sides should show the necessary flexibility so that the upcoming talks would lead to tangible outcomes,” he said.

“Unfortunately, the Americans have not acted sincerely and do not do so in the nuclear talks,” he added.

Amir-Abdollahian also expressed Iran’s willingness to expand its rela-

tions with Switzerland to witness the presence of Swiss companies in economic projects in Iran.

Cassis also said Bern attaches great importance to its ties with Tehran and is ready to expand bilateral relations in various fields.

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(Continued From Page 2)

there is no way out of crises and problems, misunderstandings and disputes other than diplomacy and dialog.”

“In the absence of dialog and negotiation, the opportunities, facilities and resources of the regional countries and governments are spent on militarization instead of development and progress,” he warned.

Amir-Abdollahian also said Tehran has always called for inter-regional dialog, adding the experience of the past 100 years in Western Asian has shown that outside forces have been the main obstacle to convergence and sustainable development.

He further underlined the need for “endogenous and indigenous security arrangements to create stability and security in the region.”

“Any form of foreign presence and intervention is contrary to the goals of peace and security in the region as well as the independence and sovereignty of the regional states.”

Iran, Amir-Abdollahian said, considers the Baghdad Conference an important step in supporting peace and development in the region.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran hopes it can open a proper environment for regional cooperation, especially in the economic field. The fight against terrorism and narcotics as well as cooperation in energy and maritime security sectors and collaboration to resolve environmental crises are among the subjects that regional countries can discuss,” he added.

Teahouse...

(Continued From Page 2)

the world,” said Mabhtutian. “Then he broke his leg and never returned to work. He stayed at home until his death in 2018 at the age of 92.”

Kazem then left his advertising agency job and took over the business. “I don’t regret it at all,” he said.

“Advertising was a business, but this is a question of love. I chose this job with my heart, not for the money.”

On the menu, the price of a cup of tea is listed at 100,000 rials (35 cents), but “the rates are not fixed,” he said. “It depends on the financial situation of the customer.”

Every day he serves some 200 customers.

“Most of them come from outside the market because they know us,” he said.

“There used to be a lot of tourists too, because this shop was in the guidebooks, but the foreigners disappeared with the pandemic.”

‘Made With Love’

Given the miniature size of the teahouse, there are no tables, but customers can pull up a plastic stool outside, amid the bazaar’s bustle.

Seated there was Shafagh, a 32-year-old graphic designer, with her friend Forough, 47.

“Everyone sells tea, but the important thing is to know how to make it,” said Shafagh, enjoying a cup of kindness tea.

“It’s like cooking -- when someone makes tea with love, it tastes completely different.”

Forough chimed in that “I also come to chat with the owner. I think his tea is nothing like the tea served in other places”.

Every weekday, Habibollah Sayadi, 70, leaves his nearby clothing shop to enjoy his Iranian black tea.

“I’m a regular -- I’ve been coming here for almost 50 years because I love the taste of his tea,” he said, adding approvingly that “Mr Kazem respects hygiene” in times of Covid.

Mabhtutian, the owner, is getting on in years and is still single, so does he worry about what will become of his beloved shop in future?

“Not at all,” he said confidently. “God will find me a successor. A place like this one does not die.”

Cavers Find Snakes But No Genies in Yemen’s ‘Well of Hell’

DUBAI (AFP) – A team of Omani cavers has made what is believed to be the first descent to the bottom of Yemen’s fabled Well of Barhout -- a natural wonder shunned by many locals, who believe it is a prison for genies.

The forbidding ‘Well of Hell’, whose dark, round aperture creates a 30-meter (100 foot) wide hole in the desert floor of Yemen’s eastern province of Al-Mahra, plunges approximately 112 meters (367 feet) below the surface and, according to some accounts, gives off strange odors.

Inside, the Oman Cave Exploration Team (OCET) found snakes, dead animals and cave pearls -- but no signs of the supernatural.

“There were snakes, but they

won’t bother you unless you bother them,” Mohammed al-Kindi, a geology professor at the German University of Technology in Oman, told AFP.

Kindi was among eight experienced cavers who rappelled down last week, while two colleagues remained at the surface.

Footage provided to AFP showed cave formations and grey and lime-green cave pearls, formed by dripping water.

“Passion drove us to do this, and we felt that this is something that will reveal a new wonder and part of Yemeni history,” said Kindi, who also owns a mining and petroleum consultancy firm.

“We collected samples of water, rocks, soil and some dead

animals but have yet to have them analyzed,” he said, adding that a report will soon be made public.

“There were dead birds, which do create some bad odors, but there was no overwhelming bad smell.”

Yemeni officials told AFP in June that they did not know what lay in the depths of the pit, which they estimated to be “millions and millions” of years old, adding that they had never reached the bottom.

“We have gone to visit the area and entered the well, reaching more than 50-60 meters down,” Salah Babhair, director general of Mahra’s geological survey and mineral resources authority, said at the time.

ond in January 2021 for a cost of \$373 million.

In March this year, the U.S. army announced it was reconsidering plans to buy additional Iron Dome systems because they could not be integrated into American-made air missile systems.

“We believe we cannot integrate them into our air-defense system based upon some interoperability challenges, some cyber challenges and some other challenges,” U.S. General Mike Murray, commander of Army Futures Command, said at the time.

Washington is said to have contributed \$1.6 billion in funding Israel’s Iron Dome system since 2011, and the American defense company Raytheon is a partner with Rafael in the production of Iron Dome subsystem parts that are produced throughout 15 states in the United States.

Nevertheless, one of the challenges cited in the U.S.’s procurement of more Iron Dome batteries was Israel’s reluctance to share the system’s source code, which would be necessary in order to integrate it with other American missile systems.

Last month, Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin had told the occupying regime’s visiting prime minister Naftali Bennett that the Biden administration was working to fulfill Israel’s request for \$1 billion in emergency funding to replenish the Iron Dome.

napping in many cases.

The Iron Dome is a short-range anti-rocket system that uses targeting systems and radar to detect projectiles. Once located, it then fires Tamir interceptor missiles at the projectiles.

Last month, a U.S. report said the U.S. military had decided not to purchase Israel’s Iron Dome after testing the purported all-weather aerial missile system earlier this summer.

According to the Defense News website, Washington opted for Enduring Shield system developed by American company Dynetics after a shoot-off and comparative tests between the two systems at White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico.

The Zionist war ministry and Rafael Advanced Defense Systems -- the primary developer and manufacturer of the Iron Dome system -- told Israeli newspaper the Jerusalem Post that they would not be commenting on the report.

The U.S. decision was a significant setback for the Zionist military which has always tried to sell off the alleged capabilities of the system despite failing repeatedly against projectiles fired from Gaza.

Under a 2019 agreement, the U.S. army purchased two off-the-shelf Iron Dome batteries from the occupying regime of Israel.

The first battery was reportedly delivered in late 2020 and the sec-

President ... (Continued From Page One)

talks useful if their ultimate outcome is the removal of all sanctions. Still, he stated: “We don’t trust the promises made by the U.S. government.”

“The Islamic Republic considers the useful talks whose ultimate outcome is the lifting of all oppressive (U.S.) sanctions,” Raisi said in his address.

“We want nothing more than what is rightfully ours. We demand the implementation of international rules. All parties must stay true to the nuclear deal and the UN Resolution in practice,” he added.

The president repeated Iran’s stance that nuclear weapons are religiously prohibited. Nuclear weapons “have no place in our defense doctrine and deterrence policy,” Raisi said.

Tensions peaked last year between the U.S. and Iran after the Trump administration’s assassination of anti-terror field commander, General Qassim Soleimani, and a top Iraqi commander by a U.S. drone strike in Iraq. Raisi mentioned the men in his speech, saying they helped fight terrorists of the Daesh group from “becoming neighbors of Europe”.

U.S. ... (Continued From Page One)

caught Iron Dome interceptors