

## IRAN TEMPORARILY RELEASES HUNGER-STRIKING JOURNALIST

**TEHRAN:** Iran has temporarily released a journalist for medical treatment after he became sick following a hunger strike, local media reported yesterday. Ehsan Mazandarani, who runs reformist daily newspaper Farhikhtegan, was arrested in late 2015 and sentenced in April to seven years for "acting against national security".

"The health of my client, due to a hunger strike he was on, turned bad and he was transferred to hospital," his lawyer Hooshang Pourbabayi told the ISNA news agency. Mazandarani's wife, Maliheh

Hosseini, told local media that a doctor at Tehran's notorious Evin prison reported concerns over the journalist's health.

"We were told to go to Evin prison and take my husband to hospital," she told the reformist-linked ILNA news agency, adding that he had suffered bleeding in the stomach and his blood sugar level had plunged.

Four other journalists are thought to have been arrested around the same time as Mazandarani and have been given sentences

ranging from two to 10 years. The elite Revolutionary Guards claimed to have disrupted an "infiltration network linked to hostile Western governments". That followed warnings by supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei against "infiltration" by Western media.

Mazandarani's lawyer said he had heard that his client's sentence has been reduced to two years, but had no official confirmation.

Mazandarani was previously arrested in 2009 for acting against national security and having con-

tacts with foreigners as protests swept the country following the disputed re-election of hardline president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Journalists in Iran frequently face prosecution. Jason Rezaian, the Washington Post's Tehran correspondent and a dual Iranian-American citizen, was arrested in July 2014 and convicted last year of espionage and other charges.

He was freed in January this year as part of a prisoner swap between Iran and the United States that saw several Iranians released. — AFP



**JERUSALEM:** A man uses a phone to take a photo of a car at the site of a shooting attack near Israeli police headquarters yesterday. — AP

## PALESTINIAN GUNMAN KILLS 2 IN JERUSALEM AS UPSURGE FEARED

### FEARS GROW OF A NEW SPIKE IN VIOLENCE

**JERUSALEM:** A Palestinian opened fire from a car in Jerusalem yesterday and again as Israeli police chased him, killing an officer and a woman, officials said, as fears grew of a new spike in violence.

The gunman, reportedly scheduled to begin a prison term the same day, was killed soon after carrying out the attack near police headquarters, close to the line dividing mainly Palestinian east Jerusalem from the city's mostly Jewish western sector.

Police said the dead included 29-year-old police officer Yosef Kirma, while Israeli media said the second person killed was a 60-year-old Israeli woman. It was among the deadliest attacks in Jerusalem over the past year. Medics reported three people wounded by bullets in addition to the two killed, with another two were lightly hurt when their car was hit by the attacker's vehicle.

The shooting rampage comes at a time of increased Jewish visitors to the flashpoint Al-Aqsa mosque compound in east Jerusalem for the holidays of Rosh Hashanah, which was last week, and Yom Kippur, which begins Tuesday evening. Police said the 39-year-old assailant fired in the direction of a tram station in the area, seriously wounding a woman.

He then continued at high speed and shot at a car, leaving another woman badly hurt, they added. The attacker then headed toward the

nearby neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah in Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem, where a number of upscale hotels are located, and got out of his car, police said.

As officers approached him by motorcycle, he opened fire on them. Police returned fire and killed him, but two officers were wounded, including the one who was killed, they said.

#### Due for prison term

Police said the attacker was from the Silwan area of east Jerusalem. Hamas, which runs the Gaza Strip, said he was a member of the Islamist movement and praised the attack without claiming responsibility for it.

Palestinian media identified the man as Misbah Abu Sbeih and said he was due to begin a four-month prison term on Sunday for attacking an Israeli police officer in 2013. The reports said Abu Sbeih was a well-known figure at Al-Aqsa mosque and was banned from entering for several months.

In his last public Facebook post on October 7, Abu Sbeih wrote about his longing for the holy site and said "Al-Aqsa is a responsibility you have been entrusted with". Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, speaking at the start of a cabinet meeting, saluted the police, saying they had "acted rapidly and very firmly against the terrorist, who was eliminated".

Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum called the

attack "a natural reaction to the crimes and violations of the occupation against our people".

#### Concerns of fresh violence

Al-Aqsa mosque compound is holy to both Muslims and Jews, who refer to it as the Temple Mount. The site is central to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with Palestinians fearing that Israel may one day seek to assert further control over it.

Last year's Jewish high holidays led to clashes and marked the start of an upsurge in Palestinian gun, knife and car-ramming attacks. Violence since October 2015 has killed at least 232 Palestinians, 36 Israelis, two Americans, one Jordanian, an Eritrean and a Sudanese national, according to an AFP count. Most of the Palestinians were carrying out attacks, according to Israeli authorities. Others were shot dead during protests and clashes, while some were killed in air strikes on the Gaza Strip.

Many analysts say Palestinian frustration with the Israeli occupation and settlement-building in the West Bank, the complete lack of progress in peace efforts and their own fractured leadership have fed the unrest. Israel says incitement by Palestinian leaders and media is a leading cause of the violence. The vast majority of the attacks have been carried out by lone-wolf assailants, Israeli authorities say. Many have been young people, including teenagers. — AFP

## 3 BOMB ATTACKS IN IRAQI CAPITAL KILL 10 PEOPLE AND WOUND 37

**BAGHDAD:** Iraqi officials say three bomb attacks have killed 10 people and wounded at least 37 across the Iraqi capital. In a statement, the Islamic State group claims responsibility for the largest attack, which killed five people and wounded 22 in eastern Baghdad. It says a suicide bomber targeted Shiite pilgrims marking the holy month of Muharram.

Iraqi officials say two other attacks in

southern Baghdad killed five people and wounded 15. The Iraqi security and medical officials spoke on condition of anonymity as they are not authorized to brief the press.

The attacks come as Iraqi forces prepare to retake the city of Mosul from IS, the militant group's last urban stronghold in Iraq. IS has been carrying out attacks far from the front lines after suffering territorial losses. — AP

## MOROCCAN ELECTION OVERALL FAIR, BUT TURNOUT LOW

**RABAT:** Voting in Morocco last week was largely free and fair, the country's election observer body said yesterday, but it is investigating some cases of vote-buying and expressed concern about low turnout.

The moderate Islamist Party of Justice and Development won Friday's legislative election, beating out a party with close ties to the royal palace after an unusually hostile campaign. The PJD, which has led a coalition government since it first won elections in 2011 on a wave of Arab Spring protests, is now working on building a new coalition with rival parties.

The Interior Ministry said the PJD won 125 of the 395 seats in the Chamber of Representatives, while the Party of Authenticity and Modernity, founded by an adviser to the king, came second with 102 seats.

The National Council of Human Rights, which oversees election monitoring, released a preliminary report Sunday noting sporadic irregularities. They included 37 cases of vote buying by people distributing bags of wheat or up to 500 Dirhams (\$51) in cash. Abderrazak El Hanouchi, chief of staff to the council's president, would not

disclose the names of the parties involved, saying that would be released later in a full report. Such cases appeared rare. Council president Driss El Yazami told reporters the elections took place in a "serene and transparent climate."

However, he expressed concern about the 43 percent turnout rate. The report recommended a study into why most Moroccans don't vote. Experts see the result as a generally positive sign for Morocco's democracy and reform movement, which was unleashed in 2011. The movement is pushing for less centralized control by the royal palace and more genuine political debate.

Despite a new constitution, many Moroccans still see elections as futile because major policy decisions rest with King Mohammed VI and the royal palace. A popular Islamist movement, Adl Wal Ihsan (Justice and Charity), was among those boycotting Friday's vote.

The report also recommended increasing the number of women election workers, make voting stations more accessible to the disabled and allowing Moroccans living abroad to take part. — AP



**RABAT:** The president of a polling station shows a ballot as officials and political party's representatives count the ballots in the polling station on Friday. — AP

## TRUCK BOMB KILLS 18 IN TURKEY, IS BLAMED

**ANKARA:** Eighteen people were killed yesterday when a van packed with five tons of explosives blew up in Turkey's restive southeast in an attack blamed on Kurdish militants, the prime minister said.

The bombing, which killed 10 soldiers and eight civilians, was one of the single deadliest attacks on the Turkish security forces since the attempted coup of July 15 when a rogue military faction tried to oust President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. "The attack was perpetrated by a suicide bomber who detonated a van (packed) with five tons of explosives," Prime Minister Binali Yildirim told a press conference in Istanbul.

Earlier reports put the toll at nine dead after the attack which targeted a security post in Hakkari province. The explosion occurred as security forces were searching vehicles in Semdinli district, the official news agency Anadolu said. Another 26 people — 10 soldiers and 16 civilians — were injured in the blast which was blamed on the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), Anadolu said.

The blast left a gaping hole in the road which was 10-15 meters wide (33-49 foot) and up to seven meters (22 foot) deep, Anadolu said. It also caused major damage to the main gate of the security post. Soon after the attack, the military confirmed it had begun a large-scale air operation. And, as in previous attacks, the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTUK) issued a temporary ban on images from the scene and of the victims, it said on its website.

#### 'Heinous terror attack'

Deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmus described Sunday's attack as an "atrocious" and "heinous terrorist attack", vowing on Twitter that Turkey would never surrender to militant groups. Over the past two months, the military says it has killed a total of 387 PKK militants in Hakkari province, CNN-Turk reported.

The PKK has waged a 32-year insurgency against the Turkish state, which has left nearly 40,000 dead since 1984. The group is proscribed as a terrorist organization by Turkey, the United States and the European Union. Since the collapse of a two-and-a-half-year ceasefire in July 2015, more than 600 security forces and over 7,000 PKK militants have been killed, according to Anadolu. Over the past 15 months, attacks on the Turkish security forces have continued on an almost daily basis as the government has pressed military operations against the PKK to rid urban areas of fighters.

#### Fight will go on

Yildirim vowed that Turkey would continue with determination its "fight against the separatist terrorist organization (PKK)... and all kinds of terrorist organizations" including jihadists from the Islamic State (IS) group. The bombing comes a day after two suspects believed to have been preparing a car bomb attack blew themselves up on the outskirts of Ankara when police ordered them to surrender. Turkish officials said they believed the pair were linked to the PKK. — AFP

## ARAB COALITION TO PROBE YEMEN FUNERAL CARNAGE

**SANAA:** The Saudi-led coalition fighting rebels in Yemen said yesterday it will investigate an air raid that killed more than 140 people at a funeral, after Washington announced it was reviewing support for the alliance.

The Iran-backed Huthi rebels blamed the coalition for Saturday's attack, one of the deadliest since it launched a military campaign against the Shiite insurgents in March 2015. The attack could further sour US-Saudi ties already strained over the coalition's military intervention which is suspected of causing almost half of the more than 4,000 civilian deaths in Yemen's conflict.

It also risks embarrassing Washington, which has vehemently criticized Moscow over the heavy civilian death toll from Russian air raids in support of Syria's regime in Aleppo city. After initially denying any responsibility, the coalition said it was ready to launch a probe into the "regrettable and painful" strike, which the UN said also wounded more than 525 people.

"The coalition will immediately investigate this case along with... experts from the United States who participated in previous investigations," it said. "The coalition is also willing to provide the investigation team with any data and information related to its military operations

today, at the incident's location and the surrounding areas."

UN chief Ban Ki-Moon demanded a "prompt and impartial" probe. "Those responsible for the attack must be brought to justice," he said. The Huthis accused the coalition of a "massacre", saying its planes hit a gathering of hundreds mourning the death of the father of rebel interior minister Jalal al-Rowaisan.

They did not say if Rowaisan was in the building at the time, nor did they indicate if other senior figures were attending the funeral. But Sanaa mayor Abdel Qader Hilal was among those killed, said the rebels' Almasirah television.

#### Protest against Saudi, US

Thousands of angry protesters took to the streets of Sanaa on Sunday, chanting slogans against Saudi Arabia and the United States. Riyadh's key ally Washington said it had launched an "immediate review" of support to the Arab coalition. "We are deeply disturbed by reports of today's air strike on a funeral hall in Yemen, which, if confirmed, would continue the troubling series of attacks striking Yemeni civilians," said White House National Security Council spokesman Ned Price.

"In light of this and other recent incidents, we have initiated an immediate review of our already significantly reduced support to the Saudi-led coalition and are prepared to adjust our support so as to better align with US principles, values and interests. "US security cooperation with Saudi Arabia is not a blank cheque," Price said, and called for an "immediate" ceasefire. In August, the US military announced it had slashed its number of intelligence advisers supporting the coalition following concerns over civilian casualties. — AFP



**SANAA:** A Yemeni man who was wounded in an air strike on a funeral the previous day lies on a hospital bed yesterday. — AFP