

International

Germany jails Iraqi jihadist for life for Yazidi genocide

A historic first verdict worldwide

FRANKFURT: A Frankfurt court yesterday handed a life sentence to an Iraqi man who joined IS for genocide against the Yazidi minority, in a historic first verdict worldwide to use the label. Taha Al-Jumailly, 29, was found guilty of genocide, crimes against humanity resulting in death, war crimes, aiding and abetting war crimes and bodily harm resulting in death after joining the so-called Islamic State group in 2013.

Proceedings were suspended as the defendant passed out in court when the verdict was read out. The Yazidis, a Kurdish-speaking group hailing from northern Iraq, have for years been persecuted by IS militants who have killed hundreds of men, raped women and forcibly recruited children as fighters.

In May, UN special investigators reported that they had collected “clear and convincing evidence” of genocide by IS against the Yazidis. “This is the outcome every single Yazidi and all genocide survivors were hoping to see,” Natia Navrouzov, a lawyer and member of the NGO Yazda, which gathers evidence of crimes committed by IS against the Yazidis, told AFP after the verdict.

“Today is a historical day for humanity and the Yazidi genocide enters finally the history of international criminal law. We will make sure that more trials such as this take place,” she said.

Torment

Prosecutors say Al-Jumailly and his now ex-wife, a German woman named Jennifer Wenisch, “purchased” a Yazidi woman and child as household “slaves” while living in then IS-occupied

Mosul in 2015. They later moved to Fallujah, where Al-Jumailly is accused of chaining the five-year-old girl to a window outdoors in heat rising to 50 degrees Celsius (122 Fahrenheit) as a punishment for wetting her mattress, leading her to die of thirst.

In a separate trial, Wenisch, 30, was sentenced to 10 years in jail in October for “crimes against humanity in the form of enslavement” and aiding and abetting the girl’s killing by failing to offer help. Identified only by her first name Nora, the child’s mother testified in both Munich and Frankfurt about the torment visited on her daughter. She also described being raped multiple times by IS jihadists after they invaded her village in the Sinjar mountains in northwestern Iraq in August 2014.

‘Clear message’

The mother was represented by a team including London-based human rights lawyer Amal Clooney, who has been at the forefront of a campaign for IS crimes against the Yazidis to be recognised as genocide,

along with former Yazidi slave and 2018 Nobel Peace Prize winner Nadia Murad. Although Clooney did not travel to Munich or Frankfurt, she called Wenisch’s conviction “a victory for everyone who believes in justice,” adding that she hoped to see “a more concerted global effort to bring ISIS (another acronym for IS) to justice”.

Murad has called on the UN Security Council to refer cases involving crimes against the Yazidis to the International Criminal Court or to create a specific tribunal for genocide committed against the community. Germany, home to a large Yazidi community, is one of the few coun-



FRANKFURT, Hessen: The defendant Iraqi Taha Al-Jumailly (L) holds up a file to cover his face as he speaks with his lawyers Serkan Alkan (C) and Martin Heising (R) before the sentencing in his trial for charges of genocide. —AFP

tries to have taken legal action over such abuses.

German courts have already handed down five convictions against women for crimes against humanity related to the Yazidis committed in territories held by IS. Prosecutors in Naumburg on Tuesday charged a German woman named as Leonora M. with aiding and abetting crimes against humanity after she and her IS husband enslaved a Yazidi woman in Syria in 2015.

Germany has charged several German and

foreign nationals with war crimes and crimes against humanity carried out abroad, using the legal principle of universal jurisdiction which allows offences to be prosecuted even if they were committed in a foreign country.

The trial of Al-Jumailly “sends a clear message”, Navrouzov told AFP. “It doesn’t matter where the crimes were committed and it doesn’t matter where the perpetrators are, thanks to the universal jurisdiction, they can’t hide and will still be put on trial.” —AFP

UK spy chief calls for intel services to come out of the shadows

LONDON: The head of Britain’s overseas spy service yesterday called for the country’s intelligence agencies to shed their culture of secrecy and partner with tech firms to fight hostile states, criminals and extremists. MI6 chief Richard Moore said in a rare public address that the country’s enemies were pouring “money and ambition into mastering artificial intelligence, quantum computing and synthetic biology”.

“We cannot hope to replicate the global tech industry, so we must tap into it,” Moore, known as “C” in government, said in a speech at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London. “I cannot stress enough what a sea-change this is in MI6’s culture, ethos and way of working, since we have traditionally relied primarily on our own capabilities.”

Cyber-threats from criminals, extremists and hostile states are growing “exponentially”, warned Moore, who took over as head of MI6 last year. “We may experience more technological progress in the next 10 years than in the last century, with a disruptive impact equal to the industrial revolution,” he added.

“It is a white-hot focus for MI6,” Moore identified China, Iran and Russia—with which Britain has had frayed diplomatic ties—were states of particular concern. “Adapting to a world affected by the rise of China is the single greatest priority for MI6,” he said.

“The Chinese intelligence services are highly capable, and continue to conduct large-scale espionage operations against the UK and our allies. “Beijing believes its own propaganda about Western frailties and underestimates Washington’s resolve. The risk of Chinese miscalculation through overconfidence is real,” he added.

Russian threat

China, criticised by London for its treatment of its Uyghur minorities and creeping authoritarianism in its former colony of Hong Kong, was using “debt traps and data traps” to wield global influence, he said. The “debt trap” refers to China extracting concessions such as the use of ports from countries that sign up to its soft-power infrastructure initiative when they default on loan repayments.

“The data trap is this: that, if you allow another country to gain access to really critical data about your society, over time that will erode your sovereignty, you no longer have control over that data,” Moore told BBC Radio 4 before giving his speech.

Britain caused outrage in China last year after blocking the involvement of telecoms major Huawei from involvement in its 5G broadband roll-out, after the United States raised spying concerns. MI6’s reputation was largely forged in the Cold War with the Soviet Union.

But Moore warned in his speech that President Vladimir Putin’s Russia remained an “acute threat”, given its actions on the border with Ukraine. “We have no desire to be adversarial towards Russia to undermine or encircle it. But we will do whatever it takes to keep our country safe and to deter and defend against the full spectrum of threats Moscow poses,” he added. —AFP

Seven weeks on, what’s up with Iraq election results?

BAGHDAD: Iraqi voters went to the polls more than seven weeks ago, but they are still waiting for the final results as tensions simmer in the war-scarred country.

A major rift has opened since the October 10 parliamentary vote within the camp representing Iraq’s Shiite Muslim majority over who should have a say in forming the next government.

While the movement of firebrand cleric and nationalist Moqtada Sadr made gains in the polls, some pro-Iranian Shiite factions lost support, and their backers have launched protests claiming election fraud.

Behind the scenes, powerful players are trying to hammer out what the next government might look like. But analysts warn that—in a country still recovering from decades of war and chaos, and where most parties have armed wings—political disputes

Barcelona fire kills 4, including two children

BARCELONA: A fire ripped through an abandoned bank occupied by squatters in central Barcelona yesterday, killing four people, including a baby and a three-year-old boy, Spanish firefighters said. “While we were battling the fire, we found four people. Emergency services tried to revive them, but unfortunately they failed, they could not do anything to save them,” the head of the firefighting operation, Angel Lopez, told reporters. A neighbour who lives in a flat above the bank said people trapped on the premises had been screaming, pleading for help after the blaze broke out. “It is a huge shame because there were two small children that we saw around here,” Miquel Guimera told reporters at the scene.

“There was a lot of smoke... the

squatters were screaming, asking for help, because you can see that they were locked up. It was quite traumatic.” People had lived in the abandoned office for two to three years, he said.

Lopez said it was not clear how the four dead people were related but Barcelona-based daily newspaper La Vanguardia said they were all members of the same family. The father was from Pakistan and the mother from Romania, the paper said.

‘The horror’

“There are no words to describe the horror of four people dying, among them two very young children, it is something that never should happen. It is horrible news,” Barcelona mayor Ada Colau, a former anti-evictions activist, told reporters.

Those in the building lived “in absolutely precarious conditions,” she added. Four other people were rescued after seeking refuge on the patio and taken to hospital with smoke inhalation, but their lives were not in danger, firefighters said.

Trumpism without Trump: The Republican playbook for 2022?

WASHINGTON: As US Republicans cheered impressive gains in state elections in the fall, their leader may not have been so delighted as he followed the results from his fiefdom in southern Florida. For the results of the gubernatorial races—victory in leftward-trending Virginia and an unexpectedly narrow defeat in deeply Democratic New Jersey—proved one thing beyond doubt: Republicans can win without Donald Trump.

Whisper it, but five years after submitting entirely to the will of its mercurial leader, and one year ahead of the crucial midterm elections, the Republican Party is tentatively picturing life after

always come with the risk of military escalation.

The incumbent Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhemi escaped unhurt when an explosive-packed drone hit his Baghdad residence on November 7 in an attack not claimed by any group.

Here is a look at the Iraqi election and the situation now.

Why the delay?

Iraqi election monitors launched the lengthy manual recounts after some parties alleged voter fraud. Last Saturday, the electoral commission said it had finally wound up the recount of hundreds of ballot boxes. A judicial committee has 10 days to certify the counts, after which the commission can name the winners within two days, with the result to be ratified in federal court.

According to the initial count, the big winner in the 329-seat unicameral assembly, with more than 70 seats, was the movement of Sadr. The big loser in the Shiite camp was the Fatah (Conquest) Alliance, the political arm of the Hashed al-Shaabi former paramilitary force, since integrated in the security apparatus, which includes many pro-Iranian groups.

It lost almost two-thirds of its parliamentary bloc

to gain some 15 seats, according to the preliminary results. Hashed leaders have rejected the preliminary results as a “scam” and their supporters have held street protests chanting “No to fraud”.

Political scientist Ihsan al-Shamari said that the electoral commission’s message was clear: “To give assurance that there have been no violations and the procedures were thorough.”

Who forms government?

The formation of governments has involved complex negotiations in multi-confessional and multi-ethnic Iraq ever since a US-led invasion toppled dictator Saddam Hussein in 2003.

Posts and ministries have been handed out according to compromises reached by the main blocs, rather than to reflect the numbers of seats parties have won.

While powerful blocs favour sticking with this tradition, Sadr has called for a “majority” government which, analysts say, he could try to build with Sunni and Kurdish parties.

Few analysts would dare to predict the next move of Sadr, a former leader of an anti-US militia who has often surprised observers with his political manoeuvres. —AFP



BARCELONA, Catalonia: A man closes the door of a van that transports the bodies of the fatal victims of a fire that broke out in the early hours of yesterday. —AFP

Firefighters rushed to the scene at around 6:00 am (0500 GMT) after being warned that a blaze had broken out in the building, Lopez said. The building located in a middle-class

neighbourhood was cordoned off and surrounded by emergency vehicles. The name of the bank was crossed out and the door doors were covered with graffiti. —AFP

Donald. “At this stage, he would be the frontrunner if he chose to enter the 2024 presidential race,” Matt Lacombe, an assistant professor of political science at New York liberal arts school Barnard College, told AFP. “But it’s also very possible that coordination among potential candidates and party officials... would be sufficient to prevent him from pursuing or succeeding in a second run.” After Trump secured the Republican presidential nomination in May 2016, the party abandoned its policy platform at its next two conventions, instead opting to simply declare fealty to its rambunctious chieftain.

The consensus remains that all paths to Congress go through Mar-a-Lago—that to succeed in Washington you had to kiss the ring in Palm Beach, flattering Trump and his ultra-loyal base of tens of millions of ardent devotees. Republican politicians who fail to toe the line know they risk a public dressing down and primary challenge at best and death threats to their families if his supporters were particularly inflamed.

“Despite losing his social media megaphone, his endorsements still energize grassroots supporters, drive donations, and in some cases clear away competitors and force retirements,” Tommy Goodwin, a Washington-based political consultant and lobbyist, told AFP. Some prominent Republicans are seizing on the recent governors’ races to call for a course correction, however, navigating around Trump and his “big lie” that the 2020 election was stolen from him by the Democrats.

In Virginia, Republican multimillionaire Glenn Youngkin won by far exceeding Trump’s 2020 showing in the suburbs, especially among independents and women. Trump immediately took credit but in reality, Youngkin soft-pedaled the former reality TV star’s support and did all he could in the final weeks to keep his high-profile endorser at arm’s length. In New Jersey too, Republican Jack Ciattarelli started out very pro-Trump, even speaking at a “Stop the Steal” rally in 2020, but distanced himself from the ex-president during the campaign proper. —AFP