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Calls grow for a national monument honoring America's COVID-19 dead

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TUNIS: Tunisian police detain a protester during an anti-government demonstration in the capital Tunis. —AFP

Young Tunisian activists under police watch

Protesters say risk of arrest places a 'sword of Damocles' over their heads

TUNIS: Hamza Nasri, a young Tunisian activist, hit the streets as part of anti-government protests in recent months. Now he says he is under police watch and afraid for his friends. "I've moved house three times in recent months. I've stopped going to see certain friends so I don't put them in danger," the 27-year-old told AFP. Tunisia won plaudits for its democratic transition, its free elections and new liberal constitution after its 2011 revolution. The popular uprising put an end to a police state and established freedom of expression that was unprecedented in the North African country.

But a decade later, in the face of limited reforms to the security and judicial systems, activists say the risk of arrest places a "sword of Damocles" over their heads. In January, security forces arrested hundreds of youths, including many minors, from underprivileged and marginalized neighborhoods across the country during several nights of unrest.

They have subsequently arrested several young activists who denounced what they saw as a repressive police response. Nasri said he feared the country had taken a U-turn. The law student twice spent 48 hours in custody after anti-government protests in the capital Tunis in December and January, and now risks more than three years in prison on charges including blocking roads and insulting a police officer. "If I am sentenced to more than six months (in jail), it will go down on my criminal record and I can say goodbye to my dreams of being a lawyer," he said.

'We don't feel safe'

In Tunisia, sex before marriage, same-sex conduct, social media posts deemed offensive and evidence of cannabis use in urine samples can all be punishable by

Protester shot dead in central Myanmar, 2 Australians in custody

YANGON: Security forces in Myanmar shot dead an anti-coup protester yesterday, as the Australian government confirmed it is assisting two nationals who were detained after trying to leave Yangon.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since soldiers ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi last month, triggering nationwide protests demanding a return to democracy. Security forces have responded with lethal force, using live rounds along with tear gas and rubber bullets in an effort to bring the demonstrations to heel.

One man was killed on Sunday in the central city of Monywa and at least two people were injured in a clash with security forces at barricades, two witnesses told AFP.

"I saw people carrying a man who was shot and killed," a local resident told AFP, adding the body was taken to a local hospital. "They used stun grenades and tear gas... later they started shooting. I don't know if the man, who died on the spot after he was hit on his head, was killed from rubber bullets or live rounds."

'Caliphate' or not, IS expands reach

PARIS: In the two years since Kurdish forces wrested away the Islamic State's last Syrian bastion, the jihadist group has proved it does not need a stronghold to pose a potent threat in more countries than ever. At their apogee, the extremists controlled a territory the size of Britain covering large swaths of Syria and Iraq, where it waged one of the most brutal campaigns of systematic terror in modern history.

Its defeat on March 23, 2019, was, it turns out, far from definitive, with the group managing to maintain its cohesion despite the dispersal of its leadership. It has also continued to claim scores of deadly attacks far beyond its original base, while taking advantage of the vast deserts of war-scarred Syria to target forces loyal to the regime of President Bashar Al-Assad.

"It has for the time being gone to ground, but with

imprisonment. Observers say this leaves young people vulnerable when they stand up to the authorities. Rania Amdouni, a 26-year-old rights and democracy activist, was sentenced to six months in jail this month for insulting police officers, though her sentence was reduced to a fine on appeal and she was freed. Dozens of human rights organizations in Tunisia and abroad had called for Amdouni's release. Both Nasri and Amdouni are connected to the association Damj, which defends the rights of LGBTIQ people. "Life for a young person in Tunisia is about trying to avoid the police as much as possible," said 25-year-old Ahmed Gham.

The philosophy student, sporting short clipped hair and earrings, was jailed for 15 days in January over a Facebook post criticizing inequalities in the legal system. "We don't feel safe. We are not free," he said. Mehdi Barhoumi, an expert on rights and government in his thirties, said such arrests "place a real sword of Damocles over our heads". Barhoumi himself was arrested at a friend's house and jailed for two days after criticizing the growing presence of police unions during a private discussion.

He expressed concern at "the alarming security turn Tunisia is taking in its response to social movements". According to a study published in 2020 by peace-building campaign group International Alert, where Barhoumi works, 17 percent of 18 to 34-year-olds from several marginalized areas in Tunisia said they had been arrested over the past year. The organization said it had found irregularities in many of those arrests.

Generation of hope

However, Tunisian police no longer have the discre-

Australians in custody

Australia's foreign ministry confirmed yesterday it was providing consular assistance to two of its nationals in Myanmar. "Due to our privacy obligations we will not provide further detail," a spokeswoman said.

It is understood business consultants Matthew O'Kane and Christa Avery, a dual Canadian-Australian citizen, are under house arrest after trying to leave the country on a relief flight Friday.

The couple run a bespoke consultancy business in Yangon. A third Australian, economist Sean Turnell, an advisor to Suu Kyi, who was arrested a week after the putsch also remains in custody.

Weekend violence failed to deter hundreds of doctors and nurses donning hard hats and brandishing posters of Suu Kyi as they marched at dawn through Mandalay, Myanmar's second-largest city and cultural capital. Mandalay has been the scene of some of the worst violence from police and soldiers since the coup and local media said the rally was staged at dawn to evade security forces.

The protests came a day after a local monitoring group confirmed the killing of four protesters at the hands of security forces around the country. Two of the deaths were in Yangon, the country's commercial hub, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP).—AFP

the goals of maintaining its insurgency in Iraq and Syria and a global cyber-presence," General Kenneth McKenzie, head of the US Central Command that oversees troops deployed in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, said last month. At the same time, the group is "building and retaining a cellular structure which allows it to carry out terrorist attacks", he said.

Shortly afterwards, France requested a meeting of the coalition partners who teamed up with Kurdish forces to drive out the insurgency, warning of a "strong resurgence of Daesh", an Arabic acronym for the group. The worries are well founded, analysts say. Between the fall of IS' eastern Syria holdout of Baghouz and last month, the group has claimed responsibility for 5,665 military operations - an average of eight per day - according to a widely followed terrorism expert who publishes on Twitter as "Mister_Q".

And Syria and Iraq are still subjected to IS attacks, like the one when twin suicide bombers struck Baghdad in January, killing more than 30 people at a market. —AFP

tionary powers they enjoyed under the regime of former autocrat Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. "Things have changed," said government spokesperson Hasna Ben Slimane. While she acknowledged reforms had been slower than expected, she said there was now more "professionalism" among the security forces, and that a handbook had been published to improve police legal compliance, such as on arrests. "We are taking action to radically change practices," Ben Slimane said.

The right to protest is enshrined in Tunisia's constitution and police abuse gets media attention. But Oula Ben Nejma, vice president of a civil society organization working for penal and security reform, said bad habits among

the security forces persisted because violations go unpunished. "We are yet to witness a trial where police officers are punished for misbehavior," she said. Amine Ghali, director of the Kawakibi Democracy Transition Center, said a return to a "systematic police state" was unlikely.

But he warned that some actors hostile to reforms, such as police unions and elements of the justice system, were returning to prominence. Expert Haykel Mahfoudh said the greatest source of hope came from the new generation of police officers who have grown up in a democracy. "There is a civic dimension to their conception of things," he said. They have "absorbed certain ideas about governance". —AFP

KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN
Ministry of Housing



مملكة البحرين
وزارة الإسكان

The Ministry of Housing would like to announce the tender for the following works:

Tender Title	Tender No.	Tender/Initial Bond	Documentation Fee	Closing Date & Time	
Construction of 256 Social Apartment Units & its associated External Woks & Infrastructure in Village C1/C2 at East Hidd in the Kingdom of Bahrain funded through the Kuwait Grant under the GCC Development Program to the Kingdom of Bahrain. (Package - A)	HP/07/20	BD 50,000 /-	BD 100 /- (non-refundable)	Sunday, 09-May-2021	1:30 PM (Bahrain local time)
Construction of 264 Social Apartment Units & its associated External Woks & Infrastructure in Village B1/B2 at East Hidd in the Kingdom of Bahrain funded through the Kuwait Grant under the GCC Development Program to the Kingdom of Bahrain. (Package - B)	HP/08/20	BD 50,000 /-	BD 100 /- (non-refundable)	Sunday, 09-May-2021	1:30 PM (Bahrain local time)

- Suitably eligible and qualified contractors are invited to participate in the above-mentioned Tender Packages. Eligibility to participate shall be given to Kuwaiti Grade 'A' Contractor registered with the Kuwaiti Central Tender Committee; and Contractors registered in Bahrain should be categorized as Grade A with the Ministry of Housing and/or Grade AA in Building Construction Projects with the Ministry of Works, Kingdom of Bahrain in a Joint Venture with any Kuwaiti Eligible Contractor. Full details of the tenderer's eligibility and qualification criteria are provided in the Invitation for Qualification document.

- This is a public tender whereby the prequalification of tenderers is combined with the submission of their technical and financial proposals. Full details are provided in the Invitation for Qualification Document no. QD EHH-HP-2020 attached to each of the tender Packages. This tender is a two-envelope tender and the prequalification & technical bids will be opened first and the financial bid of technically qualified tenderers only will be opened later.

- This tender is through the Bahrain Tender Board E-Tendering System and eligible contractors who wish to participate for above mentioned Project shall have to purchase and download the Documents online through the Bahrain Tender Board's portal <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.bh>. The tender documents shall be available for purchase and download beginning from Wednesday, 10-Mar-2021 up to Sunday, 18-Apr-2021.

- Contractors who are not yet registered in the Bahrain Tender Board's e-tendering system shall be required to register through the below-mentioned link. Details of registration are provided online at the Bahrain Tender Board website. For technical assistance please contact the Tender Board through email address helpdesk@tenderboard.gov.bh or call on Tel No. +973-17566617.

<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.bh/Tenders/registerUser>

- The completed Tender which comprise of the Application for Qualification, Technical and Financial Proposal documents shall be submitted online in accordance with the Instruction to Tender and the E-Tendering Guidelines of the Bahrain Tender Board. The Tenderer should include and enclose in his offer the Tender Bond for the amount specified above. The Tender Bond should be in the form and manner as prescribed in the tender document valid for 180 days from the closing date.

- This Tender is in accordance with the provision of the Kingdom of Bahrain's Law Regulating Government Tenders & Purchases No. (36) of 2002 and Its Implementing Regulations issued by Decree No. (37) of 2002; and is subjected to the Unified Rules for Giving Priority to National Products and Products of a National Origin (Article 8, Prime Ministerial Edict No. 21 of 1987).

- For any query regarding the invitation, please contact: Cost Engineering Section, Ministry of Housing, P.O. Box 5802, Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain, Tel. No.: +973-17533000-ext.519, Email: Chandramohan.Krishnapilla@housing.gov.bh.

- This advertisement shall be a supplementary to the Tender Document.