

Israeli judicial crisis flares



People take part in a demonstration against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his cabinet's judicial overhaul, in Tel Aviv, on July 22, 2023.

● CORINNA KERN/REUTERS

International Desk

Israel is embroiled in its most serious domestic political crisis in decades as the planned overhaul of the Supreme Court Benjamin Netanyahu's cabinet is debated in parliament. The prime minister was in hospital after being fitted with a pacemaker on Sunday, as tens of thousands of people converged on Al-Quds (Jerusalem) to protest the planned overhaul of the Supreme Court. The 73-year-old leader was rushed to Sheba Medical Center near Tel Aviv on Saturday after a heart monitor implanted a week earlier in what was described as a dehydration episode detected a "temporary arrhythmia", Reuters quoted as his doctors saying. Netanyahu had been expected to vote in parliament today on a key element of his highly contested judicial overhaul, which has ignited months of nationwide protests and concern abroad over Israel's democratic health. Lawmakers on Sunday began debating the bill, which would limit the court's ability to void decisions made by the cabinet and ministers it deems "unreasonable". The result of today's vote could come as soon as that evening. The crisis has spread to the military, with hundreds of volunteer army reservists threatening not to show up for service if the cabinet continues with the plans, and former military and security chiefs warning that national security was at risk. Israel Defense Forces Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi wrote in an open letter that "dangerous cracks" are formed when political disputes seep into the military, and he called on all reservists to report for service.

Yemen not to transfer oil revenues to Saudis



Sana'a has rejected a proposal by Riyadh to transfer oil and gas revenues to the Saudi National Bank in return for the kingdom to pay public sector wages in Yemen. Mahdi al-Mashat, the head of Yemen's Supreme Political Council, held the United States responsible for the hurdles created by Saudi Arabia in paying salaries of civil servants in the areas controlled by the Ansarullah movement, Press TV quoted Yemen's al-Masirah television network as reporting on Sunday. "What the Saudis want is to loot our oil wealth, transfer it to the Saudi National Bank, and give charity money to our employees, something that is dismissed," he said. "We will try to pay the salaries in the future and we will win them back from the enemy." Mashat also urged Washington not to make enemies among more than 10 million Yemeni public sector workers by preventing the payment of their wages. Earlier, Riyadh proposed to pay the salaries of Yemeni civil servants for one year in Saudi Riyals in exchange for the extension of a ceasefire and the resumption of Yemeni oil exports. Yemen, however, wants to restore control over its own resources, saying the country's oil revenues are enough to pay the salaries of all public sector workers. Saudi Arabia launched a devastating war on Yemen in March 2015. It also imposed the most severe siege on Yemen, weakening the country's economy. Riyadh sought to crush Ansarullah and reinstall the Riyadh-friendly regime of Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi, but it failed to do achieve its objective.

Head of Yemen's Supreme Political Council Mahdi al-Mashat

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Putin to discuss security with Lukashenko

AFP - Russian President Vladimir Putin will discuss security in eastern Europe with his Belarus counterpart and ally Alexander Lukashenko in their first face-to-face talks since Minsk helped end a Wagner mutiny in Russia. He said Sunday that his talks with Lukashenko will last two days after they met for the first time since Minsk helped end a mutiny by Wagner fighters last month. "I changed some of my plans," Putin said as he met Lukashenko at Saint Petersburg's Konstantinsky Palace.

Flood toll in Afghanistan jumps to 26

AFP - The death toll from overnight flash floods caused by torrential rain in central Afghanistan has risen to 26, with more than 40 people missing, officials said Sunday. Shafiullah Rahimi, spokesman for the State Ministry for Disaster Management, said a total of 31 people had been killed nationwide in floods since Friday and extensive damage had been caused to property and farmland.

Italy holds summit aimed at stanching flows of illegal migration

Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni on Sunday called for new, more equal relationships between Europe and migrants' countries of origin and transit as she convened a summit of some 20 nations, EU officials and international organizations aimed at stanching flows of illegal migration. The one-day conference was a Meloni initiative that aims to make Italy a leader in resolving issues impacting Mediterranean nations.

Chief among them is migration, as Italy sustains hundreds of new arrivals daily on Europe's southern border, but also energy as Europe looks to Africa and the Middle East to permanently replace Russian supplies, AP reported. Human rights groups see the meeting, which includes nations from both northern and sub-Saharan Africa as well as the Middle East, as creating a future roadmap, and worry it will amount to anti-migrant policies that put the onus on Africa to keep Africans out of Europe. Meloni told the opening meeting that Western arrogance had likely stood in the way of solutions to the migrant issue. She proposed four main prongs for future cooperation: Fighting criminal or-

ganizations trafficking migrants, better managing flows of migrants, supporting refugees and helping countries of origin. "The West too often has given the impression of being more interested in giving lessons rather than lending a hand," Meloni said. "It is probably this diffidence that has made it difficult to make progress on solutions." She said if flows were better managed there would be more room for legal migration. "In an era where so much attention is given to the right to migrate, we are not paying sufficient attention to the right to not be forced to emigrate, to not be forced to flee their own homes, to not be forced to abandon their land and leave family members in search of a new life."

The conference came against the backdrop of migrants being pushed back from Tunisia into Libya, where they are stuck in the desert. Pope Francis, in his traditional Sunday blessing, called on leaders in Europe and Africa to find a solution to the thousands of people who are blocked at borders in North Africa. The Rome summit came a week after one of the key participants, Tunisian President Kais Saied, signed a memorandum of understanding for a "comprehensive strategic partnership" in a meeting that included Meloni and EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. Financial details weren't released, but the EU has held out the promise of nearly 1 billion euros (\$1.1b) to help restart Tunisia's hobbled

economy, and 100m euros (\$111m) for border control as well as search and rescue missions at sea and repatriating immigrants without residence permits. Migrants pay traffickers thousands to make the perilous journey across Africa's deserts. Many report suffering torture and other abuse along the way. And hundreds drown each year at sea trying to reach Italy in fragile boats. More than 1,900 migrants have died or gone missing and are presumed missing in the Mediterranean so far this year, bringing the total of dead and missing since 2014 to 27,675, according to the International Organization for Migration. A further 483 are dead or missing in Africa this year.

The Israeli fall

By Mostafa Mosleh-zadeh
Iran's ex-envoy in Jordan

OPINION
EXCLUSIVE

Recent developments in Israel indicate the emergence of a phenomenon known as the "Israeli fall," which appears to be progressing toward a "winter phase." The situation suggests that a return to a "spring" is unlikely. Israel, an entity with numerous aspirations, has experienced its own downfall

after more than 70 years, primarily due to a series of internal divisions and a complex interplay of regional and international factors. While internal divisions have been present in Israel since it came to existence, they have now deepened to an extent that reconciliation seems improbable. Among the most significant divides is the religious schism between ultra-Orthodox Jews and secular Jews. The chasm between these two groups has grown so wide that coexistence has become nearly impossible.

Another critical fault line is of a political nature, separating Zionist Jews from anti-Zionist Jews. The latter frequently protest against the Israeli political system, both within Israel and overseas in Europe and America. Additionally, racial disparities exist in Israel, primarily between individuals of European and non-European descent. Those of European descent wield the majority of political, economic, and military power, while non-European Jews are often regarded as second-class citizens, further exacerbating the

divide between them. Income inequality between the rich and the poor, like in many other societies, also contributes to the social rift. Moreover, Israel's political landscape has witnessed the emergence of another divide in recent years - the party gap. In the past, the Labor Party and the Likud Party, representing the left and right wings respectively, dominated the political scene. However, their influence has diminished over time, giving way to a multi-party system. This shift has resulted in coalition governments that

have proven fragile, unable to complete their terms in office due to a lack of a strong majority. In the midst of this situation, Benjamin Netanyahu emerged as a potential savior in the last election. However, his tenure has been marred by significant corruption allegations within the judicial system. In order to survive politically, Netanyahu must find a way to sidestep these cases and remove them from the agenda. Failure to do so could spell political demise not only for him but also for many of his cabinet ministers.

Consequently, Netanyahu is pushing for a judicial reform bill and seeking to exert control over the judicial system to avert the looming crisis. However, the convergence of this major problem with the deepening internal divisions has created a challenging situation for both Netanyahu's cabinet and the entire Israeli regime. Numerous former officials, particularly military and security personnel, have voiced warnings that Israel's entire political system is now at risk. Protests against Netanyahu's policies have reached

an unprecedented scale, duration, and intensity. With limited options and a lack of winning cards in the political deck, Israel finds itself on the precipice of falling further or, as previously mentioned, already in the throes of its fall. This crisis extends beyond Netanyahu and his cabinet; it is a crisis for Israel itself. The cumulative impact of various divisions has transformed the once-promised land, created for Jewish immigrants after World War I, into a troubling and turbulent reality - sheer hell on earth.