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Iran Calls for Afghan Cooperation on Water Rights



The Helmand river stretches for 1,150 km from the Hindu Kush mountains into Hamoun wetlands in Iran's Sistan Basin.

TEHRAN -- Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei on Friday urged Afghanistan to embrace the path of cooperation on removing obstacles with regard to border rivers.

Referring to longstanding commonalities in identity, culture, race, religion and civilization between Iran and Afghanistan and the presence of millions of Afghan citizens in Iran for nearly five decades, Baghaei said deepening relations between the two countries in various fields requires respecting mutual interests and avoiding unilateral and harmful actions.

He stressed the importance

of bilateral agreements, the applicable principles of international treaty and the natural rights of downstream users of common rivers, as well as the principle of good neighborliness in fair access to the water resources of rivers with an international water basin shared by the regional countries.

Afghanistan is expected to cooperate on the continuation of the flow of water from the border rivers and to remove the obstacles, he noted.

Iran has repeatedly emphasized to the Afghan parties in appropriate ways, especially through official diplomatic channels and functional (technical) mechanisms, that

the exploitation of water resources and basins cannot be done without respecting Iran's rights in accordance with bilateral treaties or principles, as well as environmental considerations, he said.

Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in contact with the relevant authorities of Afghanistan, communicated its protest and strong concern regarding the disproportionate limitation of water entering Iran or diverting the natural course of rivers that have been the source of development and shaping the natural and environmental coordinates on both sides of the common borders, he added.

U.S. Court Awards Agent \$113mn Seized From Iran

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) -- A U.S. court has awarded American journalist Shane Bauer a whopping \$113 million in money seized from Iran by the U.S. sanctions regime.

Together with his ex-wife, Sarah Shourd, and their friend, Joshua Fattal, Bauer sued the Iranian government for millions in damages they claim to have incurred during their two year-long imprisonment in Tehran.

The three Americans were arrested by Iranian soldiers near the border of the Kurdistan region of Iraq in 2009. At the time, Bauer was studying in Damascus, Syria on a U.S. Department of Defense-sponsored fellowship. Judge Leon ruled that "Iran is liable for false imprisonment," and

"for intentional infliction of severe emotional distress as to all plaintiffs."

Greyzone, an independent news website, carried the report on Friday, saying U.S. District Senior Judge Richard J. Leon had found Shane Bauer, his then girlfriend, now ex-wife, Sarah Shourd, and their friend, Joshua Fattal, entitled to receiving a the whopping fee, which has been misappropriated by the United States as part of Washington's illegal sanctions against Tehran.

The trio was arrested by Iranian servicemen near Iran's border with Iraq's Kurdistan Region in 2009 after trespassing into Iranian territory.

In 2011, an Iranian court sen-

tenced Bauer and Fattal to a total of eight years in prison each after they were convicted of illegally crossing the country's border and spying for the United States. The two each served a total of two years, while Shourd was granted a compassionate release from Iranian prison after 13 months of detention.

His, their lawyer's, and the judge's assertion of their entitlement to the sum comes while Bauer and his ex-wife were once staunch critics of the American sanctions, claiming that the money stolen as a result of the bans could be used towards benefiting Iranians, including by enabling purchase of medicine for patients.

The Holy Qur'an

On the Day when heat will be produced out of that (wealth) in the fire of Hell, and with it will be branded their foreheads, their flanks, and their backs, their flanks, and their backs. - "This is the (treasure) which ye buried for yourselves: taste ye, then, the (treasures) ye buried!"

The Holy Qur'an (9:35)

PRAYER TIMINGS

Noon (Zohr)	12:09
Evening (Maghreb)	17:24
Dawn (Fajr) "Tomorrow"	07:14
Sunrise "Tomorrow"	05:45

Ministry Summons Saudi Envoy Over Execution of Nationals

TEHRAN -- Iran has summoned Saudi Arabia's ambassador to Tehran to strongly protest the execution of six jailed Iranian nationals in the Arab kingdom over alleged drug trafficking.

Director General of the Consular Affairs Office at the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Karimi Shasati said the ambassador received a formal note of strong protest from the Islamic Republic.

He said the Saudi ambassador was told that the executions were incompatible with the overall trajectory of judicial cooperation between Iran and Saudi Arabia, emphasizing the need for an explanation.

"These individuals had been sentenced to death by the Saudi judiciary several years ago on drug trafficking charges. During this time, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs made continuous efforts to provide consular services to them and seek to commute their sentences," Shasati said.

To proceed with the executions without any prior notice to the Iranian embassy is "completely unacceptable" and a violation of international legal standards, including the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, he added.

The official also said that a legal and consular delegation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is set to travel to Riyadh to follow up on the matter.

According to a report by Reprieve and the European Saudi Organization for Human Rights (ESOHR), published last year, at least 1,243 people were executed between 2010 and 2021 in Saudi Arabia, making the Arab kingdom one of the most rampant executioners in the world.

The international rights groups emphasized that the actual number of people put to death in the country is unknown because Saudi authorities do not provide any information about capital trials and keep them shrouded in secrecy.

Italian, Iranian Officials Discuss Issue of Detained Nationals

ROME (Dispatches) -- The Iranian Embassy in Rome says Ambassador Muhammad Reza Sabouri has exchanged views with Italy's Foreign Ministry Secretary-General Riccardo Guariglia about consular issues and the cases of detained nationals.

In a note sent to the IRNA news agency on Thursday, the Embassy said Sabouri held "a friendly meeting" at the Italian foreign Ministry with Guariglia at the invitation of the latter.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed the latest situation of Iranian citizen Mohammad Abedini, who is jailed in Milan over unfounded accusations, as well as the case of Italian national Cecilia Sala, who is imprisoned for violating Iran's law, according to the note.

Sabouri explained at the meeting that relevant Iranian bodies, based on Islamic clemency and humanitarian considerations, have provided Sala with all she needs, including access to the consular section of the Iranian diplomatic mission and repeated phone calls with her family.

Tehran, in return, expects the Italian government to expedite the release of Abedini and provide him with necessary comfort items, he added.

Abedini was arrested on December 16 at Milan's Malpensa airport on a U.S. warrant alleging he was involved in the 28 January drone attack against an American military outpost in Jordan.

In a statement, the general directorate of Foreign Media of Iran's Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance said Sala travelled to Iran on December 13 on a journalist's visa and was arrested six days later for violating the law of the Islamic Republic.

Sala's case is under investigation and her arrest was carried out in accordance with regulations, the statement read, adding that the Italian Embassy in Tehran has been informed of the matter.

The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance has always welcomed the lawful activities of international journalists in Iran and has protected their legal rights, it emphasized.

Intrusive Inspection of Iranians in Beirut Sparks Tensions

BEIRUT (Dispatches) -- Tensions erupted at Beirut airport when passengers aboard a Tehran-to-Beirut flight were subjected to unusual security checks, including the manual inspection of their luggage.

Iranian diplomats were also affected, but their diplomatic bags were eventually allowed to pass without scrutiny.

An informed source close to the incident, speaking to Tasnim news agency, revealed that the confrontation ended without the inspection of an Iranian diplomat's bag.

According to Lebanon's Al-Manar TV, passengers on the flight from Tehran were subjected to intrusive body searches and extensive checks of their luggage upon arrival at Beirut's airport. Airport officials reportedly manually opened every suitcase and examined their contents, an unprecedented measure that caused significant delays and frustration among passengers.

The informed source from the Iranian Embassy in Lebanon told Tasnim that the incident occurred following pressure from the United States and Zionist regime, who suspected that Iran might be using Mahan Air to transport funds. However, no

such things were found during the luggage inspection.

The source added that airport authorities insisted on opening a small bag that was supposed to pass uninspected according to diplomatic protocols. This was resolved after intervention by Lebanon's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, allowing the bag to enter without further inspection.

Protests also erupted in Lebanon in response to the incident. Demonstrators voiced their anger, questioning why Lebanese citizens returning from Iran were subjected to such unusual treatment and expressing their concerns over the broader implications of how Iran was being treated.

Protesters accused airport officials of implementing U.S. and Israeli agendas in Lebanon, pointing out the lack of action against American activities in the country.

The protestors gathered outside the Iranian embassy, showing support for the Islamic Republic on this matter. The situation was resolved by 2 a.m., with the diplomat's bag cleared in accordance with international regulations, and no further action was taken against it.