

Daesh attack kills 8 regime loyalists in east Syria

Author:

Tue, 2021-01-12 01:17

BEIRUT: Daesh terrorists killed at least eight regime loyalists in eastern Syria on Monday, the latest in a series of deadly extremist attacks, a Britain-based war monitor reported.

Five Syrian soldiers and three pro-regime militia fighters were among those killed in the Daesh attack on one of their positions in a desert region of Deir Ezzor province, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

Eleven others were wounded, some of them critically, meaning the death toll could climb, the war monitor added.

Daesh in 2014 overran large parts of Syria and Iraq and proclaimed a cross-border "caliphate" before multiple offensives in the two countries led to its territorial defeat.

The group was overcome in Syria in March 2019, but sleeper cells continue to launch attacks in the vast Badia desert spanning from central Syria eastwards to the border with Iraq.

Since the start of the year, Daesh sleeper cells have upped their attacks on regime forces, killing at least 44, including soldiers and foreign paramilitaries, the Observatory says.

FASTFACT

Since the start of the year, Daesh sleeper cells have upped their attacks on regime forces, killing at least 44, including soldiers and foreign paramilitaries, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights says.

Among these, on Saturday, Daesh gunmen killed seven regime loyalists in the Deir Ezzor town of Al-Shola.

Another 15 Syrian troops have gone missing after a Daesh attack on regime forces in the central province of Hama on Friday, according to the Observatory.

Their bus was found torched at the weekend, but there was no sign of the men who are likely dead or held captive by jihadists, the monitor added. Syrian regime media did not report the incident.

In a separate incident last week, the Observatory said Daesh gunmen in central Syria had ambushed a bus carrying government soldiers as well as fuel tankers in another part of Hama province.

The ambush resulted in the deaths of eight soldiers, four allied fighters and three civilians, the Observatory said.

Daesh said it was behind a December 30 bus ambush in Deir Ezzor province, which killed at least 39 Syrian soldiers.

More than 387,000 people have been killed and millions forced from their homes since Syria's civil war broke out in 2011.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Daesh](#)

[Syria](#)

Daesh attack kills 7 regime loyalists in east Syria: monitorAlbania rescues 50 Syrian migrants heading for Italy by boat

[UAE confirms 2,404 new COVID-19 cases, 3 deaths](#)

Author:

Tue, 2021-01-12 01:06

DUBAI: The UAE on Monday recorded 2,404 new COVID-19 cases and three deaths related to the virus.

Officials from the Ministry of Health and Prevention (MoHAP) said the total number of cases since the pandemic began had reached 232,982, while the death toll rose to 711.

It also said that 2,252 people had recovered from the virus in the past 24 hours. The total number of recoveries is 208,366.

Abu Dhabi Media Office said free COVID-19 vaccines were now available at 105 locations around the emirate, calling on residents to register.

Residents across Abu Dhabi are receiving their free Covid-19 vaccine, now available at 105 locations around the emirate.

Protect yourself. Choose to Vaccinate today.

For more information on how to receive the free Covid-19 vaccine, visit <https://t.co/pNmXmJ01Pi>

– مكتب أبوظبي الإعلامي (@admediaoffice) [January 11, 2021](#)

The emirate also announced that schools would be ready to receive pupils from Jan. 17 and students would be able to attend classes while complying with anti-COVID-19 measures.

The UAE's Ministry of Education said on Sunday that 50 percent of students Grades 9-12 would return to school and the rest would continue distance learning.

Schools in the UAE opened on Jan. 3 with only some students attending classes.

Elsewhere, Kuwait reported 527 new coronavirus cases, raising the total number to 154,841. The death toll rose to 945 after two coronavirus-related deaths were reported in the previous 24 hours.

تعلن [#وزارة_الصحة](#) عن تأكيد إصابة 527 حالة جديدة، وتسجيل 366 حالة شفاء، و 2 حالة وفاة جديدة بـ [#فيروس_كورونا_المستجد](#) COVID-19 ، ليصبح إجمالي عدد الحالات 154,841 حالة <pic.twitter.com/HTxrv6WRPV>

– (@KUWAIT_MOH) [January 11, 2021](#)

Oman's health ministry confirmed 172 new cases and no deaths, bringing the totals to 130,780 and 1,508, respectively.

[#Statement](#) No. 264

January 11, 2021 <pic.twitter.com/yw00hfFCq1>

– (@omaniMOH) [January 11, 2021](#)

In Bahrain, no deaths was reported, keeping the death toll to 356, while 321 new infected cases were confirmed.

Out of 11539 COVID-19 tests carried out on 11 January 2021, 321 new cases have been detected among 162 expatriate workers, 152 new cases are contacts of active cases, and 7 are travel related. There were 283 recoveries from [#COVID19](#), increasing total recoveries to 92645 <pic.twitter.com/X03AXNdEVK>



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[UAE](#)

[Kuwait](#)

[Bahrain](#)

[Oman](#)

[COVID-19](#)

[Coronavirus](#)

[Ministry of Health and Prevention](#)

[Abu Dhabi Media Office](#)

[UAE Ministry of Education](#)

355,706 patients recover from COVID-19 in Saudi Arabia UAE records 2,876 new COVID-19 cases, 6 deaths

Egypt says no progress in Renaissance Dam negotiations

Author:

Tue, 2021-01-12 00:15

CAIRO: A meeting on Sunday about the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) failed to make any progress, the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said.

The six-party meeting was held to discuss a binding legal agreement on the rules for filling and operating the GERD.

Ethiopia hopes the dam will turn it into Africa's top hydropower supplier. Egypt and Sudan, however, fear it will substantially reduce their water share and affect development prospects.

"The meeting failed to achieve any progress due to disagreements over how to resume negotiations and aspects related to managing the negotiation process," the ministry said.

"Sudan insists on the necessity to mandate the experts appointed by the African Union Commission to present solutions to the issues of disagreement which Egypt and Ethiopia are unsure about."

Its statement added that the reservation came as a confirmation of the three countries' commitment to the negotiation process and to preserve their right to formulate the texts and provisions of the agreement to fill and operate the dam.

According to the statement, Egypt confirmed its readiness during the meeting to engage in serious and effective negotiations in order to reach a legally binding agreement on the rules for filling and operating the dam.

South Africa's minister of foreign affairs, Naledi Pandor, expressed regret that the hoped-for breakthrough in the negotiations had not been achieved and said she would submit a report to the president on the talks and their results.

Among those taking part in the meeting were Sameh Shoukry, Egyptian minister of foreign affairs, Mohammed Abdel Aty, Egyptian minister of water resources and irrigation, and the foreign and water ministers of Sudan and Ethiopia. It was headed by Pandor, who is the current chairperson of the African Union's executive council.

Sudan called for a change in the negotiation methodology to give the African Union experts a greater role to bring the views of the three countries closer.

Sudanese Minister of Irrigation and Water Resources Yasser Abbas said: "We cannot continue in this vicious circle of indefinite discussions, given the direct threat that the dam represents to the Roseires Reservoir, whose

storage capacity is less than 10 percent of the GERD's capacity if the filling and operation are done without agreement and the daily exchange of data."

He added that Sudan had strongly protested a letter sent by the Ethiopian minister of irrigation to the African Union, Egypt and Sudan on Jan. 8, in which he affirmed Ethiopia's intention to continue filling the dam in July regardless of whether an agreement was reached or not.

The three countries have held several rounds of talks since Ethiopia launched the GERD project in 2011, but are yet to reach an agreement on filling and operating the dam's huge reservoir.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Middle East](#)

[Egypt](#)

[Renaissance Dam](#)

[Grand Renaissance Dam](#)

Renaissance Dam talks resume after Sudanese blockage
Renaissance Dam talks resume amid Egypt-Ethiopia tension

Lebanon high court says prosecutor can resume port probe

Author:

AP

ID:

1610399205348339200

Mon, 2021-01-11 15:37

BEIRUT: Lebanon's highest court said Monday the prosecutor investigating last year's massive explosion at the Beirut port that killed dozens and injured thousands can resume his work after a three-week pause following legal challenges to his authority.

The Court of Cassation's decision gives the green light to Judge Fadi Sawwan to question officials and civil servants over the Aug. 4 explosion of nearly 3,000 tons of ammonium nitrate, a highly explosive material used mostly as a fertilizer. The blast killed more than 200 people, injured over 6,000 and damaged entire neighborhoods in the capital.

The court's decision, reported by the official state news agency, is likely to ease concerns by members of the public who feared the investigation might end given Lebanon's decades-long culture of impunity.

Nearly 30 people, most of them port and customs officials, have been arrested since the blast. Last month, Sawwan filed charges against caretaker Prime Minister Hassan Diab and three former ministers, accusing them of negligence leading to the deaths of hundreds of people.

Diab and the three former ministers did not show up for questioning following the charges.

The summoning sparked concerted criticism from most of Lebanon's top politicians and the militant Hezbollah group, which urged Sawwan to reconsider his decision, describing it as politically motivated.

Sawwan paused his investigation to allow him to respond to accusations that he violated legal and constitutional procedures by summoning for questioning Diab and the three former ministers.

Many critics have seen the attacks on Sawwan as an attempt by the political elite to prevent setting a precedent that might bring accountability at the highest level.

Two of the accused former ministers, who are currently members of parliament, challenged Sawwan's decision to question them and asked the Court of Cassation to replace him, citing "legitimate suspicion" over its legality.

The court, the highest in the country, had not decided on the matter regarding the two ministers as of Monday, state-run National News Agency said.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Lebanon](#)

[Port of Beirut](#)

[Beirut explosion](#)

Lebanon blast victims file almost 700 legal complaints
Lebanon blast could cost more than \$8bn: World Bank

[Intimidation mars Working Journalists' Day in Turkey](#)

Author:

Mon, 2021-01-11 23:27

ANKARA: Turkey marked Working Journalists' Day on Jan. 10 as media workers in the country face increasing curbs on press freedom.

Currently there are about 62 journalists in Turkish prisons, mostly facing trials under the Anti-Terror Law and Turkish Penal Code.

According to Press in Arrest, a volunteer group monitoring trials of Turkish

journalists, at least 352 journalists have been prosecuted in 230 press trials over the past two and a half years.

The country ranked 154th among 180 countries in Reporters Without Borders' 2020 World Press Freedom Index.

A report by Turkey's main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) revealed that journalists appeared 479 times in court over the past year for their journalistic activities.

"We even didn't experience such oppression during the coup of 1980," Kemal Kilicdaroglu, leader of the CHP, said in a press statement.

Olay TV, a private news channel with a reputation for independent and objective reporting, was shut down by governmental pressure after being on air for only 26 days at the end of last year.

About 90 percent of the media landscape is controlled by pro-government conglomerates in Turkey.

Despite the deteriorating conditions for press freedom in the country, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan released a message to mark Working Journalists' Day, saying: "We will never allow this concept to be abused and used for black propaganda against our country both within our country and abroad."

In a new book, Turkish journalist Serdar Akinan has claimed that then Prime Minister Erdogan squeezed his neck in 2005 during a press conference in Abu Dhabi. "My neck hurt, but I couldn't say anything," he wrote in his book.

Erdogan recently targeted an opposition newspaper, saying "I don't read Sozcu newspaper. Nobody buys it." The warning was seen as a clear sign of pressure over the media in the country.

Last year, Turkish radio and TV channels failed to cover the news about the resignation of Finance and Treasury Minister Berat Albayrak, Erdogan's son-in-law, for 27 hours for fear of drawing government's ire.

The Turkish Health Ministry removed a female journalist from its online communications group over her critical questions about social distancing rules in gatherings of state officials.

Utku Cakirozer, a lawmaker from the CHP who is a journalist by profession, said the ruling government cannot tolerate the slightest opposition to its official narrative and tries to suppress the media's role in informing people.

"If they are sincere in their reform commitments, they should start by bringing more freedom to the media sphere. However, the trials and arrests against journalists keep increasing and journalism is still seen as a 'major crime' in Turkey," he told Arab News.

Cakirozer noted that the government uses the judiciary as leverage over the

media, and that political intervention into the judicial sphere further undermines press freedom in the country.

“Turkey must end the public ad bans on independent newspapers that curbs their independent journalism. However, the government uses its stick all time over them,” he said.

Last year, five dissident newspapers were banned from receiving advertisements for a total of 333 days.

Cakirozer criticized the current practice in the government’s provision of press cards to the media officials.

“Independent and dissident journalists are often denied access to this press card that guarantees them social security provisions in performing their job. Press cards should be provided by professional organizations, not state authorities,” he said.

After publishing a controversial book based on investigations about the state apparatus, two journalists from the dissident news site Oda TV potentially face a total of 158 years’ imprisonment for charges mainly filed by Erdogan’s lawyers over claims made in the book.

Ozgur Ozel, another senior lawmaker from CHP, recently claimed that the deputy of the presidency’s Communications Director Fahrettin Altun called all the mainstream TV channels on Jan. 5 to tell them to end their live broadcast of the CHP’s weekly group meeting at the parliament. The directorate denied the claim.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Middle East](#)

[Turkey](#)

[Journalists](#)

[President Recep Tayyip Erdogan](#)

Turkish journalist gets 27 years in absentia for espionage
Turkish journalists arrested over Libya coverage