

[Putin, Erdogan agree to improve coordination of actions in Syria – Kremlin](#)

Tue, 2020-02-04 23:13

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish counterpart Tayyip Erdogan agreed to take immediate measures to improve coordination of their countries' actions in Syria, the Kremlin said on Tuesday. Putin and Erdogan, in a phone call initiated by Turkey, highlighted the need to follow Russia-Turkey agreements on Syria's Idlib that envisage increasing cooperation to "neutralize extremists," the Kremlin said. Turkey's report on the same phone call earlier on Tuesday said that Erdogan told Putin that Turkey will use its self-defense rights in the even of another attack on Turkish military personnel in Syria.



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UN chief calls for end to hostilities between Turkey and Syria in Idlib
Turkey won't allow Syrian forces to gain ground in Idlib, says Erdogan

Houthis shell Marib as army makes field gains

Tue, 2020-02-04 22:15

AL-MUKALLA: A series of large explosions rocked Yemen's city of Marib on Monday night, when shells fired by Iran-backed Houthi militias hit a military base, Yemen's Ministry of Defense (MoD) said on Tuesday.

The shells landed at Sahen Al-Jen military base in Marib, triggering large explosions that shook the city.

Amateur videos broadcast on local TV showed thick smoke billowing over the base. The MoD said that shells hit landmines and improvised explosive devices retrieved from battlefields, but that there were no fatalities.

The attack on Marib comes after Yemen's government forces, backed by Saudi-led coalition warplanes, recaptured sizable swathes of territory, Yemen's army spokesperson told Arab News.

Brig. Gen. Abdu Abdullah Majili said that territory in Nehim, near Houthi-held Sana'a, had been taken after fierce fighting left dozens dead on both sides.

"The national army is making progress on the battlefields," he said, adding that the bodies of dozens of Houthi fighters had been abandoned in Nehim's mountains. "We urge the International Red Cross to help us retrieve bodies in Nehim.

"The national army (also) managed to expel Houthi fighters from Safra and Baraqesh regions in Jawf," Majili said. Fighting is currently raging in Jawf's Masloub and Metoun districts, where government forces have traded mortar and cannon fire with the militias.

The Saudi-led coalition dispatched dozens of military vehicles and ammunition to Marib, the base of the Yemeni army and the coalition's troops, to shore up government forces battling the Houthis.

The army said that massive military logistical and air support from the coalition had enabled government forces to score major territorial gains.

"I would like to thank the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the enormous military support to the national army that helped us make victories," Majili said.

Fighting has escalated since the start of the year, when a Houthi missile and drone attack killed more than 110 soldiers and civilians at a military base mosque in Marib.

In the Red Sea province of Hodeidah, government media outlets reported on

Monday that Houthi artillery fire killed a mother and her child and injured two in the Attuhyita district, whilst another child was killed by a landmine in the district of Houk. There were also reports of artillery fire in the village of Al-Matena, where two civilians were said to have died.

Local human rights groups say that hundreds of civilians have been killed by Houthi land mines and shells since December 2018, when the government and the rebels signed the Stockholm Agreement that was designed to end hostilities in Hodeidah.



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First UN medical flight takes Yemeni patients out of Sanaa airport Saudi Arabia sends vital aid to Pakistan, Yemen

[Algeria pardons thousands of prisoners](#)

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Tue, 2020-02-04 15:43

ALGIERS: Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune on Tuesday pardoned more than 3,000 prisoners serving sentences less than six months as he seeks to win support after months of political turmoil. Tebboune, elected in December in a vote opposed by a huge protest movement seeking the replacement of the entire ruling elite, has said his top priority is to restore confidence. Thousands of people are still protesting every Friday, but the numbers appear to have waned since Tebboune's election and his offer of talks with the opposition. Last month he also ordered the release of dozens of people who had been detained for taking part in the protests. He has also promised a process to offer constitutional amendments to the public through a referendum in order to give parliament a bigger role and increase political freedoms. A court in Algiers on Monday acquitted Samir Benlarbi, an activist and a leading member of the protest movement who had been detained for over four months for "harming the national unity." Several other activists are still in detention pending trial in Algiers and other towns, but it was unclear whether the 3,471 people pardoned on Tuesday include those detained for involvement in the recent political unrest.



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[UN chief calls for end to hostilities between Turkey and Syria in Idlib](#)

Tue, 2020-02-04 20:08

UNITED NATIONS, United States: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called Tuesday for an end to fighting between Turkey and Syria in Syria's opposition-held province of Idlib on Tuesday.

Guterres told reporters it was an "extremely worrying" escalation in the conflict that the Turkish army and the Syrian army were now "bombing each other" in the restive northwest region.

"My strong appeal is for a cessation of hostilities," he said.

"We don't believe there is a military solution for the conflict in Syria. We have said time and time again that the solution is political," Guterres added.

On Monday, the Turkish and Syrian armies engaged in their deadliest clashes since Ankara sent troops to Syria in 2016.

Regime shelling of Turkish positions in Idlib killed at least five Turkish soldiers and three civilians, Ankara said.

Retaliatory fire from Turkey killed at least 13 Syrian government troops, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

The incident further tested the uneasy coordination between Russia and Turkey – the two main foreign brokers in the Syrian conflict.

Russian-backed Syrian government forces and militia have retaken dozens of villages in the last rebel enclave in recent weeks, pushing displaced populations ever closer to the Turkish border.

On Tuesday, Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Ankara would not allow Syrian forces to gain further ground.



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Turkey won't allow Syrian forces to gain ground in Idlib, says Erdogan
Turkey threatens escalation of Idlib crisis after Syrian regime shelling kills
Turkish soldiers

[Police arrest 26 for smuggling Algerians into Spain](#)

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Mon, 2020-02-03 16:43

MADRID: Spanish police on Monday said they had arrested 26 suspected

smugglers who brought more than 900 migrants to Spain last year, mostly from Algeria, charging 2,500 euros (\$2,800) per person.

The network, which was based in Algeria and the southeastern Spanish provinces of Alicante and Almeria, used powerful speedboats which set out from the northern port of Oran and crossed the western Mediterranean in three hours, a police statement said.

It also ran a route between Tangiers in northern Morocco and the southern Spanish port of Algeciras.

"Each immigrant had to pay the organization between 2,000 and 2,500 euros for the crossing" and another 500 euros to be transported by car to cities in southern and eastern Spain "where they stayed with family and friends," it said.

If they failed to stump up the full payment, they were dumped along the way or held hostage until their families covered the amount owed in a business which earned the network "more than 1.5 million euros" last year, the police said.

The detainees, whose nationality was not given, were mainly rounded up during six raids in Almeria and Alicante during which police also confiscated 17 vehicles.

Spain is one of the main gateways to Europe for migrants coming from Africa, with some 26,168 people arriving by sea in 2019, interior ministry figures show.

But overall, the numbers coming by sea have fallen significantly, down 54.5 percent on 57,498 who made the journey a year earlier.

The figures have fallen since Morocco stepped up its fight against irregular migration in coordination with European and Spanish authorities in a move which has pushed those desperate to reach Europe to seek out other routes, notably via Algeria.



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Lolo Zouai reconnects with Algerian roots in new music video