

# Turkey-backed Syrian rebels being sent to join Libya fighting

Author:

Sat, 2019-12-28 23:47

ANKARA: Turkey-backed Syrian rebels will be dispatched to support Libya's government in its fight against veteran commander Khalifa Haftar, according to press reports.

The fighters have close ties to Turkey and will mainly be those who have fought alongside it in Syria.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said earlier this week that Parliament would vote in early January on a motion to send troops to Libya.

The parliamentary vote is a continuation of Ankara's recent commitments to support the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA) through a security and military cooperation deal, and an agreement to delimit maritime borders.

Sultan Murad Division, Suqour Al-Sham Brigades and Faylaq Al-Sham are reported to be among the armed groups destined for Libya, but the Syrian Interim Government has denied any possibility of sending troops who have fought government forces during the civil war.

But deploying fighters from such groups can be done immediately, without the need for a parliamentary green light.

The UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said Turkey-backed Syrian rebels had opened recruitment centers in Aleppo for dispatching young men to western Libya with a monthly salary of up to \$2,000, while Russian media said Turkey had already sent 7,000 fighters to the north African nation.

"If the war's impact was nightmarish before, it'll be even worse now if this is confirmed," tweeted Emadeddin Badi, a Libya analyst with the Middle East Institute. "TFSA/Turkmen Syrian with Sultan Murad have been responsible for some horrendous war crimes against Kurds in Northern Syria (as part of Turkey's offensive). Their deployment in Libya might halt Haftar's offensive; but at what price? This was an entirely avoidable outcome."

## **FASTFACTS**

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- It is unclear how the process of moving Turkey's Syria assets to Libya will develop in the coming days ahead of a Jan. 8 meeting between Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

There are several risks for a Turkish presence in the region, and not only diplomatic ones. Eastern Libyan forces last week intercepted a Turkish ship bound for the western Libyan port of Misrata.

Sinan Ulgen, a former Turkish diplomat who chairs the Istanbul-based Center for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies, said Turkey was moving to limit potential Turkish casualties.

“The government has declared that the objective of Turkish support will be in an advisory capacity and therefore Turkey does not want to have its troops to be involved directly in the fighting,” he told Arab News. “But given the situation on the ground in Libya, the Tripoli government is under pressure and therefore there is a need for more boots on the ground.

Ankara was calculating that support would be available for Tripoli in the form of some foreign fighters and Turkish personnel as advisers or deployed for targeted special operations, Ulgen added.

“The Turkish move will certainly lead to a new reprisal by the countries supporting Haftar, particularly Egypt. There is a risk that, in reaction to Turkey’s more overt military engagement, other countries will also increase their military support to the Haftar side, and it might be an escalation of the conflict.”

It is unclear how the process of moving Turkey’s Syria assets to Libya will develop in the coming days ahead of a Jan. 8 meeting between Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Russia is against any interference in Libya’s internal affairs by an outsider, the Russian president’s press secretary told reporters earlier this week, although it welcomed attempts to resolve the crisis there.

Ben Fishman, a senior fellow at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, said it would be a huge mistake to counter one mercenary force with another.

“If Turkey wants to assist the GNA it should do so first with diplomacy and, if necessary, with a contingent of Turkish forces that could serve as a deterrent,” he told Arab News.



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## [Libya's state oil firm may evacuate Zawiya refinery due to fighting nearby](#)

Author:

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1577564835898477000

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TRIPOLI: Libyan state oil firm NOC is considering the closure of its western Zawiya port and evacuating staff from the refinery located there due to clashes nearby, a statement said on Saturday.

NOC might also shut down the El-Sharara oilfield, whose crude is exported via Zawiya port, the statement said.

Clashes between armed groups have broken out in recent days around Zawiya, during which a missile almost hit the oil complex. Forces allied to Libya's internationally recognized government on Friday accused eastern forces loyal to Khalifa Haftar of having tried to strike the oil port complex.

Haftar's forces have been trying to take the capital Tripoli, 40 km east of Zawiya, in a campaign since April.

Zawiya is Libya's biggest functioning refinery, serving the capital Tripoli located some 40km east as well as regions in the west and south of the country. Two workers at Zawiya port said the refinery was working on Saturday.

On Thursday an air strike blamed by local officials on Haftar's forces hit a pharmacy in Zawiya town, killing two people.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Thursday he would send troops to Libya at the request of Tripoli as soon as next month, putting the North African country's conflict at the center of wider regional frictions.



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# Day of carnage on Egypt's roads kills 28

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Sat, 2019-12-28 15:22

CAIRO: At least 28 people including tourists and laborers were among the victims of two separate crashes in a bloody day on Egypt's treacherous roads on Saturday.

Health authorities said at least 22 people, mostly laborers, were killed when a minibus collided with a truck on a highway in Port Said in northern Egypt. The minibus was bringing the laborers from a garment factory in Port Said.

The crash took place on a highway linking the cities of Port Said and Damietta.

Earlier, six people, including tourists from India and Malaysia, were killed and at least 24 injured when two buses carrying tourists crashed into a truck east of Cairo on the road to the Ain Sokhna resort on the Red Sea, a security official said.

A medical source said two female Malaysian tourists and an Indian man were killed along with three Egyptians – one bus driver, a tour guide and a security guard.

At least 24 others were injured, several of them tourists and some left in serious condition, a medical source said without giving further details. Traffic accidents are common in Egypt where many roads are poorly maintained and regulations are laxly enforced.

But efforts by authorities to crack down on traffic violations, including speeding, appear to have borne fruit in recent years, with official figures showing a decline in road deaths.

In 2018 there were 8,480 road accidents compared to 11,098 the previous year, according to the bureau of statistics.

Deaths from traffic accidents fell from more than 5,000 in 2016 to 3,747 the following year and 3,087 in 2018, official figures show.

Ain Sokhna is a popular seaside resort town in the Suez governorate southeast of Cairo. It is also home to several petrochemical, ceramics and steel factories.

\*With AFP and AP



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## [Iraqi group says 490 protesters killed since October](#)

Author:

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA | AP

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1577545406917570600

Sat, 2019-12-28 14:11

BAGHDAD: Iraq's semi-official Human Rights Commission said Saturday at least 490 protesters have been killed in Baghdad and southern cities in nearly three months of anti-government rallies.

Iraq has been roiled by protests since Oct. 1 in which demonstrators have

taken to the streets to decry corruption, poor services and a lack of jobs. They have also called for an end to the political system imposed after the 2003 US-led invasion. The mass uprisings prompted the resignation of former Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi late last month. The protesters demand an independent candidate to hold the post.

The leaderless protests – the most serious challenge for the ruling class in over a decade – were met with a violent crackdown by security forces. They dispersed crowds with live fire, tear gas and sonic bombs, leading to fatalities.

Faisal Abdullah, a member of the semi-official Human Rights Commission, said the 490 killed include 33 activists “assassinated” in targeted killings. More than 22,000 have been injured.

Abdullah said 56 protesters remain missing after reports they were abducted. Another 12 have been released, he said, quoting data recorded by his group, the Iraqi government and a committee looking into abduction linked to the country’s Interior Ministry.

The Human Rights Commission doesn’t assign blame for the violence.

The United Nations has said it received credible allegations of deliberate killings, abductions and arbitrary detentions carried out by unknown armed men described as ‘militia,’ ‘unknown third parties’ and ‘armed entities.’ “

Iraqi politicians have warned of infiltrators seeking to co-opt and sabotage the largely peaceful movement.



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Iraq protests resume as political paralysis deepens

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## [Jordan to receive \\$300m in development aid from Abu Dhabi fund](#)

Sat, 2019-12-28 17:28

DUBAI: The Abu Dhabi Fund for Development is to provide \$300 million in development aid to Jordan.

The aid highlights the strong relations between the UAE and Jordan, that are based on “brotherhood, mutual interest and respect,” the fund said on Saturday.

“The UAE leadership’s decision reaffirms the commitment to standing alongside the brotherly leadership and people of Jordan,” the statement added

The move comes following the directives of the Emirates’ President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed, with the support of Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed, state news agency WAM reported.

The UAE and Jordan are close regional allies. In May, Sheikh Mohamed met King Abdullah II in Abu Dhabi where they discussed regional security issues.





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