

# High hopes as Hariri seeks UAE cash for ailing economy, Emiratis can now travel to Lebanon

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ABU DHABI: Lebanon hopes the UAE will inject cash into its central bank to help shore up the ailing economy, Prime Minister Saad Al-Hariri said on Monday on a visit to the emirates in which leaders sought a deal behind closed doors.

Abu Dhabi is hosting a conference at which heavily indebted Lebanon is seeking partnerships and investments in food, infrastructure, oil and gas, and renewable energy.

The UAE economy minister said financing for Lebanon would be discussed, while one of Hariri's advisers said the mood was "positive" – though no formal announcements had been made by late Monday.

However, the UAE announced its citizens would be allowed to travel to Lebanon starting from Tuesday (October 8), according to an Emirates News Agency statement released on Monday.

Faced with one of the world's highest debt burdens, low growth and crumbling infrastructure, Hariri's government has vowed to implement long-delayed reforms. It is also seeking to curb a sharp loss of confidence among foreign investors and among depositors who are turning away from the Lebanese pound.

Asked on the conference sidelines whether Lebanon will see a cash injection for its central bank, Prime Minister Saad Al-Hariri told Reuters: "We are working on everything," adding: "Yes we are hoping, we will work on it."

Financial markets have tightened significantly this year, raising the costs for Lebanon of borrowing and insuring against default. But hopes for a deal boosted dollar-denominated bonds on Monday, which remain down some 15% this year.

The central bank has been drawing down its foreign exchange reserves to repay the state's maturing dollar-denominated debt, and said last week it was prepared to do more.

Central bank governor Riad Salameh, also attending the conference, said the bank was continuing to provide dollars to local financial markets, adding that Lebanon has "numerous possibilities" as it looks for assistance but it expects support from the UAE.

Lebanon's traditionally high reserves of foreign currency have been in decline because capital inflows into its banking system from Lebanese abroad have been slowing.

An adviser to Hariri, Ghattas Khoury, told Reuters the mood at the conference was positive and that there would be a meeting between the Lebanese premier and UAE authorities later on Monday.

Beirut, which has debt-to-GDP ratio, hopes its Gulf allies or regional sovereign wealth funds will offer support but no public pledges have so far been made.

UAE economy minister Sultan bin Saeed Al Mansouri told reporters his government believes Lebanon's investment climate is becoming more "settled."

He made no financing commitments, but said any financing would "be discussed with the government and they'll make the right decision."

Lebanon is preparing to sell a Eurobond of around \$2 billion this month, with cash raised earmarked for refinancing maturing debts and shoring up shaky public finances.

On Oct. 1, Moody's put Lebanon's Caal credit rating under review for downgrade, saying anticipated external financial assistance had not yet been forthcoming.

Ratings agency Fitch downgraded Lebanon to CCC in August, citing debt servicing concerns.

At the same time, S&P Global affirmed Lebanon at B-/B with a negative outlook, saying it considered foreign exchange reserves sufficient to service government debt in the "near term."



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## [US to step aside for Turkish assault on Kurds in Syria](#)

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By ZEKE MILLER and LOLITA C. BALDOR | AP

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Mon, 2019-10-07 12:27

WASHINGTON: The White House said Sunday that US forces in northeast Syria will move aside and clear the way for an expected Turkish assault, essentially abandoning Kurdish fighters who fought alongside American forces in the yearslong battle to defeat Daesh militants.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has threatened for months to launch the military operation across the border. He views the Kurdish forces as a threat to his country. Republicans and Democrats have warned that allowing the Turkish attack could lead to a massacre of the Kurds and send a troubling message to American allies across the globe.

US troops "will not support or be involved in the operation" and "will no longer be in the immediate area," in northern Syria, White House press secretary Stephanie Grisham said in an unusual late-Sunday statement that was silent on the fate of the Kurds. There are about 1,000 US troops in northern Syria, and a senior US official said they will pull back from the area – and potentially depart the country entirely should widespread fighting break out between Turkish and Kurdish forces.

The announcement followed a call between President Donald Trump and Erdogan, the White House said.

The decision is a stark illustration of Trump's focus on ending American overseas entanglements – one of his key campaign promises. But his goal of swift withdrawals in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan have been stymied by concerns from US officials and American allies about the dangerous voids that would remain. As he faces an impeachment inquiry at home, Trump has appeared more focused on making good on his political pledges, even at the risk of sending a troubling signal to American allies abroad.

Key Republican leaders in Congress appeared taken aback by the move.

House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., said Monday in an appearance on "Fox & Friends" that he had not spoken with Trump about the decision and had concerns.

"I want to make sure we keep our word for those who fight with us and help us," he said, adding that, "If you make a commitment and somebody is fighting with you. America should keep their word."

One of the show's hosts, Brian Kilmeade, asked McCarthy to try to intervene and "call the president before it's too late."

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., one of Trump's most vocal backers, also weighed in via tweet, saying that, "If press reports are accurate this is a disaster in the making."

Trump, meanwhile, tweeted a lengthy defense Monday morning, writing in all-caps that, "WE WILL FIGHT WHERE IT IS TO OUR BENEFIT, AND ONLY FIGHT TO WIN."

In December, Trump announced he was withdrawing American troops from Syria but was met with widespread condemnation for abandoning Kurdish allies to the Turkish assault. The announcement prompted the resignation in protest of then-Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, and a coordinated effort by then-national security adviser John Bolton to try to protect the Kurds.

Since January, US officials have tried to broker the creation of a "safe zone" in northern Syria to provide a security buffer between the Turkish military and Kurdish forces, but Turkey has repeatedly objected to its slow implementation.

The White House announcement Sunday came a day after Erdogan offered the strongest warning yet of a unilateral military operation into northeastern Syria, as the Turkish military has been dispatching units and defense equipment to its border with the area.

"We have given all kinds of warning regarding the (area) east of the Euphrates to the relevant parties. We have acted with enough patience," Erdogan said.

The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces threatened to respond forcefully to any Turkish incursion.

"We will not hesitate to turn any unprovoked attack by Turkey into an all-out war on the entire border to DEFEND ourselves and our people," SDF spokesman Mustafa Bali tweeted Saturday.

A Kurdish official speaking on condition of anonymity because he's not authorized to brief reporters said Monday they expect a limited Turkish operation and are still working to ascertain what will happen with American forces in the region. The official said the view is that Kurdish-led forces have a legitimate right to self-defense.

Turkey considers the People's Protection Units, or YPG, an extension of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, which has waged an insurgency against Turkey for 35 years.

A senior US official said Sunday that American troops will pull back from the security zone in northeastern Syria, where they have been working with Turkish troops, to an unspecified out-of-the-way location. There have been US troops around Manbij.

The official added that if Turkey goes ahead with the incursion into Syria, it is expected to trigger a large combat response from the SDF, and US troops will almost certainly withdraw completely from Syria. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

US defense leaders have long known that America would not get into an all-out war with Turkey, a NATO ally. But that has been stalled until now by aggressive negotiations by the US, urging Turkey against invading. The official said senior leaders never believed that the US would go to war to save the Kurds, but just hoped to put off that scenario.

The official said US leaders have spoken with the SDF and that the group, which has long fought alongside the US against Daesh, is disappointed and angry.

Mattis and other Pentagon leaders had worried that withdrawal would lead to a resurgence of Daesh in the country, particularly if the SDF abandon the prisons holding the fighters to battle Turkey.

The White House statement Sunday said Turkey will take custody of foreign fighters captured in the US-led campaign against the Daesh group who have been held by the Kurdish forces supported by the US

Ambassador James Jeffrey, the State Department envoy to the international coalition fighting the Daesh group, and Trump have said the Kurds have custody of thousands of captured Daesh militants. They include about 2,500 highly dangerous foreign fighters from Europe and elsewhere whose native countries have been reluctant to take them back and another 10,000 or so captured fighters from Syria and Iraq.

Trump has repeatedly demanded that European countries, particularly France and Germany, take back their citizens who joined the militant organization. Kurdish officials have expressed concerns of a possible breakout by Daesh prisoners in case of fighting in the area. In a recently released audio recording, Daesh leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi called on members of the extremist group to do all they can to free Daesh prisoners and women held in jails and camps.

Daesh was defeated in Iraq in 2017. In Syria it lost its last territory in March, marking the end of the extremists' self-declared caliphate. Despite these battlefield defeats, Daesh sleeper cells have continued to launch

attacks in both Iraq and Syria.



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US troops start pullout from along Turkey's border in Syria  
US conducts new joint patrol with Turkey in northeast Syria

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## [Turkish ship to begin drilling south of Cyprus by Tuesday: energy minister](#)

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ISTANBUL: The Turkish drillship Yavuz will begin drilling for oil and gas

southwest of Cyprus on Monday or Tuesday, Energy Minister Fatih Donmez said, in a move which has intensified tensions between the two countries.

Ankara said on Thursday it had sent the ship to the area where Greek Cypriot authorities have already awarded hydrocarbon exploration rights to Italian and French companies.

Cyprus has accused Turkey of a “severe escalation” of violations of its sovereign rights.

“All preparations have been completed, and it (Yavuz) will start its first drilling in the area either today or tomorrow,” Donmez told an energy conference on Monday.

Turkey has already drilled wells in waters to the east and west of the island, triggering strong protests from Nicosia and the European Union in recent months, including EU sanctions.

Turkey and Greece are allies in NATO but have long been at loggerheads over Cyprus, which has been ethnically split between Greek and Turkish Cypriots since 1974.

The internationally recognized Greek Cypriot government represents Cyprus in the European Union, while a breakaway Turkish Cypriot state in the north is only recognized by Ankara.

The latest development is the first time the two sides have targeted the same area. The United States has warned Turkey not to engage in “illegal” drilling activity in the area.

On Monday, Yavuz was located about 50 nautical miles (90 km) southwest of Cyprus, Refinitiv Eikon shipping data showed.



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## [Dozens killed on sixth day of Baghdad protests, military admits use of 'excessive force'](#)

Mon, 2019-10-07 11:27

DUBAI: The Iraqi military admitted on Monday that “excessive force” was used in a district of the capital overnight where a mass protest led to clashes that killed dozens.

The number of those killed has not yet been verified, however some sources claim 13 were killed, while others reported 15.

The reports of the deaths come as the military made an announcement admitted using “excessive force outside the rules of engagement.”

“We have begun to hold accountable those commanding officers who carried out these wrong acts,” the military said in a statement.

However, Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi had called on all forces to abide by the “rules of engagement” in dealing with rallies.

In his only address to the protesters last week, Mahdi had insisted security forces were acting “within international standards” in dealing with demonstrations.

### **Sadr City Clashes**

Hundreds had gathered overnight in Sadr City, a densely populated district in eastern Baghdad where state security forces are rarely seen.

Videos distributed on social media of the late-night rally showed protesters ducking in streets littered with burning tires as heavy gunfire was heard.

In a statement distributed to journalists on Monday morning, the Iraqi military said the prime minister had ordered “all army units to withdraw from Sadr City to be replaced with federal police units.”

Baghdad has been at the center of anti-government protests that have quickly



spread to the country's south. The protesters have been demanding jobs and an end to corruption and now include calls for justice for those killed in the protests.

The death toll after six days of unrest has been estimated to have passed 100 and more than 6,000 have been wounded.

This has been the most serious challenge facing Iraq two years after the victory against Daesh militants. The chaos also comes at a critical time for the government, which has been caught in the middle of increasing US-Iran tensions in the region. Iraq is allied with both countries and hosts thousands of US troops, as well as powerful paramilitary forces allied with Iran.

## **US relations**

On Monday, Mahdi discussed the protests in a phone call with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

"The Prime Minister reviewed developments in the security situation and the return to normal life after the curfew was lifted, and confirmed that security forces had resumed control and stability had been restored," a statement said from his office said.

The statement said the government has put forward a package of reforms and will continue to provide more to meet the demands of the protesters.

Meanwhile, the UN envoy for Iraq appealed for an end to the violence and holding to account those responsible for it. "This must stop. I call on all parties to pause and reflect," Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert tweeted Saturday night.

## **Attacks on media**

In new developments amid the unrest, masked gunmen in black cars and wearing black clothes stormed the offices of Al-Arabiya, a Saudi-owned pan-Arab news channel, beat up some of the employees and smashed equipment before they fled. The attack came after the station had received threats for several days.

Gunmen also attacked other news channels that have been covering the daily protests.



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Iraqi protesters vow to continue regardless of government offers Eight injured in second day of Baghdad protests

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## [‘Enemies seek to sow discord’ between Iran and Iraq: Khamenei](#)

Author:

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TEHRAN: Iran’s supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said “enemies” were trying to drive a wedge between Tehran and Baghdad in a tweet on Monday following deadly unrest in neighboring Iraq.

“#Iran and #Iraq are two nations whose hearts & souls are tied together ... Enemies seek to sow discord but they’ve failed & their conspiracy won’t be effective,” Khamenei was quoted as saying on his office’s Twitter account.

State news agency IRNA said the supreme leader was reacting to recent violence in Iraq.

More than 100 people have been killed in Iraq since clashes erupted last week between protesters and security forces, the majority of them demonstrators struck by bullets.

The Iraqi authorities have accused “saboteurs” and unidentified snipers of targeting the protesters.

Iran has urged its citizens planning to take part in a major Shiite pilgrimage in Iraq to delay their travel into the country over the violence. Tehran has close but complicated ties with Baghdad, with significant influence among its Shiite political groups.

The two countries fought a bloody war from 1980 to 1988 and Iran’s influence in the country grew after the US-led invasion of Iraq toppled veteran dictator Saddam Hussein in 2003.



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