

Lebanon demolishes more Syrian refugee shelters

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RIHANIYA, Lebanon: A coalition of international NGOs on Friday said the Lebanese army raided Syrian refugee settlements, destroying a number of tents, urging authorities to stop the demolitions.

The Lebanon Humanitarian INGO Forum (LHIF), which comprises 51 international NGOs, said troops raided more than 30 settlements in the northern Akkar region on Thursday and at least five more on Friday.

On Thursday they “partially demolished over 350 refugees’ homes in four tented settlement in Akkar, in northern Lebanon, using sledgehammers,” a statement said.

“Tents were demolished on the grounds that the structures were not compliant with a recent order from Lebanon’s Higher Defense Council that all non-temporary structures be dismantled or face demolition.”

It came after similar demolitions earlier this year in the border village of Aarsal.

Authorities had set a June 9 deadline for refugees living in shelters built with material other than timber and plastic sheeting in Aarsal to destroy them.

They later extended the deadline to July 1, after which the army moved in to demolish shelters which did not comply with regulations.

Lebanon, a country of some four million people, hosts an estimated 1.5 to two million refugees who have fled the conflict that erupted in neighboring Syria in 2011.

Lebanon’s economic and other woes are routinely blamed on Syrian refugees by local politicians and the government has ratcheted up the pressure to send them back.

Keen not to encourage Syrians to settle permanently, authorities allow only informal camps for refugees.

LHIF, whose members include the British charity Oxfam, the Norwegian Refugee Council and Mercy Corps, urged the Lebanese government and people to show “compassion” for refugees living in tents.

“We ask that Lebanese authorities cease these demolitions and work with the community, including refugees, landlords, and municipalities, to find a solution that allows refugees to continue to live in safety and dignity, where all parties respect the rule of law,” the statement said.

It also reported that on Thursday the army arrested 47 people, including a minor, “on the grounds that they do not have valid legal residency papers” and that other arrests were made on Friday.

“We believe that it is excessive and punitive to arrest refugees on this basis and to use demolitions as a means for doing so,” the NGOs said.



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Lebanon ups pressure on Syrian refugees to return
Two Syrians dead in Lebanon refugee camp fire

[Clashes kill six civilians in Yemen's Aden](#)

Author:

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Fri, 2019-08-09 18:26

ADEN: At least six civilians were killed and 12 others wounded Friday during clashes in Yemen's second city Aden, a security source said, as violence flares between pro-government fighters and those seeking an independent south.

The fighting erupted on Wednesday and has continued unabated between the two

sides, who are in effect backers of the Aden-based internationally recognized government of President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi.

One faction however is known as the Security Belt, a force dominated by fighters who seek independence for southern Yemen.

On Friday, fierce clashes broke out between the two sides during which a mortar round crashed into a house killing six people, four of whom were from the same family, a security source said.

Twelve other people were wounded in the fighting, the source said.

Doctors Without Borders (MSF) tweeted Friday that it had treated 75 people in a hospital run by the charity "since yesterday (Thursday) night" including seven who were in a critical condition.

"Most of the patients we admitted are civilians and were injured by shrapnel during shelling on their houses or stray bullets," MSF said.



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Yemen government blames separatists for Aden clashes Clashes erupt in Yemen's Aden, killing one

[KSRelief calls for UN probe into](#)

'serious reports' of Yemen aid agency corruption

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Fri, 2019-08-09 16:00

RIYADH: The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSRelief) has called for a full-scale probe into "serious reports" of corruption in UN agencies delivering vital aid to war-torn Yemen.

Senior KSRelief officials have demanded an urgent investigation following allegations of wrongdoing brought to their attention by a number of international news organizations.

A statement, issued by KSRelief's media center, said: "The KSRelief called upon the United Nations aid agencies to review and enforce accurate, credible, neutral and transparent monitoring mechanisms for their humanitarian work in Yemen to prevent any abuse or exploitation of humanitarian aid.

"KSRelief officials were recently briefed on serious reports from some international news agencies alleging the existence of corruption in some UN agencies working in Yemen. KSRelief relies heavily on these agencies to deliver urgent humanitarian assistance to Yemenis in desperate need of help." It added: "While the center values its strong strategic partnerships with the UN and its agencies, there are clearly stated mechanisms in its contracts with humanitarian partners which prohibit the exploitation of aid by individuals or groups working or affiliated with the UN or international organizations for any individual or other interests."

The KSRelief statement noted that aid contracts required the immediate disclosure of any incident of irregularity or corruption, and that KSRelief had the right to participate in any investigation into such incidents. The center was also entitled to review all partner agreements to ensure compliance with transparent monitoring and implementation procedures.

"Therefore, the KSRelief calls upon the UN and its humanitarian agencies to immediately begin transparent investigations into these incidents, and to disclose any suspicion of the involvement of their staff members in corruption, abuses or complicity with any party with regards to the allocation of humanitarian grants and aid provided by Saudi Arabia," said the statement.

"Moreover, the KSRelief emphasizes the importance of its valuable partnerships with the UN agencies in carrying out its mission to alleviate the suffering of all in need, and calls upon the UN and its humanitarian agencies to immediately review their monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms to ensure impartiality and transparency in aid delivery."



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World Food Programme to resume food aid in Yemen's Sanaa
Yemen government blames separatists for Aden clashes

[Tunisia PM Chahed announces run for president](#)

Author:

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Thu, 2019-08-08 19:42

TUNIS: Tunisia's Prime Minister Youssef Chahed announced Thursday he would stand in presidential elections next month.

"I have thought hard and decided to put myself forward for the position of president of the republic," he said during an assembly of his Tahya Tunis

party.

The 43-year-old, Tunisia's youngest prime minister, faces possible competition from Abdelfattah Mourou of the Islamist-inspired Ennahdha party and controversial media magnate Nabil Karoui.

Originally scheduled for November, the vote was brought forward following the death of incumbent Beji Caid Essebsi on July 25.

Chahed said he wanted to "break with the old system and give hope to all Tunisians, including young people, that they can take on important positions in the state."

Launched at the start of the year, Chahed's Tahya Tounes has become the second largest party in parliament behind Ennahdha.

Tahya Tounes said last week the premier would be their candidate for the presidential polls.

Tunisia has been praised as a rare case of democratic transition to emerge from the Arab Spring uprisings.

But it has struggled with repeated jihadist attacks, along with inflation and unemployment that have hit Chahed's popularity.

The agricultural engineering graduate entered politics after Tunisia's 2011 uprising which ousted autocratic president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.

Presidential hopefuls have until Friday to register for the election on September 15.

Over 50 people had registered their candidacy by Thursday.

They include Abir Moussi, who heads a group formed from the remnants of Ben Ali's ruling party and has called for Islamists including Ennahdha to be excluded from the poll.

On Thursday, openly gay lawyer Mounir Baatour announced he would stand in the elections, a first for the Arab world.

The electoral commission is set to announce on August 31 which candidates it will allow to run in the poll.



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[Lebanese leaders meet to stem crisis over mountain shoot-out](#)

Author:

Thu, 2019-08-08 22:31

BEIRUT: Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri expressed optimism about the chances of putting an end to the political crisis that has paralyzed the Cabinet for more than five weeks.

After meeting with President Michel Aoun in the presence of Lebanon's Security Chief Maj. Gen. Abbas Ibrahim, Hariri said: "Solutions are near to fruition and I am more optimistic than before. The meeting was very positive. We must just wait a little and we will be hearing good news soon."

Maj. Gen. Ibrahim conducted the mediation between the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) and the Lebanese Democratic Party (LDP) to find a solution to the crisis caused by a shoot-out between Druze factions in the Chouf Mountains on

June 30. He simply said: "The atmosphere is excellent."

This development, that is expected to end the political impasse in Lebanon, took place one day after the strong statement issued Wednesday by the US Embassy in Beirut, warning against "any attempt to exploit the tragic incident that took place in Kabreshmoun to promote political objectives" and stressing "the need for the Lebanese authorities to handle the case in a way that achieves justice without inciting sectarian and regional conflicts with political backgrounds."

PM Hariri is expected to visit to the US shortly, where he may meet with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

While the positive results reached by the Aoun-Hariri meeting remained unknown, an adviser to Hariri, Dr. Ammar Hourri, told Arab News that the "atmosphere was positive," expecting a Cabinet session to be held "soon."

Lebanese media outlets said the session's agenda "will not include referring the Kabreshmoun incident to the Judicial Council," the subject that sparked the inter-Druze clash and then the disagreement between the PSP and Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) in the first place.

The Hezbollah parliamentary bloc condemned what it considered "any foreign interventions in the internal affairs, whatever their source was, as they do not serve the national interest and do not want to do the country any good."

"Sparring and fighting cannot lead to a solution nor resolve the problem, and amid the ongoing economic bleeding, we demand to find a solution for the political deadlock."

Lebanon's English-language daily newspaper, the Daily Star, expressed in its Thursday's issue the impasse of political, economic and social situation in a very stark form.

The front page of the print edition was completely black, with the word "Lebanon" written across the middle in white. The 10 inside pages were bare except for a black strip across the middle bearing the following phrases: Government deadlock; Sectarian rhetoric increasing by the day; Trash continues to pile up in the streets; Pollution at alarming levels; Unemployment rate at 25 percent; Illegal weapons abound in the country; Public debt close to \$100 billion; Bankruptcy threatens businesses; and Local currency in jeopardy.

The last page read: "Wake up before it is too late."

The Daily Star's Joseph Haboush told AFP: "We wanted to deliver a message to politicians and officials about the dangerous level the situation has reached."

In October, Lebanon's most renowned newspaper, Annahar, protested at the deteriorating situation in the country, where contending parties had failed to form a government, and published 11 blank pages.



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National security is a 'red line,' warns Lebanese president
Lebanese losing faith as politicians fumble over economy