

[Suitcase filled with \\$1.5m of gold and cash found at Beirut airport](#)

Mon, 2019-07-08 18:19

CAIRO: A suitcase containing \$1.5 million of gold and cash was discovered in the car park of Lebanon's main airport.

The gold was found inside a suitcase by a passerby on Sunday and handed to airport security, Lebanon's state news agency reported.

Internal security forces at Rafic Hariri International Airport examined the suitcase and found 14.95 kilograms of gold inside, worth approximately \$675,000, along with €632,000 and \$170,000 in cash.

The security forces said the suitcase belonged to a Lebanese national who had travelled from Togo to Ethiopia before boarding an Ethiopian Airlines flight to Beirut.

After contacting the suitcase owner, the authorities found that the owner had announced the amount of gold that had been carried, but did not reveal the wads of cash inside the suitcase.

The statement said authorities had arrested the suitcase owner.



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The News: Dollar hits record high, gold price soars by Rs2,700 per tola

Syria replaces security chief – news reports

Author:

Mon, 2019-07-08 17:37

BEIRUT: Syria's government has replaced one of its top security chiefs Jamil Hassan, a subject of Western sanctions, pro-Damascus social media sites reported.

Hassan, who is in his mid 60s, has been replaced as head of Syrian Air Force Intelligence by his deputy Ghassan Ismail, said Tartous Now News Network and Homs News Network on Sunday. There was no official comment on Syrian state media.

A US Treasury sanctions designation for Hassan in 2011 described Air Force Intelligence as one of Syria's four main security agencies.

Syria's pervasive security agencies have played a major role for President Bashar Assad since the start of the conflict in 2011 by rooting out and detaining those suspected of links with the opposition.

Rights group Amnesty International says more than 80,000 people have been subjected to enforced disappearance by the Syrian government since the start of the conflict.

Last year German prosecutors issued an international arrest warrant for Hassan, accusing him of "war crimes and crimes against humanity" for his part in Syria's war and the mass protests that preceded it.

The prosecutors accused him of overseeing the torture, rape and murder of "at least hundreds of people between 2011 and 2013."

Syria's government denies any widespread abuses by its security forces.

In an interview with Britain's Independent newspaper in 2016, Hassan was quoted as saying the government should have used more force against the opposition at the start of the war.

Comparing it to the crushing of a Muslim Brotherhood uprising in Hama in 1982, he was quoted as saying "if we did what we did in Hama at the beginning of the crisis, we would have saved a lot of Syrian blood."



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Regime bombardment kills 12 civilians in northwest Syria: monitor
Russian-led assault in Syria leaves over 500 civilians dead, say rights groups

[Tunisia finds bodies of pregnant migrant, toddler after boat sinks](#)

Author:

Sun, 2019-07-07 23:11

TUNIS: Tunisia's Red Crescent said Sunday three more bodies had been retrieved off the country's coast, including those of a pregnant woman and toddler, days after a boat carrying scores of migrants sank.

"The number of bodies retrieved (from the water) has reached 15," said Red Crescent official Mongi Slim.

The bodies of a three-year-old and two women, one pregnant, were recovered Saturday night off the island of Djerba in southern Tunisia, Slim said.

On Saturday the Red Crescent said 12 bodies had been retrieved by the coast guard from waters off southern Tunisia that morning.

Including the corpse of a woman that the National Guard said it found on a beach off Zarzis on Friday, the total number of bodies recovered since the boat sank on Monday stands at 16.

A Malian survivor told the UN's migration agency that 86 people had been on board the dinghy, which capsized.

"People were terrified as water started pouring in, some of them fell into the water. They stayed down there," survivor Soleiman Coulibaly told AFP.

Flavio Di Giacomo, a spokesman for the UN's International Organization for Migration, tweeted on Thursday that "about 80 migrants are feared dead."

The Red Crescent and the navy said three Malians and an Ivorian were rescued on Wednesday by the coast guard, who had been alerted by local fishermen.

The Ivorian, however, died in hospital and one of the Malians has also been hospitalized in intensive care.

The boat tipped over only hours after setting out to sea from the Libyan town of Zuwara, west of Tripoli, with the intention of reaching Italy.

Libya has in recent years been a major departure point for migrants seeking to reach Europe across the Mediterranean.

Rights groups say migrants face horrifying abuses in Libya, with many held in squalid detention facilities.

An air strike Tuesday on a migrant center in the capital Tripoli killed at least 53 people, according to the World Health Organization.



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Malta to relocate 65 migrants after rescue ships defy Italy ban
Heatwave adds to the woes of migrants stranded Bosnia

[Russian-led assault in Syria leaves over 500 civilians dead, say rights groups](#)

Author:

Sun, 2019-07-07 21:58

AMMAN: At least 544 civilians have been killed and over 2,000 people injured since a Russian-led assault on the last rebel bastion in northwestern Syria began two months ago, rights groups and rescuers said on Saturday.

Russian jets joined the Syrian army on April 26 in the biggest offensive against parts of rebel-held Idlib province and adjoining northern Hama provinces in the biggest escalation in the war between Syrian President Bashar al Assad and his enemies since last summer.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights, (SNHR), which monitors casualties and briefs various UN agencies, said the 544 civilians killed in the hundreds of attacks carried out by Russian jets and the Syrian army include 130 children. Another 2,117 people have been injured.

"The Russian military and its Syrian ally are deliberately targeting civilians with a record number of medical facilities bombed," Fadel Abdul Ghany, chairman of SNHR, told Reuters.

Russia and its Syrian army ally deny their jets hit indiscriminately civilian areas with cluster munitions and incendiary weapons, which residents in opposition areas say are meant to paralyse every-day life.

Moscow says its forces and the Syrian army are fending off terror attacks by al Qaeda militants whom they say hit populated, government-held areas, and it accuses rebels of wrecking a ceasefire deal agreed last year between Turkey and Russia.

Last month U.S.-based Human Rights Watch said the Russian-Syrian joint military operation had used cluster munitions and incendiary weapons in the attacks along with large air-dropped explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated civilian areas, based on reports by first responders and witnesses.

Residents and rescuers say the two-month-old campaign has left dozens of villages and towns in ruins. According to the United Nations, at least 300,000 people have been forced to leave their homes for the safety of areas closer to the border with Turkey.

"Whole villages and towns have been emptied," said Idlib-based Civil Defence spokesman Ahmad al Sheikho, saying it was the most destructive campaign against Idlib province since it completely fell to the opposition in the

middle of 2015.

On Friday, 15 people, including children, were killed in the village of Mhambil in western Idlib province after Syrian army helicopters dropped barrel bombs on a civilian quarter, the civil defence group and witnesses said.

The heads of 11 major global humanitarian organizations warned at the end of last month that Idlib stood at the brink of disaster, with 3 million civilian lives at risk, including 1 million children.

“Too many have died already” and “even wars have laws” they declared, in the face of multiple attacks by government forces and their allies on hospitals, schools and markets,” the U.N.-endorsed statement said.

Last Thursday an aerial strike on Kafr Nabl hospital made it the 30th facility to be bombed during the campaign, leaving hundreds of thousands with no medical access, according to aid groups.

“To have these medical facilities bombed and put out of service in less than two months is no accident. Let’s call this by what it is, a war crime,” Dr. Khaula Sawah, vice president of the U.S.-based Union of Medical Care and Relief Organisations, which provides aid in the northwest, said in a statement.



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US call for Syria troops divides German coalition
Regime bombings kill 14 civilians in northwest Syria

Syrians, facing orders to demolish homes, fear fate in Lebanon

Author:

Sun, 2019-07-07 21:39

ARSAL, LEBANON: Dima Al-Kanj's house is now a pile of rubble and twisted metal.

It was just a concrete hut near the Lebanese border, but she had spent five years trying to make it cosy for her children after fleeing the war in Syria. Then, under army orders, she had to smash it.

"Every year, we fixed up one thing after another so that we could live in what you'd call a home," she said, standing in the room levelled to the ground in the remote Lebanese town of Arsal. "Now, there's nothing left."

Kanj is among thousands of Syrian refugees who will be left stranded by a government decision to dismantle "semi-permanent structures" in eastern Lebanon, aid agencies say.

At least 15,000 children could become homeless.

Lebanon is toughening enforcement of work and housing rules – some of which were ignored for years – on its more than 1 million Syrian refugees. Lebanese politicians have also ramped up their calls for the Syrians to leave.

The army demolished at least 20 refugee homes on Monday, seven global aid agencies said.

In the makeshift Arsal camp where Kanj lives, home to 450 people, refugees said the army arrived at dawn with a small bulldozer taking down a few shelters.

Soldiers came again two days later as a reminder that people must remove their concrete walls and metal roofs.

Kanj, 30, has since paid men from a nearby camp to knock down her hut with jackhammers. She preferred to do it herself than face a forcible demolition. She and her four small children are now crammed into their neighbour's hut across the dirt road with a dozen people.

"We're all sitting inside the same room on top of each other with our stuff," she said. "We can't rent a place or leave or do anything at all."

People at the camp said they would follow the rules but have found it hard to meet deadlines and find money for equipment. They must also get rid of the rubble.

Some worry they will not manage to cobble together the permitted tents from wood and plastic sheeting, which would barely shield them from Arsal's harsh winter.

The military first told them of the order some two months ago and has since allowed grace periods. The army has not commented on the demolitions, but a military source said the forces were executing a legal regulation.

"Of course, we're scared of the future," Kanj said. "God knows what more decisions (authorities) will come up with next."

'START FROM SCRATCH'

Human Rights Watch described the shelter order as "one of many recent actions

to crank up pressure on Syrian refugees to go back.” These include more arrests, deportations, shop closures, curfews, evictions and other measures in the past months, it said on Friday.

Some Lebanese officials have called the mainly Sunni refugees a threat to Lebanon, warning the concrete huts would lead to their lasting settlement. It is a thorny topic in a country with a fragile sectarian political system where informal settlements of Palestinians have expanded after they came decades ago.

Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil, the president’s son-in-law, has pushed hard for Syrians to go home, insisting they should not wait for an elusive peace deal to end the war.

Last month, he said town councils could get refugees to leave by “implementing the law and protecting public order”.

But activists accuse his party and other politicians of fueling hostility towards refugees and blaming them for Lebanon’s long-existing problems.

Abou Firas, a Syrian refugee who oversees the same Aarsal camp, said they would leave if they could.

As fighting died down and Damascus reclaimed much of Syria, tens of thousands of refugees have returned, Lebanese authorities say. Still, aid agencies say many have fears about going home, including reprisals, military conscription, loss of property, or fresh waves of violence.

“There’s a lot of uncertainty about our fate,” said Abou Firas, who must demolish his family’s hut too. “We don’t intend on permanently settling here.”

“This room becomes a part of you,” he added. “You put effort into fixing it up ... and suddenly you find yourself having to start from scratch.”



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Syrians return to their home city by Lebanese border in state-organized trip
HRW condemns 'pressure' on Syrians to leave Lebanon