

Egypt to host African summits Tuesday on Sudan, Libya

Author:

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CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi will lead two emergency summits with other African leaders on Tuesday to address events in Sudan and Libya, his presidency said.

The leaders will focus on “the evolution of the situation in Sudan” where protests continue after the military toppled president Omar Al-Bashir. They will also seek to “stem the current crisis” in Libya, where commander Khalifa Haftar is leading an offensive on Tripoli, Egypt’s presidency said in a statement.

El-Sisi is also the current president of the African Union.

He will receive the Chadian president Idriss Deby, Rwanda’s head of state Paul Kagame, Congo’s Denis Sassou-Nguesso, Somalia’s Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed and South Africa’s Cyril Ramaphosa as well as Djibouti’s leader Ismail Omar Guelleh.

The planned summits are the first to be convened by African leaders on the current crises in Sudan and Libya.

For Sudan, the objective “is to discuss ... the most appropriate ways to address the evolution of the situation and to contribute to stability and peace,” Egypt’s presidency said.

The AU on April 15 threatened to suspend Sudan if the military does not hand over power within 15 days of that date to a civilian authority.

President of the African Union commission Moussa Faki is also expected to participate in the discussions, along with officials from Ethiopia, South Sudan, Uganda, Kenya and Nigeria.

Another summit on Libya, which will bring together the leaders of Rwanda, South Africa and the Congo with El-Sisi, will focus on “relaunching a political process... (and) the elimination of terrorism,” Egypt’s presidency said.

Strongman Haftar’s self-styled Libyan National Army launched an offensive against Tripoli, the seat of the internationally recognized Government of National Accord, on April 4.

Egypt is a strong ally of Haftar, who is also backed by the UAE and – according to the White House – was consulted by US President Donald Trump in a phone call last week.



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Sudan tensions escalate after talks with military break downLibyan force slows Tripoli push over concerns for civilians

[Libyan force slows Tripoli push over concerns for civilians](#)

Author:

Mon, 2019-04-22 21:09

TUNIS, Tunisia: A self-styled Libyan army slowed down its push on the country's capital over concerns for civilians caught up in the violence as the UN refugee agency said Monday that the fighting for Tripoli has displaced more than 32,000 people.

Fighting erupted on April 5, pitting the self-styled Libyan National Army, led by commander Khalifa Haftar and aligned with a rival government in the east, against militias affiliated with Tripoli's UN-supported government. The clashes threaten to ignite a new civil war in Libya on the scale of the 2011 uprising that toppled and killed longtime dictator Muammar Qaddafi. The death toll from this month's fighting climbed to 254, including

combatants and civilians, the World Health Organization said Sunday. At least 34 more people died in the past two days, WHO said; 1,228 were wounded. Since launching his push, which many see as a power grab for Tripoli, Haftar's forces have captured the districts of Gharyan and Qasr Bani Ghashi, along with several smaller towns. They also seized the capital's shuttered old airport.

Fighting is now underway for control of Ain Zara and Azizya, two larger towns near Tripoli, and in the Abu Salim district, about 7 kilometers (4 miles) from Tripoli center.

Abdelhadi Lahouij, the top diplomat for the east-based government, told The Associated Press in Tunis on Sunday that Haftar's push was slowed down because of concerns for civilians in the greater Tripoli area, estimated to number about 3 million.

If the civilians had not been taken into account, the battle would not have lasted even a week, he said.

"The army is today 20 kilometers (12.5 miles) from Tripoli. It controls the (old) airport and the bridge that connects the airport to the city center," Lahouij said.

He also lauded President Donald Trump's call to Haftar last week expressing US support for the Libyan commander's perceived stance against terrorism and Haftar's role in "securing Libya's oil resources."

A White House statement on Friday also said "the two discussed a shared vision for Libya's transition to a stable, democratic political system."

Trump's phone call was a step "in the right direction," Lahouij said.

Since Gaddafi's ouster, Libya has slid into chaos, governed by rival authorities in the east and in Tripoli, each backed by various militias and armed groups fighting over resources and territory.

Haftar has vowed to unify the country. He has led previous campaigns against Islamic militants and other rivals in eastern Libya, and has received support from the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Russia and France.



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Haftar forces press offensive on Libyan capital Libya reopens Tripoli's only functioning airport

[Former Turkish PM Davutoglu sharply criticizes Erdogan's AK Party](#)

Author:

Mon, 2019-04-22 21:01

ANKARA: A former prime minister and close ally of President Tayyip Erdogan strongly criticized the ruling AK Party on Monday, blaming policy changes and an alliance with nationalists for its poor performance in Turkey's local elections last month.

In his first major public challenge to Erdogan since leaving office three years ago, Ahmet Davutoglu, an AKP member, slammed the party's economic policies, media restrictions and the damage he said it had done to the separation of powers and to Turkey's institutions.

Davutoglu, a high profile figure in the party, served as prime minister between 2014 and 2016 before falling out with Erdogan, who has ruled Turkey with his AKP for 16 years.

In a serious blow to Erdogan, the AKP lost control of the capital Ankara and Turkey's largest city Istanbul in the March 31 elections. The AKP and its Islamist predecessors had governed the two cities for 25 years.

"The election results show that alliance politics have caused harm to our party, both in terms of voter levels and the party's identity," Davutoglu said in a 15-page statement.

The AKP and the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) formed an alliance before presidential and parliamentary elections in June last year in which Erdogan won the executive presidency but saw the level of support for his party fall.

"Scaring global investors"

There were no signs of a lira reaction to Davutoglu's statement. The currency had weakened in early trade and stood at 5.8350 against the dollar, from a close of 5.8170 on Friday.

Davutoglu said the party's reformist, liberal ethos had been replaced in recent years by a more statist, security-based approach that was driven by concerns about preserving the status quo.

He also said recent economic policy decisions showed a move away from free market principles and that "scaring global investors necessary to the development of the country is a dead-end."

The Turkish economy slipped into recession in the last quarter of 2018 after

a currency crisis which has wiped 35 percent off the value of the lira since the start of last year.

“The main reason for the economic crisis is an administration crisis. Trust in the administration vanishes if economic policy decisions are far from reality,” Davutoglu said.

He also warned against cronyism in public administration and said that recruitment should be transparent and based on competence and qualifications, not on personal connections.

In recent years there has been repeated media speculation that prominent AKP politicians might break away to establish a new political party, but that has not happened and Davutoglu made no mention of such a prospect.

Instead, he stressed the need for reform within: “I call on our party’s executives and relevant bodies to assess all these subjects and our future vision sensibly and with cool heads.”



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Turkey’s opposition leader attacked at soldier’s funeral
Turkey says understands NATO concerns over Russian missile deal

[**Israeli troops accused of shooting**](#)

handcuffed Palestinian

Author:

Mon, 2019-04-22 20:54

BEIT JALA, West Bank: A hospitalized Palestinian teen said Monday he was shot in his thighs by Israeli soldiers while he was handcuffed and blindfolded – the latest in what a leading rights group portrayed as a series of unjustified shootings of Palestinians by Israeli soldiers.

The military said it was investigating last week's incident, which it said took place as Palestinian youths were throwing stones at Israeli soldiers. Osama Hajjahjeh, 16, said he was trying to run from soldiers when he was shot Thursday. He said the incident began after a funeral for a school teacher in his village of Tekoa, who had been hit by a car driven by an Israeli while walking at a busy intersection.

Hajjahjeh said school was let out early for students to attend the funeral. After the burial, he said he was tackled by a soldier who jumped out of an olive grove and forced him to the ground. He said his hands were cuffed and his eyes covered with a cloth blindfold.

After the arrest, he said he could hear Palestinian youths shouting at the soldiers, while soldiers yelled back in Arabic and Hebrew.

"I got confused" and stood up, he said. "Immediately, I was shot in my right leg. Then I tried to run, and I was shot in my left leg and fell on the ground," he said, speaking from his hospital bed in the West Bank town of Beit Jala south of Jerusalem. Doctors said he is in stable condition.

A photo captured by a local photographer shows soldiers appearing to pursue a fleeing Hajjahjeh with his eyes covered and hands tied behind his back.

The shooting set off a chaotic scene. Soldiers and Palestinians shouted at each other as the teen lay on the ground. One soldier took off the teen's belt and used it as a tourniquet to stop the bleeding.

Amateur video shows a masked soldier screaming and pointing a pistol at a group of anguished Palestinians as the teen lies on the ground. Later, a soldier scuffles with residents as another soldier fires into the air. A soldier and two Palestinian men then carry away the teen to medical care.

In a statement, the military said the teen had been arrested after participating in "massive stone throwing" at Israeli forces.

"The detainee was held at a nearby spot and began running away from the force. The soldiers chased him, during which they fired toward his lower abdomen," it said.

The statement did not say anything about him being blindfolded or cuffed, but said the military offered medical treatment after the shooting and was investigating the event.

Hajjahjeh's father, Ali, said he was thankful a soldier gave his son medical care. But he said his son never should have been shot to begin with.

"Only a sick person would shoot a blindfolded boy," he said.

The Israeli human rights group B'Tselem said the incident was the latest in a series of what it called unjustified shootings on Palestinian teens and young men. It says four Palestinians in their late teens or early twenties have been killed in the West Bank since early March.

The army has challenged the Palestinian witness accounts, but also frequently

announces investigations into disputed cases.

B'Tselem has long criticized military investigations, saying they rarely result in punishments and alleging they're used to whitewash abuses by troops.

"Like the previous four cases we investigated, this is an example of Israel's reckless use of lethal fire, and the fact that the human lives of Palestinians count very little in the eyes of the army," said Roy Yellin, a spokesman for the group.



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BAGHDAD: More than \$60 million dollars in public funds were embezzled by Mosul officials close to the province's sacked governor in the wake of last month's ferry sinking, Iraqi officials said Monday. Iraq's anti-corruption Integrity Commission said officials from the Nineveh province, of which Mosul is the capital, had embezzled a total of \$64 million in public funds.

They included nearly \$40 million set aside to rebuild the city, which was ravaged by three years of Daesh group rule followed by months of fierce fighting to oust the jihadists.

The money was stolen in the aftermath of a tragic ferry sinking in March that left more than 100 people dead and prompted parliament to unanimously fire governor Nawfel Akoub, who has since gone on the run.

In its Monday statement, the Integrity Commission said officials "close to Akoub" had stolen the funds but did not accuse him personally.

It said 14 officials were detained earlier this month after its probe found that "cheques and wire transfers of public funds had been made out to the personal accounts of senior officials."

Of the missing money, "just six million dollars" were recovered by the government, a commission member told AFP.

Parliament had been investigating accusations of profound corruption among Nineveh officials, and their results came to light amid outrage over the Mother's Day ferry sinking.

Some officials have been arrested but Akoub remains at large, thought to be hiding out in Irbil, the capital of Iraq's Kurdish region.

Graft is endemic across Iraq, which ranks among the world's worst offenders in Transparency International's annual Corruption Perceptions Index.

Since 2004, a year after the US-led invasion that ousted Saddam Hussein, a total of \$228 billion has vanished into the pockets of shady politicians and businessmen, according to parliament.



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