

Jordan upgrades diplomatic ties with Syria

Tue, 2019-01-22 19:37

JEDDAH: Jordan has appointed a chargé d'affaires to Syria in an upgrade of diplomatic ties.

An unnamed Jordanian diplomat with the ranking of advisor will begin work again at the Jordanian embassy in Damascus, a foreign ministry spokesman said. "The decision is inline with the Jordanian stance since the Syrian revolution erupted in 2011," he said.

The decision is the latest move from Arab countries to improve relations with Bashar Al-Assad's government, which was ostracized by many countries in the region when the Syrian war started in 2011.

Last month, the UAE reopened its embassy in Damascus after seven years and there has been speculation that Syria will be allowed back into the Arab league after it was kicked out in 2011. Bahrain also plans to reopen its embassy in the Syrian capital.

Sudan president, Omar Al-Bashir, became the first Arab leader to visit Damascus when he traveled there in December.

Jordan recalled its ambassador in 2011 but diplomatic ties were never fully severed, despite Amman's support for some rebel groups fighting Assad's forces.

In recent months there have been signs of an improvement in relations. In October, Jordan reopened a border crossing with Syria that had been closed for three years. The route once carried billions of dollars of trade each year.

In November, a delegation of Jordanian MPs traveled to Damascus and met Assad in a visit to discuss ways to improve relations.





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UAE reopens Syrian embassy in Damascus Bahrain resumes activity in embassy in Syria

[Sudan president Bashir to visit Qatar](#)

Mon, 2019-01-21 22:14

Sudan's president Omar Al-Bashir will arrive in Qatar on Tuesday, Qatar's state news agency reported.

It added that Al-Bashir would meet Qatar's Emir on Wednesday to discuss matters of common interest.

Sudan has been rocked by antigovernment protests calling for Al-Bashir to stand down.

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Sudan protesters show resilience, employ Arab Spring tactics
Sudan police shoot live fire outside home of dead protester

[Turkey demands security role in Manbij](#)

Author:

Mon, 2019-01-21 21:56

ANKARA: After Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan told US President Donald Trump on Sunday that Turkey was ready to take over security keeping in Manbij in northern Syria without delay, eyes are turned toward the parameters and feasibility of such a target.

As Moscow tries to have primacy after the pullout of 2,000 American troops from the country, its reaction toward Turkish maneuvers to assume the security-provider role in the predominantly Arab town is still uncertain.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov recently expressed the Kremlin's expectation that the Assad government takes over the territory in eastern Syria after the US withdrawal to establish its sovereignty.

The Kurds are also gradually turning to the regime and the Kremlin for support.

When Russia recently dispatched military police to the western part of Manbij, this move was seen by experts as a counter-maneuver to remind regional partners of Russian presence against any military advancement and to fill the political and military vacuum in the area.

Ankara and Washington are also negotiating the possible creation of a 30-kilometer safe zone along the Turkish frontier with northern Syria to push back Kurdish militants from its border.

Joe Macaron, a resident fellow at the Arab Center in Washington, thinks that while Washington and Ankara remain locked in negotiating the post-US withdrawal, their core interests in northern Syria are irreconcilable.

"It is difficult to see how the US can reach a deal with Turkey to stabilize Manbij and east of Euphrates River without committing to stay in Syria in the short term, at least to make sure there is no Turkish-Kurdish confrontation," he told Arab News.

For Macaron, the stakes are high, as both the US and Turkey want a deal to prevent the Russian-backed Syrian regime from filling the vacuum but this deal seems improbable given their widely different views on the Kurdish role in Syria.

In 2016, the town of Manbij, being located 20 miles south of the Syrian-Turkish border, was captured by US-backed alliance of Arab and Kurdish militia, known as the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). However, Ankara has since threatened to launch a military offensive to oblige the Kurdish militia YPG that leads the SDF to withdraw from Manbij, a predominantly Arab town, as Turkey considers the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) a terror group.

Since early November, American and Turkish troops were conducting joint patrols around the city of Manbij for averting any clashes between Turkey and Kurdish militia.

Some Syrian Arab tribes in Manbij recently called for Turkish intervention against YPG especially following its call for compulsory enlistment and discrimination against Arab locals.

A recent Daesh-claimed suicide attack in Manbij, in which about 20 people, including US service personnel, were killed, is also seen as a development that may slow the US pullout.

On Monday, a bomb attack against a YPG and US army convoy in Hasakah province in northeastern Syria killed at least five.

"As the US and Turkey are negotiating cooperation in northeastern Syria based

on the Manbij model, one of the complications is that the Manbij model itself is not successfully completed yet," Ozgur Unluhisarcikli, Ankara office director of German Marshall Fund of the US, told Arab News.

"Therefore, successful implementation of the Manbij road map would not only be an important confidence-building measure as far as Turkey is concerned, but also a prerequisite for US-Turkey cooperation in the east of the Euphrates."

According to Unluhisarcikli, it would also be a litmus test for Turkey's capabilities before it takes on bigger roles.

"The US cannot realistically withdraw its forces from Syria before the transition in the east of Euphrates is completed, in one form or another, and the current pace of the Manbij road map is not very promising for those who desire a quick withdrawal," he said.

Kerim Has, a Moscow-based Russia analyst, thinks that the Kremlin will certainly not wish for and try to impede a new, large-scale military Turkish army incursion into Syria, but may have to concede to Turkey's demands for a 'symbolic military victory' before the local elections in Turkey depending on what it gets in return.

"If Turkey takes the control of Manbij, we may assume firstly that, Ankara and Washington have reached a deal; secondly, YPG is withdrawing from the region and Turkish army is not going to fight against YPG and thirdly, the withdrawal of YPG from Manbij will result in favor of Turkey's advancement in Syria," Has told Arab News.

According to Has, Moscow can give a consent to the Turkish army for entering Manbij only if Turkey transfers control of the city to regime forces in a short period of time.

"In this case, Turkey will play a 'subcontractor role' of saving the face of the US in its relations with Russia and the regime on Syria and Kurds," he said.

"For Russia, taking Manbij from Turkey, rather than the US, may seem a 'smooth transition' of the city's control to Damascus."

But, in any case, Has noted, Turkey's further advancement in Syria is already becoming a risk for Moscow.

"Russians will probably prioritize reaching a deal between regime and the Kurds until the last moment before giving a 'green light' to the Turkish forces entering Manbij and put the Idlib issue on the table as the top agenda," he said.



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Erdogan: Turkey will not allow Syria safe zone that will turn into 'swamp'
Turkey-backed fighters await 'zero hour' to attack Syria's Manbij

[HRW criticizes Italy, EU's Libya migrant policy](#)

Author:

Mon, 2019-01-21 21:23

CAIRO: Human Rights Watch is urging Italy and the EU to condition their support to Libya on tangible improvements in detention conditions for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

The New York-based rights group says in a report Monday that unquestioning foreign support for Libya's coast guard leads to migrants being held in "arbitrary, abusive detention."

It condemned such efforts to stem migration to Europe as contributing “to a cycle of extreme abuse” against people fleeing war and poverty.

The report documents “severe overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, malnutrition, and lack of adequate health care” in detention centers, including at least four instances of violent abuse by guards.

It says children have also been seen to be held in poor conditions.

Millions of migrants have applied for asylum in Europe, but some countries have toughened their asylum laws and tried to deport more people than they did previously.

On Sunday, a private rescue boat carrying dozens of migrants said that for a second day several nations had not given permission for it to enter a safe port, while another vessel filled with panicky migrants and described as taking on water in the southern Mediterranean was helped by a cargo ship.

The Dutch-flagged boat Sea-Watch 3, run by a German non-governmental group, said it had contacted Italy, Malta, Libya and the Netherlands asking where it could land the 47 migrants it had taken aboard. Sea-Watch tweeted that Libyan officials hung up when it asked for a port assignment.

An Italian state TV reporter aboard Sea-Watch 3 said the rescue took place Saturday about 50 km off the coast west of Tripoli in Libya’s search-and-rescue area. Libya-based human traffickers launch flimsy or rickety boats crowded with migrants hoping to reach Europe and its opportunities for better lives.



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Boat with migrants rescued off Libya looks for port to dock Boat carrying over 300 migrants rescued off Libya reaches Spain

[Egypt arrests 24 in demolition protests near pyramids](#)

Author:

By HAMZA HENDAWI | AP

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Mon, 2019-01-21 (All day)

CAIRO: Egyptian security officials say police have arrested 24 people who tried to prevent authorities from demolishing illegal buildings near the Giza pyramids.

They say police used tear gas to disperse residents and shopkeepers in the Nazlet el-Samman village on Monday after they scuffled with police escorting the demolition workers.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief the media.

Monday's violence follows a recent announcement that a private Egyptian company will take charge of running the historical site that includes the Great Pyramid and the Sphinx, which are visited by millions every year. Many of the village's residents make a living off visitors, hawking souvenirs and offering horse rides. Tourists have long complained of being harassed or overcharged.



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