

UN draft resolution calls for Yemen truce, two weeks to unblock Hodeidah port for aid shipments

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Mon, 2018-11-19 14:49

UN, NEW YORK: A UN draft resolution on Yemen presented to the Security Council on Monday calls for an immediate truce in the port city of Hodeidah and sets a two-week deadline for removing all barriers to humanitarian aid, according to the draft seen by AFP.

Britain circulated the draft to the 14 other council members after hearing a report on Friday from a UN envoy working to arrange [peace talks in Sweden](#) to end the nearly four-year war.

A vote on the measure has yet to be scheduled.

The proposed resolution would significantly ratchet up the pressure to find a negotiated settlement in Yemen, where millions are on the brink of starvation.

The UN considers Yemen the world's biggest humanitarian crisis and has warned that without a stop to the fighting, the country will face one of the worst famines in decades.

The draft text calls "on the parties to introduce a cessation of hostilities in Hodeidah governorate, to end all attacks on densely populated civilian areas across Yemen and to cease all missile and UAV attacks against regional countries and maritime areas."

The Red Sea port of Hodeidah, which is controlled by the Iranian-backed Houthi militia and is a key point of entry for aid and imports to Yemen, has seen heavy fighting over the past weeks.

The text calls on warring sides to "facilitate the unhindered flow of commercial and humanitarian food, water, fuel, medicine and other essential imports across the country, including by removing within two weeks of the adoption of this resolution, any bureaucratic impediments that could restrict such flows."

The truce would go into effect on the day of the adoption of the resolution. Under the proposed measures, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres would report to the council within two weeks on the cessation of hostilities.

The council said it was ready to "consider further measures" to support a political solution the war, the draft said.

The measure calls for a large injection of foreign currency into the economy through the central bank to support the collapsing currency and for salaries of civil servants, teachers and health workers to be paid within one month. It supports a series of confidence-building measures aimed at paving the way to peace talks including the release of prisoners, the re-opening of the airport in the rebel-held capital Sanaa to commercial flights and strengthening the central bank.

Both sides are urged to engage with UN envoy Martin Griffiths, who is due to travel to Sanaa this week to finalize arrangements for the peace talks that he hopes to convene soon.

Yemen's internationally recognized government said Monday it will take part in the talks, hours after the Houthi leader, Mohammed Ali Al-Houthi, said he was ready to freeze military operations.

The Saudi Arabian-led coalition has been fighting the Houthis in order to restore to power Yemeni President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi, whose government is recognized by the UN.

British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt arrived Monday in Iran for the first time to discuss Tehran's role in Yemen, meeting with his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif.



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UN calls for Hodeidah ceasefire as momentum gathers for Yemen peace talks
Yemeni forces launch massive new offensive to capture Hodeidah from Houthis

[Putin and Erdogan in Turkey to mark key phase in pipeline](#)

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Mon, 2018-11-19 (All day)

ISTANBUL: Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan are in Istanbul to mark the completion of a key phase in a natural gas pipeline.

The two leaders on Monday are marking the completion of the offshore part of TurkStream's two lines that will carry natural gas from Russia to Turkey. The lines when finished are expected to supply Russian gas to European markets through Turkish territories. Together the two 930-kilometer (578-mile) lines via the Black Sea will carry 31.5 billion cubic meters (1.1 trillion cubic feet) of natural gas annually.

Turkey relies on imports for its energy needs and Russia is its top supplier for natural gas. It bought 28 billion cubic meters last year. That gas is currently transported through another line under the Black Sea and the onshore West Line through Ukraine, which is mired in conflict with Russia.



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Turkey, Russia, Iran to hold Syria talks next week
Turkey says US support for Syrian Kurdish YPG a "big mistake"

[Egyptian sentenced to death for murder of Christian doctor](#)

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Sun, 2018-11-18 22:02

CAIRO: An Egyptian man affiliated with Daesh was sentenced to death Saturday in the fatal stabbing of an 82-year-old Christian doctor in Cairo in Sept. 2017.

The assailant, identified as 40-year-old Hassan G., pretended to be a patient to gain access to the doctor, identified as Dr. Tharwat. Once admitted to the clinic's examination room he began stabbing the elderly doctor. When the doctor's assistant, Susan K., attempted to intervene, she was also stabbed. During the trial, prosecutors said the defendant had embraced the extremist ideology of Daesh.

At the time of the incident, the Ministry of Interior reported that the defendant's motivation was believed to be financial. He was unemployed and facing financial difficulties and intended to rob the doctor, it was believed.

Saturday's verdict will be sent to the Grand Mufti, Egypt's top Muslim cleric, for ratification. While the Grand Mufti's opinions are not binding, he is customarily asked to review death sentences and his recommendation is often followed.

Also on Saturday, another Egyptian court sentenced one Egyptian to death and six others to 10 years in prison. The defendants had appealed a similar Dec. 2016 sentence over an attack on policemen and soldiers north of Cairo; most attacks on police, military and civilians in Egypt over the last few years have been claimed by the Daesh.

Daesh, which has gained a foothold in the remote areas of Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, has vowed to target Egypt's Christian minority in retaliation for their support of President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi.

In early November, Daesh claimed credit for an attack on a bus carrying Christian pilgrims outside the Monastery of St. Samuel that left seven dead and wounded 19 – in nearly the same location that another attack killed 28 pilgrims in May 2017. In response, the Ministry of Interior announced two days later that 19 "militants" linked to the attack had been killed.

Elected in 2014, El-Sisi has cracked down on the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamic groups since coming to power after Muslim Brotherhood ex-President Muhammad Mursi was removed from power in the summer of 2013. Mursi's ouster came after mass protests calling for the removal of the Muslim Brotherhood. Daesh blames El-Sisi for the ensuing crackdown on Mursi's followers.

The Coptic Orthodox leadership and many other Christians supported El-Sisi in the wake of Mursi's ouster, hoping he could protect them against violent attacks by Islamists.

Groups affiliated with Daesh have claimed responsibility for numerous attacks against Christians in the four years since El-Sisi's election. In 2015, the group posted a video of the beheading of a dozen Christian Egyptians in Libya.

In December 2016, a suicide bomber killed 29 in an attack on St. Mark's Cathedral compound in Cairo. Daesh took credit for killing nearly 80 Egyptian Christians and wounding over 150 in 2017 in two Palm Sunday bombings and attacks on buses carrying Christians. Last month, an Egyptian military court sentenced 17 to death for the fatal attacks.



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Reward offered for leads in Canada billionaire couple's murder
Daesh-aligned groups warn of more attacks in Western nations

[Netanyahu in crucial talks as he resists snap polls](#)

Sun, 2018-11-18 22:00

JERUSALEM: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu resisted calls for snap polls Sunday, saying Israeli elections now would be "unnecessary and wrong," ahead of what he called last-ditch talks to hold his embattled coalition together.

Netanyahu's right-wing coalition was thrown into crisis Wednesday after Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman's resignation over a controversial Gaza cease-fire deal, leading to speculation over whether early elections have become inevitable.

After Lieberman's withdrawal along with his Yisrael Beiteinu party, Netanyahu's government was left clinging to a one-seat majority in the 120-seat Parliament.

Key coalition partners say that is unworkable.

Netanyahu, who has sought to delay calling elections, made his case at the Cabinet meeting on Sunday.

“In a period of security sensitivity, it’s unnecessary and wrong to go to elections,” Netanyahu said.

HIGHLIGHTS

The Israeli government left clinging to a one-seat majority

Key coalition partners say the issue is unworkable.

Education Minister Naftali Bennett demands the defense portfolio to keep the government together.

He noted past instances when right-wing governments had called elections that did not turn out as they had hoped.

“We need to do whatever we can to avoid such mistakes,” he said.

Elections are not due until November 2019.

Education Minister Naftali Bennett of the far-right Jewish Home party, which holds eight seats in Parliament, has demanded the defense portfolio as a way of keeping the government together.

Netanyahu says he will take it over at least temporarily rather than hand the key ministry to one of his main right-wing rivals, though a last-minute deal could not be ruled out.

On Saturday, Bennett told Israeli television that Lieberman had “collapsed the government.”

“There is no more government and we are heading toward elections,” he said. “There is no other alternative.”

Bennett declined to comment to journalists when entering Sunday’s Cabinet meeting, but Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked of his Jewish Home party said in a statement that making him defense minister was “the only justification” to keep the government together.

Conflicting reports

Netanyahu met Bennett on Friday, but conflicting reports emerged from their discussions.

A source close to Bennett said the two had agreed that "it would be senseless to continue" with the same coalition.

"They will set a date for elections when they meet with the (other) coalition partners on Sunday," the source said.

Within minutes, a statement from Netanyahu's Likud said that was wrong.

"The prime minister told minister Bennett that rumors that a decision has been made to go to elections are not correct," it said.

The crisis was set into motion with Lieberman's resignation over the cease-fire that ended the worst escalation between Israel and Palestinian militants in Gaza since a 2014 war.

Separately, Netanyahu welcomed a US decision to vote for the first time against an annual UN resolution condemning Israel's occupation of the Golan Heights.

"I would like to thank President (Donald) Trump and Ambassador (Nikki) Haley on this important and just vote that is completely in keeping with my policy," Netanyahu said at the start of a Cabinet meeting.

"Israel will always remain on the Golan Heights, and the Golan Heights will always remain in our hands."

The US voted against the UN resolution on Friday, dropping its practice of abstaining.

The non-binding text was adopted in a General Assembly committee by a vote of 151 to 2, with the US and Israel the only two countries opposing the measure. Fourteen countries abstained.

Haley called the resolution "useless" and "plainly biased against Israel," citing concerns about Iran's military role in Syria to oppose the measure.

The vote continues US practice under Trump of adopting firmly pro-Israel positions.

In September, US ambassador to Israel David Friedman said he expects the Golan Heights to remain under Israeli control "forever."

Israel seized much of the Golan Heights from Syria in a 1967 war and later annexed it in moves never recognized by the international community.

The resolution declares that the Israeli decision to occupy and annex the Golan was "null and void," and calls on Israel to rescind its moves.



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Israel PM Netanyahu battles to save weakened ruling coalition
Israel defense minister Lieberman resigns over Gaza ceasefire

[Oman marks its 48th National Day](#)

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Sun, 2018-11-18 21:01

JEDDAH: The Sultanate of Oman has celebrated its 48th National Day, marking a period of peace and development under the leadership of Sultan Qaboos.

In celebration, Sultan Qaboos will preside over the “Glorious National Day” military parade on Sunday, which will be staged at the parade ground of the Royal Guard of Oman (RGO) Command.

On the occasion, Oman’s neighbors, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain, have congratulated the country’s leadership and its people on the event of their national day.

Oman and Saudi Arabia enjoy historic, brotherly relations on various issues, in which both countries are keen on strengthening and developing the interests of their peoples and their leaders.

48 years ago, in his first historic speech in 1970, Sultan Qaboos promised to establish a modern state. Years have proven that with under his wisdom, inspired by the values of the past and future aspirations, Qaboos has built a nation that upholds the values of justice, citizenship, equality and law.

Throughout the years, Oman has made numerous and continuous achievements in various fields while maintaining its originality and heritage, all while remaining at pace with contemporary developments.

The most important feature of the modern “Omani Renaissance” is that Sultan Qaboos has laid the foundations and pillars of national unity as a firm pillar of this nation.

This is accompanied by programs to stimulate tourism and investment in tourism projects in the various provinces of the Sultanate.

Oman also tops rankings by international institutions in indicators on various fields, such as terror-free countries, reliability of police services, the judicial independence index, the road quality and the port services efficiency index.







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