

Morocco arrests 25 'terrorism' suspects linked to Daesh: security source

Author:

AFP

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Sat, 2021-12-18 23:13

RABAT: Moroccan security forces arrested 25 people this month on suspicion of supporting Daesh group and planning "terrorist" attacks in the kingdom, a security source told AFP on Saturday.

The arrests took place in several cities on December 8 as part of "ongoing efforts to fight terrorist dangers," the source said on condition of anonymity.

Some of the suspects have already been referred to the judiciary, the source added.

Moroccan news outlets had reported a nationwide counter-terror operation on December 8 – the largest of its kind in recent years – but official sources had not confirmed the crackdown.

Reports on Saturday said that during the operations, authorities seized weapons including firearms and ammunition, as well as documents on bomb-making and material "glorifying the Daesh group."

They said investigations revealed the suspects were planning to carry out "specific" terrorist attacks inside Morocco.

Counter-terrorism police said Friday that they had thwarted a suspected Daesh bomb plot and arrested an alleged supporter of the group, in cooperation with US intelligence services.

The security source told AFP the operation had "no connection" to the arrests earlier this month.

On October 6, counter-terrorism police announced the dismantling of a "terror cell" in the northern city of Tangiers and the arrest of five suspects accused of plotting bomb attacks.

Since 2002, Moroccan police say they have dismantled 2,000 "terror cells" and arrested 3,500 people in cases linked to terror, according to figures published in February.



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Think tank warns of 'threat' of leaving Daesh members in 'insecure' Syrian camps
A fragile partnership in Iraq tries to prevent Daesh revival

[Lebanon imposes curfew for unvaccinated to prevent new holiday outbreak](#)

Author:

Sat, 2021-12-18 21:16

BEIRUT: Lebanese security services have imposed a three-week curfew for unvaccinated residents, with fines for those who break it, from 5 p.m. to 6 a.m. until Jan. 9, 2022, amid rising cases across the country.

The committee that follows up on coronavirus disease preventative measures said it would exclude those "with at least one vaccine dose or a negative PCR test in the last 48 hours and children under 12."

On Friday, the Ministry of Public Health reported 1,912 new COVID-19 cases, mostly in people between 30 and 39 years old, some of whom had received three vaccine doses. In addition, 14 deaths were recorded.

The ministry said: "We have had 22,168 active cases these last 14 days," adding only 34 percent of people had received two vaccine doses, with the lowest vaccination rate recorded in the Bekaa region.

Lebanese Red Cross Secretary-General George Kettaneh said that "ambulance teams transport 80 to 100 cases to hospitals every day, while over 1,200 oxygen concentrators have been distributed."

So far, Lebanon has had 60 cases of the new omicron variant, but Lebanese Health Minister Firass Abiad noted it is "rapidly spreading ... two and a half times faster than the delta variant."

Those who have received three vaccine doses have greater protection against omicron, he added.

Lebanon fears yet another outbreak over the holidays, particularly since the medical sector is exhausted amid shortages in staff, fuel, oxygen, medical supplies and medicines.

Suleiman Haroun, head of the Syndicate of Private Hospital Owners, said: "Hospitals are still able to accommodate patients, but they are of course under a lot of pressure, especially since 80 to 90 percent of COVID-19 beds are occupied."

Haroun added: "We fear the numbers will rise. The majority of cases currently do not require intensive care, but some patients are staying up to three weeks in the hospital."

In a bid to avoid an outbreak over the holidays, the committee that follows up on COVID-19 preventative measures imposed a limit of 50 percent capacity at any venue.

In addition, nightclubs, restaurants and hotels will deny entry to those without at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose or a negative PCR test in the past 48 hours.

Meanwhile, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres will arrive in Lebanon on Sunday to meet with President Michel Aoun, Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri and Prime Minister Najib Mikati, as well as civil society representatives.

Political observers ruled out the possibility of this affecting the work of the Cabinet, which has been paralyzed since mid-October.

The Canadian Embassy in Lebanon has urged Canadian nationals to "exercise a high degree of caution in Lebanon due to an unpredictable security situation and the risk of terrorist attack."

The embassy advised people to avoid certain areas, namely the southern suburbs of Beirut, Tripoli, Baalbek-Hermel, all Palestinian camps and areas

south of the Litani, “due to the presence of armed groups and the risk of violence from organized crime, kidnappings and threat of terrorist attacks.”



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[Rights violations on all sides of Ethiopia conflict, UN says](#)

Sat, 2021-12-18 00:31

GENEVA: All sides in the deepening conflict in northern Ethiopia are committing severe human rights violations and should pull back from their year-old war, the UN said.

An estimated 5,000 to 7,000 people are detained, including nine UN staff, under a state of emergency and its “excessively broad provision” declared by the government last month, the UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Nada Al-Nashif, said.

“Many are detained incommunicado or in unknown locations. This is tantamount to enforced disappearance, and a matter of very grave concern,” she told a special session of the UN Human Rights Council.

Ethiopia’s Ambassador to the UN in Geneva, Zenebe Kebede, did not comment directly on the accusations of detentions, but said that there was a failure to condemn what he said was a series of abuses by rebellious forces from the northern Tigray region.

“Ethiopia is being targeted and singled out at the Human Rights Council for defending a democratically elected government, the peace and the future of its people,” he said.

Thousands of civilians have died and millions have fled in the conflict between the federal government and rebellious forces including fighters loyal to the Tigray People’s Liberation Front, which dominated Ethiopia’s ruling coalition for nearly 30 years.

Al-Nashif said people had been detained in Oromiya and Benishangul-Gumuz regions this month.

“I also deplore increasing hate speech and incitement to violence by federal and regional authorities, as well as other public figures, particularly targeted against Tigrayans and members of the Oromo community,” she added.

The forum will consider a draft resolution brought by the EU that condemns violations by all sides. If adopted, it would set up an international commission of rights experts on Ethiopia to investigate and report back after a year.

The US called for the resolution’s adoption and for the Ethiopian government to “release all civilians and allow international monitors timely access to detainees.”

Ethiopia’s Zenebe rejected the resolution and said the government would not work with any such commission.

He added that the state-appointed Ethiopian Human Rights Commission had already worked with the UN rights office to investigate accusations of abuses, and was ready to do so again.

That joint investigation published last month found that all sides in Tigray’s conflict had committed violations that may amount to war crimes.

Diplomats expected the vote on the resolution to be close at the 47-member-state forum.

The African Group of countries said that “any politicization of the

investigation process must be avoided” and that the EU had “totally ignored its positions and advice on this delicate situation.”

The proposed investigative mechanism was “counterproductive and likely to exacerbate tensions,” it said, calling for the resolution to be rejected.

In Addis Ababa, Ethiopian government spokesman Legesse Tulu did not respond to requests for comment.



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Ethiopia urged to free reporters held under emergency laws
Tigray rebels retake Lalibela in Ethiopia

[Death toll in Darfur tribal clashes reaches 199](#)

Author:

Sat, 2021-12-18 00:42

KHARTOUM: At least 199 people have been killed in Sudan's restive Darfur in tribal clashes over the past two months, medics said on Friday, urging the government to stop the bloodshed.

The clashes, triggered by disputes over land, livestock and access to water and agriculture, have hit several parts of Darfur since early October.

The independent Doctors' Committee said 199 people have been killed, most of them shot dead.

"There are no concrete steps being taken from any side to stop the violence. The state is absent as well as the justice system and police are nowhere to be found," it said in a statement.

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the violence has displaced more than 83,000 people.

Darfur was ravaged by a civil war that erupted in 2003 between ethnic minority rebels, who complained of discrimination, and the Arab-dominated government of then president Omar Bashir.

Khartoum responded by unleashing the Janjaweed militia, blamed for atrocities including murder, rape and the looting and burning of villages.

The violence resulted in one of the world's worst humanitarian catastrophes. More than 300,000 people died and 2.5 million were displaced during the conflict, according to the UN.

Bashir, who is wanted by the International Criminal Court on charges of genocide in Darfur, was ousted and jailed in April 2019 after mass protests against his three-decade rule.



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Watchdog says UN monitors needed in violence-hit Darfur
Death toll in Sudan's Darfur tribal clashes hits 138: medics

[UN fears for Lebanon's children amid poverty and violence](#)

Author:

Fri, 2021-12-17 22:56

BEIRUT: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres will travel to Lebanon on Sunday for an official visit to the country.

The UN Information Office in Beirut said the visit was a gesture of solidarity, and that the secretary-general "will reiterate the support of all the UN family, the political mission, the peacekeeping forces and the humanitarian and relief workers to Lebanon and its people."

Two days before the visit, the special representative of the secretary-general on violence against children, Najat Maalla M'jid, conducted a tour of Lebanon, discussing "the huge impact of the economic, social and pandemic crises on children, especially the poor ones, in addition to all forms of violence against them.

"We looked into ways to support and accelerate the activation of national policies for social coverage and protection of children against all forms of violence, especially the fight of child labor, within the framework of an integrative approach to a series of very important services," M'jid said on Friday.

Her remarks came after meetings with Lebanon's President Michel Aoun and Prime Minister Najib Mikati.

"The UN supports the Lebanese government in the field of children's protection from violence, discrimination and poverty," she added.

A UNICEF report warned that "children in Lebanon are in danger, as 15 percent of families stopped their children's education, and 30 percent of children do not receive the needed primary healthcare."

By Thursday, 239,000 people in Lebanon had registered on the platform of the

Poorest Families Program, Mikati said.

Among those registered, 166,000 applications met the required specifications, which indicates the extent of social pressures, he added.

In the first stage, he said, \$125 will be paid to each family per month for a year, through funds secured by the World Bank.

There is also the issue of the ration card that will adopt the same platform for registration, which covers more than 500,000 families, he added,

“We have agreed with the World Bank that once the relief project begins and two months of credits are paid for the ration card at an acceptable cost from the funds of special withdrawals in the central bank, the World Bank will secure financing for the project for a period of one year, estimated at about \$500 million,” he said.

Mikati assured the Lebanese people that “there is an international decision not to let Lebanon collapse,” adding: “There is an external and internal umbrella that protects the government’s work.”

The prime minister stressed that the government would not hesitate to resign if it led to a solution, but said he felt the move would “cause a further deterioration in the situation, and may lead to the postponement of the parliamentary elections.”

Mikati also said talks were ongoing to resume Cabinet sessions.

Lebanon faces an economic crisis described by the World Bank as “one of the worst crises on Earth since the middle of the 19th century.” Around 80 percent of the Lebanese people live in poverty.

UNICEF estimated in a report published November that “more than 30 percent of families have at least one child who skipped a meal, while 77 percent of families say they lack sufficient food and 60 percent of them buy food by accumulating unpaid bills or borrowing money.”

The dollar rate was about to reach 29,000 Lebanese pounds in the middle of the week, but the intervention of the Lebanese Central Bank reduced it to around 26,000 pounds.



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