

Algeria to review relations with Morocco after 'hostile acts'

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Algiers: Algeria will review its relations with neighboring Morocco, which it accuses of involvement in deadly fires that have ravaged the North African country, a presidency statement said Wednesday.

"The incessant hostile acts carried out by Morocco against Algeria have necessitated the review of relations between the two countries," the Algerian statement said.

There would also be an "intensification of security controls on the western borders" with Morocco, the statement added.

Algeria is reeling from the devastation caused by dozens of forest fires in multiple sites that broke out amid a blistering heatwave on August 9, leaving at least 90 people dead, including 33 soldiers.

President Abdelmadjid Tebboune has said most of the fires were of "criminal" origin.

The decision to review relations with Rabat was made during an extraordinary meeting of the country's security council, chaired by Tebboune.

The statement provided no further details about what the review might mean. Algerian authorities have appeared to point the finger for the fires at the independence movement of the mainly Berber region of Kabylie, which extends along the Mediterranean coast east of the capital Algiers.

As well as the Paris-based Movement for Self-determination of Kabylie (MAK), Algiers has accused the Islamist-inspired Rachad movement of involvement. Algiers classified both as a "terrorist organization" in May.

The authorities also accuse the groups of involvement in the lynching of a man falsely accused of arson, an incident that sparked outrage. The mob also set the victim on fire.

The blazes burned tens of thousands of hectares of forest, with emergency services on Wednesday declaring all the fires had been extinguished.

Relations between Algiers and Rabat have been fraught in past decades, especially over the flashpoint issue of the disputed Western Sahara.



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Algeria forest fires extinguished: emergency services
Heartbroken and homeless: Algerian villagers grapples with wildfire aftermath

[Arab coalition reiterates support for Yemeni government as battle for Marib continues](#)

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Wed, 2021-08-18 22:31

ALEXANDRIA: The Arab coalition on Wednesday pledged to provide continuous military support to the internationally recognized government in Yemen in its ongoing battle against the Iran-backed Houthis.

It came as Lt. Gen. Mutlaq Al-Azima, deputy chief of the general staff and acting commander of the joint forces, and Lt. Gen. Mohammed Ali Al-Maqdishi, Yemen's defense minister, met to discuss military operations in the country and coalition support for government troops, the Saudi Press Agency reported.

Dozens of Houthis were reportedly killed on Tuesday and Wednesday during intensive air raids by coalition warplanes targeting rebel locations and military reinforcements in Marib and Jouf provinces. Yemeni military officials said the airstrikes prevented the Houthis from advancing in those areas and helped government forces make limited gains.

Skirmishes between government forces and rebels broke out on the ground in several places in the two provinces as Houthi efforts to recapture Marib city continued. Yemen's Defense Ministry said the Houthis suffered heavy casualties, with at least 15 killed, during an ambush by government forces in Al-Mashjah, west of Marib.

Fighting in the central Marib province escalated in February when the Houthis resumed a major military offensive in an attempt to conquer Marib city, the government's last bastion in the north of the country.

Government forces on Wednesday made limited advances in the northern province of Jouf after driving the Houthis from the mountains and surrounding areas in the district of Bart Al-Anan.

On Tuesday, Yemeni Prime Minister Maeen Abdul Malik Saeed appealed to the UN and other international donors to help the war-torn country cope with the rapid devaluation of its currency and an economic meltdown.

During a meeting in Riyadh with Cathy Westley, charge d'affairs of the US embassy in Yemen, Saeed called on global powers and aid organizations to allocate urgent funds to help his government implement plans to address the economic crisis and its dangerous repercussions on an already devastating humanitarian crisis, official Yemeni state news agency SABA reported.

The PM said his government's current priorities are halting the depreciation of the nation's currency, the implementation of the Riyadh Agreement, and ending the Houthi coup.

After a brief recovery last week, the value of the Yemeni riyal slipped again on Wednesday on the black market, reaching a rate of 1040 to the dollar, compared with 950 during the rebound.

In an attempt to halt the slide in value and control a chaotic exchange market, the central bank in Aden recently shut down several unregulated exchange firms, told the others to follow monetary rules, and ordered commercial and Islamic banks based in Sanaa to move their operations to Aden.



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In Yemen's north, Houthis face virus with outright denial
Houthis fire hundreds of 'renegade' security officers

[Saied grapples with Tunisia's economic woes](#)

Author:

Wed, 2021-08-18 02:52

TUNIS: At the Sidi Bahri market in Tunis, shoppers were pleased with the president's attacks on corruption and high prices since he seized control of the government last month.

President Kais Saied has criticized Tunisia's economic policy, urged traders to charge less for food and medicine and accused unnamed businessmen of stealing billions of dollars while police are investigating corruption in state industry.

"The citizen feels reassured and prices have gone down in everything," said Azza Belwaer, a 36-year-old medical equipment vendor buying groceries in Sidi Bahri.

However, three weeks after Saied sacked the prime minister and froze parliament, he has yet to appoint a new government, articulate any broad

economic policy or say how he intends to finance the public deficit and debt repayments.

Anger at economic stagnation, aggravated by the pandemic, helped drive apparently widespread popular support for Saied's sudden intervention on July 25.

As president, Saied has been formally responsible only for foreign affairs and defense. Before his election he gave few clues as to his economic views though some of his main supporters came from the political left.

One option may be help from Gulf states. Saied has boasted of contacts with "friendly countries" for help and has received envoys from two countries. Gulf aid could give Saied fiscal wiggle room, "letting political reforms start immediately, followed by economic reform by a stable government after elections," said economist Ezzidine Saidane.

Saied has an opportunity to take advantage of 'broad popular support' to propose urgent change.

Mohamed Ali Boughdiri

Mohamed Ali Boughdiri, deputy head of the Tunisian General Labour Union, said Saied had an opportunity to take advantage of "broad popular support" to propose urgent change.

It sees efforts to combat corruption, tax evasion and the informal economy as priorities, he said. Though the IMF has also urged efforts to reduce those, it sees tackling the public wages and subsidies as more pressing.

Saied is now responsible for resolving Tunisia's chronic economic troubles – potentially undermining the political transformation in which he appears most interested.

"In the big picture, these events have unleashed enormous expectations. It's going to be very difficult for him to meet those. He'll need the help of Tunisia's friends and an inclusive approach," said the diplomat.



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Tunisian president receives official US delegation
Tunisia arrests 14 officials in phosphate graft probe

[UAE senior official says Taliban statements encouraging](#)

Author:

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Tue, 2021-08-17 17:54

CAIRO: A senior UAE official said on Tuesday the statements of the Taliban are “encouraging”, in the first comment from the Gulf country since the fall of Kabul to the Islamist movement.

“Nations are not built with revenge, but through amnesty, through dialogue and tolerance,” said Anwar Gargash, the diplomatic advisor to the UAE president.

“We hope that the Afghans will turn the pages of suffering in favor of peace and prosperity,” he added on Twitter.



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Taliban chief takes charge as militants vow ‘no revenge, respect for women’
Taliban announce ‘general amnesty’ for Afghan government officials;
central bank chief flees

[Iran accelerates enrichment of uranium to near weapons-grade, IAEA says](#)

Author:

Wed, 2021-08-18 00:07

VIENNA: Iran has accelerated its enrichment of uranium to near weapons-grade, the UN atomic watchdog said in a report on Tuesday seen by Reuters, a move raising tensions with the West as both sides seek to resume talks on reviving Tehran’s nuclear deal.

Iran increased the purity to which it is refining uranium to 60 percent fissile purity from 20 percent in April in response to an explosion and power cut at its Natanz site that damaged output at the main underground enrichment

plant there.

Iran has blamed the attack on Israel. Weapons-grade is around 90 percent purity.

In May, the International Atomic Energy Agency reported that Iran was using one cascade, or cluster, of advanced centrifuges to enrich to up to 60 percent at its above-ground pilot enrichment plant at Natanz. The IAEA informed member states on Tuesday that Iran was now using a second cascade for that purpose, too.

The move is the latest of many by Iran breaching the restrictions imposed by the 2015 nuclear deal, which capped the purity to which Tehran can refine uranium at 3.67 percent. The United States and its European allies have warned such moves threaten talks on reviving the deal, which are currently suspended.

Following Reuters' report, Iran reiterated that its nuclear program is peaceful and said it had informed the IAEA about its enrichment activities. It added that its moves away from the 2015 deal would be reversed if the United States returned to the accord and lifted sanctions, Iranian state media reported.

"If the other parties return to their obligations under the nuclear accord and Washington fully and verifiably lifts its unilateral and illegal sanctions ... all of Iran's mitigation and countermeasures will be reversible," Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh was quoted as saying by state media.

The IAEA said on Monday that Iran had made progress in its work on enriched uranium metal despite objections by Western powers that there is no credible civilian use for such work.

Uranium metal can be used to make the core of a nuclear bomb, but Iran says its aims are peaceful and it is developing reactor fuel.



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Iran warns it can enrich uranium to nuclear weapons grade Iran gives IAEA notice of escalating uranium metal work