

# In northeast Syria town, families say Turkey cut their water

Author:

Wed, 2020-08-26 00:46

HASAKAH, Syria: Outside her home in northeast Syria, Sheikha Majid said her life had become an endless quest for fresh water, three weeks into the latest supply cut by Turkish forces.

"I spend the whole time running after water trucks," the 43-year-old grandmother said, amid an ongoing outage – one of many in recent months – in Hasakah, a city run by a semi-autonomous Kurdish administration.

As coronavirus spreads across northeastern Syria, residents in Hasakah have been caught up in spats between Turkish forces to the north and Syria's Kurds, viewed by Ankara as "terrorists."

In October last year, Turkish forces and their Syrian proxies occupied a 120-kilometer (75-mile) stretch of land inside the Syrian border, including the Alouk power station that supplies drinking water to Hasakah.

Kurdish officials say Turkey is now using the water station to pressure the local authorities into giving them more electricity in areas Ankara seized from them.

While Turkey claims the station has merely been under maintenance, aid organizations have warned against using water as a political or military tool to the detriment of civilians.

Majid said the latest supply cut had made it difficult to ensure basic hygiene for her seven children and two grandchildren.

"Most of the time we bathe in salty water" from wells instead, she said, adding that she used the brackish liquid for washing clothes too.

In the city's narrow streets, women and children clutched empty jerrycans, waiting to fill them up from water deliveries, some from aid groups.

On a rooftop, a young girl held a gushing green pipe over a water tank, funnelling water from a truck below.

"This time it's really dragged on," elderly resident Muhammad Khatar told AFP on Saturday, referring to the latest supply cut.

"All we want is to eat and drink, and do our job. We have nothing to do with politics."

The Kurds say there have been eight interruptions to the supply of water from the station near the town of Ras Al-Ain since last autumn.

The Turks “occupied our land and now they’re cutting off our water,” 45-year-old Saleh Fattah said.

The issue has sparked increasing concern at a time when confirmed coronavirus infections have risen to 362 cases including 25 deaths in Syria’s Kurdish-held northeast, according to data provided by the semi-autonomous administration. Dozens of those cases are in Hasakah.

In March, the UN warned one of the earlier water supply interruptions from Alouk was putting 460,000 people at risk in the Hasakah area, as the pandemic spread worldwide.

Kurdish forces spearheaded the US-backed battle against the Daesh group in Syria, but Ankara says they are linked to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) in Turkey.

Turkey’s Defense Ministry claimed on Aug. 6 the Alouk water facility was under maintenance but that Hasakah was still receiving water.

The Kurds say the water has been cut off, and the hashtag “Thirst is strangling Hasakah” has been trending online.

Damascus on Monday accused Ankara of using water as a “weapon against Syrian civilians.”

Kurdish officials say that, after Ankara’s military campaign in October, there was an initial deal for the Turks to ensure continued water supply from Alouk, in exchange for the Kurds providing electricity to newly taken areas.

But the Turks have been trying to exert pressure on the Kurds to give them more electricity, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor and a Kurdish official.

The Turks repeatedly “ask for more electricity,” said Suzdar Ahmad, the joint head of the Kurdish-run water authority.

Aheen Sweid, co-director of the energy authority, said the water cuts were nothing new.

“Since the Turks occupied Ras Al-Ain there have been endless rounds of negotiations over water interruptions from Alouk,” she said.

This time, around 10 days after the taps ran dry in Hasakah, on August 13 the Kurds cut off the electricity to the Ras Al-Ain area in retaliation, Sweid said.

Both sides then negotiated via Russia – an ally of Syria’s central government in the country’s complex civil war – and on Saturday they came to an agreement that envisaged water making its way back to Hasakah’s pipes from Monday.

But Syria analyst Nicholas Heras said the water cuts were likely to continue in areas controlled by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces.

“Seizing the Alouk plant was one of Turkey’s key campaign goals” in October last year, he said, “exactly because Turkey wants to use water as a pressure point to turn local people in Hasakah against the SDF.”

Ankara now held the “ability to cut water indefinitely to over half a million water-starved people” in Kurdish-held areas, representing a far more effective weapon than retaliatory power cuts, he said.



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## [Optimism in Egypt despite strict virus protocols](#)

Author:

Tue, 2020-08-25 01:51

CAIRO: Following a government decision, EgyptAir will ask passengers arriving in the country to submit a negative PCR test 72 hours before arrival. In a statement, the airline said that the move will take effect from Sept. 1

and is within the framework of government efforts to combat coronavirus. Egyptian Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly recently announced that the Supreme Committee for the Management of the New Coronavirus Crisis decided to impose examination tests on passengers arriving from abroad.

Waheed Assem, a board member of the Tourist Chambers, said while the government decision has caused controversy in the tourism industry, he remains optimistic about the outcome.

“We are now living in an era of coexistence with the virus until a vaccine is found, produced and distributed. Until that time comes, countries will carefully devise new plans to protect themselves from the collapse of their health sectors from a second wave of the virus,” he said.

He added that Ukraine, one of the largest tourism markets in Sharm El-Sheikh and Hurghada, has also asked incoming passengers to present PCR results.

Testing is also performed for passengers for a \$50 fee in three well-known airports in the country.

Assem said the policy will only have a minimal effect on Egyptian hotels, but would increase the number of passengers arriving in the country as health and safety fears are alleviated.

Ashraf Noyer, head of the Egyptian Civil Aviation Authority, said that passenger entry in airports will be prohibited unless a negative PCR result is presented 72 hours before arrival.



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## Israel parliament postpones budget, avoiding another election

Author:

AFP

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Mon, 2020-08-24 20:12

JERUSALEM: Israel's parliament on Monday evening passed a bill postponing a vote on the budget by four months, thus avoiding another general election after three polls in less than a year.

Emerging as the biggest party in a March election, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing Likud formed a coalition with Benny Gantz's centrist Blue and White party, bringing Israel out of the longest political crisis in its history.

The agreement between the two parties stipulated that the government put together a two-year budget.

But Likud proposed voting on two budgets – a change rejected by Gantz.

Netanyahu announced on Sunday night that he had accepted a compromise solution by a coalition lawmaker that would postpone adoption of the budget.

On Monday night, lawmakers voted by 67 to 37 in favor in the second and third readings of the bill, thereby postponing adoption of the budget by 120 days.

The budget was supposed to be passed before Tuesday.

The vote in favor of postponing the decision on the budget avoided a dissolution of parliament, effectively bringing an end to the threat of yet another election.

But the substance of the dispute between Netanyahu and Gantz remains unresolved.



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Israeli demonstrators stage anti-Netanyahu protest  
Israel lawmakers endorse Netanyahu-Gantz government

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## [Libya's GNA targeted by demonstrations for second day](#)

Mon, 2020-08-24 23:10

CAIRO: Protests have resumed in Libya's capital Tripoli against the Government of National Accord.

The demonstrations on Monday follow angry protests on Sunday against deteriorating living conditions.

Protesters in Tripoli's Martyrs' Square chanted for the head of the UN-backed GNA, Fayez Al-Sarraj, to stand down, Al Arabiya reported.

Earlier Monday, the UN mission to Libya called for an “immediate and thorough investigation” into the use of excessive force from pro-GNA security forces at Sunday’s protests.

Libya is divided between two rival administrations, with the GNA controlling Tripoli and the west and the House of Representatives holding sway in the east.



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UN in Libya urges probe after violence at protest  
Protests against Libya’s GNA erupt in Tripoli over living conditions

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[\*\*Gaza reports first COVID-19 cases\*\*](#)

# outside quarantine areas, declares Lockdown

Author:

Reuters

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Mon, 2020-08-24 20:12

GAZA: Gaza reported its first cases of COVID-19 in the general population on Monday, as authorities confirmed four infections at a refugee camp and security forces declared a full lockdown for 48 hours.

The four cases were from a single family, according to a government statement.

The closure would affect the entire Gaza Strip, according to an official from Hamas, the Islamist group that rules the territory.

Until Monday the 360 sq. km. coastal strip, which is home to two million Palestinians living in densely packed cities, towns and refugee camps, had reported no infections outside quarantine centers set up for people returning home from abroad.



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