

Day of carnage on Egypt's roads kills 28

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CAIRO: At least 28 people including tourists and laborers were among the victims of two separate crashes in a bloody day on Egypt's treacherous roads on Saturday.

Health authorities said at least 22 people, mostly laborers, were killed when a minibus collided with a truck on a highway in Port Said in northern Egypt. The minibus was bringing the laborers from a garment factory in Port Said.

The crash took place on a highway linking the cities of Port Said and Damietta.

Earlier, six people, including tourists from India and Malaysia, were killed and at least 24 injured when two buses carrying tourists crashed into a truck east of Cairo on the road to the Ain Sokhna resort on the Red Sea, a security official said.

A medical source said two female Malaysian tourists and an Indian man were killed along with three Egyptians – one bus driver, a tour guide and a security guard.

At least 24 others were injured, several of them tourists and some left in serious condition, a medical source said without giving further details. Traffic accidents are common in Egypt where many roads are poorly maintained and regulations are laxly enforced.

But efforts by authorities to crack down on traffic violations, including speeding, appear to have borne fruit in recent years, with official figures showing a decline in road deaths.

In 2018 there were 8,480 road accidents compared to 11,098 the previous year, according to the bureau of statistics.

Deaths from traffic accidents fell from more than 5,000 in 2016 to 3,747 the following year and 3,087 in 2018, official figures show.

Ain Sokhna is a popular seaside resort town in the Suez governorate southeast of Cairo. It is also home to several petrochemical, ceramics and steel factories.

*With AFP and AP



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23 killed in Egypt crashesEgypt: More arrested over Cairo train crash that killed 25

[Iraqi group says 490 protesters killed since October](#)

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By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA | AP

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Sat, 2019-12-28 14:11

BAGHDAD: Iraq's semi-official Human Rights Commission said Saturday at least 490 protesters have been killed in Baghdad and southern cities in nearly three months of anti-government rallies.

Iraq has been roiled by protests since Oct. 1 in which demonstrators have

taken to the streets to decry corruption, poor services and a lack of jobs. They have also called for an end to the political system imposed after the 2003 US-led invasion. The mass uprisings prompted the resignation of former Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi late last month. The protesters demand an independent candidate to hold the post.

The leaderless protests – the most serious challenge for the ruling class in over a decade – were met with a violent crackdown by security forces. They dispersed crowds with live fire, tear gas and sonic bombs, leading to fatalities.

Faisal Abdullah, a member of the semi-official Human Rights Commission, said the 490 killed include 33 activists “assassinated” in targeted killings. More than 22,000 have been injured.

Abdullah said 56 protesters remain missing after reports they were abducted. Another 12 have been released, he said, quoting data recorded by his group, the Iraqi government and a committee looking into abduction linked to the country’s Interior Ministry.

The Human Rights Commission doesn’t assign blame for the violence.

The United Nations has said it received credible allegations of deliberate killings, abductions and arbitrary detentions carried out by unknown armed men described as ‘militia,’ ‘unknown third parties’ and ‘armed entities.’ “

Iraqi politicians have warned of infiltrators seeking to co-opt and sabotage the largely peaceful movement.



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Iraqi president says he would rather quit than name PM rejected by protesters
Iraq protests resume as political paralysis deepens

[Jordan to receive \\$300m in development aid from Abu Dhabi fund](#)

Sat, 2019-12-28 17:28

DUBAI: The Abu Dhabi Fund for Development is to provide \$300 million in development aid to Jordan.

The aid highlights the strong relations between the UAE and Jordan, that are based on "brotherhood, mutual interest and respect," the fund said on Saturday.

"The UAE leadership's decision reaffirms the commitment to standing alongside the brotherly leadership and people of Jordan," the statement added

The move comes following the directives of the Emirates' President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed, with the support of Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed, state news agency WAM reported.

The UAE and Jordan are close regional allies. In May, Sheikh Mohamed met King Abdullah II in Abu Dhabi where they discussed regional security issues.



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Synchronized Israeli attacks on Jordan, King Abdullah Saudi GACA chief signs air safety agreements at Jordan conference

[Libya policy threatens Turkey, Russia alliance](#)

Author:

Sat, 2019-12-28 01:35

ANKARA: Experts say that the rift between Moscow and Ankara over policy differences in Libya may intensify following Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's decision to send troops to Libya at the request of the Libyan Government of National Accord (GNA).

The presence of a senior Turkish delegation in Moscow on Monday to meet their

Russian counterparts is considered an effort to avert a major bilateral crisis.

Although welcoming attempts for resolving the crisis in the North African country, Russia is against any interference in Libya's internal affairs by an outsider, the Russian president's press secretary, Dmitry Peskov, told reporters on Thursday.

"We have repeatedly reiterated Russia's stance on the Libyan crisis. Moscow is seeking a prompt resolution of the conflict and an end to the bloodshed in the country," Peskov said.

Konstantin Kosachev, chairman of the Federation Council's International Affairs Committee, wrote on his official Facebook page that Turkish military intervention in Libya could be the worst scenario.

Kosachev also criticized Erdogan's recent claims that the Kremlin-linked Wagner group is in Libya with 2,000 mercenaries supporting Gen. Khalifa Haftar's forces. Erdogan condemned the Russian presence in Libya, saying they had not been invited by the official government.

"To put it kindly, considering the level of our bilateral relations, it is not accurate to hear such statements from Ankara," Kosachev said.

The comments from the Kremlin side were made after Erdogan's announcement that he would submit a motion to the Parliament early next month to use Turkish troops in Libya.

Parliamentary approval is required for deploying Turkish troops although there is a military cooperation deal between both parties. The prospect of setting foot in Libya also boosts the nationalist narrative in Turkey.

Samuel Ramani, a geopolitical analyst and doctoral candidate at the University of Oxford, UK, points to the risk of an Ankara-Moscow confrontation ahead of Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to Turkey on Jan. 8.

All eyes are now on this planned visit which will be dominated not only by the opening of the TurkStream natural gas pipeline, but also by developments in Libya.

"Erdogan and Putin have consulted each other on carving out zones of influence in Libya to avoid conflict, but the potential for a clash is real," Ramani told Arab News.

In Syria and Libya, Russia and Turkey are backing rival parties. Turkey supports Fayed Al-Serraj's GNA in Tripoli, which controls the west of the country, while Russia is backing its rival, Haftar's eastern-based Libyan National Army (LNA).

According to Ramani, any confrontation between Ankara and Moscow would be unwelcome and have repercussions at a time when both powers are trying to reach a settlement on Idlib and Syrian refugee repatriation.

The UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights recently claimed that Turkey-backed Syrian rebels have opened recruitment centers in northern Aleppo for dispatching young fighters to Libya through Turkey with a monthly salary of up to \$2,000.

According to a UN report last month, Turkey has already sent military supplies to the GNA in breach of the arms embargo.

In anticipation of more military engagement, the Turkish Red Crescent is also gearing up to open a branch in Libya in the first months of 2020.

Michael Tanchum, a senior associate fellow at the Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy (AIES), told Arab News that Russia does not want chaos in Libya, and the Kremlin would like to continue to use Turkey to keep NATO divided and off-balance.

“Erdogan’s best pitch to Putin is that if the GNA falls there will be more war and instability and that the Turkey-Russia partnership in managing Libya is a better option. Despite the previous flexibility that Russia has shown toward Turkey’s strategic ambitions, the Libya case may be different,” he said. “Sufficient weight needs be given to the Russia-Egypt and Russia-UAE relationships when assessing Russia’s strategic calculus. All these factors are at play.”

The special representative of Putin for the Middle East and Africa, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia Mikhail Bogdanov, met yesterday separately with the Libyan and Turkish ambassadors.

For Timur Akhmetov, a researcher at the Russian International Affairs Council, Russia is facing a dilemma where it should embrace Turkish demands for participation in Libyan affairs but keep Turkish participation not critical to Russian interests.

“The general trend now is that Turkey, while being isolated in the region, enforces its diplomatic stance with heavier reliance on hard power, but it doesn’t necessarily mean Ankara’s intrinsic inclination to hostilities; hard times demand desperate measures,” he told Arab News.

For Akhmetov, Russia would probably accept Turkish involvement to an extent where its role suits or facilitates Russian long-term interests such as stabilization of the conflict, securing economic assets or eventually making all major belligerent sides accept a final resolution.



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Algeria reviews security as Turkey readies Libya intervention
Turkish MPs to vote on Libya troop deployment

[Algeria reviews security as Turkey readies Libya intervention](#)

Author:

Sat, 2019-12-28 01:33

ALGIERS: Algeria's newly elected President Abdelmadjid Tebboune has chaired a rare meeting of the country's top security body to discuss contingency plans for a threatened Turkish military intervention in neighboring Libya.

The High Security Council met on Thursday and "discussed the situation in the region, particularly on the borders with Libya and Mali," the president's office said in a statement.

"It decided on a battery of measures to boost the protection of our borders and national territory, and to revitalize Algeria's role on the international

stage, particularly concerning these two issues.”

The statement did not elaborate on the measures to be taken but said the council would meet again “periodically and whenever necessary.”

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Thursday opened the way for direct military intervention in Libya, announcing a parliamentary vote in early January on sending troops to support the UN-recognized Tripoli government against the forces of Gen. Khalifa Haftar.

The same day, Libya’s Government of National Accord said it may officially seek Turkish military support in the face of Haftar’s months-long offensive to seize Tripoli.

Turkey and its regional ally Qatar have already supplied an array of weapons to the Tripoli government, including drones, but is now threatening a sharp escalation.

In Mali and adjacent countries of the sprawling Sahel region, France has a 4,500-member force which has been fighting militants since 2013. Forty-one soldiers have died.

Last month, 13 French soldiers were killed in a helicopter crash in the north of Mali as they hunted militants – the biggest single-day loss for the French military in nearly four decades.

The Pentagon is looking into reducing or even withdrawing US troops from the region, including those supporting the French operation, the New York Times reported on Tuesday.



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Hundreds of thousands turn out to mourn Algeria's powerful army chief
Algerians protest despite day of mourning for army chief