

Sudan's government, rebel leaders start peace talks in Juba

Author:

By SAMY MAGDY | AP

ID:

1571058586750305500

Mon, 2019-10-14 13:00

CAIRO: Sudan's new transitional government met with rebel leaders on Monday, kicking off peace talks aimed at ending the country's yearslong civil wars.

The peace initiative was built into a power-sharing deal between Sudan's army and its pro-democracy movement. That deal was reached after the overthrow of longtime autocrat President Omar Al-Bashir in April. The transitional authorities have six months to make peace with the s, according to the agreement.

South Sudan's President Salva Kiir is hosting the talks in its capital, Juba, where some rebel groups signed a draft agreement last month that detailed a roadmap for the talks, trust-building measures and an extension of a cease-fire already in place.

South Sudan gained independence from the north in 2011 after decades of civil war. But in the 2000s, Sudan was most known for Al-Bashir's brutal repression of an uprising in the western Darfur region.

Achieving peace is crucial to the transitional government in Sudan. It has counted on ending the wars with rebels in order to revive the country's battered economy through slashing the military spending, which takes up much of the national budget.

Sudanese authorities have introduced good-will signals. They dismissed death sentences against eight rebel leaders and released more than a dozen prisoners of war. They have also delayed the formation of the parliament and the appointment of provincial governors to allow time for the rebels to come on board.

The government delegation, led by Gen. Mohammed Hamadan Dagalo, a member of the Sudan's sovereign council, arrived in Juba late Sunday. Rebel leaders arrived earlier this month.

Rebel leader Malik Agar of the Sudan Revolutionary Front, an alliance of Darfur rebel groups, told The Associated Press that they would start "the official opening" of the talks Monday in Juba.

Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, head of Sudan's sovereign council, also arrived in Juba to attend the opening session, along with other African leaders including Egypt's Prime Minister Mustafa Madbouly and Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, according to the official SUNA news agency.

Ethiopia and the African Union mediated the power-sharing agreement in August which ended months of violence and faltering talks between Sudan's generals and protesters following the uprising against Al-Bashir.

On Sunday, Sudan's newly appointed top judicial officials were sworn in before Burhan.

Neamat Kheir, a veteran female judge, took the oath as chief of the judiciary. She's the first woman to rise to Sudan's highest judicial post. Taj Al-Ser Al-Hebr, a lawyer, was sworn in as the country's public prosecutor.

Last month, thousands of Sudanese took to the streets demanding the two original appointees be sacked. Those two were chosen by the military council that ruled Sudan after ousting Al-Bashir.

Protesters had insisted that independent judges be appointed before prosecuting members of the old regime, as well as those responsible for a deadly crackdown on protesters in June.

Unlike many judges, Kheir was not known to compromise her integrity to serve the interests of Al-Bashir's government. However, she was widely criticized for not having supported the Sudanese uprising since its inception.



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South Sudan rebel leader in Juba in bid to salvage peace deal

Kurds 'may be releasing' Daesh prisoners in Syria to get US involved: Trump

Author:

AFP

ID:

1571055388710043900

Mon, 2019-10-14 12:14

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump suggested Monday that Kurdish fighters may be releasing imprisoned Daesh group militants to force the United States to remain involved in northeastern Syria.

"Europe had a chance to get their Daesh prisoners, but didn't want the cost. 'Let the USA pay,' they said..." Trump tweeted, using an alternate acronym for the Daesh group.

...Kurds may be releasing some to get us involved. Easily recaptured by Turkey or European Nations from where many came, but they should move quickly. Big sanctions on Turkey coming! Do people really think we should go to war with NATO Member Turkey? Never ending wars will end!

– Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [October 14, 2019](#)

"... Kurds may be releasing some to get us involved. Easily recaptured by Turkey or European Nations from where many came, but they should move quickly."



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Will European arms ban impact Turkey's Syria operation? France, Germany halting arms exports to Turkey over its offensive against Kurds in Syria

Will European arms ban impact Turkey's Syria operation?

Author:

Mon, 2019-10-14 01:11

ANKARA: With an increasing number of European countries imposing weapons embargoes on Turkey over its ongoing operation in northeastern Syria, Ankara's existing inventory of weapons and military capabilities are under the spotlight.

More punitive measures on a wider scale are expected during a summit of EU

leaders in Brussels on Oct. 17.

It could further strain already deteriorating relations between Ankara and the bloc.

However, a EU-wide arms embargo would require an unanimous decision by all the leaders.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned last week of a possible refugee flow if Turkey “opened the doors” for 3.6 million Syrian refugees to go to Europe – putting into question the clauses of the 2016 migration deal between Ankara and Brussels.

“The impact of EU member states’ arms sanctions on Turkey depends on the level of Turkey’s stockpiles,” Caglar Kurc, a researcher on defense and armed forces, told Arab News.

Kurc thinks Turkey has foreseen the possible arms sanctions and stockpiled enough spare parts to maintain the military during the operation.

“As long as Turkey can maintain its military, sanctions would not have any effect on the operation. Therefore, Turkey will not change its decisions,” he said.

So far, Germany, France, Finland, the Netherlands and Norway have announced they have stopped weapons shipments to fellow NATO member Turkey, condemning the offensive.

“Against the backdrop of the Turkish military offensive in northeastern Syria, the federal government will not issue new permits for all armaments that could be used by Turkey in Syria,” German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas told German newspaper Bild am Sonntag.

Following Germany’s move, the French government announced: “France has decided to suspend all export projects of armaments to Turkey that could be deployed as part of the offensive in Syria. This decision takes effect immediately.”

While not referring to any arms embargo, the UK urged Turkey to end the operation and enter into dialogue.

Turkey received one-third of Germany’s arms exports of €771 million (\$850.8 million) in 2018.

According to Kurc, if sanctions extend beyond weapons that could be used in Syria, there could be a negative impact on the overall defense industry.

“However, in such a case, Turkey would shift to alternative suppliers: Russia and China would be more likely candidates,” he said.

According to Sinan Ulgen, the chairman of the Istanbul-based EDAM think tank and a visiting scholar at Carnegie Europe, the arms embargo would not have a long-term impact essentially because most of the sanctions are caveated and

limited to materials that can be used by Turkey in its cross-border operation.

"So the arms embargo does not cover all aspects of the arms trade between Turkey and the EU. These measures look essentially like they are intended to demonstrate to their own critical publics that their governments are doing something about what they see as a negative aspect of Turkey's behavior," he told Arab News.

Turkey, however, insists that the Syria operation, dubbed "Operation Peace Spring," is undeterred by any bans or embargoes.

"No matter what anyone does, no matter if it's an arms embargo or anything else, it just strengthens us," Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu told German radio station Deutsche Welle.



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Turkey and proxies advance deep into Syria
Turkish army says 31 soldiers killed in Syria operation

South Sudan says will host peace talks between Sudan and rebels

Author:

AFP

ID:

1570989802803457400

Sun, 2019-10-13 16:50

JUBA: Sudanese Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok will attend peace talks in the South Sudan capital Monday with rebel leaders from several Sudanese states, said official sources in Juba.

"Tomorrow's meeting is to mark the launching of Sudan's peace talks," Ateny Wek Ateny, spokesman for South Sudan's President Salva Kiir, told AFP Sunday. Hamdok, who was only appointed in August in a deal between the army and the opposition, will meet rebel leaders from the Sudanese states of Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile.

Kiir, who just a few weeks ago signed his own peace deal with rebel leader Riek Machar, offered to mediate between Sudan and the rebels back in November 2018.

This new set of talks follow a first round in September when both sides agreed on a road map for the negotiations.

This week's meeting is intended to tackle the main issues, said Ateny. Also attending will be Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who last week won the Nobel Peace Prize, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni and Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta.

Their presence, said Ateny, was to give the talks more weight.

A senior Sudanese delegation arrived in Juba on Sunday.

The Sudanese delegation will meet Abdulaziz Al-Hilu, leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), which is active in Bule Nile and South Kordofan states. Al-Hilu will lead the rebel delegation.

This new peace initiative comes after the fall of longtime Sudanese autocrat Omar Al-Bashir, who was toppled from power by the Sudanese military in April. Prime Minister Hamdok has been tasked with leading Sudan back to civilian rule, but he has said he also wants to end the conflicts with the rebels. Over the years, the rebels' conflict with Khartoum have killed hundreds of thousands of people and forced millions to flee their homes.



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Lebanon says Israel sent drone over Hezbollah area

Author:

AFP

ID:

1570980836502617800

Sun, 2019-10-13 12:48

BEIRUT: The Lebanese army on Sunday accused Israel of sending a reconnaissance drone at the weekend over Beirut's southern suburbs, a bastion of the Shiite militant Hezbollah group.

On August 25, two explosives-laden drones were sent to the same area. One of

them exploded, sparking a dangerous escalation between Hezbollah and Israel. On Saturday night, "one of the Israel enemy's reconnaissance drones violated Lebanese air space... overflew the southern suburbs and left," the army said in a statement.

The Iran-backed Hezbollah is represented in Lebanon's government and parliament but is considered a terrorist organisation by Israel and Washington, which has stepped up the financial pressure on the organisation. The August incident heightened regional tensions, which culminated in a cross-border exchange of fire in early September.

Hezbollah vowed then that it would shoot down any Israeli drones violating Lebanon's air space.



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