

Algerians protest bill to boost foreign money in oil sector

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Sun, 2019-10-13 12:28

ALGIERS: Thousands of Algerians are protesting in front of their parliament against a bill aimed at attracting foreign investment to the oil and gas sector, which underpins the national economy.

Surrounded by police, protesters raised their fists and accused the government of selling out Algeria's resources and threatening their children's futures.

The bill has further angered anti-democracy protesters who have been demonstrating since February.

The government is discussing the bill Sunday. It argues that Algeria needs foreign investment to modernize the sector and make it more globally competitive. State-run gas and oil giant Sonatrach says the bill is needed to simplify Algeria's tax system.

Protest organizers include professor Nouredine Boudierba, who accuses Algeria's provisional government of offering favors to foreign companies in exchange for political support ahead of December's presidential election.





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[Egypt's president to meet with Ethiopia PM over Nile dispute](#)

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Sun, 2019-10-13 12:41

CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi said on Sunday he would meet Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in Russia to discuss a dispute over a hydropower dam that the Horn of Africa country is building on the River Nile. A long-running diplomatic standoff over building and operating the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam has heightened tensions between the two countries. Egypt worries that the dam will threaten its already scarce water supplies. "I agreed with the Ethiopian prime minister to meet in Moscow and to discuss the issue to move forward, and God willing, things will go in a way that helps to solve this issue in one way or another," Sisi said at a military forum on Sunday.

He did not say when they would meet, but Russia will host the first Russian-African summit in the Black sea resort of Sochi on Oct. 23 and 24.

Sisi and Abiy spoke on Friday after the Ethiopian prime minister won the Nobel Peace Prize for his peacemaking efforts with Eritrea. Sisi had congratulated Abiy on Facebook.

"The call included a stress on the importance of overcoming any obstacles in the negotiations of the Renaissance Dam," said Egyptian presidency spokesman Bassam Rady.

Ethiopia, the source of the Blue Nile which joins the White Nile in Khartoum and runs on to Egypt, says the dam will not disrupt the river's flow and hopes the project will transform it into a power hub for the electricity-hungry region.

Sudan, which is also involved in the talks, hopes to buy electricity produced by the dam.

Sisi said his government had a plan, through 2037, worth 900 billion Egyptian pounds (\$55 billion) to overcome "water poverty". The plan includes building huge sea water desalination plants and sewage triple treatment plants.

Sisi said Egypt had already spent 200 billion pounds on the plan, and would spend 70-100 billion more next year.

Many Egyptians on social media criticised Sisi for signing a 2015 "declaration of principles" with Ethiopia and Sudan, which was meant to serve as a basis for negotiations. Critics say the declaration has strengthened Addis Ababa's hand in talks, and no breakthrough has been made since it was signed in Khartoum.

Sisi blamed the 2011 uprising which toppled longtime autocrat Hosni Mubarak

for weakening Cairo's position in the dam negotiations.

"If not for 2011, there would have been a strong and easy agreement on constructing this dam, but when the country exposed its back and ... stripped its shoulder naked, anything could be done," he said at the military forum. (\$1 = 16.2000 Egyptian pounds)



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Egypt denounces Ethiopia for moving ahead with Nile dam amid water-shortage fears
Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia fail to reach agreement on Nile dam

[Turkey steps up assault on Syrian Kurds defying sanction threats](#)

Sun, 2019-10-13 01:55

RAS AL-AIN: Ankara stepped up its assault on Kurdish-held border towns in northeastern Syria on Saturday, defying mounting threats of international

sanctions, even from Washington. Buoyed by a night of steady advances in the countryside, Turkish troops and their Syrian allies entered the battleground town of Ras Al-Ain, sources on both sides said.

The Turkish Defense Ministry hailed its forces' capture of the first Kurdish-held town of the offensive so far.

But Ras Al-Ain's Kurdish defenders denied the town had fallen and an AFP correspondent near the town said Turkish troops and their Syrian allies had entered but had yet to capture it.

The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), who were the main ground partner in the US-led campaign against Daesh, have taken mounting losses against the vastly superior firepower of the Turkish army.

At least 20 SDF fighters were killed in clashes overnight, taking their losses since the Turkish offensive began on Wednesday to 74, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based war monitor, said.

Turkish airstrikes on Kurdish-held towns and intense artillery exchanges caused mounting casualties on both sides of the border, with 28 dead on the Syrian side, according to the Observatory, and 17 dead in Turkey, according to Turkish reports.

The Turkish army has reported four dead, according to the Defense Ministry and the state-run Anadolu news agency.

FASTFACT

The Turkish invasion, which has led to an exodus of civilian residents, Arab as well as Kurdish, amounts to 'an attempt to redraw the ethnic map of the region at their expense.'

The town of Ras Al-Ain and that of Tal-Abyad further west have been primary goals of the Turkish offensive and have both come under heavy bombardment.

They lie at either end of a section of the border which although Kurdish-controlled has an ethnic Arab majority.

Ankara says its forces' mission is to establish a safe zone run by its mainly Arab Syrian allies in which some of the 3.6 million mainly Arab refugees in Syria can be rehoused.

But the Kurds say that the Turkish invasion, which has led to an exodus of civilian residents, Arab as well as Kurdish, amounts to an attempt to redraw the ethnic map of the region at their expense.

The offensive has so far displaced some 100,000 people, according to the UN. Roads leading out of the area have been filled with fleeing civilians, some on foot, other in vehicles piled high with their belongings. Few have any idea when if ever they will be able to return to their homes.

The Kurdish Red Crescent said it would no longer dispatch medical teams to Ras Al-Ain because its ambulances are being hit by Turkish fire.



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Turkey's Syria offensive 'invasion' of Arab land: Arab League chiefPro-Turkey rebels 'execute' 9 civilians in Syria

[Why Erdogan wants to remake northeast Syria's demographics](#)

Sat, 2019-10-12 23:43

ERBIL, Iraqi Kurdistan: Turkey's incursion into northeast Syria has given rise to fears that its military will commit another major atrocity against the war-torn country's Kurdish minority.

The UN has warned that 1.7 million people in northeast Syria are at risk as a result of Operation Peace Spring, and that up to 300,000 could soon be displaced, which would create a new humanitarian crisis.

Turkey has targeted urban centers with airstrikes and shelling, sending civilians fleeing en masse from their homes.

Ankara has said its military operation is justified since the Syrian-Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) group has links to the Turkish Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which Ankara has been fighting since 1984 in a conflict that has killed more than 40,000 people. The US and the EU have also designated the PKK as a terrorist organization.

But the YPG has not sent its forces to help the PKK in its operations in either southeast Turkey or Iraqi Kurdistan, instead focusing its efforts on the war against Daesh in Syria.

HIGHLIGHTS

64,000 – People displaced in NE Syria

300,000 – People likely to be displaced

40,000 – Number of SDF fighters

\$300 million – Fall in US humanitarian aid to Syria from 2017 to 2019

3.6 million – Syrian refugees in Turkey

After the US military partnered with the YPG, which later formed the larger, multi-ethnic Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), against Daesh in 2014, Ankara said Washington was making a mistake by using "one terror group to eliminate another."

Nevertheless, the SDF proved the only capable and reliable ally the US had on the ground in its campaign against Daesh in Syria.

Today, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has not concealed his goal for the future of northeast Syria.

Besides insisting that the YPG must be completely neutralized, he has outlined his goal of resettling millions of Syrian refugees currently residing in Turkey in Syria's Kurdish-majority areas.

"We intend to establish initially a peace corridor with a depth of 30 km and a length of 480 km, and enable the settlement of 2 million Syrians there with the support of the international community," Erdogan told the UN General Assembly on Sept. 24.

He intends to do this through a \$27 billion project to build new cities and towns in Syrian Kurdistan that will be repopulated with Syrian refugees currently residing in Turkey.

Ossama Muhammad, a Syrian-Kurdish interpreter and translator, lamented the situation in a Facebook post, writing: "Now families of those who were killed to defend the world, will keep behind alone to wait for new genocide and demographic change, the Kurds will never trust the humanity or the world or

human rights again.” Muhammad was referring to the immense sacrifices made by Kurds to stop Daesh in Syria.

Erdogan has also threatened to send millions of Syrian refugees to Europe if it opposes the settlement project or criticizes the military operation.

This would not be Turkey’s first assault on the Syrian Kurds. In early 2018, it entered the northwestern enclave of Afrin with the help of the Free Syrian Army (FSA).

At the time, Erdogan openly spoke of returning Afrin to its “rightful owners.” By this, he meant resettling non-Kurds in a Kurdish-majority region.

Opinion

This section contains relevant reference points, placed in (Opinion field)

Before Turkey’s invasion, Afrin stood out as an oasis of stability that had welcomed displaced Syrians regardless of ethnicity from across the war-weary country.

After the invasion, which displaced well over 100,000 Kurdish civilians, the FSA rapidly sought to resettle displaced Syrians in the enclave, encouraging them to occupy vacated Kurdish homes, and even giving them Turkish-issued residency permits, in a clear bid to cement the demographic changes caused by the invasion. Many groups within the FSA have destroyed symbols of Afrin’s Kurdish and Yazidi cultural heritage. The FSA has also committed human rights violations against Afrin’s civilian population.

Amnesty International said these violations included “arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, and confiscation of property and looting to which Turkey’s armed forces have turned a blind eye.”

The YPG has also been accused of human rights violations in northeast Syria. In August 2018, Human Rights Watch (HRW) criticized the group for recruiting children into its ranks from displaced-persons camps. The SDF promptly issued a decree to end this practice, which was welcomed by HRW.



The Syrian Democratic Forces proved the only reliable ally the US had in the fight against Daesh in Syria. (Shutterstock)

In 2015, Amnesty International reported that the YPG destroyed entire villages that it had captured from Daesh.

The report said there was no justification or military grounds for destroying these Arab villages.

Amnesty suspected that the YPG was motivated by a desire to collectively punish civilians from villages previously occupied by Daesh, or to settle land disputes with Arabs going back decades.

Kurds fear that Turkey will carry out a large-scale campaign of ethnic cleansing in its current operation.

They feel betrayed by US President Donald Trump for countenancing the Turkish invasion, because the SDF was the predominant ground force in Syria that destroyed Daesh's "caliphate." The SDF says it sacrificed approximately 11,000 men and women in that fight.

Mohammed Salih, a Kurdish journalist and doctoral student at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication, sees the latest Turkish foray into Syria as Erdogan's "final solution of the Kurds."

Salih told Arab News: "Erdogan and his Syrian jihadi proxies are planning and interested in nothing less than ethnic cleansing of not only the Kurdish people in northeast Syria, but based on what we've seen in Afrin, of Christian and Yazidi populations there as well."

He said: "This isn't a matter of conjecture and speculation. The ongoing example of Afrin supports these fears without a shred of doubt."

“Turkish government officials have unequivocally made clear that they plan to resettle ... non-Kurdish Syrian refugees in the narrow strip of land populated by the Kurds.

“The world needs to act and stop Erdogan’s genocidal designs.”



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Turkey’s Syria offensive ‘invasion’ of Arab land: Arab League chiefAbul Gheit: Turkish attack on Syria incites regional hostility

[Yemeni minister hails Saudi backing against Houthis](#)

Sat, 2019-10-12 00:19

MARIB: Yemeni Defense Minister Lt. Gen. Mohammad Ali Al-Maqdashi hailed Saudi Arabia’s support in the fight to restore security and stability to his country.

He said the Kingdom's stance was helping toward rebuilding Yemen following the coup by Iran-backed Houthi militias, the Saudi Press Agency reported. Al-Maqdashi highlighted the sacrifices made by Saudi and Yemeni armed forces to combat threats to the security and stability of Yemen and the region. His comments came during a meeting with heads and directors of various bodies and departments of the Yemeni Ministry of Defense. They discussed ways of coordinating the work of ministerial departments in contributing toward rebuilding Yemen's military institutions.



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Houthis killed in clashes with Yemeni army Saudi humanitarian organization continues to provide aid to flood victims in Yemen