

# Abul Gheit: Turkish attack on Syria incites regional hostility

Author:

Fri, 2019-10-11 23:14

CAIRO: Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Abul Gheit said that the Turkish attack on Syria will incite "uncontrollable hostilities" in the region which could have negative repercussions.

Abul Gheit said that foreign intervention in Arab affairs by regional powers fueled further crises and made the possibility of settling them harder. He added that the latest Turkish attack on Syrian lands would complicate the situation.

He expressed alarm over Ankara's plans and current preparations to carry out a military operation deep inside Syria.

Abul Gheit said the Arab League views Ankara's military operation as a clear violation of sovereignty that would threaten Syria's unity and would open the door for more deterioration in security and the humanitarian situation.

He called on Turkey to withdraw its troops from all Syrian lands.

Assistant Secretary-General and Chief of Staff of the Arab League Hossam Zaki said: "Turkey should not carry out such military operations."

On efforts by the Arab League to prevent a military attack on northern Syria, Zaki said it "was not involved in the Syrian issue from 2011, when Syria's membership was suspended. It does not have the effective tools to be involved in the crisis."

## **SPEEDREAD**

- Arab League views Ankara's military operation as 'a clear violation of sovereignty that would threaten Syria's unity.
- An emergency meeting of the Arab League Council at the level of foreign ministers will be held on Oct. 12.

He pointed out that regional and international consultations are usually held between groups of states, adding that the Arab League is excluded from such talks.

Zaki said that since Abul Gheit assumed his post three years ago, he has been seeking to involve the Arab League in regional and international efforts with regards to the Syrian crisis.

"However, we have not achieved our aspired success so far. Hence, when the crisis of military operations in northern Syria erupts, the Arab League can only express a political stance. We cannot say that we would be active in this crisis or that we can influence Turkey, a country threatening the sovereignty of a member state."

Zaki confirmed that an emergency meeting of the Arab League Council at the level of foreign ministers will be held on Oct. 12 after Egypt called for it.

The meeting, to be held in consultation with Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohamed Ali Alhakim, will discuss Turkish aggression in Syria.



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## [EU slams Turkey for 'weaponizing' refugees](#)

Author:

Fri, 2019-10-11 23:08

ANKARA: As the Turkish ground and air offensive in northeastern Syria continues, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has threatened to send millions of Syrian refugees to Europe if the EU calls Turkey's military offensive "an invasion." "We will open the gates and send 3.6 million refugees your way," he said on Thursday.

The statement is considered by some a move to "weaponize" the refugees who have been in Turkey since the beginning of Syrian civil war, and to use them as a leverage.

European institutions harshly criticized Turkey's military operation into northeastern Syria against Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which Turkey considers a terror group.

"Turkey must understand that our main concern is that their actions may lead to another humanitarian catastrophe, which would be unacceptable. Nor will we ever accept that refugees are weaponized and used to blackmail us. That is why I consider yesterday's threats made by President Erdogan totally out of place," Donald Tusk, president of the European Council, said on Oct. 11 after his meeting with President of Cyprus Nicos Anastasiades.

Under heavy artillery and airstrikes, more than 60,000 residents in Syrian towns have reportedly fled their homes since the beginning of the operation. Ankara says it wants to create a "safe zone" along its border and to help the return of about 1 million Syrian refugees back to their country. However, the project is criticized by some as a move of "demographic re-engineering" that would forcibly settle families and change the social realities of the region. In the framework of 2016 Turkey-EU refugee deal, the EU allocated about 97 percent of the €6 billion (\$6.6 billion) of funding.

Russian President Vladimir Putin warned on Friday that Daesh captives could potentially escape from prisons in Syria over Turkey's incursion amid the chaos.

"Not sure if Ankara can take control of the situation," he said to the Sputnik news agency.

## NUMBER

60,000 – residents – under heavy artillery and airstrikes – have reportedly fled their homes in Syrian towns since the beginning of the operation.

Western countries have expressed their disapproval of Turkey's operation. France announced sanctions against Turkey will be "on the table" at next week's European summit, while Norway and Finland decided on Thursday to suspend their arms exports to Turkey.

US President Donald Trump tweeted on late Thursday: "We have one of three choices: Send in thousands of troops and win militarily, hit Turkey very hard Financially and with Sanctions, or mediate a deal between Turkey and the Kurds!"

According to Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch, Erdogan's statement equals treating Syrian refugees as pawns to be manipulated for political purposes.

Roth thinks that a stated reason for the operation is to force 1 million or more refugees to a zone along the border that Erdogan pretends will be "safe" but has no capacity to secure.

"Then, when others criticize this illegal scheme, he threatens to uproot refugees from the lives they have been building in Turkey and send them off to Europe," he told Arab News.

Although experts say a threat of such a scale is not particularly credible, it will ring alarm bells in some European countries, especially Greece at the doorstep of the illegal migration route. Turkey hosts 4 million refugees, 3.6 million of them Syrians.



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## [Party activists storm Lebanon's Parliament over failing economy](#)

Author:

Fri, 2019-10-11 23:00

BEIRUT: Opposition party protesters broke into Lebanon's Parliament on Friday demanding new parliamentary polls and voicing their anger at the country's failing economy.

The Sabaa Party activists breached a security cordon outside the Parliament and stormed the main assembly hall. Once inside, protesters denounced the government as a "failed regime" and condemned what they described as the "corruption and looting" of public funds.

One activist, Baria Al-Ahmar, read from a statement, saying: "The party wishes to deliver a message from within the Parliament to the Lebanese and the entire world. In this chamber, the constitution has been violated dozens of times."

Al-Ahmar described the presidential election as "illegal" and criticized the failure to change the Parliament speaker, saying: "In this chamber, the worst sectarian quota governments have been formed that have led us to failure."

"This civil resistance is against a corrupt and failed regime that has ruined the most beautiful country in this region," she said.

The Parliament's security team arrested four activists and prevented the media from taking photographs of the intruders. However, activists shared footage of Al-Ahmar's speech inside the chamber on social media.

Parliamentary Speaker Nabih Berri, who was not present at the time of the protest, told security forces to issue a warning to the activists and release them.

Sabaa has hundreds of independent activists who describe their party as "the opposite of all other traditional Lebanese parties, and the only real national and cross-sectarian platform."

"This civil resistance is against a corrupt and failed regime that has ruined the most beautiful country in this region."

#### **Baria Al-Ahmar, an activist**

Sabaa's protest coincided with a demonstration by Communist Party activists, who broke into the headquarters of the General Confederation of Lebanese Workers (CGTL).

One activist read out a statement telling the CGTL leadership that "the workers' weapon is their voice in the midst of authority's attack on them." A protesters' spokesman criticized the "Lebanese Banks Association, where banks are accumulating the people's money looted by the destructive alliance between the troika of banks, the Lebanese central bank and the political power."

CGTL said that "the storming of the union's headquarters is irresponsible because its doors are open for all those who wish to demand their rights." The protests come amid Lebanon's deteriorating economic situation and a crisis regulating dollar currency in banks that has created a scarcity of dollars.

Riad Salameh, Bank of Lebanon governor, said during a ICC FraudNet conference in Beirut that "dollar bills are available in the market, the monetary situation is stable, and a mechanism will be adopted to facilitate the process of importing essential supplies such as medicine, wheat and fuel."



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## [With little to show, Gazans question mass border protests](#)

Author:

Fri, 2019-10-11 22:39

GAZA CITY: Ahmed Abu Artima was one of the founders of the "Great March of Return," the weekly protests along Gaza's frontier with Israel meant to draw attention to the plight of the territory's 2 million people. But these days, he mostly avoids the demonstrations. He is among a growing number of Gazans who believe the protests have lost their way. With little to show from 18 months of demonstrations beyond the hundreds of people killed or wounded by Israeli fire, many Gazans are beginning to question and even criticize the Hamas-led protests, a rarity in a territory where dissent is barely tolerated by the ruling group.

For several months now, Abu Artima has organized his own alternative protest. On a recent Wednesday, dozens of Palestinians gathered near the separation fence between Israel and Gaza, performing traditional dances and ballads

between poem recitals and speeches by local community leaders. Children gathered around two camels decorated with embroidered saddles. Abu Artima's eyes sparkled as he watched. This is the kind of demonstration he envisioned when he and other young grassroots activists came up with the idea of building mass encampments along the fortified frontier. He calls it a protest that "tries to deliver our message as safely as possible." Held every two weeks, these events are in dramatic contrast to the main Friday protests.

### **Friday rallies**

Directed by a committee comprising Hamas and other Gaza groups, the Friday demonstrations are held against a backdrop of black smoke from burning tires. Protesters hurl rocks at Israeli troops, who respond with clouds of tear gas and gunfire. Ambulances scream back and forth, ferrying the wounded to field clinics and hospitals.

When the protests began, Hamas quickly seized upon the popular idea and transformed the quiet gatherings into violent confrontations.

Under its direction, thousands of Palestinians have gathered at five sections of the fence each week, facing off against Israeli forces perched on earth mounds and in sniper positions.

The Israeli troops fire live shots, rubber-covered steel pellets and tear gas, in what Israel says is a legitimate tactic to defend against attacks and border infiltrations.

Hamas says the violent protests, which are still attended by a few thousand people every Friday, are meant to force Israel to ease its crippling blockade. But the demonstrations have done little to improve conditions in Gaza, and have come at a high human cost.

The Gaza-based Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights says 211 Palestinian protesters, most of them unarmed, have been shot dead during the demonstrations, including 46 under the age of 18. More than 18,000 have been wounded. The Health Ministry says 124 had amputations in lower limbs. One Israeli soldier has also been killed.

With Hamas dedicating this week's protest to "child martyrs," UN Humanitarian Coordinator Jamie McGoldrick urged both sides to protect children. "Boys and girls must never be targeted, put at risk or encouraged to participate in violence," he said.

### **NUMBER**

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Calling his event "The Return Journeys," Abu Artima says he is focused on his original idea of highlighting the desire of Palestinian refugees and their descendants to return to the lands they fled or were forced from during the 1948 war surrounding Israel's establishment. Some two-thirds of Gaza's population are refugees.

“We want to present a model for the people that we can send our voice by art and national songs,” he said. “Our presence here even without direct confrontation is a message of determination.”

While the “right of return” was the original message of the demonstrations, Hamas quickly turned the focus to the 12-year-old blockade imposed by Israel and Egypt after it seized control of Gaza in 2007.

The blockade has devastated Gaza’s economy and caused the unemployment rate to skyrocket to over 50 percent. Israel says the closure is needed to prevent Hamas from arming.

### **Leverage**

Hamas views the protests as a key form of leverage in getting the closures lifted, so it urges maximum participation. On days before protests, vehicles with loudspeakers mounted on their roofs tour Gaza streets and mosques urging families to head to the fence. On Friday, buses pick up participants from across the strip.

There have also been calls to storm the frontier. In May 2018, as the US was opening its embassy in Jerusalem after relocating it from Tel Aviv, more than 55 Palestinians were killed in a single day as tens of thousands protested amid Hamas calls to cross into Israel.

To prevent what could have been a fourth war in a decade between Hamas and Israel, mediators rushed to contain the protests. Under an unofficial Egyptian-brokered truce, Hamas scaled down the marches in recent months while Qatar delivered cash infusions for Hamas’ civil servants and welfare programs. UN-sponsored job creation programs were also envisioned.

Hamas scaled back the protests, triggering more accusations that it was acting for its own interests. Critics include scores of people who were shot in the legs. In Gaza’s overwhelmed medical system, such cases often end with amputations.

In a video circulated in August, a father scolded his wounded son at a hospital for going to the protests and accused doctors of not providing proper medical care for the teenage boy.

Hamas officials also came under fire after a press photo went viral showing rows of amputees at a Hamas event, each waiting for a \$50 welfare payment.



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## [Celebratory gunfire: How to stop Lebanon's stealthy killer](#)

Thu, 2019-10-10 23:46

BEIRUT: Celebratory shootings in the air, or what Maj. Gen. Abbas Ibrahim, Lebanon's general security chief, called the "stealthy killer," is a phenomenon some Lebanese still hold on to to express their joys and sorrows. This phenomenon was the theme of the workshop organized on Thursday in Beirut.

The workshop focused on "applying behavioral sciences to put an end to indiscriminate shootings on occasions."

Maj. Gen. Abbas Ibrahim said: "People have a human and moral right to express their feelings in a joyful celebration or a sad occasion. However, they

cannot do so by shooting – a crime that shall be subject to the most severe punishment and social condemnation.”

Dr. Rana Shami talked about “her suffering at the American University of Beirut Medical Center AUH, as she tried to heal injured people with stray bullets, that ended the lives of many.” Dr. Shami launched the project “Stray Bullet Initiative,” as part of a campaign to combat this phenomenon.

Gen. Ibrahim said: “We can no longer tolerate silence on the random shooting phenomenon. Decisive action must be taken at state level and its security and judicial entities, and even the local authorities, in parallel with civil society.”

According to official figures, the number of victims of the uncontrolled weapons in 2017 was 500, 170 of whom died. This number fell in 2018 to 300, including 120 deaths.

Maj. Gen. Ibrahim noted that “the dangers of random shootings are present all across the Lebanese regions, without exception.”

“This phenomenon reflects the fragility of the Lebanese state and its institutions and causes a serious rift in the society. It is a disgrace to have ignorant individuals among us who still use weapons to express their joys or sorrows,” he added.

He demanded “the consolidation of the penal code, as has happened in many countries, especially Japan, where such negative factors have dramatically dropped.” He suggested “shedding light on this issue in schools through the adoption of awareness-raising curriculums and programs.”

The Lebanese brag about owning arms at their homes, while only 30,000 permits have been issued by the relevant authorities at the Defense Ministry.

One of the articles of the 1959 Law on the permits of arms’ possession stipulates that “citizens have the right to obtain a firearm permit for ‘self-defense purposes’.” The Lebanese civil war in 1975 increased the

Lebanese sense of the need for self-protection.

Head of the General Security Center in Chouf Maj. Dounia Abu Saeed said: "Arms in Lebanon have become a means to celebrate a childbirth, the victory of an election candidate or the success of a student, or even to express grief over the loss of a young man killed in a traffic accident."

She said the workshop aims to "come up with non-traditional solutions to combat one of our society's most dangerous behaviors, for random shooting is a security matter with behavioral roots that does not require security-related methods and ideas, but the design of simple effective and inexpensive choices developed by experts in behavioral science from the Business School departments at Warwick University in the UK. They replace bullets with roses. We must understand the psychological aspect of shooters."

Until 2016, the Lebanese Penal Code did not provide a clear classification of the crime of "random shooting", where the Constitution stipulates that 'No offense may be established or penalty imposed except by the text of Law'. However, since Nov. 3, 2016, random shooting in Lebanon has been a crime, punishable by Law according to the gravity of the result. It can reach a minimum of 10 years of hard labor, with a fine of 20 to 25 times the minimum wage, in the case of a random shooting leading to casualties.



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