

Russian jets kill at least 25 in north-western Syria

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AMMAN: Aerial strikes on Monday killed at least 25 people, mostly civilians, in northwestern Syria in the sixth week of a Russian-led military offensive that has so far killed hundreds of civilians, according to residents and civil rescuers.

They said war planes flying at high altitude, which monitors said were Russian Sukhoi jets, dropped bombs on the village of Jabala in southern Idlib province, with rescuer teams so far pulling out 13 bodies, including women and children.

Russian jets were also behind several raids that hit the town of Khan Sheikhoun, Kfar Batikh and several other villages that left at least another 12 civilians dead, according to another local rescuer.

Rescuers say the major aerial campaign that Moscow has thrown its weight behind since it was launched in earnest at the end of April has killed over 1,500 people with more than half of the death toll civilians.

Residents and local and international aid agencies that support the rebel-held areas say the sustained campaign that has bombed schools and knocked down medical centers was to smash the spirit of civilians in opposition areas.

More than 300,000 people have fled the frontlines to the safety of areas near the border with Turkey, UN and aid agencies say.

The Russian-backed offensive has so far failed to make major inroads into rebel territory in northern Hama and southern Idlib provinces, where mainstream rebels backed by Turkey alongside hardline fighters are putting up fierce resistance in their last remaining bastion in Syria.

Russia and the Syrian army deny allegations of indiscriminate bombing of civilian areas or a campaign to paralyze everyday life in opposition-held areas and say they are fighting Al-Qaeda-inspired extremist militants.

Moscow blames the rebels for breaking a truce by hitting government-held areas and says Turkey has failed to live up to its obligations under a deal brokered last year that created a buffer zone in the area that obliges it to push out militants.

Civilians in rebel-held areas, where many oppose returning to Syrian President Bashar Assad's one-party rule, look to Turkey which has steadily built up a military presence in the area as a protector against the Russian-led strikes.

Northwest Syria – including Idlib province and parts of neighboring provinces – has an estimated 3 million inhabitants, about half of whom had already fled fighting elsewhere, according to the United Nations.



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Syrian Kurds hand over 12 French orphans from Daesh families
Syrian goalkeeper who became icon for the opposition dies in battle

[Sudan's military blames protest leaders for escalation](#)

Author:

Mon, 2019-06-10 23:03

KHARTOUM: Sudan's ruling military blamed the country's protest movement for an escalation as the second day of the opposition's general strike kicked in on Monday.

For the second day, shops and businesses were closed in the capital, Khartoum, though there was visibly more traffic in the streets than on Sunday, when the strike began.

The military said actions by the protest movement as doing major harm to Sudan and its security.

It has been two months since the military ousted Sudan's former ruler, Omar Al-Bashir, on April 11, following months of protests against his government. The generals put Bashir behind bars and took over the country, promising free elections following a transitional period.

The protesters, however, remained in the streets demanding the generals relinquish power right away. The standoff lasted until troops moved in last Monday and broke up opposition sit-ins, including the main encampment outside the military headquarters in Khartoum.

Over 100 people have been killed in the violence since then. The Health Ministry disputes the death toll, saying the official total tally of those killed in the violence stands at 61, including three members of the security forces.

On Sunday, the military council said it was willing to return to the talks with what looked like a concession on a plan offered by the Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed who visited Khartoum last week trying to revive negotiations between the generals and the protest leaders.

The opposition said it accepts Aby as mediator but put forth several conditions.

The protest leaders urged people to close up roads again, rebuild dismantled barricades across the country, and avoid clashes with the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces. In a video posted late Sunday, Mohammed Al-Asam, a protest leader, urged the Sudanese to continue the campaign.

Security forces on Sunday removed barricades from main roads and reopened the sit-in area outside the military's headquarters.

"The solution is to get life paralyzed," the protest leaders said.

Lt. Gen. Jamaledine Omar, from the ruling military council, said late Sunday that by closing roads and setting up barricades, the protesters committed a crime.

"The technique of closing the roads and building barricades ... is a full-fledged crime as it deprives people from being able to go about their normal life," he said.

Omar said the Forces for Declaration of Freedom and Change, which represented the protesters in negotiations with the military council that went on for weeks till the generals suspended the talks earlier this month, are to blame for "all the regrettable events" of the past days.



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Four killed in Sudan as protesters launch civil disobedience campaign
Sudan protesters call for new civil disobedience campaign to press demand for a civilian government

[Recording of the week: Loss of a world and a need to capture it](#)

This week's selection comes from Charlie Morgan, Oral History Archivist. Someone asked Goha what was his favourite music and he replied, 'The clanging of pots and pans and the tinkling of glasses' (Middle Eastern Food, p.520) In 2018 Gaby's Deli closed after 50 years on Charing Cross Road. A popular...

Sun-drenched Middle East has a high vitamin D deficiency rate. Why?

Mon, 2019-06-10 02:07

DUBAI: Dubbed the “sunshine vitamin,” vitamin D is produced when the skin is exposed to direct sunlight.

Paradoxically, despite the intense sunshine in the Middle East and North Africa, deficiencies in the vitamin are widespread among the population.

According to research published in the Journal of Nutrition and Metabolism, “the Middle East and North African regions have a very high rate of vitamin D deficiency, which reaches 81 percent among various age groups.”

Reasons for this include cultural practices, climate, genetic disposition and skin color.

Cultural forms of dressing, which include covering major parts of the body, also may affect the skin’s absorption of sunlight, especially for women.

Another reason is the region’s high temperatures, which limit time outdoors for many people.

FASTFACT

Low levels of vitamin D have been linked to a number of illnesses, including rickets and osteomalacia, which weaken bone tissue.

Researchers at the Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal said the deficiency can also be attributed to “a racial difference in vitamin D concentration or a genetic predisposition to vitamin D deficiency among people of Saudi Arabia.”

Skin color also affects the skin’s ability to synthesize sunlight into vitamin D.

A paper published in 2011 by Floor Christie of the University of Sunderland and Linda Mason of the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine found that women with darker complexions require two hours of sun exposure to produce the same amount of vitamin D that a woman with lighter complexion can produce in 12 minutes.

“Creating areas where women, particularly those of lower socioeconomic status, can enjoy sun exposure, as well as fortifying more foods, would go some way toward tackling this problem,” they wrote.

Low levels of vitamin D have been linked to a number of illnesses, including rickets and osteomalacia, which weaken bone tissue.

Severe cases of rickets may result in stunted growth and skeletal deformities in children.

Recent studies show that vitamin D deficiency is also linked to various types of cancer, some coronary heart diseases, and type 1 and 2 diabetes. It is also correlated to ailments such as multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, hypertension and Alzheimer's disease.

Moreover, research has also suggested a link between vitamin D deficiency and some mental health problems, including depression.

Most doctors recommend vitamin D supplements since exposure to sunlight and food intake may not always be sufficient to meet the required dose.



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Cancer breakthrough by Lebanese doctor in the US
Vitamin D deficiency rampant, says expert

Qatar admits having different 'assessment' to US on Iran threat

Mon, 2019-06-10 00:04

LONDON: Qatar has its "own assessment" different to the US on policy towards Iran, the country's foreign minister said Sunday.

The comments are expected to alarm members of the Trump administration, which has beefed up America's military presence in the region after an increased Iranian threat.

Qatar hosts the biggest US military base in the Middle East but has become increasingly close to Iran despite Washington viewing Tehran as the world's largest state sponsor of terror.

Since withdrawing from the 2015 agreement to curb Iran's nuclear program, President Donald Trump has ramped up sanctions and vowed to curb Tehran's destabilizing activities in the region.

Speaking in London, Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani said Qatar respected US policy on Iran, but added: "We have our own assessment."

"There is a big pressure on Iran's economy, but Iran lived under sanctions for 40 years. It's never been like this but they survived. We don't see the repetition of the same way will create a different result," he said.

"They don't want to have a continuation of the sanctions at the same level and enter negotiations. They believe there was an agreement and US was part of the agreement."

Sheikh Mohammed said Qatar and other countries have been talking to both Iran and the United States about de-escalation, urging both sides to meet and find a compromise.

"We believe that at one point there should an engagement – it cannot last forever like this," he said. "Since they are not willing to engage in further escalation, they should come up with ideas that open the doors."

Qatar's close ties with Iran, along with its support of extremist groups, was one of the reasons Saudi Arabia, the UAE and other Gulf and Arab countries cut ties with Doha two years ago.

The comments from Qatar on a differing approach to Iran come after the US

last month deployed an aircraft carrier strike group and B-52 long-range bombers to the region to tackle escalatory action by Iran.

The US has also said Iran was almost certainly behind an attack on four oil tankers, including two Saudi ships, off the coast of the UAE.

Sheikh Mohammed also spoke about the Trump administration's impending Middle East peace deal, saying there was a disconnect between the Palestinians and the US over the blueprint.

"It cannot be a solution like, sort of, imposed on the Palestinians – no country in the Arab world can accept that," Sheikh Mohammed said, of the deal to end decades of conflict with Israel.

*With Reuters



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Qatar condemned after backtracking on Makkah summit declaration US commander says he believes Iran threat still 'very real'