

UK, European holidaymakers warned against Turkey travel as government blames Kurdish militia for unrest

Author:

daniel fountain

ID:

1556481244407900100

Sun, 2019-04-28 23:10

LONDON: British tourists are being told to be vigilant if traveling to Turkey after security officials warned of "terror nests" in bordering countries posing a significant threat to holidaymakers, Anadolu News Agency reported on Sunday,

The Anadolu statement said that cells in Afrin "pose a threat to Turkey." The warning comes as more Europeans – especially tourists from the UK – travel to Turkey for their summer holidays. UK nationals made up 2.3 million of annual visits to the country in 2018.

Despite Daesh militants attacking foreigners and Turkish citizens in recent years, the Turkish government has said Kurdish militia are to blame for the unrest.

Anadolu tweeted: "There are currently 8,000-10,000 terrorists in the Afrin region near Aleppo, near the Turkish-Syrian border, which has been besieged by the PYD/PKK.

"Terrorists are now hiding in shelters and pits in residential areas in Afrin after Turkey pointed out the region was a nest for terrorists

"No US soldiers are currently in Afrin while around 100 Russian military police are located in Tel Rifat, Tel Acar and Kefer Cenne areas."

86 people were killed in a bomb blast in the capital Ankara in 2015, while a further 45 were killed during an attack on Ataturk Airport a year later.

Meanwhile, in 2017, 39 revellers were killed in Istanbul as they welcomed the new year.

The UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office, as of April 28, is telling British citizens to avoid all travel within 10 kilometers of the Syrian border, with a warning that states: "Terrorists are very likely to try to carry out attacks in Turkey. Terrorist groups, including Kurdish groups, Daesh (formerly referred to as ISIL) and far left organizations, continue to plan and carry out attacks."

Speaking to the UK's Daily Star last year, Michael McCabe, CEO of risk awareness experts Intelligence Fusion, said the country faces a number of new crises, which could put holidaymakers at risk.

"President Erdogan's government faces a range of diverse internal and external threats," he said.

"The conflicts in Iraq and Syria on its border, separatist Kurdish groups, and significant opposition to the government."



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Turkey, Iran carried out joint operation against Kurdish militants
Turkey bans rally for Kurdish MP on hunger strike

[Abu Dhabi fund to deposit \\$250m into Sudan's central bank](#)

Sun, 2019-04-28 14:53

LONDON: The Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD) is to deposit \$250 million into Sudan's central bank as part of a previously-announced grant.

The move aims to secure increased liquidity and strengthen the financial position of Sudan, the UAE state news agency WAM said on Sunday, following the toppling of President Omar Al-Bashir.

Mohammed Saif Al-Suwaidi, director-general of the state-funded ADFD, said the UAE aims to support the Sudanese people and economy.

"ADFD and the government of Sudan have enjoyed strong and longstanding ties

dating back to 1976. The fund's development projects have significantly contributed to improving socio-economic conditions and driving sustainable growth," he said.

The deposit is part of a \$3 billion grant to Sudan announced by Saudi Arabia and the UAE earlier this month.

The grant includes a \$500 million deposit into Sudan's central bank, evenly split between the two countries.

The rest will be in the form of food, medicine and petroleum products.

In recent years Sudan has been hit by an acute lack of dollars, a key factor behind the nationwide protests that led to the toppling of Al-Bashir by the army earlier this month.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE called for "stability" and a "peaceful transition" in the days following the removal of Al-Bashir.

To date, ADFD has financed 17 development projects in Sudan with a total value of approximately 2 billion dirhams (\$545 million), WAM reported.

In 2017, the fund granted almost 1.5 billion dirhams to support liquidity and foreign currency reserves at Sudan's central bank.



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Sudan signs \$200m loan with Kuwait-based fund Saudi Arabia, UAE to give Sudan \$3 billion, including \$500 million in Central Bank

[Iran plays Hormuz Strait card, US says ready to respond](#)

Author:

AFP

ID:

1556450725735197100

Sun, 2019-04-28 11:05

TEHRAN: Iran's top general warned on Sunday Tehran could close the strategic Strait of Hormuz shipping route if it faces more "hostility," news agency ISNA said, as the US tightens up sanctions.

A day earlier, US Central Command chief Gen. Kenneth McKenzie said the US would deploy the necessary resources to counter any dangerous actions by Iran, Sky News Arabia reported.

"We're gonna continue to reach out to our partners and friends in the region to ensure that we make common cause against the threat of Iran," McKenzie, on an official visit to the Gulf region, was quoted as saying by Sky News Arabia.

"I believe we'll have the resources necessary to deter Iran from taking actions that will be dangerous," he said, according to a transcript released by the Abu Dhabi-based channel. "We will be able to respond effectively."

Strait of Hormuz

Iranian armed forces chief of staff Mohammad Bagheri told semi-official ISNA: "We are not after closing the Strait of Hormuz but if the hostility of enemies increase, we will be able to do so,"

"Also if our oil does not go through the strait, other countries' oil will certainly not cross the strait, too," he added.

The statement came after Washington said on April 22 it would start imposing sanctions on countries such as India, China and Turkey that buy Iranian oil.

Eight countries were initially given six-month reprieves after the US

reimposed sanctions on Iran in November, following US President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from a 2015 nuclear accord.

Iranian officials have repeatedly warned the Islamic republic could shut down the strait, a vital shipping lane for international oil supplies, should it find its national interests or security threatened.

"We believe Iran will continue to sell its oil ... (and) use the Strait of Hormuz. But if the United States takes the crazy measure of trying to prevent us from doing that, then it should be prepared for the consequences," Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Wednesday.



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Iran Guards drone spies on US warships in Gulf: media

Tunisia soldier killed in mine blast in extremist bastion

Author:

AFP

ID:

1556368603407587900

Sat, 2019-04-27 12:33

TUNIS: A Tunisian soldier has been killed and three others were wounded in a mine blast in the restive Kasserine region, the defense ministry said Saturday, in an attack claimed by Al-Qaeda-linked extremists. The mine exploded Friday on Mount Chambi, in Kasserine, where the army has conducted search operations since 2012 to hunt down extremists linked both to Al-Qaeda and the Daesh group, the ministry said. The area which borders Algeria – a “closed military zone” since 2014 – is considered to be a bastion of Okba Ibn Nafaa, a local affiliate of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Okba Ibn Nafaa claimed responsibility for the attack, SITE Intelligence Group reported late Friday. It said an anti-armored improvised explosive device (IED) was detonated targeting Tunisian soldiers but did not specify casualties, the monitoring group said. The attack which the defense ministry said killed a 26-year-old soldier came days after officials said security forces had shot dead a suspected extremist in the Kef mountains further north. Since its 2011 revolution, Tunisia has experienced multiple extremist attacks that have killed dozens of members of the security forces and 59 foreign tourists. The country has been under a state of emergency since November 2015, when a Daesh-claimed suicide bombing in Tunis killed 12 presidential guards.



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Minister of Commerce: Saudi-Tunisian relations witnessing remarkable development
Tunisia tourism sector makes flying start to 2019

[Sudanese protesters demanding civilian rule meet with army](#)

Author:

By FAY ABUELGASIM and SAMY MAGDY | AP

ID:

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Sat, 2019-04-27 12:43

KHARTOUM: The organizers of the protests that drove Sudan's President Omar Al-Bashir from power said they met Saturday with the ruling military council for talks on forming a transitional government.

The protesters had agreed on Wednesday to resume talks with the military after a temporary break. The announcement to set up a joint committee to tackle political disputes was followed by the resignation of three members of the military council, whom the opposition had accused of being too close to Al-Bashir.

The protesters fear the army, dominated by Al-Bashir appointees, will cling to power or select one of its own to succeed him. They also fear Islamists and other factions close to the deposed leader, who is now jailed in the capital, Khartoum, will be granted a role in the transition.

The Sudanese Professionals Association, which spearheaded four months of escalating demonstrations that led the military to remove Al-Bashir from power April 11, is demanding a civilian government. They have proposed that a sovereign council, which would include "limited" army representation, hand over full powers to civilians during a four-year transitional period. Army leaders have called for a two-year transition during which the generals would retain sovereign power and give only executive authorities to civilians.

The military also agreed on Wednesday to recognize the Forces for the Declaration of Freedom and Change, a coalition of opposition groups led by the SPA, as the uprising's only legitimate representative, in a move widely seen as a victory for the protesters.

The council has met with a wide range of political parties about the transition, including those formerly close to Al-Bashir. Shams Al-Deen Al-Kabashi, the spokesman for the council, said late Friday that it had completed a review of proposals. He did not elaborate.

The opposition has meanwhile vowed to continue protests, centered on a sit-in outside the military headquarters in Khartoum.

The Umma party of former Prime Minister Sadiq Al-Mahdi, a leading opposition figure, said the protesters will not break up the sit-in until there is a full transfer of power to civilians.

The SPA says around 100 people have been killed by security forces since December, when a failing economy and a spike in prices sparked the first protests.



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Sudan protesters hold prayers
outside military headquarters in campaign for civilian rule