

# Moroccans protest prison sentences of anti-poverty activists

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RABAT: Thousands of demonstrators in Morocco are condemning prison sentences given to the leader of the Hirak Rif anti-poverty movement and dozens of other activists.

The demonstration brought one of the main avenues of the Moroccan capital, Rabat, to a standstill on Sunday. Security forces kept watch as participants sang, "The people want the detainees released" and "Long live Rif."

Hirak leader Nasser Zefzafi was sentenced to the maximum prison term of 20 years for threatening state security. An appeals court upheld his sentence and those of other activists this month.

Rif is the struggling region in northern Morocco where the Hirak movement was born in 2016. The movement demands development and job creation for the region.

Families, human rights organizations and left-wing parties are demanding the imprisoned activists' immediate release.



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## **Bahrain's King Hamad orders reinstatement of citizenship of 551 convicts**

Sun, 2019-04-21 16:06

JEDDAH: Bahrain's King Hamad issued an order on Sunday to reinstate the citizenship of 551 convicts whose nationality had been revoked as per court rulings, reported the state news agency.

The royal decree is in line with the provisions of Article 24 of Law 58/2006 with respect to the Protection of the Community against Terrorist Acts, stipulating that rulings related to citizenship withdrawal will not be effective unless they are approved by the king.

King Hamad had already given directives to the competent authorities to evaluate the situation of convicts whose citizenship was revoked and take into account "the nature of crimes committed" before the final implementation of the court judgment.

"The study and evaluation of the situation of convicts should be based on criteria pertaining to the seriousness, impact and consequences of the crimes, as well as on the danger the convict may pose on national security," Bahrain News Agency said in announcing the king's decision.

King Hamad also instructed the minister of interior to study and evaluate the citizenship revocation rulings and to prepare a list of reinstatement beneficiaries.

Authorities later will announce the names of those having their citizenship restored.

Last week, 138 people lost their citizenship in a mass trial.



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## **Saudi Arabia, UAE to give Sudan \$3 billion, including \$500 million in Central Bank**

Sun, 2019-04-21 15:36

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have granted Sudan \$3 billion in support, Saudi Press Agency said on Sunday.

The grant includes a \$500 million deposit into Sudan's central bank, in a bid to strengthen its financial position, ease pressure on the Sudanese pound and achieve greater stability in the exchange rate, SPA reported

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



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 this month.

The Kingdom and the UAE called for “stability” and a “peaceful transition” in the days following the removal of Al-Bashir.

The aid from Saudi Arabia and the Emirates is the first major publicly announced assistance to Sudan from Gulf states in several years.

“This is to strengthen its financial position, ease the pressure on the Sudanese pound and increase stability in the exchange rate,” the Saudi Press Agency said.

Since Al-Bashir’s ousting, the Sudanese pound has steadily strengthened on the black market, and on Sunday it jumped to 45 to the dollar, after trading at 72 at one stage last week.

The official exchange rate is 47.5 pounds to the dollar.



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\$7 million cash hoard found in home of Sudan’s ousted leader Omar Al-

BashirSudan arrests several top members of former ruling party – senior party official

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## Syria's Assad discusses peace talks, trade with Russian envoys

Sat, 2019-04-20 18:54

BEIRUT/MOSCOW: Syrian President Bashar Assad met senior officials from his strongest ally Russia in Damascus on Friday and Saturday to discuss upcoming peace talks and trade between the two countries, state media in Syria reported.

Russia has helped Assad's forces to take back most of the country but the eight-year-long war continues. Swathes of the northeast and northwest are out of his control, while sanctions and a fuel shortage are constricting the economy.

Moscow has pushed for a political process involving talks on a new constitution and elections as a way to end the conflict, but Assad has played down the possibility that the Turkey-backed opposition or foreign countries might participate.

Russia's Foreign Ministry said late on Friday that Assad had met Moscow's Syria envoy Alexander Lavrentiev, Deputy Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Vershinin and several Russian Defense Ministry officials.

However, while it said they had discussed the formation of a constitutional committee, which Syria's opposition last year agreed to join under UN auspices after a Russian-hosted peace conference, Syrian state media did not mention it.

Syria's official SANA news agency said meetings had focused on the next round of talks in Kazakhstan involving Syria, its allies Russia and Iran, and the rebels' backer Turkey.

Hundreds of thousands of people have been killed in Syria's war and about half the pre-conflict population of 22 million has been displaced.

Russia launched a military intervention to support Assad in 2015, turning the tide of the fighting in his favor.

On Saturday, SANA said Assad had met Russian Deputy Prime Minister Yury Borisov to discuss trade and economic cooperation, "particularly in the fields of energy, industry and increasing trade."

It said Assad and Borisov discussed mechanisms to overcome obstacles including those "resulting from the sanctions which countries against the Syrian people imposed on Syria."

The United States and European Union imposed tough sanctions on Syria early in the conflict over what they described as atrocities carried out by the government, which it denies.

This week, Syrian state media reported that a fuel shortage which has resulted in rationing and long queues at petrol stations came in the context of difficulty in importing fuel and the halting of a credit line from Iran.

Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Al-Mouallem said in a statement on Saturday carried by SANA that “Syria is always coordinating with Iran.”



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Separate militant attacks kill nearly 50 Syrian soldiers

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## [Heavy clashes break out in southern suburbs of Libyan capital](#)

Author:

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Sat, 2019-04-20 14:11

TRIPOLI: Heavy clashes broke out in the southern districts of the Libyan capital Tripoli on Saturday, with the shelling audible from the centre of the city, residents said.

Eastern Libyan forces launched an offensive on Tripoli more than two weeks

ago, but they have been stopped in the southern outskirts by forces allied to the UN-backed administration based in the city.

The head of the Libyan National Army (LNA) Khalifa Haftar says his forces are fighting to clear the country of "terrorist" elements.

The shelling was louder and more frequent on Saturday than in previous days, residents said. Both sides claimed progress in southern Tripoli, but no more details were immediately available.



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