

[Arab coalition targets Yemen's Houthi drone capabilities in Sanaa](#)

Sat, 2019-01-19 21:16

JEDDAH: The Arab coalition fighting to support the legitimate government in Yemen said it has targeted Houthi drone capabilities in a military operation in Sanaa and called on civilians not to approach the targeted sites. The coalition said it has taken the necessary measures to protect civilians during the military operation in the Houthi-held Yemeni capital. It assured that the military operation is consistent with international humanitarian law.



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Yemen's Houthis imposed war on Arab coalition: Saudi FM Al-Jubeir

[Sudan protesters plan march on parliament, more demos](#)

Author:

AFP

ID:

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Sat, 2019-01-19 13:50

KHARTOUM: A group that is spearheading anti-government protests across Sudan on Saturday said it plans to launch more nationwide rallies over the next few days, including a march on parliament.

Protests have rocked Sudan since December 19, when the government raised the price of bread, and since then have escalated into rallies against President Omar Al-Bashir's three-decade rule.

The Sudanese Professionals Association, an umbrella group of trade unions, in a statement called for a march on parliament Sunday to submit to lawmakers a memorandum calling for Bashir to step aside.

"We are calling for a march to parliament in Omdurman on Sunday," it said referring to Khartoum's twin city where parliament is located.

"The protesters will submit to parliament a memorandum calling on President Bashir to step down," added the association, which represents the unions of doctors, teachers and engineers.

Over the past month, protesters have staged several demonstrations in Omdurman, on the west bank of the Nile.

Officials say at least 26 people, including two security personnel, have died during a month of protests, while rights group Amnesty International last week put the death toll at more than 40.

The group spearheading the protests said there will also be rallies in Khartoum on Sunday, to be followed by night-time demonstrations on Tuesday in the capital and in Omdurman.

"And on Thursday there will be rallies across all towns and cities of Sudan," the statement added.

On Friday, hundreds of mourners leaving the funeral of a protester had staged a spontaneous demonstration in the capital's Burri district, while crowds of Muslim worshippers had launched another rally in a mosque in Omdurman, witnesses said.

Protesters chanting "freedom, peace, justice" have been confronted by riot police with tear gas at several rallies since the first protest erupted in the eastern town of Atbara on December 19 after the rise of bread price.

The government's tough response has sparked international criticism, while Bashir has blamed the violence on unidentified "conspirators."

Analysts say the protests have emerged as the biggest challenge to the veteran leader's rule who swept to power in 1989 in an Islamist-backed coup. The protests come as Sudan suffers from an economic crisis driven by an acute shortage of foreign currency and soaring inflation that has more than doubled the price of food and medicines.



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Sudan police shoot live fire outside home of dead protester
Sudan protesters, police clash as anti-Bashir unrest spreads
Social media aids Sudan opposition to spread protests
Sudan protests will not change government: Bashir

[Syrian opposition sees window for political solution in Syria](#)

Author:

Reuters

ID:

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Sat, 2019-01-19 13:20

RIYADH: Syria now has a good opportunity to reach a political solution to its

devastating eight-year war as cease-fires have brought calm to many areas of the country, Syria's chief opposition negotiator said on Saturday.

"I think now that we have an opportunity, because nearly in Syria we have a cease-fire now, in the northeast of Syria and the north of Syria, and the efforts of fighting terrorism has achieved good results," Nasr Hariri told Reuters in an interview in the Saudi Arabian capital Riyadh, where he is based.

Hariri, the opposition's chief negotiator in UN peace talks, met with the newly appointed United Nations Special Envoy to Syria Geir Pedersen on Friday.

"Now it is time to invest all of these developments: the cease-fire, fighting terrorism, the belief of the majority of the Syrian people that the only solution to the Syrian crisis is the political solution," Hariri added.

In December, Russia, Iran and Turkey – supporters of the main sides in Syria's complex civil war – failed to agree on the makeup of a UN-sponsored Syrian Constitutional Committee but called for it to convene early next year to kick off a viable peace process.

Syrian President Bashar Assad, whose forces have reclaimed most of Syria with Russian and Iranian support apart from the northern province of Idlib, has clung to power throughout the conflict and is widely seen as being loath to yield power after it ends.

Arab states, including some that once backed rebels against Assad, are seeking to reconcile with him after decisive gains by his forces in the war, aiming to expand their influence in Syria at the expense of non-Arab Turkey and Iran.

"All the countries... Turkey, to some extent Russia and the Arab countries believe ... that without a political solution, the normalization with the (Assad) regime would be impossible," Hariri said.



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[Bashar Al-Assad](#)

[Nasr Hariri](#)

US Senator Graham hopes Trump will slow America's Syria withdrawal
Air strike on Daesh-held area in eastern Syria kills 20

[Syrian refugees wade through their worst Lebanese winter](#)

Author:

Fri, 2019-01-18 23:38

DELHAMIYEH, Lebanon: Snowstorms and weeks of bad weather have turned Lebanon's lush Bekaa Valley into an unliveable swamp for tens of thousands of Syrian refugees.

The Litani River flooded many of the fields stretching across the two majestic mountain ranges flanking the Bekaa after this year's second major

storm hit on Wednesday.

Some families had barely finished repairing their tents when the most severe winter they have faced yet unleashed another crushing night of snow, wind and flooding.

"We spent all night emptying the tent but the water kept coming in," said Thaer Ibrahim Mohammed, a red and white headscarf wrapped around his head.

"This is the worst winter," said the greying man.

Gaggles of children made the most of the afternoon sun and pulled rubber boots on their bare feet to romp in the camp's sludgy alleys and have snowball fights.

The shelters in "Camp 040," which lies on the edge of the village of Delhamiyeh and is one of the many informal settlements that dot the valley, are all the same.

They were erected on concrete slabs and their roofs are held down with used tires.

Their tarpaulin walls provide a flimsy protection against strong winds and freezing temperatures.

The camp looks like it could have sprung up just weeks earlier but many of its residents have lived there since 2012, when the Syrian conflict escalated.

Abu Ahmad, a native of Homs spending his seventh winter in Lebanon, said aid was inadequate.

"This year there was a lot of rain. But humanitarian organizations have reduced aid," he said, standing on a brick placed as a stepping stone in a muddy puddle.

"You just need to look: Do you think this sheeting keeps us warm or keeps the water out? They gave us nothing, no new tarps, no firewood, nothing," the young man said.

Aid organizations say they are doing their best to distribute emergency aid to the most vulnerable among the estimated 340,000 refugees living in the Bekaa Valley.

The UN refugee agency (UNHCR) said close to 24,000 people were affected by extreme weather conditions.

Some tents were destroyed by the storms that elsewhere in Lebanon have cut the main road to Syria several times, flooded the highway north of Beirut and forced schools to close.

Relief agencies have had to relocate families who were left homeless, once again, in several feet of snow.

Fatima, a 20-year-old refugee originally from the main northern Syrian city of Aleppo, had to leave her tent with her family but opted to squeeze in with neighbors.

“The tent is totally flooded, we can’t live in it. So we took our things and left, what else can we do?”



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Farmer turns ferryman as river engulfs Syrian hometown
Deadly attack on US forces leaves Syria town fearful for future

[Farmer turns ferryman as river engulfs Syrian hometown](#)

Author:

Fri, 2019-01-18 22:55

DARKUSH, Syria: The alleyways of the Syrian town of Darkush are normally thronged with pedestrians but since the swollen Orontes River burst its banks, Abu Ihab’s boat has provided the main way of getting around.

The 49-year-old farmer normally takes a well-earned rest in January when winter frosts turn his fields as hard as rock.

But this year, days of torrential rain in the mountains of Lebanon has sent a deluge downstream, submerging the streets of his hometown under as much as 5 feet of water.

So instead the father of four is working long hours each day paddling his boat around the streets helping stricken residents to get their children to school, do the shopping or check on relatives.

“In winter, I don’t usually leave the house much as it is cold and it rains. But this year I felt that people needed me,” he says as he provides yet another ferry ride to grateful fellow townspeople.

Abu Ihab normally uses his boat for summer fishing on the Orontes to supplement his farm produce.

He is one of the few in the town to own one so he offers his services for free, delivering fresh bread from the bakery or ferrying excited children on an unaccustomed school run by boat.

“Today, people are staying at home. They can’t even get to the shops to buy food,” he says, wearing a woolly hat and jacket against the cold.

It is not the first year that he has provided his free boat service. “Most years there are spates but this year is a really big one because of the torrential rains,” he says.

The ground floors of houses close to the river have been inundated.

The Arab town close the Turkish border lies in Idlib province which is largely under the control of militants led by Al-Qaeda’s former Syria branch.

Across the province, the torrential rains have triggered flash floods that have caused widespread hardship, particularly in the vast tent cities set up for the displaced.

Civilians who have fled other parts of Syria recaptured by government forces make up around half of the resident population of Idlib and neighboring opposition-held areas.







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Deadly attack on US forces leaves Syria town fearful for future
Explosion in north Syria targets Al-Qaeda gunmen, kills 11