

Lebanese MP: Sweida hostages were freed by Russia

Author:

Mon, 2018-11-12 22:30

BEIRUT: Lebanese MP and member of the Democratic Gathering party Wael Abou Faour told Arab News that “the liberation of the women abducted by Daesh on Nov. 8 was accomplished by Russian special forces. They were responsible for the monitoring, reconnaissance, timing and execution of the operation. The Syrian army was not the one to do so as the regime had claimed. However, some Syrian elements that directly follow the Russian leadership took part in the operation.”

“What happened was a military liberation operation. No deal was made with the Syrian regime or the abductors,” he added.

Faour had accompanied the head of the Democratic Gathering party, Taymour Jumblatt, on a trip to Moscow where they met with the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov, in the presence of the official in charge of the issues of Lebanon, Syria and Palestine Andrei Banov. “The Russians informed us that the hostages will be released very soon at 10 a.m. Moscow time, while the Syrian announcement of their liberation came at 3 in the afternoon,” he noted.

Daesh had kidnapped 36 women and children from the Syrian southern province of Sweida during an attack that killed more than 250 people, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

“The Syrian regime was responsible for the kidnapping in the first place, so it is not normal for it to be behind the liberation. The regime wanted to use what happened to blackmail Syrian Druze into returning to the military service. There are hundred of thousands of Druze in Syria and 53,000 of them refused to join the military.”

“Since the beginning of the kidnapping crisis, the Russian leadership informed us that it is working directly on the ground and running the negotiations. Through announcing its responsibility for the liberation of the hostages, the Syrian regime is trying to look as if it is protecting the Druze and acquit itself from letting Daesh into the Druze areas,” Faour pointed out.

“The situation in Sweida is relatively acceptable. Some arrangements are being made under the direct guidance of the Russian leadership. Taymour Jumblatt is taking part in this matter in a way that preserves the security of Sweida residents and their relations with the rest of the Syrian people and prevents their usage in any future conspiracies carried out by the regime.

“These recent events showed that Taymour Jumblatt’s confidence in the Russians was in place especially after the liberation operation. Further discussions about future arrangements related to the Druze’s situation in Syria are under way. A suggestion proposed that the Druze wanted for military service would join the fifth legion led directly by Russia, which is receiving positive feedback among Druze,” he said.

"The relation between the Progressive Socialist Party led by Walid Jumblatt and the Russian Federation is historic. Russians preserve their relations with their historic allies and remember the great role of Kamal Jumblatt, who was awarded with the Order of Lenin among very few figures in the world. They also cherish the common friendship and struggle they share with Walid Jumblatt and want to consolidate the relation with his son Taymour.

"The relation with Russia does not lead to a relation with President Bashar Assad. That relation will only come back to life when there is a democratic regime in Syria," Faour stressed.

"Russia is working on a gradual political solution in Syria. There is no turning away from the constitutional committee. There are discussions related to the representatives of the civil society that constitute a third of the committee, which balances it in some way.

"The meeting held with Russian officials also discussed Lebanese issues. Moscow showed a great interest in the internal situation and it fears that the current developments, international disputes in particular, may destabilize its stability.

"They are very concerned with the forming of the Lebanese government headed by Saad Hariri, and Bogdanov expressed Russia's readiness to take any initiative to help Lebanon overcome the government crisis," he added.



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2 killed children among liberated Syrian hostages held by Daesh
Syria army frees 19 Druze hostages from Daesh

Israeli air strikes kill three Palestinians in Gaza after rocket fire

Author:

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Mon, 2018-11-12 18:42

GAZA: Israeli air strikes in Gaza killed three Palestinians on Monday after a barrage of rocket fire from the enclave, as renewed violence threatened to derail efforts to restore calm.

Israel's military said it had so far struck more than 20 militant sites in response to some 80 launches from the Hamas-run territory, reportedly rockets and mortars.

Missile defences had intercepted a number of the rockets, the military said.

The army said an Israeli bus was hit by fire from the Gaza Strip. Medics reported one person severely wounded.



A picture taken from the Gaza Strip on November 12, 2018 shows missiles being launched toward Israel. (AFP)

Medics also said six people from the southern Israeli city of Sderot were lightly wounded.

Israeli police said a rocket hit a house in Netivot, another southern Israeli town.

Gaza's health ministry said three Palestinians were killed in the Israeli strikes.

Militant group the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine said two were its members.



A picture taken from the Gaza Strip on November 12, 2018 shows missiles being launched toward Israel. A number of rockets were launched from the Gaza Strip toward Israel. (AFP)

Hamas meanwhile said it was behind the rocket fire on behalf of all Palestinian militant groups in Gaza, saying it was in revenge for a deadly Israeli military operation late Sunday.

On Sunday, a clash erupted during an Israeli special forces operation in the Gaza Strip that killed seven Palestinian militants, including a local commander for Hamas's armed wing, and an Israeli army officer.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu cut short a trip to Paris and rushed home as tensions rose, and on Monday convened a meeting of security chiefs.

Israel had stressed its covert operation on Sunday was an intelligence-gathering mission and "not an assassination or abduction," but Hamas strongly denounced it and vowed revenge.

Israeli bombardment of Al-Aqsa TV building in [#Gaza](#) City
pic.twitter.com/lgcmymrItG

– Ahmad Samaan (@ahmadsaman7) [November 12, 2018](#)

Israel signalled that Sunday's mission did not go as planned and resulted in the clash, which Palestinian officials said included Israeli air strikes.

In the immediate aftermath of the clash, Israel said it identified 17

launches – likely rockets or mortars – toward its territory from Gaza, with three intercepted by missile defences. No injuries were reported.

Hamas's armed wing, the Ezzedine Al-Qassam Brigades, said the Israeli special forces team had infiltrated near Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip in a civilian car.

Al-Qassam agents stopped it and wanted to search it, realised it was an Israeli operation and confronted them, it said in a statement.

An exchange of fire followed in which local Al-Qassam commander Nour Baraka was killed along with another militant, it said.

The car then attempted to flee and Israeli aircraft provided covering fire.

An Israeli helicopter landed near the fence and took away the special forces troops, according to Al-Qassam.

Israeli military spokesman Jonathan Conricus declined to comment on the Al-Qassam account "because of the sensitive nature of the operation".

Israel provided few details on Sunday's operation, saying it was carried out by special forces and resulted in an "exchange of fire".

A funeral was held for the seven Palestinian militants on Monday attended by thousands, including masked Al-Qassam members carrying rifles, some firing into the air.

On the Israeli side of the border, residents said they had stayed close to shelters throughout the night.

"I was sitting in my living room and around 10 pm or 11 pm, I suddenly heard the sound of helicopter gunships firing," said Gadi Yarkoni, head of a regional council in the area and a resident of Nirim Kibbutz.

"It was right above the village I'm living in. It was very unpleasant."

The clashes came after months of deadly unrest along the Gaza-Israel border had appeared to be calming.

Recent weeks have seen Israel allow Qatar to provide the Gaza Strip with millions of dollars in aid for salaries as well as fuel to help ease an electricity crisis.

Before the flare-up, Netanyahu had defended his decision to allow Qatar to transfer the cash to Gaza despite criticism from within his own government over the move, saying he wanted to avoid a war if it was not necessary.

Naftali Bennett, Netanyahu's education minister and right-wing rival, compared the cash flow to "protection money" paid to criminals.

Israel and Palestinian militants in Gaza have fought three wars since 2008, and recent months have raised fears of a fourth.

Deadly clashes have accompanied major protests along the Gaza-Israel border that began on March 30.

At least 230 Palestinians have since been killed by Israeli fire, the majority shot during protests and clashes, while others died in tank fire or air strikes.

Two Israeli soldiers have been killed in that time.

Egyptian and UN officials have been mediating between Israel and Hamas in an effort to reach a long-term truce deal.





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Israel-Gaza border falls quiet after botched Israeli operation

[**Bomb in Turkish-controlled Syrian town kills 1, wounds 24**](#)

Author:

Associated Press

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1542025025898350100

Mon, 2018-11-12 (All day)

ANKARA, Turkey: Turkey's state-run news agency says a car-bomb explosion in a Turkish-controlled town in northern Syria has killed one person and wounded 24.

The Anadolu Agency says the explosion occurred Monday in front of a school in the town of Jarablus. Five of the wounded were in serious condition and were evacuated to Turkey for treatment.

No one immediately claimed the attack.

The town is part of a swath of territory in northern Syria that has been under Turkish control since 2016, when Syrian rebels backed by Turkey drove out Daesh militants.



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US-backed Syrian force resumes ground assault on DaeshAt Syria border,
Jordanians dash over for cheap shopping

[What We Are Reading Today: Ernest Hemingway. Supplement to Ernest Hemingway](#)

Author:

Sun, 2018-11-11 22:53

Author: Audre Hanneman

This supplementary bibliography describes work by and about Ernest Hemingway published between 1966 and 1973.

Part One lists publications by Hemingway, including six recent books, new editions of previously published volumes, and work by other authors to which Hemingway contributed.

Translations and anthologies are entered, as are previously unpublished writings and material reprinted in newspapers and periodicals (including articles recently attributed to Hemingway).

The first half of Part Two lists 448 books and pamphlets on or mentioning Hemingway. The second half describes work that appeared in newspapers and journals, including articles, reviews, poems, critical essays, and textual studies.

Foreign publications are noted throughout Part Two. Omissions to the first volume of the bibliography have been entered in each section.

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[Assad regime protests to UN over coalition airstrike in east](#)

Author:

Sun, 2018-11-11 22:18

BEIRUT: The Syrian regime has protested to the UN about an airstrike by the US-led coalition against Daesh which it said killed 26 civilians in Hajjin in

the eastern Deir Ezzor region, pro-Assad media reported on Saturday.

Asked about reports of airstrikes in that area on Friday, the coalition's spokesman said it had "successfully struck and destroyed a Daesh observation post and staging area in Hajjin, void of civilians at the time."

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said 41 people, including 17 children, had been killed in two waves of coalition airstrikes on Friday in Hajjin and the nearby village of Al-Shafa on the eastern bank of the Euphrates River.

It said the casualties were mostly Iraqi and family members of Daesh fighters.

The coalition is supporting the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces in an attempt to defeat Daesh in the area it controls near the border with Iraq.

Syrian regime media said the Foreign Ministry had written to the UN secretary general and the president of the security council about "the crime" in Hajjin.

Col. Sean Ryan, the coalition spokesman, said: "Our team looks into all strikes to determine the credibility of any civilian casualty claims they see in open media."

The Observatory said earlier that militants had killed at least eight Syrian regime troops near a planned buffer zone around the country's last major rebel bastion.

The Observatory said the attack took place late on Friday in the north of Hama province near the planned buffer zone around opposition-held territory in neighboring Idlib.

The attack was led by fighters of Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham, an alliance led by Syria's former Al-Qaeda branch which is the dominant force in Idlib, the monitoring group said.

"An assault by HTS targeted a Syrian regime position on the outskirts of the de-militarized zone" and was followed by clashes in which eight regime forces were killed, Observatory chief Rami Abdel Rahman said. Two militants also died.

The de-militarized zone was announced by Ankara and Moscow in September to separate regime troops from rebel fighters in Idlib and adjacent areas.

Under the deal, the militants were supposed to have removed all heavy weapons from the buffer zone by Oct. 10 but skirmishes have continued to pit regime forces against militants and other insurgents on the ground.

Aid organizations had warned that a fully-fledged offensive on Idlib could spark the worst humanitarian catastrophe of the civil war so far.

Militant factions have said they withdrew their heavy weapons from the zone

but HTS and other hard-line groups have refused to pull out their fighters.

The deadly militant assault came hours after regime troops killed 23 fighters of a formerly US-backed group inside the planned buffer zone.

On Sunday, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) said they were resuming their offensive against Daesh in eastern Syria.

The (SDF), joint Arab-Kurdish units, had announced a suspension to their operation on Oct. 31 after Turkey shelled Kurdish militia posts in northern Syria.

The SDF said the resumption followed “intensive contacts” with the international coalition.



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Jordanians dash over for cheap shopping