

US-backed Syrian force resumes ground assault on Daesh

Author:

Reuters

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Sun, 2018-11-11 18:33

AMMAN: The US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces said on Sunday it had resumed a ground assault against Daesh in its last foothold near the Iraqi border, following the suspension of the offensive last month after Turkish shelling of northern Syria.

The Kurdish-led SDF said its operations in the Deir Ezzor area had restarted as the result of "intensive contacts between our forces' leadership and the international coalition and active diplomatic efforts aimed at defusing the crisis on the (Turkish-Syrian) border."

In a statement, the SDF said it was committed to continuing operations "to eliminate (Daesh)."

The US-led coalition kept up air strikes in the Deir Ezzor area despite the pause in SDF operations.

Turkey views Kurdish influence in northern Syria as a national security threat. The SDF is spearheaded by the Kurdish YPG militia, which Ankara views as an extension of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has waged a three-decade insurgency in Turkey.



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[Syrian Democratic Forces \(SDF\)](#)

[Iran upholds prison term for official convicted of spying](#)

Author:

Associated Press

ID:

1541940104309191600

Sun, 2018-11-11 (All day)

TEHRAN, Iran: An Iranian appeals court has upheld the 10-year prison sentence of a former Foreign Ministry official convicted of spying.

The semi-official Fars news agency on Sunday quoted judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejehi as saying the court upheld Kamal Amirbeig's sentence and fined him \$200,000. The report did not provide further information.

Iran rarely discloses the names or occupations of alleged spies.

Authorities have jailed several dual nationals in recent years on espionage charges. Rights groups have criticized those detentions, suggesting hard-liners in the judiciary are jailing Iranians with Western passports to use them as bargaining chips.

The US and Israel both view Iran as a regional menace, and are believed to have carried out past intelligence operations targeting its nuclear program.



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More sanctions likely on Iranian regime, says US national security adviser
US grants Iraq 45-day waiver over Iran sanctions to import gas, electricity: US Embassy

[Netanyahu defends Qatari cash infusion to Gaza](#)

Author:

AFP

ID:

1541929835858359800

Sun, 2018-11-11 08:53

JERUSALEM: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has defended his decision to enable Qatar to bring \$15 million into Hamas-controlled Gaza for salaries, saying it would calm tensions and prevent a Palestinian humanitarian crisis.

Netanyahu's remarks late Saturday were his first on the issue since Israel

allowed the cash to be transferred to the enclave controlled by Hamas, considered not only by the Jewish state but also the United States and European Union as a terrorist movement.

"I'm doing what I can, in coordination with the security elements, to return quiet to the southern communities, but also to prevent a humanitarian crisis," Netanyahu said, referring to Israeli towns near the Gaza border and deteriorating conditions in the Gaza Strip.

Netanyahu said the Israeli security establishment supported the move and that ministers in his security cabinet approved it.

"We held serious discussions," he said ahead of his flight to Paris, where he will join world leaders marking the centenary of the end of World War I.

"I think we're acting in a responsible and wise way."

He added: "At this time, this is the right step."

On Friday, Palestinian civil servants began receiving payments after months of sporadic salary disbursements in cash-strapped Gaza, with money delivered into the Palestinian enclave through Israel, reportedly in suitcases.

The Israeli-authorized money transfer appeared to be part of a deal that would see Hamas end months of often violent protests along the border in exchange for Israel easing its blockade of Gaza.

Border protests have been much calmer the last two Fridays.

The money influx was criticized by the Ramallah-based Palestinian Authority, which saw it as undermining reconciliation efforts with rivals Hamas and its attempts to return to power in the Gaza Strip.

Netanyahu has also faced political pressure within Israel, including from opposition head Tzipi Livni, who called it the premier's "submission to Hamas," which would strengthen the Islamist movement.

Deadly clashes have accompanied the major protests along the Gaza border with Israel that began on March 30, generating fears of a new war between the Jewish state and the strip's militant rulers.

Israel and Palestinian militants in Gaza have fought three wars since 2008.

At least 221 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire, the majority shot during protests and clashes, since the protests began.

Others have died in tank fire or air strikes.

One Israeli soldier has been killed along the Gaza border in that time.



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[Benjamin Netanyahu](#)

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'Pride of Palestine' Abdul Kareem Al-Selwady ready to kick and punch his way into record books at Brave 18 in Bahrain
New Zealand activists raise funds for Palestine charity after fine by Israel

[One dead in flooding as heavy rains hit Kuwait](#)

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Sat, 2018-11-10 16:33

JEDDAH: Flash floods after heavy rains in Kuwait killed one man Saturday and damaged roads, bridges and homes, officials said, as several oil firms and ministries announced a state of emergency.

The Ministry of Health said the man, aged 30, was swept away by the flooding

as he tried to rescue his family from their home, which was submerged in water in Al-Fahaheel area in the east.

An unspecified number of people were also reported injured in traffic accidents caused by the rains.

Several vehicles in many areas of the desert kingdom were washed away by the floods, particularly in newly-build residential areas, AFP journalists said. Kuwaiti National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanim promised on Saturday that the family of the Kuwaiti citizen killed by heavy rains on Friday night would not be "left in the lurch."

"The family of the martyr of the Al-Fahaheel floods, Ahmad Al-Fadhli, will not be let down, facing life challenges alone," he said in a press statement following Al-Fadhli's funeral procession.

He added that he had to attend the funeral since he is the representative of the Kuwaiti people.

The Kuwaiti army and the national guard launched search operations as authorities set aside several locations to receive residents threatened by flooding.

The ministries of oil and electricity as well as several oil companies announced a state of emergency, and the government held an urgent cabinet session on Saturday morning.

Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Sabah chaired the meeting and said that officials will be investigated and those who failed in their duties to prevent the flooding will be held accountable.

The state news agency KUNA, quoting the ministry of education, said that private and public schools would be closed on Sunday.

Kuwait's meteorological office has issued weather warnings for the coming hours, with an increasing potential for spotty and thundery showers.

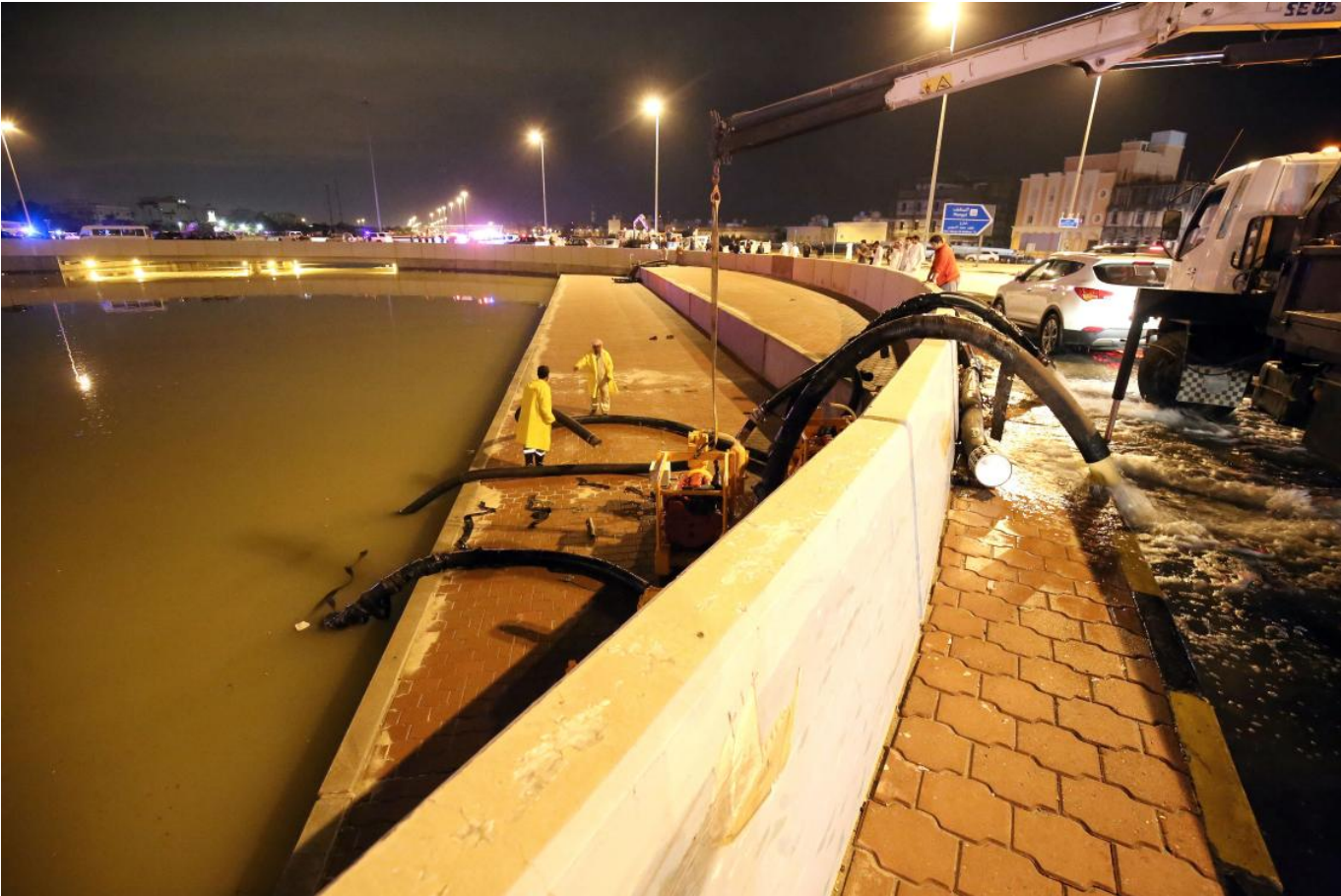
The unstable weather gripping the country is likely to persist later on Saturday with a chance of intermittent downpours at varying intensities, meteorologist Abdulaziz Al-Qarawi told KUNA.

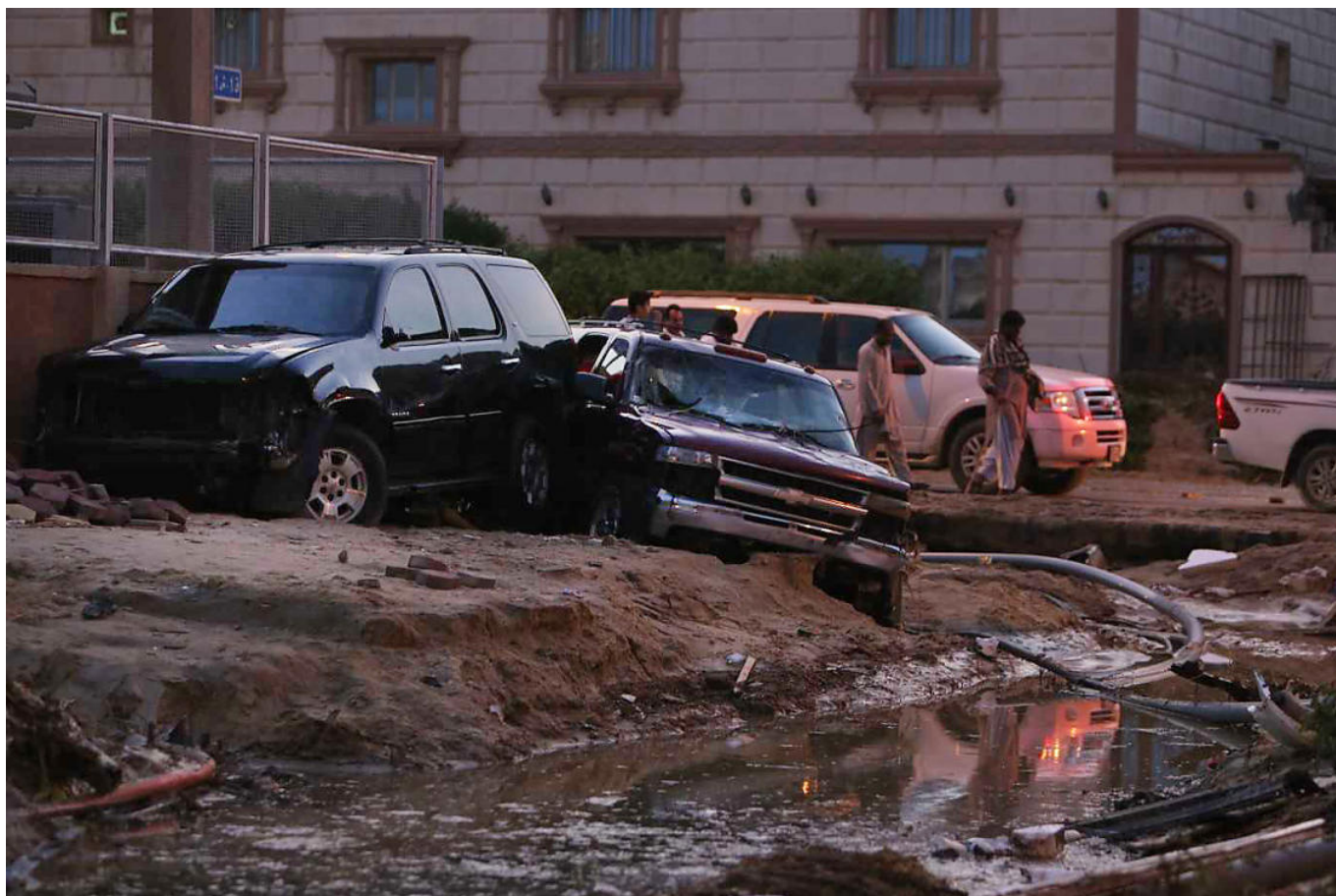
Weather conditions are expected to gradually improve after midday tomorrow, he indicated.

Bad weather accompanied by torrential rains and flash flooding has hit several countries in the region, including Jordan where 12 people have been killed and nearly 4,000 tourists forced to flee the famed ancient desert city of Petra.









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Kuwait's public works minister resigns amid severe flooding
Bad weather shuts schools and government in Kuwait

[Freed Daesh captive says son died in her lap from militant gunfire](#)

Author:

Sat, 2018-11-10 22:47

DAMASCUS: A Syrian woman captured by Daesh said her eight-year-old son died in her lap after the extremists shot him and his cousin during a military operation to liberate them more than 100 days after they were kidnapped.

Najwa Abu Ammar, 35, was kidnapped with her two sons and daughter and nearly two dozen others in July from southern Sweida province in a bloody attack on their villages in which the militants killed over 200 people.

When a military operation began to liberate them on Thursday, the children panicked during the gunfire, she said.

Her son Rafaat and his 13-year-old cousin Qusay ran and the militants fired at them.

“We were in the open air at the bottom of a valley as the clashes raged between the army and gunmen,” she said.

“When my son tried to run away, they (Daesh militants) shot him. He was in my lap when he died.”

His cousin Qusay bled to death after nearly five hours, Abu Ammar said.

“I am very very sad,” she said in a telephone interview through a crackling line from her remote village of Shbiki. “I am tired.”

A large funeral procession for the two children set out on Saturday from the national hospital in Sweida to their village, about 30 km to the east.

“What is the sin of those innocent children, who should now be in their classrooms,” Monzer Al-Shoufi, a resident of Sweida who took part in the procession, told AP by telephone.

The family of Abu Ammar suffered another loss in the kidnapping – Rafaat’s grandmother was killed on the day of the abductions.

Nashaat Abu Ammar, Rafaat’s father, said his mother was among those kidnapped by the militants, who forced the elderly, sick woman to walk about 4 km. When she failed to continue, they shot her dead.

Bombings

The rare attacks in the province populated mainly by minority Druze included several suicide bombings. The violence on July 25 devastated the community and shattered the region’s calm. At least 216 people were killed and the militants walked away with the captives.

BACKGROUND

Militants have killed at least eight Syrian regime troops near a planned buffer zone around Idlib.

The attack took place in the north of Hama province near the planned buffer zone.

The attack was led by fighters of Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham, an alliance led by Syria’s former Al-Qaeda branch.

Nashaat Abu Ammar said about 20 of those killed were close relatives and 60 others were related.

Najwa Abu Ammar said the captors held the group in different hideouts, including a camp and a cave, and once kept them in a moving car for over 12 hours, the captives not knowing where they were headed.

The militants fed them sporadically and beat and insulted the children. They didn't torture them, Abu Ammar said, but started threatening to kill them as time passed.

At least two women and one man died in captivity, including a woman who was shot by the extremists to pressure authorities in negotiations for the captives' release.

Abu Ammar's husband said she looked frail.

"Sometimes they fed us once every two days and other times twice every day," Abu Ammar said, adding that it was mostly just olive oil, thyme and jam.

"They held us first in a camp then a cave and kept moving us from one place to the other," she said.

Abu Ammar said she didn't know about the killed hostages until they were liberated.

Broad offensive

Six other hostages, two women and four children, had been freed in an exchange with the regime in October. Negotiations were expected to free the remaining hostages but talks failed and Syrian troops launched a broad offensive against Daesh in southern Syria.

Separately, a war monitoring group and pro-Assad media accused the US-led coalition of killing over two dozen civilians in airstrikes in Hajjin, a town in southeastern Syria near the border with Iraq, Daesh's last stronghold.

Spokesman Col. Sean Ryan told AP in an email that the US-led coalition "successfully struck (and) destroyed" a Daesh observation post and staging area in Hajjin "void of civilians at the time."

Ryan said the coalition team in charge of tracking civilians reviews claims of civilian casualties they see in media reports.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said at least 26 people, believed to be members of Daesh families, were killed in Hajjin and another seven were killed in Shafaa in airstrikes on Friday.

The Observatory said the dead were mostly women and children and were mostly Iraqis.

Syria's state news agency reported 26 killed, quoting locals.

The Daesh group posted a rare video from inside Hajjin showing badly

destroyed homes, bodies protruding from under rubble and dust still rising from some buildings.

The US-led coalition and local allies have been battling Daesh on the eastern banks of the Euphrates River.

But the militants continue to hold their ground in the small sliver of territory around Hajjin.



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After Daesh, Damascus suburb residents blocked from going home2 killed children among liberated Syrian hostages held by Daesh