

UN seeks \$80 mn to avert 'imminent' Yemen oil spill

Author:

Fri, 2022-04-08 19:14

LONDON: The UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Yemen David Gressly renews the warning of the danger of the Safer oil tanker.

Developing...



Yemen troops battle new Houthi attacks near Marib

Fri, 2022-04-08 18:35

AL-MUKALLA: Fierce fighting broke out on Friday on the outskirts of Yemen's central city of Marib after the Iran-backed Houthis mounted a new attack on government forces defending the strategic location.

The Yemeni Defense Ministry said that army troops and allied tribesmen were fending off a major Houthi assault at flashpoint sites in Juba district, south of Marib.

The attack has been described as the biggest since April 2, the first day of a two-month truce brokered by the UN.

Yemen's government has accused the Houthis of exploiting the ceasefire and absence of Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen warplanes by mobilizing new forces and military equipment including tanks, artillery, and BMP infantry fighting vehicles.

The army said that the Houthis had committed at least 100 violations of the truce in contested areas in Hodeidah, Jouf, Taiz, Saada, Hajjah, and Marib. The Houthis accused the Yemeni government of attacking their forces in Marib on Friday.

Energy-rich Marib has seen the bloodiest and most aggressive fighting in the war since earlier last year when the Houthis resumed an offensive to control the city.

Thousands of combatants and civilians have been killed outside the city and the group rejected calls to end its attacks that have exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in the country.

Under the terms of the longest truce since the beginning of the conflict, warring factions in Yemen were to halt hostilities on all fronts in addition to stopping cross-border attacks on Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Sanaa airport would open for two flights to Egypt and Jordan each week, and 18 fuel ships would be allowed to enter the western port of Hodeidah.

Yemen's former President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi on Thursday transferred his powers to a presidential council of eight members to run the country and engage in peace talks with the Houthis.

Houthi spokesman, Mohammed Abdul-Salam, on Thursday rejected the formation of the presidential council and the outcomes of Yemeni-Yemeni consultations in Riyadh, claiming the council was meant to reorganize the ranks of their opponents before pushing them into the battlefields to fight them.



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Exploiting truce, Houthis deploy war machinery outside Marib Fighting rages outside Yemen's Marib as UN envoy meets leaders

[Sudanese take to the streets in new anti-coup protests](#)

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1649259265919813000

Wed, 2022-04-06 18:51

CAIRO: Thousands of Sudanese marched in the capital of Khartoum and other cities on Wednesday in new protests against an October military coup that plunged the African country into political turmoil and aggravated its

economic woes.

It was the latest in efforts to pressure the ruling generals, whose takeover has triggered near-daily street protests demanding civilian rule. Called by pro-democracy groups, the demonstrators marched in Khartoum and its twin city of Omdurman amid tight security around the presidential palace, which has seen violent clashes in previous protests.

There were also rallies elsewhere, including in Qadarif and Port Sudan in the east and war-ravaged Darfur region in the west. Footage on social media, which corresponded with The Associated Press reporting, shows young people setting tires on fire and blocking roads.

The army's takeover upended Sudan's transition to democracy after three decades of repression and international isolation under autocratic President Omar Al-Bashir. It also sent the country's already fragile economy into free fall, with living conditions rapidly deteriorating. A popular uprising forced the military to remove Al-Bashir and his Islamist government in April 2019. Since the coup, a crackdown on protesters has killed more than 90 people, mostly young men, and injured thousands, according to a Sudanese medical group.

Western governments and world financial institutions suspended their assistance to Sudan in order to pressure the generals to return to civilian-led government.

The UN envoy for Sudan warned last month that the country was heading for "an economic and security collapse" unless it addresses the political paralysis following the coup.

Wednesday's marches were called for by the Sudanese Professionals' Association and the so-called Resistance Committees, which were the backbone of the uprising against Al-Bashir and have also spearheaded the ongoing anti-coup protests. They demand an immediate handover to a fully civilian government, the removal of the generals behind the coup and holding them accountable in "swift and fair trials."

The US State Department spokesman Ned Price on Tuesday urged Sudan's military rulers to allow peaceful protests to "continue without fear of violence." President Joe Biden's administration last month imposed sanctions on Sudan's Central Reserve Police, which it described as a militarized unit of the country's police forces, for using violence against pro-democracy protests. The latest protests come on the third anniversary of the beginning of a sit-in outside the military headquarters in Khartoum that accelerated the removal of Al-Bashir.

They also come on the 37th anniversary of the overthrow of President Jaafar Al-Nimeiri in a bloodless coup in 1985 after a popular uprising. At the time, the military quickly handed power to an elected government.

However, the dysfunctional administration lasted only a few years until Al-Bashir – a career army officer – forged an alliance with Islamist hard-liners and toppled it in a 1989 coup.



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Sudan's Burhan threatens to expel UN mission head
Sudanese protest military coup, tumbling economy

[Ankara considering opportunities to start talks with Syria: Hurriyet](#)

Wed, 2022-04-06 18:43

ANKARA: The Turkish government is mulling over opportunities to establish a dialogue channel with the Syrian government, the pro-government Hurriyet newspaper has reported.

Using anonymous sources, the Turkish daily said: "The balanced policy recently followed by Turkey and the role that Ankara has played in recent months, especially in resolving the war in Ukraine, have made the current period suitable for resolving the Syrian crisis."

According to the report, the bilateral discussions will focus on three key issues: Protection of the unitary structure of the Syrian state against the activities of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), safeguarding the territorial integrity of Syria and allowing the safe return of about half of the Syrian refugees currently living in Turkey.

There has been no comment yet on the Hurriyet report from either Damascus or Ankara.

Francesco Siccardi, a senior program manager at Carnegie Europe, told Arab News that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is seizing a political opportunity with a potential move of rapprochement with Syrian President Bashar Assad.

"After presenting himself as the mediator between Russia and Ukraine, he could portray himself as a benevolent leader also in the Syrian scenario. The fact that both initiatives could bear no fruit is secondary to the perception of these posturing that will help him lift his image both at home and abroad," he said.

The improvement of diplomatic ties with Damascus could also help Ankara reduce the political and economic burden of hosting 3.7 million refugees in Turkey amid skyrocketing inflation and decreasing purchasing power. The economic problems crippling the country are often blamed on the presence of an uncontrolled number of refugees.

According to Siccardi, this initiative could produce excellent gains for Erdogan if a portion of the Syrian refugees currently in Turkey are allowed to return to Syria.

Hurriyet also claimed that Assad's visit to the UAE last month was seen in Ankara as a show of his willingness to take new initiatives and rally new support as he hopes to stabilize the country.

In the meantime, the normalization of ties between Turkey and Egypt is also on the horizon, with some unconfirmed reports of an eventual appointment of a Turkish ambassador in Cairo after nearly nine years.

Experts note that Turkey's ongoing normalization efforts with the Middle Eastern and Gulf countries will inevitably require resuming relations with Syria.

Samuel Ramani, an associate fellow at the London-based Royal United Services Institute, said Turkey regards itself as an increasingly important actor in the crisis diplomacy sphere.

"Turkey has acted as a dialogue facilitator and mediator between Russia and Ukraine, and is now trying to channel that experience to Syria. Assad's recent visit to the UAE underscores his growing normalization with Arab countries, and despite Turkey's antipathy toward him, Ankara realizes that Assad is Syria's only leadership option," he told Arab News.

According to Ramani, given the fact that Turkey is trying to ease tensions

with regional powers, such as the UAE and Egypt, removing Syria as a source of tension serves that agenda.

Since the beginning of the civil war in Syria, Turkey conducted multiple military operations in Syria's northern part in a bid to fight back against Syrian Kurdish militants that it associates with the PKK.

According to the 1998 Adana memorandum between Syria and Turkey, both parties are required to take necessary measures to remove PKK fighters from the Syria border.

Ankara has deployed thousands of troops in Syria and set up dozens of military outposts and bases there, which Damascus considers a violation of its sovereignty.

The last meeting between Turkey, Russia and Iran under the Astana process was held in December. How Turkey's potential disagreements with Russia over its pro-Ukrainian neutrality policy will affect dynamics in Syria remain to be seen.

According to Ramani, Turkey has tried to compartmentalize its disagreements with Russia over Ukraine in its engagement with Moscow in Syria.

"Patrols between Russia and Turkey have continued in northern Syria, even as Russian tanks brandish the Z symbol of support for the war which Turkey opposes. Presidential spokesperson Ibrahim Kalin cited Turkey's ability to engage with Russia in theaters, such as Syria, while disagreeing with its conduct in Ukraine as a model for Western countries to follow," he said.

As Turkey has not joined Western sanctions against Russia, Ramani does not expect that Moscow will have any objections to dialogue with Ankara in Syria.

"It will welcome talks between Turkey and Assad too," he said.

For Siccardi, Turkey has much to lose in Syria and a change of the status quo in Idlib could have catastrophic consequences for Ankara.

"More than 3 million civilians have taken refuge there. An Assad regime's offensive – backed by Moscow – could lead to many people crossing into Turkey, where almost 4 million Syrians have already taken shelter. This would be incredibly damaging for Erdogan, who is working for the safe return home of the better part of the Syrians currently living in Turkey. To prevent this outcome, Turkey will continue to be very careful and protective of its relationship with Moscow."

Last year, Erdogan raised the specter of a new Turkish military campaign against Kurdish forces in northern Syria. For the moment, such an offensive is not on the domestic agenda.

"But, with an eye on the country's parliamentary and presidential elections in 2023, any new plan for military operation in Syria will help Erdogan connect with his nationalistic constituencies and drum up support," Aydin Sezer, an expert on Turkey-Russia relations, told Arab News.

“Last year, Russia did not give Syria the green light to any plan of a military offensive. But, considering current balances between Russia and the US over the Ukrainian conflict, Russia may push for a military offensive in Syria against Kurdish militants just to draw the US forces into a new turmoil,” he added.

According to Sezer, if the rapprochement between Ankara and Damascus bears fruit before the elections, the repatriation of refugees may take place with some political offsets.

“Damascus can ask Ankara to take back fighters of the Syrian National Army who mostly have Turkish citizenship, and offer its help for the repatriation of Syrian refugees,” he said, adding: “If Turkey takes coordinated steps with the UAE in Syria, it should also align its strategies with Russia.”

Ankara has, in the last four years, maintained low-level contact with Damascus through intelligence agencies.

But in 2019, Erdogan asserted that he would never talk to Assad, “who is responsible for the death of more than 1 million Syrians.”



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In war-torn Syria, a charity offers hope to kids with cancer Turkey's Erdogan,

Gaza, Ukraine, Germany: From one home to another

Wed, 2022-04-06 18:14

SCHWETZINGEN, Germany: Dr. Mohab Mousa, a Palestinian brain and neurosurgeon, lived and worked in Ukraine until the war forced him to flee. Now he and his family have taken refuge in Germany.

More than 4 million people have fled Ukraine since the conflict began. Over 300,000 of them have arrived in Germany, many from the Middle East as Ukraine has a community of tens of thousands of people from the region.

Mousa, from Rafah in the Gaza Strip, has seen firsthand the horrors of war at home. As the situation in Gaza was unlikely to improve, he decided to leave.

"I wanted to improve my skills and provide a safe home for my wife and children," he told Arab News. Mousa registered at the University of Kharkiv in eastern Ukraine in 2016.

His wife and three children followed shortly afterward. His fourth child was born there and is a Ukrainian citizen.

Mousa learned Russian and started to work in the city of Kharkiv. Ukraine became his new home. "I like the country, but Kharkiv is something like a personal love story," he said.

"The people are nice, there's a large community of expats – basically everything in Kharkiv is beautiful."

But the new world Mousa had escaped to has been turned upside down, something he said he did not expect even until the day before the conflict began.

"I was having coffee with a friend who asked me if there was going to be a war. I told him no."

The very next day, the quarter where he lives on the outskirts of the city was hit by missiles. "I woke up my wife and children, and we fled to the school to find shelter there," Mousa said.

As the situation deteriorated further every day, he and his wife decided to leave to protect the children.

They only took what they could carry and booked a train to the city of Lviv in western Ukraine.

They arrived after an exhausting trip that took 30 hours, but they were far from safety. Devious people who offered refugees a ride to Slovakia did not hesitate to exploit their needs.

“They charged foreigners 2,500 Ukrainian hryvnia (\$85) instead of the regular 500,” Mousa said. With his children around and sub-zero temperatures at night, he accepted.

They managed to get to Bratislava, where “the stress the little ones had to suffer started to show,” he said.

Despite positive memories of people prepared to help, Mousa described the overall treatment of non-Ukrainian foreigners in Slovakia as “shameful.”

Despite guarantees by the EU that refugees coming from Ukraine could travel freely, an employee at Bratislava’s main railway station insisted that Mousa pay €77 (\$84) for tickets because he is not Ukrainian.

“I asked her why? I had our residence permits from Ukraine and my youngest child is a Ukrainian citizen.” He had to pay regardless. “It was arbitrary.”

The family’s odyssey was not over yet. After numerous stations, they finally arrived in the city of Karlsruhe in southwest Germany, where they registered and were given shelter, first in the town of Heidelberg and then in the town of Schwetzingen.

Mousa said he did his best to hide the reality of war from his children – an almost impossible task.

His wish now is for them to resume their education and pursue outdoor activities. “They should start to learn German now so they can integrate more easily.”

Although he has lived in Ukraine for six years, Mousa is determined to stay in Germany and practice his profession there.

To do that, he wants to learn German as quickly as possible, prove his qualifications and start to work. “An unproductive man is a burden to society.”



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Arab delegation visits Moscow, Warsaw to discuss Ukraine conflict