

# Clashes near Syria prison attacked by Daesh

Author:

Sun, 2022-01-30 01:11

HASSAKAH: Clashes broke out Saturday between Kurdish forces and Daesh group fighters near a Syrian prison where dozens of jihadists are still holed up, a war monitor said.

A Daesh assault on the sprawling Ghwayran Prison complex near the northeastern Syrian city of Hassakah on Jan. 20 sparked days of heavy fighting that has left some 260 people dead.

The US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces announced they had recaptured the prison on Wednesday, but that mop-up operations continued.

On Saturday, there were "clashes in the vicinity of the prison between the Syrian Democratic Forces and Kurdish security forces on the one hand, and members of IS (Daesh) who are hiding in the area," the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

The war monitor, which relies on a network of sources inside Syria, said that four Daesh fighters are holding a local official and three civilians hostage in a residential building near the prison.

The SDF said on Wednesday some 3,500 Daesh members had surrendered, but that holdout Daesh fighters had barricaded themselves inside the prison facility. The Daesh gunmen are in "cellars that are difficult to target with airstrikes or infiltrate" the observatory said.

SDF officials estimate that between 60 and 90 Daesh fighters were still in the basement and the ground floor above it.

An AFP correspondent reported that US troops and Kurdish-led forces have surrounded the building and deployed snipers on nearby rooftops, reporting there was intermittent shooting.

Kurdish forces have repeatedly called for Daesh gunmen to surrender. "Our forces have not used force with them so far," Farhad Shami, who heads the SDF's media office, said on Saturday.

Kurdish-led forces have banned journalists from accessing the Ghwayran neighborhood or approaching the prison since the start of the attack.

The fighting has killed more than 260 people, including around 180 jihadists, 73 Kurdish-led fighters and seven civilians, the observatory said, adding that the death toll is likely to increase.



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## [Loyalists drive Houthis from swaths of Yemen](#)

Author:

Sun, 2022-01-30 00:38

AL-MUKALLA: Loyalist fighters from the Giants Brigades drove the Houthis out of swaths of central Yemen on Saturday as the Iran-backed militia suffered more military defeats.

“The national army and the Giants Brigades are inflicting heavy blows on the Houthis,” army spokesman Gen. Abdu Abdullah Majili told Arab News.

Government troops recaptured Najed and Al-Hajela in Juba district and made gains in Abedia district, both south of Marib, Majili said.

The Giants Brigades stormed Houthi locations on the Malla'a mountain range as they sought to join up with army troops outside the Houthi-controlled Um Resh military base in Juba. They also resumed their push inside the Houthi-controlled Al-Bayda province, retaking the Gharaba area in Natea district, east of Al-Bayda.

The Houthis have suffered a string of military defeats since the beginning of this year, when the Giants Brigades began an offensive that led to the recapture of the oil-rich province of Shabwa, and seized control of large amounts of lands from the Houthis in the battleground Marib province.

Their successes have alleviated pressure on government troops who have been defending the central city of Marib since February last year.

Hundreds of Houthis have been killed in Marib, Shabwa and Al-Bayda since earlier this year when the Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen intensified airstrikes against the militia's military targets.

The Giants Brigades have now redeployed some of their fighters, and thanked the coalition for military support to their forces since the first day of their offensive.

"The forces completed their mission in liberating the district of Shabwa and securing it, and pushed the Houthis out of the district of Harib, south of Marib," a Giants Brigades official said.

"The force that was repositioned did not leave the front lines, but rather began putting up defensive measures to repel any military attacks by the Houthis.

"What is not yet liberated in Marib province is left up to the government, which has hundreds of thousands of soldiers, and it is their turn to kick the Houthis out of Marib."

Yemen's Defense Ministry said on Saturday that a coalition airstrike had killed nine Houthis and destroyed a cannon after targeting their location in Jabal Habashy district, west of Taiz.

Fighting between government troops and the Houthis has intensified in Jabal Habashy since last week, when government troops mounted a new offensive to liberate the district and break the Houthi siege on Taiz.

Earlier, five Giants Brigades fighters were killed and several more injured when a missile fired by the Houthis hit their location in Al-Safha in Shabwa's Bayhan district.





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## [Aoun stresses Sunnis' role in preserving Lebanon unity](#)

Sat, 2022-01-29 22:07

BEIRUT: Lebanese President Michel Aoun made a surprise visit to Dar Al-Fatwa on Saturday, where he met with Lebanon's Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdel Latif Derian, the highest authority in Sunni Islam in the country, amid fears of a Sunni boycott of Lebanon's political process.

Aoun stressed the role "that the Sunni community plays in preserving

Lebanon's unity and political diversity, and the importance of participating alongside all other components in national and political life, as well as all elections that define the future of Lebanon and its people.

"Arrangements are underway so that the parliamentary elections are held as scheduled, and there is no reason to postpone them," he added, stressing that "the Sunni community is an essential component, and we do not support its boycott of the elections."

Aoun's visit to Dar Al-Fatwa was described by political observers as "an attempt to remedy what can no longer be remedied; too little, too late."

A source close to the former prime minister of Lebanon, Fouad Siniora, told Arab News: "The damage was done to the Sunni community when Aoun obstructed all attempts made by PM-designate Saad Hariri to form his government. Aoun went further by insulting Hariri, calling him a liar.

"Lebanon's relationship with the Gulf states was also damaged as a result of the positions of Aoun and Hezbollah regarding the abuse committed against Saudi Arabia. It's pointless to resort to Dar Al-Fatwa now."

Prime Minister Najib Mikati announced on Friday that "there will be no Sunni boycott of the parliamentary elections in May. Our main concern is for the state and its institutions to remain active and effective, and for elections to be held on time."

It comes days after Hariri, who leads the Future Movement that represents the majority of the Sunni community in Parliament, announced "the suspension of political work and the suspension of any direct role or responsibility in the ruling authority, Parliament and politics in its traditional sense."

Mikati said: "It is true that Hariri announced his reluctance to run in the elections, but we will definitely not call for a Sunni boycott, and whoever wants to run should run. The sect holds great potential to participate in the elections."

Hariri's Future Movement has a major influence in 10 of the 15 electoral districts in Lebanon. He had attributed the suspension of political action to his conviction that "there is no room for any positive opportunity for Lebanon in light of Iranian influence, international uncertainty and national division."

A source in Dar Al-Fatwa said: "Derian, along with prominent Sunni figures, decided to move toward unifying the ranks to absorb the turmoil before it was too late and to confront the Iranian control that Hezbollah relies upon on the national scene."

The source close to Siniora noted: "The Sunni sect's boycott of political action leads nowhere because Hezbollah can then take the decisions it wants without anyone objecting to it. It can also nominate whoever it wants for Sunni seats in the elections and ensure their victory to serve its interests."

On Friday evening, three days after Hariri's speech, his older brother Bahaa Hariri announced that he would "continue his father's journey, the late Prime Minister Rafik Hariri."

Bahaa, 55, who had kept away from politics after the assassination of his father in 2005, making room for his brother Saad, said: "First of all, it must be emphasized that neither our religion, nor our morals, nor our upbringing ... allow us, the sons of martyr Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, to abandon our responsibility, and we put (forward) all our capabilities for the sake of Lebanon's renaissance."

He added: "The family of the martyr Rafik Hariri ... will not disintegrate. In partnership and solidarity, we will fight the battle to restore the homeland and restore the sovereignty of the homeland from its occupiers."

Bahaa stressed that any misinformation alluding to a power vacuum among Lebanon's Sunni community serves only the enemies of the country, adding: "Who dares warn of a vacuum within the largest sect in Lebanon to which I have the honor to belong?"



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Kuwaiti initiative Lebanon's Bahaa Rafik Al-Hariri says he will continue his father's journey

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## UK stands with UAE after fatal Houthi attack: Foreign secretary

Sat, 2022-01-29 00:18

LONDON: British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said on Friday that the UK stands "with our Emirati friends" following a deadly attack by Yemen's Houthi militia last week.

Speaking during a phone call with her UAE counterpart, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed, Truss strongly condemned the attack that killed three people and wounded seven others.

The Iran-backed Houthis launched a number of ballistic missiles and explosive-laden drones toward Abu Dhabi on Jan. 17 targeting fuel facilities of Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) and the airport. The militia renewed its attack on the capital on Monday and launched two ballistic missiles that were intercepted by the UAE with US support.

We stand with our Emirati friends after the deadly Houthi attacks on Abu Dhabi

Today I spoke to [@ABZayed](#) & agreed:

Houthi attacks must stop & we need a diplomatic solution

We continue to work closely on regional stability

Strengthening security & economic ties [pic.twitter.com/413T55pi0V](https://pic.twitter.com/413T55pi0V)

– Liz Truss (@trussliz) [January 28, 2022](#)

Truss said she and Sheikh Abdullah agreed that Houthi attacks must stop, a diplomatic solution was needed, and to continue to work closely on regional stability.

They "also stressed that these terrorist attacks undermine efforts to achieve security and stability in the region," Emirates news agency WAM reported. Truss offered her condolences to the UAE for the victims of the attack and wished the injured a speedy recovery.

The two sides also discussed the solid strategic and historical relations between them and their joint efforts to consolidate security and stability in the region, WAM said.





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## [Lebanon highlights drug seizures as PM 'smooths rough edges' of response to Kuwaiti initiative](#)

Fri, 2022-01-28 22:45

BEIRUT: Interior Minister Bassam Mawlawi pledged that the Lebanese state "will spare no effort in thwarting all smuggling operations and preventing harm to our Arab brothers."

He also announced on Thursday evening that the Anti-Narcotics Office of the Judicial Police, in cooperation with the Anti-Narcotics Division of the Customs, had seized about 12 tons of drugs hidden in boxes of powdered juice bound initially for Sudan.

Two days earlier, the minister revealed that authorities had seized a large quantity of captagon hidden in a tea shipment being sent by sea to an African country and then on to the Gulf.

The seizures come as Lebanon strives to show that it takes the smuggling of drugs to Gulf nations seriously, and highlight the effectiveness of its security and intelligence measures to combat the illicit trade.

## **BACKGROUND**

**Kuwait's foreign minister said recently that he has given Lebanese authorities a list of suggested measures to be taken to ease a diplomatic rift with Gulf countries.**

As part of efforts to repair strained relations between Lebanon and Gulf states, Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Ahmed Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah presented a new initiative during talks in Lebanon last week. It includes 10 items that "represent Arab, Gulf and international conditions for rebuilding confidence with Lebanon," he said during his visit.

Lebanese Foreign Minister Abdullah Bou Habib will deliver an official response to the Kuwaiti initiative on Saturday.

Prime Minister Najib Mikati is trying to smooth the rough edges of the response, according to a source close to the PM, which will include a call for dialogue on the issue of Hezbollah's weapons on the grounds that Shebaa Farms and Kafr Shuba are still occupied by the Israelis.

The source also said that Mikati reiterates Lebanon's continuing adherence to the Taif Agreement that ended the civil war in the country, international resolutions and efforts to ensure the best possible relations with the region and the world.

The Kuwaiti initiative has been extensively discussed among members of the ruling Lebanese authority and it is understood the response has undergone several revisions.

Leaked information suggests that the initiative includes "harsh conditions, some of which are impossible to implement, such as Security Council Resolution 1559, which calls for the disbanding and disarming of all Lebanese militias."

It also is said to call for Lebanon to adhere to political, economic and financial reforms, rehabilitate state institutions, adopt neutrality, respect the sovereignty of Arab and Gulf countries, halt any political, media or military interference in these countries, respect the decisions of the Arab League, and commit to international resolutions.

Other conditions include disarming all militias and extending government control over all Lebanese territory; serious measures to control Lebanese border crossings and prevent drug smuggling, including the adoption of a clear and decisive security policy that prevents the targeting of Gulf countries by drug-smuggling operations; measures to prevent interference by Hezbollah in the Yemen war; and taking firm steps to prevent any meetings or gatherings that might affect the internal affairs of Gulf states.

Gebran Bassil, the head of the Free Patriotic Movement, said that the Kuwaiti initiative includes conditions that would require time to be implemented, and some that are contentious to the Lebanese.

“Discussing the issue of arms is dangerous,” Bassil, whose bloc constitutes President Michel Aoun’s team in the parliament, told Russia Today.

“There is Israeli aggression and Palestinian invasion happening on Lebanese territories, and external pressure on Lebanon leads to an internal implosion as the conflict becomes a conflict between those who support Hezbollah’s weapons and those who are against them.”

Nabih Berri, the parliament’s speaker, said his position on Hezbollah’s weapons has not changed.

“Some Lebanese lands are still occupied by Israel, which gives these weapons a reason to exist and gives Hezbollah and Lebanon the right to resist the occupation,” he said.

Although Hezbollah has not responded directly to the Kuwaiti initiative, the party announced that Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah will deliver a speech on Monday. It is not known whether he will be supportive of the initiative or renew his criticism of Gulf states.

Lebanon’s Al-Markazia news agency quoted a source close to the party as saying: “Nasrallah will focus on the reasons and motives that dictate Hezbollah’s adherence to the resistance as long as there is an inch of Lebanese territory occupied.”

In his Friday sermon, Sheikh Ahmed Qabalan, a Shiite cleric affiliated with Hezbollah and the Amal movement, addressed “brothers in the Gulf Cooperation Council” and said: “The enemy is Israel, not the Arabs, and the danger lies in Tel Aviv, not in Beirut’s southern suburb.

“The solution does not start with (UN Security Council resolutions). The weapons of the resistance are a guarantee for the Arabs and not against them.

“Today, the resistance’s weapons are a guarantee for Lebanon and the greatest national need to prevent any civil war, sectarian strife or an Israeli or

takfiri invasion.”



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