

Beirut's blast-hit silos must be demolished, experts warn

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BEIRUT – A section of the grain silos that absorbed much of last year's Beirut port blast must be demolished to avoid collapse, experts warned in a report published Monday.

Swiss company Amann Engineering, which has offered laser scanning assistance to Lebanon since the cataclysmic August 4 explosion, called the most damaged of the disemboweled silos an "unstable, moving structure."

"Our recommendation is to proceed with the deconstruction of this block," the company said in a report.

"As it becomes more obvious the concrete piles have been heavily damaged... new silos will have to be built at a different location," it warned.

Economy minister Raoul Nehme had said in November that Lebanon will demolish its largest grain store over public safety concerns, but authorities have yet to take action.

Once boasting a capacity of more than 100,000 tons, the imposing 48-meter-high structure has become emblematic of the catastrophic port blast that killed more than 200 people and damaged swathes of the capital.

Authorities say the blast was caused by a shipment of ammonium nitrate fertilizer that caught fire after being impounded for years on end.

The silos absorbed much of the blast's impact, shielding large swathes of west Beirut from its ravaging effects.

"As much as the structure can be iconic, facts do show there is no way to ensure safety on even the medium term with the north block remaining as is," Amann said in its report.

It warned that the damage to some of the silos was so severe that they were tilting at an alarming rate.

"The inclination proceeds at the rate of 2 millimeters per day, which is a lot structurally speaking," it said.

"By comparison, the Tower of Pisa in Italy was leaning about 5mm per year until it was stabilized by very special works."

Lebanon relies on imports for 85 percent of its food needs.

Confirmation that the silos cannot be salvaged for future use compounds an already alarming food supply outlook.

The country, grappling with its worst economic crisis in decades, has received donations of grain and flour in the aftermath of the explosion.



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Germany to propose Beirut port reconstruction with 'strings attached'
Explosion sound heard at Beirut neighborhood caused by tyre burst

[Yemen peace efforts falter as Houthis demand direct flights to Iran](#)

Author:

Mon, 2021-04-05 21:49

AL-MUKALLA: UN-brokered peace efforts to end the war in Yemen have made no progress, with the Houthis and government squabbling over key issues such as flights from Sanaa airport, halting military operations and airstrikes, and Hodeidah seaport revenues, a senior government official told Arab News.

During talks with the UN Special Envoy for Yemen Martin Griffiths and Omani mediators, the Houthis demanded arranging unchecked direct flights to Iran, Syria and Lebanon, halting Arab coalition airstrikes, and easing restrictions on traffic to and from the seaport as preconditions for agreeing to a truce,

the Yemeni government official said.

The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to brief reporters.

The government has rejected the Houthis' demands.

It insists on arranging inspected flights from Sanaa to limited regional and international destinations such as Egypt, India, Sudan, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. It also wants the Houthis to stop their military operations before airstrikes are halted, and for seaport revenues to be deposited into the central bank in Hodeidah and used to pay public servants.

If the Houthis agreed to those demands, the government would then engage in direct talks with them to end the war, the official said.

"The Houthis are demanding that the ceasefire be divided: First halting airstrikes and then stopping military operations on the ground," the official told Arab News.

The government is concerned that the Houthis might ferry fighters and weapons from Iran on direct flights.

The Houthis might also exploit the absence of Arab coalition warplanes to advance on the ground because airstrikes have foiled their attempt to make gains, according to military officers.

Griffiths and the US envoy to Yemen, Tim Lenderking, have shuttled between Riyadh and Muscat to convince the Yemeni President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi and the Houthis to accept their ideas for ending the war.

Those ideas are an immediate truce, followed by other measures to ease the country's humanitarian crises such as opening airports and seaports, paying public servants and then later resuming a political process.

Griffiths' spokeswoman, Ismini Palla, said on Monday that the envoy had made progress in reducing the differences between warring factions that were impeding efforts to reach a peace deal.

"We are familiar with their negotiation positions and with the gap between these positions," she told Arab News. "And we are indeed making progress in narrowing down these differences with the help of a renewed regional and international momentum aimed at helping Yemen find a peaceful way out of this conflict."

The Kingdom's initiative for ending the war, unveiled last month by Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan, has energized peace efforts and led to heightened diplomatic activity in the region to find a settlement.

This initiative includes a truce, reopening Sanaa airport and Hodeidah seaport, and resuming peace talks under UN supervision.

On Monday, the Yemeni government renewed its accusations about the Houthis

not being serious about striking a peace deal, citing the rebels' continuing military operations across the country, mainly in the central province of Marib.

During a meeting with the UAE ambassador to Yemen, Salem Al-Ghafli, Yemen's Foreign Minister Ahmed Awadh bin Mubarak said the Houthis were moving ahead with a large-scale offensive on Marib city, putting the lives of tens of thousands of displaced people at risk.

The minister also warned that the Houthi military operation and its missile strikes on displacement camps in Marib would ruin peace efforts.

He renewed the government's demands – that the international community pressure Iran to stop meddling in Yemen's affairs by arming and financing the Houthi militia.



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UN hits back at Houthi threat over time bomb Yemen oil tanker Senior Yemeni official demands UN condemn Houthi mistreatment of African refugees

Egypt-Sudan air drills 'do not target a specific country,' say military chiefs

Mon, 2021-04-05 21:37

CAIRO: Joint air drills between Egypt and Sudan are not targeting a specific country, according to the military chiefs of both nations.

Sudan's Chief of Staff Mohammed Othamn Al-Hussein and Egypt's Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Mohammed Farid Hegazy made the remark as the drills, called "Nile Eagles 2," concluded at Sudan's Marwa Air Base.

The exercise, which started last Wednesday, involved developing joint air operation skills, executing air attacks on specific targets, and protecting sensitive installations.

It coincided with the launch of a new round of negotiations between the two countries and Ethiopia about a multi-billion dollar dam project, which has been a source of years-long tension.

Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia have been negotiating since 2011 to reach an agreement on filling the dam. Ethiopia hopes the dam will turn it into Africa's top hydropower supplier, but Egypt and Sudan fear it will substantially reduce their water share and affect development prospects.

Hegazy said: "The Egyptian army stands side-by-side with the Sudanese army in the same trench to defend it as both armies look forward to a more promising and safer future. We reiterate the importance of joint action in facing joint challenges in order to secure the borders and protect the resources. The 'Nile Eagles' exercise saw positive development in all of its stages during its first and second editions in regards to preparations, planning, and implementation."

He added that the drills, which came within the framework of cooperation between both countries' armed forces, were strategic to joint military cooperation and contributed to bolstering both nations' security.

He delivered President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi's greetings to the Sudanese armed forces, calling on them to continue their sacrifice for the sake of protecting nations, and repeated the need to "quickly implement the upcoming exercise to complete an exchange of expertise in order to maintain both countries' national security."

Al-Hussein stressed that the joint air drills with Egypt were aimed at enhancing bilateral relations between the two countries and integrating their national security.

The exercises included prompting procedures, cooperation organization methods to unify concepts, and refining skills for efficiently managing joint air

operations.

They also included implementing air strikes to attack hostile targets and protecting vital targets in addition to other air exercises, with multi-task fighter jets taking part in the missions.



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Egyptian officials: Third coronavirus wave will begin with Ramadan
El-Sisi: Egypt has 'political will' for agreement with Ethiopia over Nile dam

[Egyptian officials: Third coronavirus wave will begin with Ramadan](#)

Author:

Mon, 2021-04-05 21:25

CAIRO: Egypt is on the verge of a third wave of coronavirus infections that will begin in the month of Ramadan, Noha Assem, an adviser to the Egyptian minister of health, has said.

Assem warned that case numbers are expected to spike due to public

gatherings.

“The beginning of the third wave of the coronavirus depends on citizens’ commitment to precautionary measures, wearing face masks and following social distancing rules,” she said.

“Citizens have grown accustomed to the existence of coronavirus, which has resulted in them not wearing their face masks, not ventilating their homes and continuing wrong behaviors inside their homes.”

The month of Ramadan and family gatherings over iftar will likely lead to a significant increase in daily registered coronavirus cases, she said.

Mohammed Awad Taj El-Din, the Egyptian presidential adviser for health affairs, said that coronavirus symptoms as a result of the third wave do not significantly differ from the the previous two waves.

He added that infection can affect the brain and digestive system, and that the virus attacks most of the body, including the nervous system.

Taj El-Din said that people who have tested positive for the virus have complained of stomach pains and the appearance of rashes and redness in the eyes.

The known symptoms, he added, begin with a high fever, resulting in bone pain, loss of sense of smell and taste, and a runny nose.

He added that the respiratory system is the most vulnerable part of the body in the case of a coronavirus infection.

Egypt has seen a concerning rise in daily new coronavirus virus case numbers after almost 700 cases per day were recorded.

The government, meanwhile, has stressed the importance of social distancing and preventive health measures.

Egyptian Minister of Health and Population Hala Zayed warned during a meeting of the Supreme Committee for the Management of the Coronavirus Crisis last week that there could be new symptoms in coronavirus patients.

These include severe inflammation of the eye membrane, the spread of rashes, impaired sense of hearing and pain and palpitations, Zayed said.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi also reiterated the concerns of the government and asked people to follow precautionary measures ahead of Ramadan.



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Egypt to receive 5 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines by May
Egypt coronavirus cases top 100,000: ministry

[Senior Yemeni official demands UN condemn Houthi mistreatment of African refugees](#)

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LONDON: The UN should clearly condemn the Houthis for their “racist” treatment of African refugees, the adviser to Yemen’s president said on Sunday.

Abdulmalik Al-Mekhlafi said the racist way that Houthis treat African migrants and their crimes against them is an extension of the militia’s “crimes and racism against Yemenis.”

“What is happening in Sanaa to African refugees at the hands of the Houthis is not characteristic of the ethics of Yemenis,” Al-Mekhlafi tweeted. The adviser’s comments come a day after reports said that hundreds of African migrants from Sanaa were kidnapped on Saturday and forced to cross into government-controlled areas in a bid to suppress demands for an investigation into a deadly fire at a detention center in March. “In every meeting I have had with him and in every forum on Yemen, the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, the former High Commissioner for Refugees, has praised the ethics of Yemenis in dealing with refugees,” Al-Mekhlafi tweeted. Yemen’s Minister of Information Moammar Al-Eryani tweeted a link to Arab News’ interview with a founding member of Black Lives Matter (BLM) Greater New York.

2-These courageous voices reminds world of continuing genocide by Iran-backed Houthi militia against African refugees, &need to work on justice for the victims and their families and ensure that perpetrators won’t escape punishment<https://t.co/9DQRxn1cZ8>

– معمر الإرياني (@ERYANIM) [April 4, 2021](#)

Al-Eryani said that the interview with Hawk Newsome reminds the world of Houthi crimes committed against African refugees “which continue till this moment.” He added it highlights the need to obtain justice for the victims and their families and that those responsible for these crimes should be brought to justice.



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Houthis abduct, deport hundreds of migrants from Sanaa