

[Daesh suicide bomber kills southern separatist fighters in Yemen's Aden](#)

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Fri, 2019-08-30 13:54

ADEN: A suicide bomber on a motorcycle killed six southern separatist fighters on Friday on the outskirts of the Yemeni city of Aden, the site of a surge of violence that had complicated the near five-year-old war and undermined peace efforts.

Daesh claimed responsibility for the assault on the patrol from the Security Belt group, part of a separatist front fighting Yemeni government forces for control of the city, the extremist group's Amaq news agency said.

The separatists and the government are both part of an Arab coalition battling the Iran-aligned Houthis, which took over most of Yemen's cities in 2014.



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Sweden's FM to tour Mideast to relaunch Yemen talks Yemeni president accuses

UAE of attacking government targets, Abu Dhabi claims it was protecting coalition

UN to 'facilitate' evacuations from Syria desert camp

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Fri, 2019-08-30 10:46

BEIRUT: The United Nations said Friday it will help evacuate civilians from an "abysmal" Syrian desert camp near the border with Jordan, after a mission last week determined who wanted to leave.

"We are ready to facilitate" evacuations from the Rukban camp, said Panos Moutzias, the UN's Syria humanitarian chief.

"We want to make sure it happens in a voluntary way," he told AFP during an interview in Beirut, describing the situation in the settlement as "abysmal." According to the UN official, around 12,700 people remain in the isolated Rukban camp near a base used by the US-led coalition fighting the Daesh group.

The Syrian government and key backer Russia said in February they had opened corridors out of the camp, calling on residents to leave.

More than half of the original population has left in the past months, the United Nations says.

The UN and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent sent a mission to the camp last week to determine how many people remained inside and who wanted to leave, the UN official said.

"A little bit more than a third of them want to leave," Moutzias said.

"The vast majority want to go into government-held areas and some others want to go to the north," held by the opposition, he added.

But the UN is not able to provide protection guarantees after civilians quit the camp, he said.

Some 47 percent of surveyed camp residents said they wanted to stay, citing reasons including "security concerns" and "fear of detention."

Rights groups have warned that civilians returning to government-held territory have faced detention and conscription.

Those fleeing to the rebel-held north might face violence in the Idlib region, where Russian and regime bombardment have killed more than 950 people since April.

Although Rukban has not received aid since February, the latest UN mission did not deliver any relief items beyond "a minimal number of health supplies," Moutzias said.

But last week's visit is only the first part of a "two-step" plan – the second of which will involve aid delivery, according to the UN official.

“The next mission – I hope very quickly – will go back and deliver the desperately needed assistance,” he said, without providing a specific date. Conditions inside Rukban are dire, with many surviving on just one simple meal a day, often bread and olive oil or yoghurt, according to one resident.



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Russia announces ceasefire in Syria's Idlib from Saturday Turkey demands smaller Syria safe zone in US negotiations

[Russia announces ceasefire in Syria's Idlib from Saturday](#)

Author:

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Fri, 2019-08-30 09:17

MOSCOW: Russia on Friday announced that Syrian government forces would cease fire in the northwestern province of Idlib from Saturday morning.

An agreement was reached on “a unilateral ceasefire by Syrian government forces in the Idlib de-escalation zone, from 6:00 am on August 31,” the Russian Reconciliation Centre for Syria said in a statement.

The announcement came after Russian-backed regime forces advanced in the militant-held bastion, one of the last holdouts of opposition to President Bashar Al-Assad’s regime.

The statement said the ceasefire aimed “to stabilise the situation” in Idlib and urged anti-government fighters to “abandon armed provocations and join the peace process”.

After months of intense bombardment, regime forces launched a ground offensive against Idlib earlier this month.

Syria’s war has killed more than 370,000 people and displaced millions since it started in 2011.

Russia launched a military intervention in support of Assad’s regime in 2015, helping his forces to reclaim large parts of the country from opposition fighters and militants.

Earlier on Friday, Turkey’s foreign minister said Russia had assured Turkey its observation posts in northwest Syria would not be attacked.

Speaking in Oslo, Mevlut Cavusoglu warned that continued attacks by Russian-based Syrian government forces in rebel-held Idlib province could unleash another wave of Syrian refugees to Europe. He added that Turkey’s military, which backs some Syrian rebel groups, would leave the region only when a political solution was found.



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Turkey demands smaller Syria safe zone in US negotiations Trump, Erdogan speak over telephone about trade and Syria situation

[UK calls for broad support to tackle Gulf shipping threats](#)

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Fri, 2019-08-30 11:01

LONDON: British Foreign Minister Dominic Raab will call for more international support to protect shipping in the Strait of Hormuz when he meets his French and German counterparts later on Friday for talks about Iran.

Last month, Iran seized a British-flagged oil tanker in the strait, the Gulf's outlet to the open seas, in apparent retaliation for Britain's seizure in Gibraltar of an Iranian ship accused of violating European sanctions by taking oil to Syria.

Britain joined a US-led mission to escort merchant vessels through the Strait of Hormuz at the start of August but Germany and France declined to take part amid fears that it could increase the chance of open conflict with Iran.

"We...need the broadest international support possible to tackle the threats to international shipping in the Strait of Hormuz," Raab said in a statement before he attends a meeting of European foreign ministers in Helsinki.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said a possible separate European maritime defense operation would be discussed in Helsinki, though her foreign minister Heiko Maas previously acknowledged it would be slow to get off the ground. French defense minister Florence Parly told AFP on Thursday that she would back an EU-led "dissuasive presence."

Last week, Iran's President Hassan Rouhani said international waterways would be less secure if his country's oil exports faced complete sanctions.

Raab reiterated Britain's commitment, alongside Germany and France, to a 2015 nuclear deal that US President Donald Trump pulled out of last year, reimposing sanctions on Iran.

"The nuclear deal is the only deal on the table that prevents Iran from getting a nuclear weapon and we will continue working together to encourage Iran to uphold the agreement in full," Raab said.

The 2015 deal between Iran and six world powers, reached under former US President Barack Obama, aimed to curb Iran's disputed uranium enrichment program in exchange for the lifting of many international sanctions on Tehran.

Trump said on Monday at a G7 summit in Biarritz, France, that he might be willing to meet Rouhani in the coming weeks to end confrontation over the deal.



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Turkish FMSatellite photos shows burning rocket at Iranian space center

[US Treasury sanctions Lebanon's Jammal Trust Bank for Hezbollah support](#)

Thu, 2019-08-29 22:05

WASHINGTON: The US on Thursday sanctioned Lebanon-based Jammal Trust Bank SAL and its subsidiaries for allegedly facilitating the financial activities of Hezbollah, according to the Treasury Department.

It said the bank gives money to the families of suicide bombers.

“The Treasury is targeting Jammal Trust Bank and its subsidiaries for brazenly enabling Hezbollah’s financial activities,” the statement said.

“Corrupt financial institutions like Jammal Trust are a direct threat to the integrity of the Lebanese financial system.

“Jammal Trust provides support and services to Hezbollah’s Executive Council and the Martyrs Foundation, which funnels money to the families of suicide bombers,” said Sigal Mandelker, Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence.

“The US will continue to work with the Central Bank of Lebanon to deny Hezbollah access to the international financial system. This action is a warning to all who provide services to this terrorist group.”

Separately, the Treasury also sanctioned four individuals for moving money from Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) to Hamas through Hezbollah, which the US says is backed by Iran.

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Changes to proposed US anti-Hezbollah sanctions allay Lebanon's fears
Kingdom extends Hezbollah sanctions