

Exhausted rescue workers soldier on at Beirut port

Author:

Fri, 2020-09-11 22:58

BEIRUT: Firefighters and civil defense workers were continuing their efforts on Friday to cool down a site at the Port of Beirut where a fire had broken out a day earlier, with white smoke billowing out and agencies estimating \$4 million worth of losses as a result of the incident.

According to the army, the fire broke out in a warehouse containing tires and oil. The fire was due to the cutting of iron columns that had collapsed after a massive explosion on Aug. 4. Warehouse workers had wanted to remove the columns in order to pull out the goods trapped underneath. However sparks from the cutting fell on inflammable goods in the warehouse and caused a fire.

The military police, who are in charge of investigating the fire, have questioned 20 people including eyewitnesses.

The port has been under army control since Aug. 4, when the explosion of 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate in a warehouse destroyed wheat silos, the port's warehouse zone, Beirut waterfront and neighboring areas.

The explosion killed 192 civilians including children, in addition to 10 rescue workers and firefighters. It injured 6,000 civilians and displaced 300,000 people whose houses were either totally or partially destroyed. According to testimonies, nine people are still missing.

Col. Roger Khoury, who is commander of the army's Engineering Regiment, said during a meeting with President Michel Aoun that 24 bodies had been retrieved from the site eight days after the Aug. 4 tragedy, including the bodies of nine firefighters and nine silo workers.

"During the search operation in the port we discovered 4,350 kilos of ammonium nitrate that had been stored in a warehouse since 2004 or 2005, so they were destroyed in special fields. In addition, we discovered that there were warehouses which have been storing inflammable materials for the past 15 years, noting that 143 warehouses containing inflammable materials were checked," he added.

Col. Youssef Haidar said that 1 million square meters of the port's 1.4 million square meter area had been cleared, 15,000 tons of rubble had been removed and 20 tons of cargo had been sorted.

The port's two disasters have been mainly handled by the fire services and civil defense.

Georges Abou Moussa, head of operations at Lebanese Civil Defense, said there were huge pressures on the team.

He went to Qartaba, northern Lebanon, to fight forest fires caused by unusually high temperatures. "We are working round the clock," he told Arab News. "I had to move from the Port of Beirut to a region 2,000 meters high up in the mountains to fight forest fires. Yes, we are exhausted but we did not lose our enthusiasm, this is our duty and we are used to always confronting disasters. However, the number of these disasters has drastically increased lately."

Abou Moussa said that some civil defense employees were working without pay, while others were getting minimum wage.

Lt. Michel Murr, from Beirut Fire Brigade, said that firefighters had been working at the port for 24 hours.

"Our conditions are lamentable," he told Arab News. "Our vehicles are overused and have started to break down. Yesterday the water pump broke down yet we continued fighting the fire and called on anyone who had a water tank to bring it over so that we could extinguish the fire."

The fire brigade had just three vehicles and if they broke down then operations would come to a halt, he said.

"According to the international firefighting system, the vehicles should be replaced every three or four years. In Lebanon we never replace them with brand new ones because the state has no money. We are working with minimal resources and we still rush into the field whenever we hear of a fire breaking out somewhere. Firefighters did not lose hope despite losing some of our colleagues who got killed in action. Yesterday, our aim was to spare Beirut from the fire and pollution resulting from burning tires and oil. Our equipment consists of the bare essentials, in spite of this we work with high professionalism to spare ourselves from human and material losses."



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Explosive material found in Beirut port after blast was stored for years, says president
Lebanon faces hurdles to deliver cabinet on time

[Bahrain agrees to normalize relations with Israel](#)

Fri, 2020-09-11 19:08

LONDON: US President Donald Trump said on Friday Bahrain will normalize ties with Israel.

Trump tweeted out the news after he spoke via phone to Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the White House said.

Another HISTORIC breakthrough today! Our two GREAT friends Israel and the Kingdom of Bahrain agree to a Peace Deal – the second Arab country to make peace with Israel in 30 days!

– Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [September 11, 2020](#)

A joint statement issued by the three leaders said the two nations had agreed on “establishment of full diplomatic relations between Israel and the Kingdom of Bahrain.”

The statement added: “This is a historic breakthrough to further peace in the Middle East. Opening direct dialogue and ties between these two dynamic societies and advanced economies will continue the positive transformation of the Middle East and increase stability, security, and prosperity in the region.”

Netanyahu hailed the agreement as marking a “new era of peace.”

On August 13, the UAE and Israel agreed to normalize ties under a US-brokered agreement which is scheduled to be signed on Sept. 15.

Friday’s deal makes Bahrain the fourth Arab country to reach such an agreement with Israel since exchanging embassies with Egypt and Jordan decades ago.

Last week, Bahrain said it would allow flights between Israel and the UAE to use its airspace.

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Bahrain-Israel-US joint statement in full:

“President Donald J. Trump, His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel spoke today and agreed to the establishment of full diplomatic relations between Israel and the Kingdom of Bahrain.

This is a historic breakthrough to further peace in the Middle East. Opening direct dialogue and ties between these two dynamic societies and advanced economies will continue the positive transformation of the Middle East and increase stability, security, and prosperity in the region.

The United States expresses its gratitude to the Kingdom of Bahrain for hosting the historic Peace to Prosperity workshop in Manama on June 25, 2019, to advance the cause of peace, dignity, and economic opportunity for the Palestinian people. The parties will continue their efforts in this regard to achieve a just, comprehensive, and enduring resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to enable the Palestinian people to realize their full potential. Israel affirmed that as set forth in the Vision for Peace, all Muslims who come in peace may visit and pray at the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Jerusalem’s other holy sites will remain open for peaceful worshippers of all faiths.

King Hamad and Prime Minister Netanyahu express their deep appreciation to

President Trump for his dedication to peace in the region, his focus on shared challenges, and the pragmatic and unique approach he has taken to bringing their nations together.

The parties commend the United Arab Emirates and Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed for his leadership on August 13, 2020, in announcing full diplomatic relations with Israel.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has also accepted President Trump's invitation to join Israel and the United Arab Emirates at the historic signing ceremony on September 15, 2020, at the White House where Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel and Foreign Minister Abdullatif Al Zayani of Bahrain will be signing a historic Declaration of Peace."

In a press statement, Bahrain's Foreign Minister Abdullatif Al Zayani said that the Gulf country stresses the importance of intensifying efforts to reach a just solution to the Palestinian- Israeli conflict.

Al Zayani added that peace is a strategic option to end the conflict in a just manner in accordance with international resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The foreign minister said that the peace agreement between Bahrain and Israel will contribute to security and stability in the region whilst ensuring that the rights of the Palestinians are protected.

He added that the UAE-Israel agreement to normalize relations between the two countries has contributed to stopping the annexation of Palestinian land.

Meanwhile, Egypt's president Abdel Fattah El-Sisi said he appreciates the "important step" of Israel and Bahrain establishing diplomatic relations.

The agreement would help establish "stability and peace in the Middle East, in a way that achieves a just and permanent settlement of the Palestinian issue," he said.

The UAE also welcomed the agreement saying it hoped it would have a positive effect on the climate for peace and cooperation in the region and around the world.

"The move represents a significant step towards an era of security and prosperity ... (and) would expand the scope of economic, cultural, scientific, and diplomatic avenues of cooperation," the UAE foreign ministry said in a statement.



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Israeli minister says visit by UAE delegates under review as lockdown looms
Gargash: UAE-Israel agreement will not be at the expense of the Palestinian issue

Morocco warns of Sahel 'time bomb' after Daesh-linked cell busted

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Fri, 2020-09-11 16:16

SALÉ, Morocco: The Sahel region of Africa is a ticking "time bomb" of terrorism and organized crime, a Moroccan police chief told AFP on Friday, a day after a suspected Daesh group-affiliated cell was busted.

"It was a dangerous cell primed to go into action at any moment," Abdelhak Khiame, head of the Central Bureau of Judicial Investigation (BCIJ), said in an interview at its offices in Sale, near Morocco's capital Rabat.

Five "extremists," aged between 29 and 43, were detained Thursday in simultaneous operations at sites in Tangiers and the Rabat region, said the Central Bureau of Judicial Investigations.

Explosive belts, three kilograms (6.6 pounds) of ammonium nitrate, electronic equipment and bladed weapons were seized in raids on homes and businesses of the suspects, the bureau said.

Khiame said the Daesh-affiliated group was plotting suicide attacks targeting "public personalities, military figures and the headquarters of security services" in the North African kingdom.

Three kilos (6.5 pounds) of ammonium nitrate, the chemical behind the August 4 cataclysmic Beirut blast, was also netted.

Pledges of allegiance to the Daesh were discovered. Two of the suspects put up "fierce resistance," leaving a policeman with serious knife wounds.

The alleged head of the group, a 37-year-old fish salesman, had been convicted of a common law crime in 2004 and radicalized since.

Khiame said it was the first such large-scale bust since the 2003 Islamist suicide attacks in Casablanca, Morocco's economic capital, that left 33 dead. He warned that Daesh "has developed in the Sahel-Sahara region, with the conflict in Libya and in countries like Mali which do not control not their security."

The Sahel covers western and north-central Africa.

"Terrorist cells and terrorism are growing in the region but also organized crime networks, drug trafficking, weapons and human beings," said the BCIJ chief.

"All of this... makes the Sahel region, in my opinion, a time bomb."

Khiame said the dismantled cell had apparently had no direct contact with the extremists of Daesh.

But “even if Daesh was defeated in the Levant, in the region of Syria and Iraq, its ideology... does not need territory, it can develop where it finds sympathizers,” he said.

Daesh-inspired “cells underground act like sleeper cells which in most cases have no relationship to each other,” he said.



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Sahel allies have ‘shifted the dynamic’ in fight with extremists:
Macron 3,000-strong African force planned against Sahel extremism

[Explosion at a military installation in the Jordanian city of Zarqa](#)

Fri, 2020-09-11 01:12

RIYADH: An electrical short circuit at a military warehouse on the outskirts

of the Jordanian city of Zarqa caused a massive explosion on Friday morning. The installation, east of the city, contained idle mortar bombs belonging to the armed forces, said Amjad Adaileh, minister of state for media affairs. The Army said that an explosion occurred in one of the munitions depots under dismantling and that there were no casualties.

#BREAKING: Explosions heard in the Jordanian city of Zarqa. Initial reports say it was ammunition stores at a military installation. (Video: Social media) <https://t.co/N6WUcougWn>
pic.twitter.com/87PoKfxHBv

– Arab News (@arabnews) [September 10, 2020](#)

The installation is located away from civilian areas and it was reported that the blast could be heard 30 km away.

The army has cordoned off the area of the explosion and Civil Defense teams are at the scene trying to fight the flames, sources told Arab News.

A committee has been formed to determine the causes of the explosion.

The army has asked citizens to “shun circulating untrue information, adding that further details will be issued later.”





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[Kuwaiti Emir health is stable, Emiri Diwan says](#)

Fri, 2020-09-11 00:20

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait's Emiri Diwan said in a statement on Thursday that the Emir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah's health is stable and that the Emir is receiving the scheduled medical treatment following surgery, state news agency KUNA cited the Diwan statement.

Emir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah is in the US completing medical treatment following surgery for an unspecified condition in Kuwait.

The Emiri Diwan called for reports on the Emir's health to be accurate with complete information from official sources, and urged people not to pay attention to unfounded news reports.

(With Reuters)



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Saudi King sends letter to deputy emir of Kuwait