

# Iraq PM says anti-government protests cost country 'billions'

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Sun, 2019-11-03 22:07

BAGHDAD: Protests threatening the oil industry and blocking access to Iraq's ports have cost the country "billions," Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi said on Sunday.

The embattled leader issued a long statement in response to weeks of demonstrations against the government that have been met with a brutal response from the security forces, killing more than 250 people.

Abdul-Mahdi said the protests have delayed the arrival of goods and this has contributed to an increase in prices paid by citizens, the poor in particular.

He also said demonstrations have affected the growth of the economy and delayed the submission of the budget for 2020.

Last week, President Barham Salih said Abdul-Mahdi is willing to resign amid the crisis once political leaders agree on a replacement.

But the prime minister made no mention of standing down, instead focussing on the economic damage of the protests.

He said the Baghdad International Fair was delayed because of the demonstrations, and that sick people's lives have been put at risk because medical clinics have been forced to close and ambulances obstructed.

He called on anti-government protesters to reopen roads saying "it's time for life to return to normal."

The prime minister differentiated between peaceful protesters, who he said had turned the demonstrations into "popular festivals" that bring the nation together, and "saboteurs" who had used the demonstrators as "human shields" while attacking security forces.

He also called for markets, factories, schools and universities to reopen after days of protests in the capital and across the mostly Shiite south.

Tens of thousands of protesters have gathered in Baghdad's central Tahrir Square and across southern Iraq in recent days, calling for the overhaul of the political system established after the 2003 US-led invasion.

Protesters have also taken over a large tower in the square that was abandoned after it was damaged in the war.

Thousands of students have skipped classes to take part in the street rallies, blaming the political elite for widespread corruption, high unemployment and poor public services.

Earlier Sunday, protesters blocked roads around their main protest site with burning tires and barbed wire, unfurling a banner at one roadblock reading: "Roads closed by order of the people."

They appeared to be borrowing a tactic from Lebanon, where similar anti-government demonstrations have been underway since Oct. 17, and have repeatedly blocked major roads in order to ramp up pressure on authorities.

(With AP)



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[Adel Abdul-Mahdi](#)

Iraqi protesters storm Iranian consulate in KarbalaTehran fury as Iraq's Shiite leadership rejects Iranian 'interference'

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## [Turkey thanks Qatar for supporting Syria invasion](#)

Author:

Sun, 2019-11-03 19:54

LONDON: Turkey on Sunday thanked Qatar for supporting a widely-condemned invasion of northern Syria.

Doha acted in defiance of the Arab League last month when it voiced support for the Turkish operation against Kurdish forces in north-east Syria.

Other Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia, condemned Turkey's "aggression" as a threat to regional peace and security and a violation of Syria's sovereignty.

The operation, which came after Donald Trump withdrew US troops from the region, was also denounced by European countries and aid groups.

Qatar however defended Turkey, saying Operation Peace Spring was in response to an "imminent threat" from Kurdish groups. One of the few other voices of support came from the hardline Palestinian militant group Hamas.

At our meeting in [#Doha](#) w/Amir [@TamimBinHamad](#) of brotherly [#Qatar](#), conveyed greetings of President [@RTErdogan](#). Thanked for Qatar's support to [#OperationPeaceSpring](#). [pic.twitter.com/QAVH47LyCC](https://pic.twitter.com/QAVH47LyCC)

– Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu (@MevlutCavusoglu) [November 3, 2019](#)

On Sunday, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu personally thanked Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim for supporting the operation during a meeting in Doha. In a tweet he described Qatar as a "brotherly" nation and conveyed the greetings of Recep Tayyip Erdogan."

Turkey and Qatar have grown closer since Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE and Bahrain launched a boycott of Qatar over its links to extremist groups and cooperation with Iran. Ankara boosted its military presence in Qatar and as Doha promised support for Turkey's economy.

The Turkish operation was launched on Oct. 9 to push back from its border Kurdish fighters, who it considers terrorists for their links to decades of insurgency inside Turkey.

A truce deal signed last week between Ankara and Moscow demanded Kurdish fighters withdraw from the border, handing the Turks a 120 kilometer-long stretch of Syrian territory.

The deal includes joint Russian-Turkish patrols along other parts of the frontier that started on Friday.



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Turkey begins joint patrols with Russia in northern Syria Rights group calls on Turkey to stop deporting Syrians to war-torn country

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## [Sudanese protests demand answers over June crackdown deaths](#)

Author:

By SAMY MAGDY | AP

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1572798511692010600

Sun, 2019-11-03 16:01

CAIRO: Hundreds of protesters took to the streets in Sudan's capital and across the country on Sunday, demanding the disbanding of the former ruling party that underpinned Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir's three decades in power.

The demonstrations were organized by local groups linked with the Sudanese Professionals' Association, which spearheaded the uprising that toppled Al-Bashir in April. Protests continued throughout the summer, despite a violent clampdown by the country's security forces, forcing the ruling generals into a power-sharing agreement with civilians.

In the capital of Khartoum, the protesters also called on authorities to step up an investigation into the hundreds of people who went missing on June 3, when security forces dispersed the main sit-in outside the military headquarters. According to the protesters, at least 128 people were killed and hundreds went missing. Authorities put the death toll at 87, including 17 inside the sit-in area.

Dura Gambo, an activist with the SPA, said the demonstrators wanted to know the fate of those who disappeared in the June crackdown.

"If they are alive, where are they, and if they were dead, where are their bodies? This what we want to know," she said.

The protesters carried posters of the missing people, and marched to the office of the country's chief prosecutor, where they presented officials with written demands for a new investigation by an independent committee.

Protesters already rejected the results of the prosecutor's investigation in September, which said the country's ruling generals did not order the deadly break-up, and blamed the deaths on paramilitary forces who exceeded their orders.

Setting up an independent probe into the crackdown was a key point in the transition deal between the military and civilian leaders signed in August. The new government has just over three years to steer the country toward democratic elections.

Sunday's rallies also took aim at the lingering influence of Al-Bashir's political system, including his National Congress party.

Footage circulated online showing the protesters, mostly youth, in the city of Wad Madani, the provincial capital of Al-Jazirah province, waving Sudanese flags and calling for the former ruling party's dissolution as well as resignation of the local governor whom Al-Bashir appointed.

There were no reports of any clashes with police or casualties during the protests.

The transitional government previously said it won't appoint governors or an interim parliament until it makes peace with the country's rebel groups. The first round of peace talks between government and the rebel leaders took place in October in South Sudan's capital, and are to resume later this month.



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Sudan activists call for protest to disband old ruling party  
Sudan rebel faction, govt hold first round of talks

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## [Turkey-backed fighters kill foreign medic in Syria's northeast](#)

Author:

Associated Press

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1572793844001565600

Sun, 2019-11-03 14:44

BEIRUT: Shelling by Turkey-backed opposition fighters killed a Burmese medic and wounded another Iraqi member of the humanitarian team on Sunday in northeastern Syria where fighting between Kurdish fighters and Turkey-backed gunmen continued, the head of the humanitarian group said.

David Eubank, a former member of US Army Special Forces and the founder of the Free Burma Rangers said in a video that the attack occurred about 4 kilometers from the northern town of Tal Tamr. Eubank said the medic, Zau Seng, was hit in the head by shrapnel from a mortar shell that struck nearby as he was filming a video of the fighting.

“He died right away and we brought him here to Tal Tamr,” Eubank said in the video, which also showed one of the aid group’s armored vehicles hit by shrapnel.

Today, Nov. 3, our Kachin cameraman and medic from Burma, Zau Seng, was killed today by an FSA/Turkish Army mortar strike that hit our CCP. Our Iraqi coordinator was also wounded. Thank you for your prayers during this time. <https://t.co/LT1YANLbj1>

– Free Burma Rangers (@FreeBurmaRangrs) [November 3, 2019](#)

Eubank added that an Iraqi team member was also wounded in the mortar attack, which he blamed on the “Free Syrian Army and Turks.”

Earlier in the day, Mustafa Bali, a spokesman for the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, tweeted that he “received terrible news” of the death of a medic with the Free Burma Rangers, putting the blame on the Turkish army.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitor, also reported the death of the medic.

Turkey’s defense ministry denied that Turkish troops attacked the aid convoy, saying that the reports “are not true.”

The Free Burma Rangers identifies itself as a multi-ethnic humanitarian group working in Burma, Syria, Iraq and Kurdistan.

Turkey last month invaded northeastern Syria to push out Syrian Kurdish fighters, who it considers terrorists for their links to a Kurdish insurgency inside Turkey.

The Observatory said the fighting Sunday was concentrated near the town of Zirkan in the northeastern province of Hassakeh, adding that a Turkish drone attacked positions of the Kurdish-led forces in the area.

The Kurdish Hawar news agency said Turkish troops pounded Zirkan with artillery shells amid fierce fighting. It added that Turkey-backed fighters are trying to cut the M4 highway that links the northern city of Aleppo, Syria’s largest, with Hassekeh, adding that the Syrian Kurdish fighters repelled the attacks.

The fighting continued two days after Turkey and Russia launched joint patrols in northeastern Syria, under a deal that halted a Turkish offensive against Syrian Kurdish fighters who were forced to withdraw from the border area following Ankara’s incursion.

Though the truce has mostly held, it has been marred by accusations of violations from both sides and occasional clashes. Turkish President Recep

Tayyip Erdogan has threatened to resume the offensive if deemed necessary.



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Explosion in Syrian town on Turkish border kills 13 Turkey releases 18 Syrian soldiers captured in Syria

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## [Pay deal ends strike by UN Palestinian agency workers in Jordan](#)

Author:

Associated Press

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Sun, 2019-11-03 13:05

AMMAN: An agreement was reached to end a strike in Jordan by employees of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, hours after the walkout began Sunday, Amman's top diplomat and a trade union leader said.

Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi announced the deal with UNRWA employees, involving salary rises of between 70 and 100 Jordanian dinars (88 to 126 euros) per month from January, at a late afternoon news conference

with union representatives.

“Consequently, it has been decided to put an end to the strike,” said Riyadh Zyghan, leader of the UNRWA employees’ union in Jordan.

More than two million Palestinians are registered in Jordan as refugees with UNRWA, which provides everything from healthcare to schooling.

Around 7,000 workers had joined the strike, forcing a shutdown of agency facilities, according to UNRWA spokesman in Jordan Sami Mshamsha.

Mshamsha said the union demanded a salary increase of 200 Jordanian dinars, but agreed to ask for half that amount following negotiations with UNRWA.

The union of UNRWA workers had said the action would be “open-ended” and had told pupils and students they should stay at home.

The strike came as the agency faces an unprecedented financial crisis.

In 2018, the United States suspended and later cut all its funding for UNRWA, causing a shortfall that threatened to close its schools and hospitals.

Those woes were compounded by allegations of abuse by the agency’s management, leading other key donors – the Netherlands and Switzerland – to snap shut their purses.

In June UNRWA commissioner general Pierre Krahenbuhl told a news conference in Amman that the agency faced an expected \$211 million shortfall in funding for 2019, and called on donors to fill the gap.

The agency runs 169 schools in the kingdom, serving some 120,000 students, as well as a faculty of science and educational arts, 25 primary healthcare centres and other services.

UNRWA was set up in 1949 after more than 750,000 Palestinians fled or were expelled during the war surrounding Israel’s creation the previous year.

It provides vital schooling and medical services to some five million Palestinians in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the Gaza Strip and the Israeli-occupied West Bank, including annexed east Jerusalem.



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Palestine 'dear to the hearts of Arabs', Saudi envoy tells UNOIC praises Saudi Arabia's \$50m donation to UNRWA