

South Sudan says will host peace talks between Sudan and rebels

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Sun, 2019-10-13 16:50

JUBA: Sudanese Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok will attend peace talks in the South Sudan capital Monday with rebel leaders from several Sudanese states, said official sources in Juba.

"Tomorrow's meeting is to mark the launching of Sudan's peace talks," Ateny Wek Ateny, spokesman for South Sudan's President Salva Kiir, told AFP Sunday. Hamdok, who was only appointed in August in a deal between the army and the opposition, will meet rebel leaders from the Sudanese states of Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile.

Kiir, who just a few weeks ago signed his own peace deal with rebel leader Riek Machar, offered to mediate between Sudan and the rebels back in November 2018.

This new set of talks follow a first round in September when both sides agreed on a road map for the negotiations.

This week's meeting is intended to tackle the main issues, said Ateny. Also attending will be Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who last week won the Nobel Peace Prize, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni and Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta.

Their presence, said Ateny, was to give the talks more weight.

A senior Sudanese delegation arrived in Juba on Sunday.

The Sudanese delegation will meet Abdulaziz Al-Hilu, leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), which is active in Bule Nile and South Kordofan states. Al-Hilu will lead the rebel delegation.

This new peace initiative comes after the fall of longtime Sudanese autocrat Omar Al-Bashir, who was toppled from power by the Sudanese military in April. Prime Minister Hamdok has been tasked with leading Sudan back to civilian rule, but he has said he also wants to end the conflicts with the rebels. Over the years, the rebels' conflict with Khartoum have killed hundreds of thousands of people and forced millions to flee their homes.



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[Lebanon says Israel sent drone over Hezbollah area](#)

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Sun, 2019-10-13 12:48

BEIRUT: The Lebanese army on Sunday accused Israel of sending a reconnaissance drone at the weekend over Beirut's southern suburbs, a bastion of the Shiite militant Hezbollah group.

On August 25, two explosives-laden drones were sent to the same area. One of

them exploded, sparking a dangerous escalation between Hezbollah and Israel. On Saturday night, “one of the Israel enemy’s reconnaissance drones violated Lebanese air space... overflowed the southern suburbs and left,” the army said in a statement.

The Iran-backed Hezbollah is represented in Lebanon’s government and parliament but is considered a terrorist organisation by Israel and Washington, which has stepped up the financial pressure on the organisation. The August incident heightened regional tensions, which culminated in a cross-border exchange of fire in early September.

Hezbollah vowed then that it would shoot down any Israeli drones violating Lebanon’s air space.



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[Algerians protest bill to boost foreign money in oil sector](#)

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Sun, 2019-10-13 12:28

ALGIERS: Thousands of Algerians are protesting in front of their parliament against a bill aimed at attracting foreign investment to the oil and gas sector, which underpins the national economy.

Surrounded by police, protesters raised their fists and accused the government of selling out Algeria's resources and threatening their children's futures.

The bill has further angered anti-democracy protesters who have been demonstrating since February.

The government is discussing the bill Sunday. It argues that Algeria needs foreign investment to modernize the sector and make it more globally competitive. State-run gas and oil giant Sonatrach says the bill is needed to simplify Algeria's tax system.

Protest organizers include professor Noureddine Boudierba, who accuses Algeria's provisional government of offering favors to foreign companies in exchange for political support ahead of December's presidential election.





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[Egypt's president to meet with Ethiopia PM over Nile dispute](#)

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Sun, 2019-10-13 12:41

CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi said on Sunday he would meet Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in Russia to discuss a dispute over a hydropower dam that the Horn of Africa country is building on the River Nile. A long-running diplomatic standoff over building and operating the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam has heightened tensions between the two countries. Egypt worries that the dam will threaten its already scarce water supplies. "I agreed with the Ethiopian prime minister to meet in Moscow and to discuss the issue to move forward, and God willing, things will go in a way that helps to solve this issue in one way or another," Sisi said at a military forum on Sunday.

He did not say when they would meet, but Russia will host the first Russian-African summit in the Black sea resort of Sochi on Oct. 23 and 24.

Sisi and Abiy spoke on Friday after the Ethiopian prime minister won the Nobel Peace Prize for his peacemaking efforts with Eritrea. Sisi had congratulated Abiy on Facebook.

"The call included a stress on the importance of overcoming any obstacles in the negotiations of the Renaissance Dam," said Egyptian presidency spokesman Bassam Rady.

Ethiopia, the source of the Blue Nile which joins the White Nile in Khartoum and runs on to Egypt, says the dam will not disrupt the river's flow and hopes the project will transform it into a power hub for the electricity-hungry region.

Sudan, which is also involved in the talks, hopes to buy electricity produced by the dam.

Sisi said his government had a plan, through 2037, worth 900 billion Egyptian pounds (\$55 billion) to overcome "water poverty". The plan includes building huge sea water desalination plants and sewage triple treatment plants.

Sisi said Egypt had already spent 200 billion pounds on the plan, and would spend 70-100 billion more next year.

Many Egyptians on social media criticised Sisi for signing a 2015 "declaration of principles" with Ethiopia and Sudan, which was meant to serve as a basis for negotiations. Critics say the declaration has strengthened Addis Ababa's hand in talks, and no breakthrough has been made since it was signed in Khartoum.

Sisi blamed the 2011 uprising which toppled longtime autocrat Hosni Mubarak

for weakening Cairo's position in the dam negotiations.

"If not for 2011, there would have been a strong and easy agreement on constructing this dam, but when the country exposed its back and ... stripped its shoulder naked, anything could be done," he said at the military forum. (\$1 = 16.2000 Egyptian pounds)



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Egypt denounces Ethiopia for moving ahead with Nile dam amid water-shortage fears
Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia fail to reach agreement on Nile dam

[Turkey steps up assault on Syrian Kurds defying sanction threats](#)

Sun, 2019-10-13 01:55

RAS AL-AIN: Ankara stepped up its assault on Kurdish-held border towns in northeastern Syria on Saturday, defying mounting threats of international

sanctions, even from Washington. Buoyed by a night of steady advances in the countryside, Turkish troops and their Syrian allies entered the battleground town of Ras Al-Ain, sources on both sides said.

The Turkish Defense Ministry hailed its forces' capture of the first Kurdish-held town of the offensive so far.

But Ras Al-Ain's Kurdish defenders denied the town had fallen and an AFP correspondent near the town said Turkish troops and their Syrian allies had entered but had yet to capture it.

The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), who were the main ground partner in the US-led campaign against Daesh, have taken mounting losses against the vastly superior firepower of the Turkish army.

At least 20 SDF fighters were killed in clashes overnight, taking their losses since the Turkish offensive began on Wednesday to 74, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based war monitor, said.

Turkish airstrikes on Kurdish-held towns and intense artillery exchanges caused mounting casualties on both sides of the border, with 28 dead on the Syrian side, according to the Observatory, and 17 dead in Turkey, according to Turkish reports.

The Turkish army has reported four dead, according to the Defense Ministry and the state-run Anadolu news agency.

FASTFACT

The Turkish invasion, which has led to an exodus of civilian residents, Arab as well as Kurdish, amounts to 'an attempt to redraw the ethnic map of the region at their expense.'

The town of Ras Al-Ain and that of Tal-Abyad further west have been primary goals of the Turkish offensive and have both come under heavy bombardment.

They lie at either end of a section of the border which although Kurdish-controlled has an ethnic Arab majority.

Ankara says its forces' mission is to establish a safe zone run by its mainly Arab Syrian allies in which some of the 3.6 million mainly Arab refugees in Syria can be rehoused.

But the Kurds say that the Turkish invasion, which has led to an exodus of civilian residents, Arab as well as Kurdish, amounts to an attempt to redraw the ethnic map of the region at their expense.

The offensive has so far displaced some 100,000 people, according to the UN. Roads leading out of the area have been filled with fleeing civilians, some on foot, other in vehicles piled high with their belongings. Few have any idea when if ever they will be able to return to their homes.

The Kurdish Red Crescent said it would no longer dispatch medical teams to Ras Al-Ain because its ambulances are being hit by Turkish fire.



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Turkey's Syria offensive 'invasion' of Arab land: Arab League chief
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