

# [Iraq to open border-crossing with Syria on Monday](#)

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Fri, 2019-09-27 23:42

BAGHDAD: Iraq's Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi has approved the reopening on Monday of the Qaim border-crossing with Syria, state news agency INA said, the latest sign of normalization between Baghdad and Syrian President Bashar Assad's government.

The crossing will be reopened for travelers and trade, INA reported on Friday, citing Iraq's border agency chief.

The western Anbar province town of Qaim, 300 kilometers west of Baghdad, was recaptured from Daesh in November 2017 and was the group's last bastion in Iraq to fall.

It borders the Syrian town of Albu Kamal, which was also a Daesh stronghold. The towns lie on a strategic supply route and the crossing between them had only been open for government or military traffic.

Daesh in 2014 seized vast swathes of land in both Iraq and Syria, declaring a caliphate across both countries. Iraq declared victory over the group in 2017 and it lost its last territory in Syria earlier this year.

Iraq's government recently called for the reinstatement of Syria's membership of the Arab League, which was suspended in 2011 over its crackdown on protesters at the start of the civil war.



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Iraq reinforces border with Syria, fearing Daesh spillover  
Iraq-Syria border set for last major assault on Daesh: US general

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## [US kills 17 suspected Daesh militants in Libya strike](#)

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Fri, 2019-09-27 17:23

WASHINGTON: The US military command for Africa announced Friday it killed 17 suspected Daesh militants in southern Libya, in the third such strike in a week.

“At this time, it is assessed the airstrike killed 17 terrorists” on Thursday, Africom said in a statement.

It said its anti-Daesh campaign in Libya was “ongoing” and that strikes were being conducted “in coordination” with the UN-recognised Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli.

Africom “continues to support diplomatic efforts to stabilise the political situation in Libya in order to maintain our common focus on disrupting terrorist organisations that threaten regional stability”, the statement said.

The previous two air strikes were carried out on September 19 and 24 near Murzuq, an oasis town some 1,000 kilometres (600 miles) south of Tripoli, killing eight and 11 Daesh “terrorists” respectively, according to Africom. Libya’s desert south lies outside the control of the GNA and of rival forces loyal to the head of the Libyan National Army (LNA) Khalifa Haftar.

Since the start of an anti-GNA offensive launched by Haftar on April 4 to take Tripoli, analysts have warned of a security vacuum that could benefit Daesh in other parts of the country.



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Libya's Haftar says open to dialogue  
Libya journalists caught in the crossfire

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## [Trump says he refused to lift sanctions for an Iran meeting despite Rouhani claims](#)

Fri, 2019-09-27 16:32

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump said he had refused a request by Tehran to lift sanctions in exchange for talks, contradicting Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, who earlier on Friday said the United States had offered to lift restrictions to facilitate a meeting.

"Iran wanted me to lift the sanctions imposed on them in order to meet. I said, of course, NO!" Trump tweeted.

Rouhani has said on Friday that European leaders at the UN General Assembly in the US said Washington was ready to lift sanctions in exchange for talks on a 2015 nuclear deal.

“The German chancellor, the UK prime minister and France’s president were there (in New York). They insisted that this meeting happen, and that America, too, is saying that it will lift the sanctions,” Rouhani said on state television.

“The next issue was over what sanctions will be lifted,” he said. “They insisted that we will lift all sanctions.”

On Friday, US President Donald Trump confirmed such an offer was never made.

Tensions have escalated between Iran and the United States since May last year when Trump pulled out of the landmark 2015 nuclear accord and began reimposing sanctions that have crippled the Iranian economy.

The deal’s remaining partners include UK, China, France, Germany and Russia.



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Trump asks Imran, Modi to ‘work out’ Kashmir solution Trump urges India,

## Yemen's ambassador to Egypt accused of 'stealing' top students' scholarships 'for friends'

Fri, 2019-09-27 14:32

Yemen's ambassador in Egypt, Mohamed Marem, was accused of corruption and "stealing" government scholarships of Yemeni students to give to "his friends'" children, Yemeni media reported.

Fatima Hajar, who received a 99.7 percent average grade from school, arrived in Cairo after receiving a government scholarship to study medicine in Egypt, but found out that Marem had given her place to the daughter of one of his diplomatic friends, activists reported.

Four similar cases of students who had their government scholarships stolen were also reported, the activists added.

The corruption scandal caused an outcry among the Yemeni community and led to an official announcement from the Yemeni government that the allegations would be investigated.

Prime Minister Maeen Abdulmalik Saeed also instructed the ministers of Higher Education and Foreign Affairs to complete the admission procedures of the students who have had their scholarships taken.

The prime minister also directed the two ministries to promptly open an investigation within the embassy in Cairo.

The official statement from the government confirmed that the Yemeni embassy in Cairo had taken five scholarships from top students and awarded them to other students who were close to embassy staff.

The Ministry of Higher Education has denounced the embassy in Egypt for giving the students scholarships – awarded by the ministry – to other students, and outside the ministry's approval.

The ministry noted that it would not hesitate to take any appropriate legal action in cases of violation to preserve the interests of students.

Activists and journalists have previously accused Marem of involvement in corruption during his post in Egypt.



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In search of glory, Yemeni athlete drowns in Med trying to reach Europe  
Houthi militia fires ballistic missile from Amran province in Yemen: Arab coalition

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## [Lebanon petrol stations suspend strike over dollar 'shortage'](#)

Author:

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Fri, 2019-09-27 10:24

BEIRUT: Owners of petrol stations in Lebanon on Friday suspended a strike called over an alleged shortage of dollar reserves, pending a meeting with the prime minister later in the day.

The Syndicate of Gas Station Owners on Thursday night announced an open-ended strike, saying banks were not supplying them with the dollars they need to pay importers and suppliers because of a shortage in reserves.

Motorists streamed into filling stations to replenish their vehicles after the strike announcement on Thursday, resulting in long queues.

"The syndicate decided to suspend the strike on Friday," after a meeting was scheduled with Prime Minister Saad Hariri in the afternoon, said Sami Brax, the head of the syndicate.

"We will meet again on Saturday morning to determine our final position," he added in a statement.

Lebanese media this week reported that banks and money exchange houses were rationing their dollar sales over a feared shortage in reserves.

The syndicate had said that petrol station owners were having to purchase dollars on the black market or from money exchange offices at higher rates. Lebanese officials, including President Michel Aoun and Central Bank governor Riad Salameh, have tried to play down the risk of an economic collapse.

When asked about a feared shortage in dollar reserves, Aoun on Friday said "Lebanon is not in danger."

"I will not let Lebanon collapse," he told reporters.

Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil acknowledged "external pressure on the economy and the Lebanese pound," but said that local parties were exaggerating the situation to undermine the government, the state-run National News Agency (NNA) reported on Friday.

"There are local actors who are conspiring against the country and its economy," he said.

They are "fabricating" the situation "to incite citizens against the state," he added.

Salameh on Monday denied that Lebanon was facing a dollar crisis.

"Dollars are available in Lebanon," the central bank governor said in a news conference, calling reports of a shortage an "exaggeration."

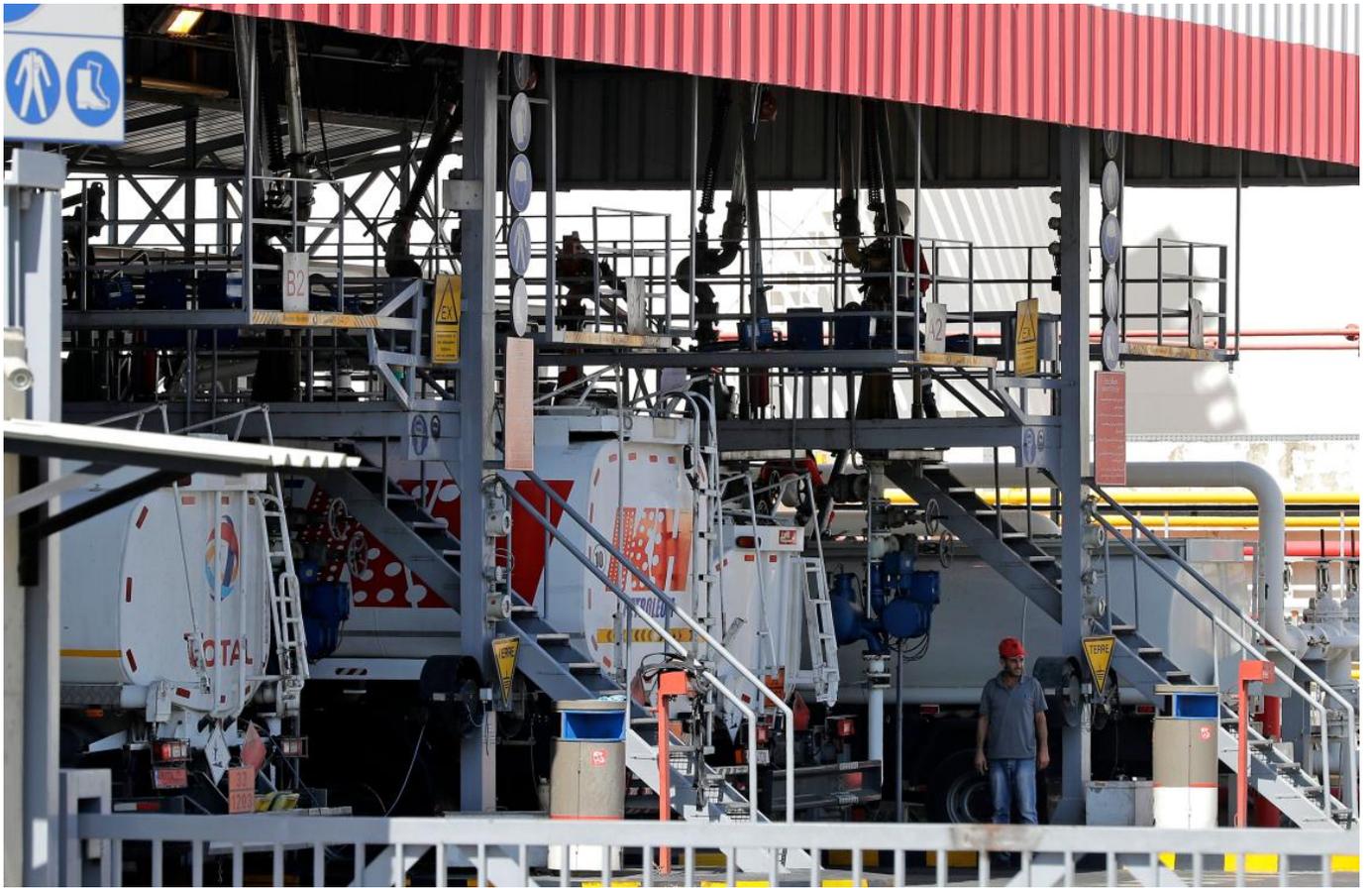
Economic growth in Lebanon has plummeted in the wake of repeated political deadlocks in recent years, compounded by the impact of eight years of war in neighboring Syria.

Lebanon's public debt stands at around \$86 billion – higher than 150 percent of GDP – according to the finance ministry.

Eighty percent of that figure is owed to Lebanon's central bank and local banks.

Last month, ratings agency Fitch bumped the country down to "CCC" over what it called "intensifying pressure on Lebanon's financing model."





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'France is Lebanon's friend,' says President Macron  
Return of Israeli agent to Lebanon angers former Khiam prisoners