

Sudan's ruling council, rebel leaders agree on peace talks roadmap

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JUBA: Sudan's ruling council and rebel leaders have agreed on a roadmap for peace talks that are expected to begin in October and last about two months, officials from both sides said on Wednesday.

The council, a transitional government, has made peace-making with rebels fighting Khartoum one of its main priorities as it is a key condition for the country's removal from the United States' sponsors of terrorism list.

The council took over the reins of government in August after military and civilian parties and protest groups signed a three-year power-sharing deal after months of strife following the removal of long-ruling authoritarian president Omar Al-Bashir in April.

South Sudan brought together members of the council and rebel leaders from several areas.

Thousands of people have been killed in Sudan's civil wars, including the conflict in the western Darfur region, where rebels have been fighting against then-President Bashir's government since 2003.

Sudanese officials and rebels signed the initial agreement in front of diplomats to set a two-month period for talks, starting on Oct. 14 and running until the middle of December.

"Today's signing aims at the implementation of the peace confidence building that came in the constitutional declaration," said Yasir Arman, the deputy chairman of the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army-North (SPLM-North).

Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, a member of the sovereign council and head of the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), signed the deal on behalf of the government.

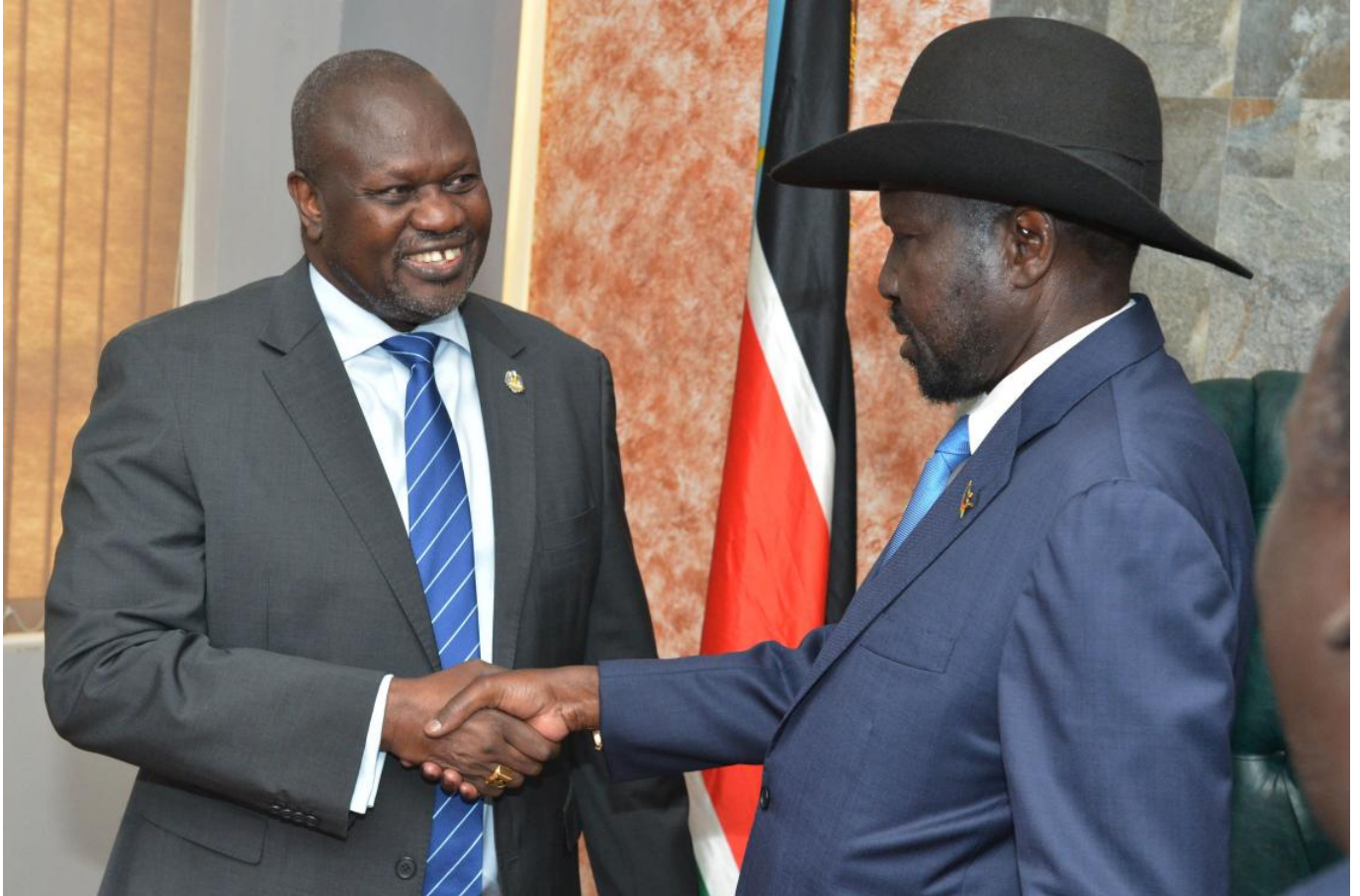
"We want assure you and the people of Sudan that we are ready to pay all the damages of the war and we will assure you that time of war is gone forever," Dagalo said.

The talks will potentially deal with issues of how any cessation of hostilities to be entered will be monitored, and set out modalities of providing humanitarian access to all parts of Darfur and Blue Nile, he said. Darfur's war pits local rebel groups drawn largely from African farming tribes complaining about neglect against government forces in a conflict that has displaced about 2.5 million people.

The fighting in Darfur has subsided over the past four years where the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and two factions of the Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA) are active, but skirmishes persist.

SPLA-N rebels are active in South Kordofan and Blue Nile, two southern regions in Sudan, have largely committed to a cease-fire over the past two years. They have been fighting Khartoum's rule since ending up on the Sudanese side of the border when South Sudan seceded in 2011.

South Kordofan and Blue Nile are home to large communities who sided with the south during decades of civil war with Khartoum. Many say they have been marginalized by the Khartoum government since South Sudan declared independence in July under a 2005 peace deal.



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Sudan's new leader to visit South Sudan

[UN: Reconstruction of landmark Mosul mosque to begin in 2020](#)

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By THOMAS ADAMSON | AP

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Wed, 2019-09-11 14:54

PARIS: The United Nations' cultural agency UNESCO announced Wednesday that a landmark reconstruction of Iraq's Al-Nouri mosque in Mosul, which was blown

up by the Daesh group in 2017, will start at the beginning of next year. The timeline of the restoration plan of the 12th-century monument, famed for its leaning minaret, was hammered out during a meeting in Paris between UNESCO Director General Audrey Azoulay and several Iraqi officials, including Iraqi Culture Minister Abdulamir Al-Dafar Hamdani, and Mosul's regional governor, Mansour Al-Mareed.

First launched in 2018, the mosque restoration plan will be the most eye-catching part of a \$100 million UNESCO-led heritage reconstruction of Mosul. "Revive the Spirit of Mosul" is the largest restoration plan in Iraqi history, and comes two years after the old city's destruction at the hands of extremists.

"Today we agreed on a calendar, a precise calendar and plan of action to be mobilized on the ground in Iraq. ... The ongoing phase of structural consolidation and the critical phase of site-clearing and mine-clearing (has) to be achieved from now to the end of the year," Azoulay told reporters.

"We've also agreed on a timetable that would see the reconstruction start in the first semester of 2020 for the mosque," she added.

IS leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi declared an Islamic caliphate from the Al-Nouri mosque in the summer of 2014, only for IS extremists to blow it up in June 2017 as Iraqi forces closed in.

Two years after IS was evicted, Mosul is a city still very much in ruins with no meaningful international effort to rebuild – one that is still struggling with basic services like electricity, water and health care. The UN's development program is working to restore private houses in the historic Old City. Most of its residents still reside in camps.

The UNESCO initiative goes far beyond the mere restoration of the mosque, and will see the cash be used to rebuild churches, schools and a street in Mosul's Old City, which was famous for its bookshops.

The United Arab Emirates is providing \$50.4 million to finance the project, focusing on the restoration of the mosque, with the European Union providing \$24 million.

The decision to select Mosul, as opposed to other Iraqi cities, for a revamp owes to its particular history as a melting pot city.

"We've chosen Mosul as a symbol because Mosul was before the conflict a city of diversity, a city of tolerance – more than tolerance – a city where people lived together and knew each other beyond communities, beyond religious belongings," Azoulay said.

She stressed that she's asked that some of the \$100 million go toward the rebuilding of a synagogue and Christian religious sites.



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Long after guns fall silent, Mosul residents suffer hearing loss

[UAE police thwart attempt to smuggle 18 people under lorry floor](#)

Wed, 2019-09-11 18:16

DUBAI: Abu Dhabi police foiled a recent attempt to smuggle 18 workers, including women, in the bed of a lorry across the Khatam Al-Shakla border in Al Ain, according to a statement released by the force on Tuesday.

The people, who were found in a cramped, hollowed-out section of the truck floor, were attempting to enter the UAE through the Buraimi and Al-Ain border checkpoint.

The police said they had acted upon a tip-off of “an attempted infiltration at the checkpoint” with the help of Abu Dhabi Customs.

In a statement, Abu Dhabi police praised the cooperation of its partners and their efforts, warning against threatening the country’s security and stability.







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Saudi Arabia, UAE welcome response for southern Yemen dialogue

[Egypt sentences 11 Islamist leaders to life for spying](#)

Author:

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Wed, 2019-09-11 11:50

CAIRO: An Egyptian court has sentenced 11 Muslim Brotherhood leaders to life in prison on charges of espionage with the Palestinian militant group Hamas. Among those sentenced by the Cairo criminal court was the Brotherhood's head, Mohammed Badie.

This is the latest of several sentences against Badie, who received a life sentence last week on charges related to mass prison breaks during the 2011

uprising.

Charges were also dropped Wednesday against the late former president, Mohammed Morsi, who collapsed and died in June during a court session on the case.

Morsi, a senior Brotherhood figure, became Egypt's first freely-elected president in 2012. The military overthrew Morsi in 2013 amid massive protests against his brief rule.

Authorities have since branded the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization and arrested thousands of its members.



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Kuwait hands Muslim Brotherhood-linked militants to EgyptMuslim Brotherhood financier and 6 others get life sentences in Egypt

Hungary to appoint Syria diplomat in thawing of ties

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Wed, 2019-09-11 11:08

BUDAPEST: Hungary is planning to appoint a diplomat to carry out “consular duties” in Damascus next year, the first time an EU member state is to upgrade its diplomatic presence in Syria since the start of the war. “Starting next year, Hungary will delegate a diplomat who will occasionally visit Syria to make follow ups on humanitarian support and to conduct consular duties,” Hungary’s foreign ministry said in a statement to AFP on Wednesday.

The ministry said Budapest provides humanitarian aid for Christians in the Middle East, including in Syria, while a “considerable number” of Syrian students study in Hungary on scholarships.

Only the Czech Republic still has an embassy in Damascus, while other EU countries, the US and Canada are among those which have closed their missions, breaking off relations with the regime of President Bashar Assad. Romania technically still has an embassy in Syria, but the ambassador is based in Beirut. Bulgaria has a charge d’affaires.

EU countries have in the past sent envoys to Syria, but not for consular purposes, with their duties limited to talks on aid and policy.

Syria’s conflict flared in 2011 with anti-government demonstrations that sparked a brutal regime crackdown. Since then, 370,000 people have been killed and millions displaced.

A source close to the Hungarian government told AFP that Budapest was considering engaging Assad to better help Christians, as well as “be ahead of” other EU countries possibly re-opening ties for economic opportunities. “Many people in (the ruling party) Fidesz and in the government think that the question of engaging Assad is not a question of if, but when it is going to happen,” he said.

Led by nationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orban, Hungary has often been at loggerheads with other EU members and the EU itself on what Orban calls its pro-immigration stance and other issues.



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