

Libya airport reopens after brief rupture in cease-fire

Author:

Mon, 2019-08-12 22:25

TRIPOLI: Flights have resumed from the Libyan capital's sole functioning airport as calm returned on Monday to the outskirts of Tripoli after a temporary truce was violated the previous day.

"Reopening airspace at Mitiga International Airport after maintenance and cleaning ... so that airlines can renew their flights," the facility's management said late on Sunday on Facebook.

The Tripoli-based government and forces loyal to eastern commander Khalifa Haftar had agreed to a truce for the three-day holiday of Eid Al-Adha that began on Sunday.

Haftar launched an offensive to take Libya's capital in early April, but encountered stiff resistance, resulting in months of stalemate in southern Tripoli's outskirts.

Flights from Mitiga airport were suspended for several hours on Sunday after rocket fire hit the airport, a few meters from the runway where planes were parked.

Located east of Tripoli, Mitiga is a former military air base that has been used by civilian traffic since Tripoli International Airport suffered severe damage during fighting in 2014.

Mitiga is in a zone under the control of forces loyal to the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA) and has often been targeted.

Haftar's Libyan National Army and the GNA had on Saturday agreed to a UN-sponsored humanitarian truce for Al-Adha, although the GNA listed conditions, including a cessation of troop movements.

The GNA blamed Haftar's forces for the attack on the airport, in which no casualties or serious damage were reported, and for a separate alleged attack in the Soug Al-Jomaa district of Tripoli.

Over the past four months, 1,093 people have been killed in the fighting and 5,752 wounded, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), while more than 120,000 people have been displaced.

Libya has been mired in chaos since a NATO-backed uprising that toppled and killed Muammar Qaddafi in 2011.



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80 migrants rescued off Libya coast
Displaced by fighting, Libyans fear ending up 'on the street'

[Iraq rejects Israeli role in Gulf flotilla](#)

Author:

Mon, 2019-08-12 22:11

BAGHDAD: Iraq rejects any Israeli participation in a naval force to protect shipping in the Strait of Hormuz, at the heart of tensions with Iran, Foreign Minister Mohammed Ali Al-Hakim said on Monday.

Tensions have escalated in past months, with drones downed and tankers mysteriously attacked in Gulf and nearby waters.

Washington and its Arab allies in the Gulf region have accused the Islamic

republic of carrying out the tanker attacks. The US has since sought to assemble an international coalition it says is to guarantee freedom of navigation in the Gulf.

Israel has made no official announcement on the operation, although Israeli media have reported a possible role for the Jewish state. Iraq “rejects any participation of forces of the Zionist entity in any military force to secure passage of ships in the Arabian Gulf,” Hakim said on Twitter. “Together, the Gulf states can secure the passage of ships,” he said.

He added that “Iraq will work to lower tensions in our region through calm negotiations,” while “the presence of Western forces in the region would raise tensions.”

Tehran and Washington have been at loggerheads since President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the US from a nuclear accord between Iran and world powers in May 2018, reimposing biting sanctions.

If the coalition is formed, each country would provide a military escort for its commercial ships through the Gulf with the support of the US military, which would carry out aerial surveillance and command operations.

The UK has said it will take part, but other European countries have so far kept out, fearing it might harm efforts to reach a negotiated settlement with Iran.

Iran’s Defense Minister Amir Hatami said on Thursday any Israeli involvement could have “disastrous consequences” for the region and the formation of a US-led flotilla in the Gulf would increase insecurity.



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Iraqis linked to Iran use money-laundering scam to beat US sanctionsIsraeli military kills four Palestinian militants on Gaza border

Blast at Iraq weapons depot injures 13, cause unclear

Author:

Associated Press

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1565637400550792800

Mon, 2019-08-12 19:09

BADHDAD: Iraq's interior ministry says a large explosion at an ammunition depot southwest of the capital, Baghdad, has injured 13 people, most lightly. Maj. Gen. Saad Maan, a ministry spokesman, said it was not immediately clear what caused the blast at the Al-Saqr military base.

The explosion was heard throughout the city and smoke billowed in the air Monday evening.

The base houses a weapons depot for the Iraqi federal police and the mainly Shiite militias known as the Popular Mobilization Forces.

The state-sanctioned PMF militias, which also receive backing from Iran, have fought alongside Iraq's regular armed forces against Daesh



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Iraqi forces launch anti-Daesh operation north of Baghdad
Suicide bombers attack Baghdad mosque

[US team in southern Turkey to work on joint operations center](#)

Author:

Mon, 2019-08-12 22:00

ISTANBUL: A US delegation has arrived in Turkey's southern province of Sanliurfa to start work on the establishment of a joint operations center to coordinate a planned safe zone in neighboring Syria, Turkish authorities said on Monday.

The two NATO allies agreed in talks last week to establish the center that would manage the zone in northern Syria though no agreement has been announced on key details of the zone, including the size of the area in question and the command structure of joint patrols that would be conducted there.

There has been cautious progress on the center despite other disputes straining bilateral relations, including Turkey's purchase of the Russian S-400 missile defense system, as well as trials of local US Consulate employees in Turkey on terrorism charges.

Work to establish the center has begun and it is expected to become active in coming days, the Turkish Defense Ministry said on Twitter.

"Within this context, a six-person US delegation has arrived in Sanliurfa with the purpose of preliminary preparation," it said.

Washington and Ankara have been at odds over plans for northeastern Syria, where US allies on the ground in the battle against Daesh include the Kurdish YPG militia, which Turkey considers an enemy and a terrorist group.

The allies have been discussing a safe zone near the Turkish frontier that would be kept free of combatants and heavy weapons, but Turkey wants it to extend more than twice as far into Syrian territory as the US has proposed.

Turkey has suggested it will act militarily if the US fails to agree on a solution that will safeguard the border. Turkey says the YPG is an extension in Syria of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which has waged an insurgency against the Turkish state since the 1980s.



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US, Turkey agree to 'work together' to resolve disputesUS, Turkey say plan

reached to resolve rift over Syria town

[Impoverished Gazans lament stagnant livestock market](#)

Sun, 2019-08-11 22:07

GAZA CITY: Livestock traders in Gaza are frustrated by the reluctance of Palestinians to buy sacrificial livestock for Eid Al-Adha because of the deteriorating economic situation. Many locals lack purchasing power due to the Israeli siege and a wage crisis.

Traders and customers blamed the stagnant market on unprecedented levels of poverty.

In order to encourage people to buy, livestock owners have resorted to a system of sale by installments. Others are skeptical of this system, fearing the inability of some to pay, especially in light of the financial crisis experienced by Palestinian Authority (PA) employees.

Mohammed Khadr and five friends agreed to join together and buy a sacrificial calf by payments in monthly installments.

Khadr, a 53-year-old taxi driver, said he would not have been able to buy it without the installment system. He said he and his friends have agreed to buy a calf in installments of 1,800 shekels (\$510) per person over nine months.

Khadr said that he used to always buy the Eid sacrifice outright, but he would not have bought it for the past three years without help from the installment system.

Despite the system, Mohammed Al-Assar said he would not buy a sacrifice for the third year in a row because of the salary crisis.

"I have used the Eid sacrifice for a decade. We had income, but now with the big deduction on salaries, I have not been able to buy a sacrifice over the past two years," said Al-Assar, a PA employee.

He said that the salary drop caused a deterioration in the living conditions of thousands of PA employees in Gaza. He added that some of them are barely able to provide basic necessities, while many are exhausted by debts and loans.

Since April 2017, the PA has imposed financial cuts on the salaries of more than 50,000 employees in the Gaza Strip, ranging from 30 to 50 percent per capita.

"The majority of those who buy the sacrifices this year are friends and

acquaintances, according to the financial installment system,” said Abu Karim Al-Satari, a livestock merchant who owns a farm in the southern Gaza Strip.

He added that the low demand for sacrifices comes despite a decline in prices compared with previous years. This, he said, is due to the deteriorating economic conditions of the majority of the population.

According to Al-Satari, the average price ranges from 16 to 20 shekels per kg.

The Israeli siege and internal Palestinian political divisions have caused a collapse in the living conditions of about 2 million Palestinians, most of whom depend on humanitarian assistance provided by the UN.

According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, about 53 percent of the population of the Gaza Strip are impoverished.

Cattle merchant Aziz Afanah agrees with Al-Satari that “the livestock market for this year is witnessing a marked decline in the demand to buy sacrifices due to a lack of cash and purchasing power of the majority of Gazans.”

But Afanah, despite the sharp recession in the livestock market, refuses to sell in installments to avoid problems of inability to pay.

“Selling by installments needs guarantees, and in Gaza there is no guarantee after the majority of people entered the cycle of financial crisis,” he said.



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