

Daesh attack on Iraqi village kills 10 soldiers, Kurdish government says

Author:

Sun, 2021-12-05 02:57

SULAIMANIYA: An attack by Daesh militants on a village in northern Iraq on Friday killed three villagers and 10 Kurdish soldiers, officials in Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region said.

Daesh claimed responsibility for the deadly attack in a statement posted on an affiliated Telegram account.

The attack took place in the Makhmour region, a hotbed for Daesh activity that sees regular attacks against Kurdish forces, Iraqi forces and often civilians.

Makhmour is a mountainous area about 70 km southeast of Mosul and 60 km southwest of the Kurdish capital of Irbil.

Kurdistan's Prime Minister Masrour Barzani called for greater security cooperation between Iraqi Kurdish and Iraqi security forces to stop Daesh's insurgent activities.

Iraqi officials and analysts have long blamed a lack of coordination along a stretch of territory claimed by both Baghdad and Irbil for Daesh's continued ability to wage deadly attacks.

Daesh controlled roughly a third of Iraq between 2014 and 2017, including the remote Makhmour region but also major cities including Mosul.

A loose coalition of US-led forces, Iraqi and Kurdish troops and Iran-backed Shiite militias defeated the extremist group in 2017, but its members still roam areas of northern Iraq and northeastern Syria.

Western military officials say at least 10,000 Daesh fighters remain in Iraq and Syria.

A statement from the Kurdistan region's armed forces, the peshmerga, said Daesh militants attacked the village in the early hours of Friday killing three residents.

It said peshmerga forces intervened, resulting in clashes that killed at least seven of their soldiers.

Kurdish security and hospital officials said the final death toll was at least 10 peshmerga soldiers and three villagers.

In a separate development, Kurdish demonstrators in The Hague stormed the headquarters of the global chemical weapons body on Friday, sparking clashes in which six people were hurt and 50 arrested, Dutch police said.

FASTFACT

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Dozens of protesters alleging that Turkey is using toxic arms in northern Iraq broke through security to enter the grounds of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in The Hague.

A number of them managed to get inside the lobby of the building before police removed them, diplomatic sources said, while the rest staged a noisy protest outside the front doors.

Police dragged the demonstrators off one by one, put them on the ground and handcuffed them, journalists saw. Some were bundled into waiting vans, but the large number meant many were taken away in a hired bus.

At least a dozen police vehicles sealed off the road outside the OPCW, which is opposite Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte's official residence. Several ambulances and a medical helicopter were also at the scene.

Two police officers and four protesters were wounded when the demonstrators "stormed the building," The Hague police said.

Turkish jets regularly attack the separatists' bases in northern Iraq and autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan, with several villages having emptied of their inhabitants since a new Turkish army offensive in April.

The PKK and Kurdish organizations in Europe have in recent months accused Turkey of using chemical weapons, including a nerve agent and sulfur mustard gas, in dozens of attacks in northern Iraq.

"We have called on OPCW and all international bodies to come and independently investigate the use of chemical weapons," Zagros Hiwa, a spokesperson for the Kurdistan Democratic Communities Union, the PKK's political branch, told AFP.



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Hundreds more migrants leave Belarus on Iraq-bound flight
Civilians among 10 dead in north Iraq attack blamed on Daesh: officials

[Sudanese group condemns UN's call to support reinstated premier](#)

Sun, 2021-12-05 02:46

CAIRO: A Sudanese pro-democracy group has condemned comments by the UN chief urging citizens to support a deal that reinstated Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, so the country can have “a peaceful transition toward a true democracy.”

The Sudanese Professionals' Association, which was at the forefront of the uprising against former autocrat Omar Bashir, rejected late on Friday Secretary-General Antonio Guterres's comments as a “moral and political failure.”

Hamdok was deposed as part of the Oct. 25 coup by military leaders that brought international criticism and disrupted Sudan's fragile transition to democracy. He was reinstated last month amid international pressure in a deal that calls for an independent technocratic Cabinet under military oversight. The SPA said Guterres's comments were seen as a “justification for violence” against anti-coup protesters, who vowed to continue their street demonstrations against the deal despite deadly violence by security forces. The US, its allies and the UN have condemned the use of excessive force against protesters who have since taken to the streets en masse. Dozens of protesters were killed and hundreds of others were wounded since the Oct. 25 coup. The agreement, signed on Nov. 21, has angered Sudan's pro-democracy movement, which accuses Hamdok of allowing himself to serve as a fig leaf for continued military rule.

Guterres told a news conference Wednesday that he understands “the indignation” and outrage of Sudanese who have seen the military coup and don't want any solution involving the military.

“But I would like to appeal for common sense,” he said. “We have a situation which is, yes, not perfect, but which could allow for a transition toward democracy.”

The UN chief warned that calling into question the solution that led to Hamdok's reinstatement “would be very dangerous for Sudan.”

The SPA said it would continue peaceful protests until the establishment of a “full civilian” government to achieve the democratic transition.

Since his appointment in 2019, Hamdok has been the civilian face of the government and one of the pro-democracy movement's most respected figures. But Sudan's key pro-democracy groups and political parties have said the deal

that reinstated him falls short of their demands for full civilian rule.



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UN says more work to be done in Sudan
Tens of thousands protest in anti-military marches in Sudan

[Crops at Beirut port silos to be composted, burned after insect infestation found](#)

Author:

Sat, 2021-12-04 22:01

BEIRUT: Tons of wheat, corn and barley stored at the Port of Beirut since the devastating explosion that rocked the city 16 months ago are to be disposed of as they are no longer fit for consumption, it has been found.

As temperatures change, mold, weevils and other insects have made it

impossible to reach the contents of silos at the site without protective equipment; according to the World Health Organization, mold produces mycotoxins "which can cause a variety of adverse health effects and pose a serious health threat to both humans and livestock ... ranging from acute poisoning to long-term effects such as immune deficiency and cancer."

Before the blast, the port's silos contained about 45 tons of wheat, barley and corn, most of which was lost during the explosion. Minister of Environment Nasser Yassin said that six to seven tons remain at the site.

Lab tests run on samples of wheat in cooperation with the ministries of economy, agriculture and environment, the American University of Beirut, Saint Joseph University, and the French Embassy, which brought in experts to assist, showed that the crops "are suitable for neither human nor animal use."

In August, a year after the explosion, the remaining grains were removed from their silos and stored in the open air to reduce the risks of accidental fires in the hot weather, but resulted in hastening the demise of the crops as fit for consumption.

A committee formed under the government of former Prime Minister Hassan Diab failed to reach a solution.

Yassin told Arab News: "We decided to ferment these quantities and turn them into compost to be distributed to farmers for free, or turn them into industrial firewood to be given to the Lebanese Army to heat its units in the high mountains, or donate them to needy families living in cold areas."

He added: "Turning them into compost allows us to avoid any procedure that produces heavy metals, and we started with this process with the help of MAN Group, which obtained funding from France to treat organic waste resulting from the explosion, and had signed the contract with the Lebanese state in May."

The grain is set to be moved to the municipality of Zahle, which has a landfill site able to treat waste and transform it into compost and firewood.

Yassin noted: "We seek to produce 3,000 tons of compost and 3,000 tons of industrial firewood. We have so far been able to produce 500 tons of compost, which is an organic fertilizer and will be distributed free of charge to farmers and we have finished producing 1,000 tons of industrial firewood through special presses.

"Indeed, this type of firewood does not last long while it burns, but we hope that it will alleviate the distress of people who cannot buy diesel for heating during winter, and curb the phenomenon of cutting trees to secure firewood for homes as an alternative to diesel."

The silos at the port absorbed about 20 percent of the blast wave, which resulted from storing 1,750 tons of ammonium nitrate at the port alongside seized explosives. Over 220 people died, more than 6,500 were injured and the city's waterfront was destroyed.

Experts who initially examined the site stressed that the wheat silos, which were severely damaged, would need to be demolished because they were on the verge of collapsing.

Former Economy Minister Raoul Nehme said in November 2020: “The government will demolish the silos due to public safety concerns.”

However, the Lebanese authorities are yet to take action.

The wheat silos are made up of a giant 48-meter concrete structure built between 1968 and 1970, with a huge storage capacity of over 100,000 tons.

Once considered a key element in Lebanon’s food security, the silos have today become a symbol of the catastrophe.



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France’s Macron says hoping for progress on Lebanon ‘within next hours’
Information minister resigns from Lebanon government

[Air defence test sparks loud blast near Iran nuclear site](#)

Sat, 2021-12-04 21:06

TEHRAN: An air defence test triggered a loud explosion near Iran's Natanz uranium enrichment facility Saturday as nuclear talks with major powers stumble.

The explosion was heard in the skies over the Iranian city of Badroud, just 20 kilometres (12 miles) from the nuclear plant, the official IRNA news agency reported.

"Badroud residents heard the noise and saw a light which showed an object had just blown up in the skies over the city," a witness told IRNA.

But the air defence commander for the Natanz region told state television there was no cause for concern.

"An hour ago, one of our missile systems in the region was tested to assess the state of readiness on the ground, and there is nothing to fear," the commander said.



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[Iran stonewalling JCPOA talks to advance nuclear program, say US officials](#)

Author:

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Sat, 2021-12-04 20:59

CHICAGO: Senior US State Department officials accused Iran of not taking negotiations on limiting nuclear technology seriously and using the revival of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action as an excuse to expand its nuclear program.

The officials conceded in a teleconference with news outlets including Arab News Saturday that although President Joe Biden views Iran's conduct as "not acceptable," the administration is focused on reviving talks rather than pursuing tougher measures or an expansion of sanctions.

During the past five-and-a-half months, they said, while telling JCPOA negotiators in Vienna that they are "getting ready," Iran was instead preparing to double their enriched uranium capacity and nuclear capabilities.

"We have been waiting patiently for five-and-a-half months. The Iranian government said that it needed time to resume the talks on a mutual return to compliance of the JCPOA, and I think what we have seen over the last week or so is what 'getting ready' meant for them," one official said.

"It meant continuing to accelerate their nuclear program in particularly provocative ways, and their latest provocation as reported by the IAEA Wednesday, while we were still in the middle of talks, was to prepare for the doubling of their production capacity of 20 percent enriched uranium at Fordo.

"What 'getting ready' meant was to continue stonewall the IAEA despite efforts by all of the P5+1, (and) constructive efforts to find a way forward between Director General Grossy and Iran."

The P5+1 refers to the UN Security Council's five permanent members – China, France, Russia, the UK and the US, plus Germany.

Iran is seeking to "walk back" all past compromises during the unproductive

six rounds of talks, while asking for more concessions, he said.

“In other (words), not come back with a serious proposal about how we could resume mutual compliance with the JCPOA but raising issues that go beyond the JCPOA,” the official said.

Although US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken has said in the past that Biden will not “accept the situation in which Iran accelerates its nuclear program and slow walks its nuclear diplomacy,” the State Department outlined no plans to step up pressure to force Iran to take the talks seriously.

He said he is unsure when JCPOA talks in Vienna will resume, adding: “The date of those talks, the date of that resumption, matters far less to us than whether Iran will come with a serious attitude prepared to negotiate seriously. If they are, they will find a very serious counterpart on the other side, which is the United States, but we will have to wait and see if they take that position. But so far, what we have seen in Vienna in their nuclear program and in their dealings with the IAEA unfortunately suggest the opposite.”

The State Department official brushed aside questions regarding China, which has violated the sanctions by purchasing Iranian crude oil.

“If Iran kills the JCPOA, then other sanctions would come into effect,” he said, declining to detail those actions.

Asked if Biden needed to “calm” the concerns of Israel, which has a huge cache of nuclear weapons, or if there are concerns Israel might respond with a military strike to any Iranian increase in activity, the official said: “We don’t view our job as to calm Israel down ... Our job is to work together towards our common objective.

“Israel is sovereign country and makes its own decisions, but we think we are stronger when we act together.”



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Europeans 'disappointed' over 'back-tracking' at Iran nuclear talks 'No cause for optimism' on Iran nuclear deal: US