

Moscow: Ukraine Talks Must Back Ceasefire



Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov

MOSCOW (AP) — Diplomats at a new round of talks on easing the crisis in Ukraine must push for an immediate, unconditional cease-fire between Ukrainian government troops and pro-Russian separatists, Russia's foreign minister said Monday.

The talks later Monday in Minsk, the Belarusian capital, come as Ukrainian troops are facing a resurgent rebel force. In the past week, the rebels have opened a new front along the southeastern Azov Sea coast and are pushing back after losing ground in the previous several weeks.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov also said Russia would not intervene militarily in Ukraine, defying reports by the Ukrainian government, NATO and Western nations that Russia has already sent troops, artillery and tanks across Ukraine's southeast border to reinforce the separatists.

"There will be no military intervention," Lavrov told students at Moscow State Institute of International Relations on Monday, the first day of classes for schools and universities across the country. "We call for an exclusively peaceful settlement of this severe crisis, this tragedy."

The envoys, who last met in July, included representatives of Ukraine, Russia and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. A separatist leader, Andrei Purgin, also was to take part.

Purgin told the Interfax news agency that the separatists' priority was to win recognition of their independence in eastern Ukraine, which has a large Russian-speaking population. He said they also were willing to discuss the exchange of prisoners and a temporary cease-fire.

On Monday, Ukrainian National Security Council spokesman Col. Andriy Lysenko said Ukrainian forces had been ordered to retreat from the airport in Luhansk, the second-largest rebel-held city, in the face of an intensifying assault that he blamed on "professional artillery gunmen of the Russian armed forces."

Russia consistently denies allegations that it has sent troops or equipment into Ukraine. But Lysenko said Monday that "not less than four battalions and tactical groups of the Russian armed forces are active in Ukraine."

A battalion consists of about 400 soldiers.

The assault on the Azov Sea coast that began last week has raised concerns that the rebels are aiming to establish a land corridor from Russia to Crimea, the Black Sea peninsula that Russia annexed in March.

Boko Haram Attacks Force People to Flee: Official



Cameroonian soldiers deploy as reinforcements against Boko Haram Takfiri militants in Dabanga, Cameroon on June 17, 2014.

ABUJA (Press TV) — Boko Haram atrocities in the northeastern parts of Nigeria have compelled people to leave their homes, fleeing to neighboring Cameroon, an official says.

"We've been flooded here in (the town of) Mora by Cameroonians and Nigerians fleeing Boko Haram," a Cameroonian police officer said on Sunday.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, the officer added that until Friday, "there were already more than 10,000 people in Mora. Not a day goes by without more people coming."

A large number of people have been internally displaced in Nigeria and many others have crossed the borders into neighboring countries, because of the attacks conducted by Boko Haram Takfiri militants.

On Saturday, the militants continued their acts of terror in Nigeria's twin towns of Gamboru and Ngala, killing scores of civilians.

"They are now killing people like chickens. They started by selective killings and later went on a killing spree," said a Gamboru resident.

Boko Haram has claimed responsibility for many deadly gun and bomb attacks in various parts of Nigeria since the beginning of its militancy in 2009. Over 10,000 people have so far been killed in the assaults.

The militants have also conducted a number of assaults and kidnappings in Cameroon, including the abduction of the deputy prime minister's wife in late July. Following the abduction, the Cameroonian army launched a successful operation and rescued Amadou Ali's abducted wife.

Boko Haram -- whose name means "Western education is forbidden" -- says its goal is to overthrow the Nigerian government.

Fajr Libya Militants Overrun Capital Tripoli

TRIPOLI (Press TV) — Conflicting reports coming out of Libya, where fierce clashes have been underway between rival militant groups for weeks, indicate that the capital, Tripoli, has fallen to the Fajr (Dawn) Libya gunmen.

Libya's caretaker government has announced that most ministries and state-run institutions are now out of its control.

Attacks and looting have broken out across the city with the interior and electricity ministries and the prime minister's office ransacked.

Tripoli was captured after a five-week battle, involving heavy and indiscriminate artillery bombardments between Fajr Libya militants and tribal fighters from Zintan, Warshafan and Warfallah militia groups.

Militants have also stormed Yarmouk refugee camp in Tripoli, which houses people from the northern town of Tawargha. Five residents are reported to have been kidnapped, with tribal elders appealing for the release of the hostages.

Elsewhere in Libya's eastern restive city of Benghazi, heavy fighting drags on between forces loyal to renegade General Khalifa Haftar and the so-called Ansar al-Sharia, comprising armed Salafi militias.

The fatal clashes erupted on Saturday when Ansar al-Sharia men attempted to take control of an airport, which is currently in the hands of Haftar's militia forces in the Benina area of Benghazi.

Reports indicate that 10 militiamen loyal to Haftar were killed and more than two dozen others injured when grad rockets struck the Benghazi airport amid the clashes.

Nearly three years after the fall of the former ruler, Muammar Gaddafi, in a popular uprising in 2011, Libya is still grappling with rising insecurity.

Armed militant groups, who have refused to lay down arms, are now turning their guns on each other in an attempt to dominate politics and the country's vast oil resources.

Anti-Euro Party's Success Poses Dilemma for Merkel



German Chancellor Angela Merkel

BERLIN (AP) — The success of a new anti-euro party in a German state election intensifies a dilemma for Chancellor Angela Merkel: how to handle a rival whose rise could make it more difficult for her party to form coalition governments around the country.

Alternative for Germany, or AfD, won 9.7 percent support in Saxony on Sunday and took its first seats in a regional legislature. It is the latest success for a party that has already won representation to the European Parliament after narrowly missing the 5 percent threshold needed to enter Germany's parliament last fall.

AfD leader Bernd Lucke told Deutschlandfunk radio Monday that his party has "visibly arrived in the German party spectrum" and that it is "growing from election to election." The party hopes to repeat its success in two more eastern states in elections Sept. 14.

The main economic policy of Lucke's party is to scrap the euro in its current form, at least reducing the number of countries that use it. Though Germany's economy remains Europe's powerhouse 15 years on from the launch of the euro currency, AfD taps into concerns that the country holds the primary responsibility in bailing out weaker economies in the single currency zone, such as Greece and Portugal.

AfD's view on the euro isn't the only difference with Merkel's Christian Democrats. AfD's socially conservative image contrasts with her party's increasingly centrist approach and it also talks tough on immigration.

Merkel said AfD's showing reflected "protest to a large extent." She noted issues such as crime near Saxony's Czech and Polish borders and concerns over Ukraine among matters that need to be resolved.

"My aim is for it (AfD) to play a smaller role as soon as possible," Merkel said after the Saxony result. "So my aim is to talk about what issues we haven't yet resolved sufficiently that people are satisfied."

AfD has drained support from the conservatives' traditional junior partners, the pro-business Free Democrats. They lost their seats in Germany's parliament last year as well as on Sunday in Saxony — where they also lost their last jobs in any state government.



NEW YORK (Press TV) — The United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has expressed deep concern over the military coup in the South African nation of Lesotho, calling on all parties to resolve their differences peacefully.

"He calls for respect for the constitutional order and democratic rule. He urges all parties to refrain from violence and work together towards a peaceful and lasting resolution of their differences," Ban's Spokesman Stéphane Du-jarric said in a statement released on Sunday.

The UN chief also welcomed earlier efforts by the regional bloc known as the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Commonwealth and other partners of Lesotho to support the restoration of trust among the members of the country's coalition government, and urged all parties to continue to play an active role in the promotion of peace in Lesotho.

On Saturday, Lesotho's Prime Minister Thomas Thabane fled to South Africa in fear for his safety after the army surrounded his residence and police stations in the capital Maseru, and gunshots rang out.

Thabane said he suspected his deputy Mothet Joa Metsing was involved.

STOCKHOLM (Press TV) — Swedish medical authorities are investigating a possible case of Ebola after a young man who recently had traveled to an Ebola-hit West African country was hospitalized in the capital Stockholm due to high fever and stomach pains.

According to local media, the unidentified man had developed high fever and stomach pains and was taken to Karolinska University Hospital in Stockholm on Sunday to receive medical care.

"Yes, we have a suspected [Ebola] case, but it's not confirmed," a spokeswoman for Stockholm County Council said on condition of anonymity.

Communicable disease specialist Ake Ortqvist said, "The risk that this is an Ebola case is minimal, but we are handling this with extreme care."

He further noted that the probability for an Ebola outbreak in Sweden is very low.

BRUSSELS (AP) — NATO leaders this week will be asked to approve creation of a high-readiness force and the stockpiling of military equipment and supplies in Eastern Europe to help protect member nations there against potential Russian aggression, the alliance's secretary general said Monday.

"The Readiness Action Plan will ensure that we have the right forces and the right equipment in the right place, at the right time," Anders Fogh Rasmussen said. "Not because NATO wants to attack anyone. But because the dangers and the threats are more present and more visible. And we will do what it takes to defend our allies."

President Barack Obama and leaders of NATO's other member countries open a summit Thursday in Wales that is expected to be dominated by how the U.S.-led alliance should react over the long term to Russian actions toward Ukraine and the implications for security in Europe.

Rasmussen told a news conference the proposed new force could be composed of several thousand troops contributed on a rotating basis by the 28 NATO countries.