

Syrian Army Prepares for New Operation in Idlib

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – The Syrian Army has deployed the TOS-1A, the latest version of the original Russia-made TOS-1 heavy flamethrower system, to southern Idlib as the countdown has started for an imminent operation against terrorists in the region, a Russian media outlet reported.

The Arabic-language website of Sputnik quoted the Russian One website as reporting that the army has deployed TOS-1 A system also known as Solentsik to southern Idlib to provide back-up for the ground troops' imminent operation in the region.

The TOS-1A heavy flamethrower system is intended for direct fire support of advancing infantry and main battle tanks, and moves in

their combat orders. It is designed to engage military personnel, fortifications and light armored vehicles. The heavy flamethrower system is generally similar to multiple-launch rocket systems, however it fires different types of rockets and has a shorter firing range.

Sputnik further said that TOS-1A is one of the most powerful launchers with broader range worldwide, adding that the Syrian Army utilized the system in a battle in Idlib province in January.

It added that only one time fire of the system can cover an area as large as 4sq/km.

Military field sources reported earlier that the Russian and Syrian fighter jets carried out joint combat



The file photo shows a Syrian air defense system.

sorties over terrorist-held regions in southern Idlib, destroying a main base and killing or wounding a number of terrorists.

The sources said that the warplanes pounded a main base of the terrorists near the town of Tarmalah in southern Idlib.

India ...

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“We both will work for restoring peace, stability, prosperity and a pluralistic system in Afghanistan,” Modi said after holding talks with Rouhani in New Delhi on the final day of Rouhani’s three-day visit.

Rouhani said Iran and India “are prepared for joint ventures in gas and petroleum sectors.” He sought India’s investment in these areas, as well as in the industrial and mining sectors.

He said Afghanistan must be “a vivacious and secure country,” adding that Iran and India would also cooperate in dealing with the situations in Iraq, Syria and Yemen. Iran is a key stakeholder in the future of those nations.

Rouhani referred to Trump’s threat on the nuclear deal, and said that “politics without adhering to one’s commitment and promises cannot resolve the conflicts and problems of the current world.”

He also accused the United States of intervening in the internal affairs of countries in the Middle East.

“Why did they (U.S.) invade Iraq? Why are they in Syria now? Why have they occupied a part of Syria now?” Rouhani asked while giving a speech at the Observer Research Foundation, an Indian think-tank.

“We know that selling arms is a very profitable business,” he said. “We are aware that the factories that produce arms need customers.”

Russian ...

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The U.S. announced last month that it would work with the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to set up a new 30,000-strong “border security” force along the Turkish border with Iraq and within Syria along the Euphrates River.

The announcement infuriated Turkey, which soon launched a military incursion in Syria’s Afrin region in a declared bid to eliminate the Kurdish militants on its borders.

Russia and Turkey, along with Iran, have been brokering a peace process between Syrian warring parties in the Kazakh capital of Astana. Russia and Iran are Syrian government allies, and Turkey is an ally of the anti-Damascus militants.

Haiti ...

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Roland Van Hauwermeiren, the charity’s former manager in Haiti after the earthquake, said he had made “mistakes” by having a sexual relationship with a woman, but insisted he had not indulged in sex parties or paid prostitutes.

Three staff resigned and four were sacked apparently for indulging in sex parties with local prostitutes in the country in 2011.

President Moise said: “We call on the Belgian and UK government to assume their responsibility, and we call on the whole international community to help make sure those guilty of such misconduct are punished, whether they are Belgian or of another nationality. The dignity of the Haitian people has been trampled on.”

Pakistan ...

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“How and on what grounds the government took the decision, or was this decision not taken by the government as such but it was just part of a routine that the military decided to send more troops?” she asked.

The Saudi war was launched in March 2015 in support of Yemen’s former Riyadh-friendly government and against the Houthi Ansarullah movement, which has been running state affairs since the former regime resigned.

The offensive has, however, achieved neither of its goals despite the spending of billions of petrodollars and the enlisting of the cooperation of Saudi Arabia’s regional and Western allies.

The Saudi-led campaign, which is accompanied by a land, aerial, and naval blockade of Yemen, has so far killed more than 13,600 people and led to a humanitarian crisis.

Twin Blast in Baghdad Leaves Casualties



A general view taken on February 14, 2018 shows destruction in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul.

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – A civilian was killed, while four others were

wounded in two bomb explosion in south and west of Baghdad, a security source was quoted saying on Saturday.

Speaking to Baghdad Today, the source said, “A bomb exploded today at a car of a civilian at al-Furat district, west of Baghdad, which caused his immediate death.”

“Security troops transferred the victim to forensic medicine department and conducted investigations,” the source, who asked to remain anonymous, added.

Moreover, “another bomb went off near stores at al-Yusufiya region, south of Baghdad, leaving four people wounded,” the source said. All were transferred to hospital for treatment.

A total of 115 Iraqi civilians, ex-

cluding policemen, were killed and another 250 injured in acts of terrorism, violence and armed conflict in Iraq in January 2018, according to casualty figures recorded by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

Baghdad was the worst affected governorate, with 323 civilian casualties (90 killed, 233 injured). Diyala followed, with 8 killed and 15 injured; and Nineveh, with 13 killed and 7 injured.

As many as 3,298 civilians were killed and 4,781 others were wounded in 2017, excluding Anbar civilian casualty figures for November and December, which are not available, UNAMI said in a report in December.

Incarceration of Palestinian Teenager Draws More Ire

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – Chile protested to the Zionist regime over incarceration of Palestinian teenager **Ahed al-Tamimi, 17, who was detained in December for slapping a Zionist trooper who intruded into her family home in the village of Nabi Saleh near Ramallah.**

“The government of Chile has expressed to the Embassy of Israel in Chile its enormous concern over the case of the Palestinian citizen, **Ahed al-Tamimi, a minor of 17 years of age, who is being detained and tried by an Israeli military court on the charge of incitement to violence,**” a Chilean government statement said, Wafa reported.

“In view of this unfortunate situation affecting a minor, the Chilean government reiterated to the Diplomatic Representation of Israel the need for the rights of the Palestinian minor to be fully observed, with the guarantees of a due process and

to be adequately weighed by the judicial authority the circumstances and area of tension in which the events that gave rise to this investigation took place,” it added.

“The government of Chile expects the prompt release of **Ahed al-Tamimi,**” the statement concluded.

A hearing into the case of Tamimi opened at the Ofer military prison in the West Bank village of Betunia on Tuesday.

The judge ordered journalists and diplomats to leave the courtroom, but the girl’s family members were allowed to remain there.

Tamimi’s lawyer Gaby Lasky criticized the judge for shutting the media and members of the public out of the trial.

“They understand that people outside Ofer military court are interested in **Ahed’s case;** they understand that her rights are being

infringed and her trial is something that shouldn’t be happening.”

Lasky went on, “So the way to keep it out of everybody’s eyes is to close doors and not allow people inside the court for her hearing.”

On Monday, Amnesty International called for Tamimi’s release and accused the Tel Aviv regime of discriminatory treatment of Palestinian children.

“As an unarmed girl, **Ahed posed no threat during the altercation with the two Israeli soldiers who were heavily armed and wearing protective clothing.**”

Magdalena Mughrabi, Amnesty International’s deputy director for the Middle East and Africa, added, “Nothing she has done can justify her continued detention and the long, aggressive interrogation sessions she has been forced to endure during the first two weeks of her detention.”

Protest at administrative detention

Palestinian prisoners held under the much-criticized policy of administrative detention said they were boycotting Israeli court hearings altogether.

According to figures provided by the Palestinian prisoners’ rights group Addameer, almost 6,280 Palestinians are currently being held in Israeli jails, 465 of them in administrative detention.

Palestinian detainees have continuously resorted to open-ended hunger strikes to show their outrage against administrative detention, which is a form of imprisonment without charge or trial that allows Israel to incarcerate Palestinians for up to six months – and subject to indefinite extensions.

Palestinian prisoners have also complained about being assaulted and tortured at Israeli prisons.

Turkey Sentences Six Journalists to Life

ANKARA (Dispatches) – A Turkish court has sentenced six journalists to life in prison over accusation of involvement in the country’s 2016 failed coup.

The court handed the life sentences to the six defendants for “seeking to overthrow the constitutional order by force,” the state-run Anadolu news agency reported.

All six, three of whom have already been imprisoned for nearly 17 months, have denied the charges.

Prominent Turkish journalists **Nazli Ilicak, Mehmet Altan and his brother Ahmet** are among the defendants.

Turkey’s highest court, the Constitutional Court, had previously ordered the release of **Mehmet Altan,** saying the detention violates his rights, but the penal court dismissed the request.

The Altan brothers were accused of giving coded messages on a television talk show a day before the coup. “Whatever the developments were that lead to military coups in Tur-

key, by making the same decisions, [President Recep Tayyip] Erdogan is paving the same path,” **Ahmet Altan** had said at the TV show.

On the same program, **Mehmet Altan** pointed to “another structure” within the government that was monitoring the political developments in the country to “take its hand out of the bag.”

Prosecutors say the comments were coded messages to followers of U.S.-based opposition cleric **Fethullah Gulen,** whom Ankara accuses of

masterminding the putsch.

“This sets a devastating precedent for scores of other journalists charged with similarly groundless charges,” said Sarah Clarke of writers organization PEN International.

The lawyer for the Altan brothers, **Ergin Cinmen,** told Reuters that they would appeal against the verdict, saying, “This is a trial that wiped out freedom of thought.”

“This verdict will be definitely reversed. Turkey cannot go on with this verdict,” he added.