

BEIRUT/ANKARA (Reuters) – The main Syrian Kurdish political party said on Sunday that one of its leaders had been arrested in Prague at the behest of Turkey, where a court has charged him with sedition. Saleh Muslim, a top Kurdish politician, has “full citizenship rights” as a Syrian national and was visiting Europe in an official capacity, the PYD party said. In a statement, the party accused the Turkish state of “demanding the arrest of individuals who are not its citizens ... without any legal justifications”. Turkey launched a military offensive last month in Syria’s Afrin region against the Kurdish YPG militia, the PYD’s armed affiliate, which it deems a menace on its border.

This world is not a permanent place, it is a passage, a road on which you are passing. There are two kinds of people here: One is the kind of those who have sold their souls for eternal damnation, the other is of those who have purchased their souls and freed them from damnation.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

### In Counter-Terrorism Campaign

# Syrian Army Retakes Eastern Ghouta Areas

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – The Syrian army has launched a ground operation against the al-Nusra Front and other terrorist groups in the Eastern Ghouta region, wresting control over some areas.

Iran’s Arabic-language Al-Alam news channel reported the recapture of the Nashabeya and Hazma areas as well as Farzat Hill by the Syrian military on Sunday.

It also said that Syrian army soldiers had advanced in al-Zariqiya as terrorists fled the region.

The fresh campaign is aimed at gaining control of the neighborhoods occupied by the terrorists in the suburbs of the capital Damascus.

The operation came one day after the United Nations Security Council unanimously passed a resolution demanding a 30-day ceasefire across Syria to allow for humanitarian aid deliveries and medical evacuations.

The resolution was adopted by 15 votes to none, after several delays and a flurry of last-minute negotiations.

“It would be naïve to think that



Pro-government forces standing on pickup trucks with heavy machine-guns mounted on them, in the eastern city of Dayr al-Zawr

internal Syrian questions can be solved by a resolution,” said Russia’s Ambassador to the UN Vasily Nebenzya.

He added that Russia had “supported the intentions” behind the document, but stresses that a ceasefire was not possible “without agreement from warring parties.”

He further went on to criticize the “occupational ambitions” of the US-led coalition, and added that

foreign-backed militants were responsible for the humanitarian crisis that the resolution was aimed at addressing.

He also claimed that the West was conducting a “propaganda campaign” against government forces in Eastern Ghouta, where there have been intense clashes over the past week.

Eastern Ghouta near Damascus has witnessed renewed violence in

the past few days, where terrorists have mounted repeated mortar attacks on the Syrian capital in the face of an imminent rout. Western powers, however, blame the Syrian government and Russia for the crisis.

The Syrian capital has seen a dramatic rise in deadly attacks over the past several days. The escalating violence comes amid international efforts to end clashes between government forces and terrorists in Eastern Ghouta.

After the ceasefire was voted for, Syria’s Ambassador to the UN Bashar Ja’afari stressed that his country does not need showboating sessions or the establishment of UN committees, but it only needs the current resolutions to be abided by.

He added that the people in Damascus are deeply suffering due to the actions of the terrorists positioned in the Eastern Ghouta.

“The appeals of eight million Syrians do not reach the General Secretariat or the mailboxes of Britain’s and France’s representatives, but the appeals of terrorists do reach them,” he added.

### Over Daesh Affiliations

## Iraq Sentences 15 Turkish Women to Death

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – A court in Iraq has sentenced more than a dozen Turkish women to death over membership in the Daesh terrorist group and involvement in acts of terror across the conflict-ridden Arab country.

A judicial official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the Central Criminal Court sentenced 15 female Turkish citizens to death, while another Turkish woman was condemned to life imprisonment.

On February 22, Arabic-language al-Sumaria television network quoted Iraq’s Foreign Ministry spokesman Ahmed Mahjoub as saying that Iraqi authorities had extradited four women and 27 children from the families of Daesh terrorists to

Russian officials.

“There was no proof that those extradited had been involved in terrorist operations against Iraqi civilians or security forces,” Mahjoub said, adding, “They will be prosecuted in Russia for illegally entering Iraq.”

Iraq’s Arabic-language al-Mashriq newspaper has reported that more than 1,500 women and children from the families of Daesh terrorists are currently being held in the country, and that the Baghdad government is coordinating with their respective countries to decide their fate.

Meanwhile, Iraq has rejected a request from Riyadh to hand over more than 400 Saudi Arabians, whom it has imprisoned

on terrorism charges.

According to the London-based newspaper Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, the Saudis were captured along with “hundreds” of other Arabs and Europeans in the fight against Daesh and al-Qaeda.

The paper cited government spokesman Saad al-Hadithi as saying that Baghdad would allow the extradition of those foreigners who have been acquitted of terror charges. Iraq says all foreign prisoners fall under the jurisdiction of the country’s legal system.

Riyadh made the extradition request after pledging \$1.5 billion during a donors’ conference held in Kuwait to Iraq’s post-Daesh reconstruction.

Daesh follows the radical ideology of Wahhabism, which dominates Saudi Arabia. It views people of other faiths and creeds as “infidels” punishable by death.

The outfit unleashed its campaign of bloodshed and destruction on Iraq and neighboring Syria in 2014, overrunning large swathes of territory. At the time, extremists from Britain, France and Germany as well as from elsewhere across Europe joined the group to establish a Takfiri caliphate.

As their exodus began, many European leaders ignored repeated warnings that hardened militants could return home one day and hit back, simply because they wanted to see the back of the Syrian government.

### Saudi Minister:

## Qatar to Lose Right to Host World Cup

DOHA (Press TV) – Saudi Arabia’s sports minister has suggested that Qatar could be stripped of its right to host 2022 World Cup.

Tweeting on Saturday, Turki Al Sheikh proposed that either the United Kingdom or the United States host the event.

“I would extremely enjoy watching the World Cup if hosted in England or the USA,” he said.

“If found guilty of any ethical violations, the Qatari government must accept the consequences of their actions,” he added, referring to an announcement by FIFA, which is expected to come in September, on allegations that Doha resorted to corruption as it was competing to win the hosting right.

German magazine Focus, meanwhile,

quoted sources close to Al Sheikh as saying that it had already been decided that Qatar would lose the hosting right.

The developments come amid an ongoing blockade against Qatar by Saudi Arabia and its allies.

Last June, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) imposed a trade and diplomatic embargo on Qatar, accusing Doha of supporting terrorism, an allegation strongly denied by the emirate.

Qatar has said it had too many financial resources at its disposal to be afraid of the financial assault.

Last November, the Intercept, a US-based investigative website, said it had gotten

hold of documents found in an e-mail account belonging to the Emirati envoy to the US Yousef al-Otaiba exposing a detailed plot by the UAE to wage an economic war on Qatar.

Under the plan, the UAE sought to target Qatar’s currency “using bonds and derivatives manipulation.” The UAE also sought to increase Qatar’s debt by controlling its “yield curve,” referring to a standard financial-industry graph showing a country’s borrowing costs for debt that is due at different dates.

After Qatar was brought to its knees, the UAE would start a propaganda campaign to portray Doha as incapable of hosting World Cup 2022, the documents showed.

## Saudi Airstrikes Flatten Mosques in Yemen



A Yemeni separatist walks at a military camp after they took control of the pro-government position in the northern Dar Saad district of Aden on January 31, 2018.

SANAA (Dispatches) – Saudi Arabian warplanes have flattened a mosque in Yemen’s Ma’rib Province, and stricken another in the Sa’ada Province.

The first attack targeted the mosque in Ma’rib’s Sirwah district, Yemeni news website Sahafah24 reported on Sunday.

Yemen’s al-Masirah television network published a video released by the country’s War Media outlet showing the moment the structure was ruined.

A day earlier, the aircraft targeted a mosque and other religious centers in Sa’ada’s Razih District.

Two people were wounded in Saudi airstrikes in Sa’ada’s Sahar district. A woman was also injured in a Saudi attack targeting a road in the province’s Saqayn district.

The footage broadcast on al-Masirah also showed the aftermath of the attacks on Sa’ada.

In an earlier development, some 14 people were killed in a Daesh attack on a police headquarters in Yemen’s southern port city of Aden.

According to medical and security sources on Saturday, at least 40 people, including women and children, were injured in the attack in the Tawahi district in southwest Aden.

The Daesh terrorist group claimed

responsibility for the attack via its Amaq news agency.

The incident took place as two bombers detonated two vehicles packed with explosives outside the headquarters’ main entrance while six gunmen attempted to enter the facility.

“All the ... terrorists were liquidated immediately before they could reach the outer gate of the anti-terrorism headquarters,” said a statement released by the police.

The attack was the first of its kind since clashes broke out in January between southern separatists and former President Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi’s government, which controls the city.

The fresh outburst began after the separatists managed to take control of a number of sites and military camps run by forces loyal to Hadi following intense clashes.

According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, over 36 people have been killed and nearly 200 others injured during the clashes on Sunday and Monday.

The separatists have long demanded independence for Yemen’s south, which used to be independent -- with former British colony Aden as its capital -- from its formation in 1967 until 1990, when it was unified with the north.

## Turkish Army Enters Strategic Region in Afrin

ANKARA (Dispatches) – The Turkish army and its affiliated militants continued Operation Olive Branch in Northern Syria on Sunday, entering the strategic region of Jandaris in Afrin.

The Arabic service of Sputnik news agency quoted a field source as saying that the Ankara-backed militants, supported by heavy artillery fire of the Turkish army, have occupied major parts of Jandaris in Afrin.

Field sources also said that the Ankara-supported militants have gained control over the villages of Maskouteh and Samalkan as well as the village of Meidan Akbas in Rajou region and the village of Bandar Lik in Shangal region.

In a relevant development, a Kurdish media outlet reported on Sunday that over 40 Turkish military men and militants were killed and a large volume of their

equipment were destroyed in Operation Olive Branch against the Kurds in Afrin region in northwestern Aleppo.

Turkish forces have been heavily bombing Afrin since early Saturday, killing a number of pro-government forces and destroying a drinking water tank in Jandaris in southwestern Afrin.

Syrians in Afrin staged a demonstration to protest against Turkey’s military operation in the northern border region.

The protesters chanted slogans against Ankara and held placards bearing the images of those killed in Turkish attacks.

In a statement released on Friday, Human Rights Watch criticized the Ankara government’s ongoing cross-border offensive in Afrin, saying that the Turkish military had failed to adopt necessary measures to avoid civilian casualties.