

BEIRUT (Xinhua) – Lebanon's President Michel Aoun says his country is at a breaking point in dealing with Syrian refugees, describing the crisis "an existential threat."

"Lebanon is no longer able to wait anymore and bear with the suffering of the Syrian refugees because this issue has turned into an existential threat," a statement from the presidency said.

To lose or to waste an opportunity will result in grief and sorrow.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

## Iraq Gains Control of Kurdish Frontier With Turkey



Iraqi and Turkish soldiers wave flags at the Habur border gate between Turkey and Iraq in this still image taken from video on October 31, 2017.

ERBIL, Iraq (Reuters) – Iraqi troops landed on Tuesday at one of the main land crossings with Turkey, gaining a foothold at the Kurdish-held frontier for the first time in decades and imposing one of Baghdad's central demands on the Kurds.

Iraq's entire land border with Turkey is located inside the Kurdish autonomous

region, and has been controlled by the Kurds since the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003.

But since the Kurds staged a referendum on independence last month that Baghdad considers illegal, the central government has demanded a presence at all border crossing points.

The Iraqis set up positions between

the Turkish and the Iraqi Kurdish checkpoints at the border crossing between the Turkish town of Habur and the Iraqi Kurdish town of Fish-Khabur, a security source in Baghdad said.

Vehicles crossing the border would now be subject to three checks -- by Turks, Iraqi forces and the Kurds.

"Habur border gate has been handed

over to the central government as of this morning," Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim told members of his ruling AK Party in parliament in Ankara.

Officials from the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) said they had not relinquished control of the crossing. Discussions were ongoing to allow Iraqi "oversight" at the border, Hoshiyar Zebari, a former Iraqi foreign minister now working as an advisor to the KRG, told Reuters.

An Iraqi official showed Reuters pictures of the Iraqi flag being raised at the border gate, where Iraqi and Turkish soldiers were deployed and Turkish flags also hoisted.

The issue of control of the border crossing is of crucial importance for the landlocked Kurdish region. The Fish-Khabur crossing is the site of the main oil export pipeline for northern Iraq, and crude exports through it are the principal source of funds for the Kurds.

The balance of power between the Iraqi central government forces and the semi-autonomous Kurdish region has been transformed since the Kurds staged their referendum on Sept. 25.

Iraqi Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi ordered his forces to recapture all territory held by the Kurds outside the borders of their autonomous region, and most of it was seized this month within a matter of days.

## Bahrain Court Sentences 10 More Men on Terrorism Charges



Bahraini anti-government protesters wave national flags and hold up images of jailed political leaders during a protest after midday prayers in Diraz, Bahrain, May 8, 2015.

MANAMA (Dispatches) – A Bahraini court sentenced 10 men to life imprisonment and revoked their citizenship on charges of forming a terrorist cell and plotting attacks, the Bahraini Public Prosecution said on Tuesday.

The men were accused of receiving training in military camps in the use of arms and bombs to carry out terrorist attacks in Bahrain, the prosecution said in a statement.

On Monday Bahrain's Public Prosecution said it had sentenced 19 unnamed defendants to prison terms for contacts with a banned party it says is backed by Iran and involved in militant attacks. Critics accuse Bahrain of clamping down on dissent.

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have strongly condemned the jail terms handed down to three family members of a prominent activist living abroad, stating that the verdicts are clearly indicative of the extremes, which the Al Khalifah regime is prepared to go in order to crush political dissent in the tiny Persian Gulf kingdom.

"The sentences against Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei's family members on trumped-up charges and following a grossly unfair trial are a blatant scheme by Bahraini authorities to punish the prominent Bahraini activist, and pressure him to stop his peaceful criticism of the government," Samah Hadid, the director of Campaigns at Amnesty International's Beirut regional office, said.

She added, "This is a clear attempt to muzzle Alwadaei from afar. It sends a chilling signal that no one is out of Bahraini authorities' reach, and demonstrates that they are prepared to use whatever means necessary to crush the dissent."

"These sentenced should also be a wakeup call for the UK government ... it can no longer stay silent over the abuses being committed in Bahrain," Hadid pointed out.

Separately, Joe Stork, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch, said the court rulings handed down to Alwadaei's relatives is an evidence of the Bahraini regime's heavy-handed crackdown on the dissent, and an attempt to silence pro-democracy activists with collective punishment.

Stork added that Bahrain courts, instead of ensuring justice, have turned into a political tool to "persecute critics of the government and the ruling family." Human Rights Watch said Alwadaei's family members have been ill-treated during investigation, forced to stand for long painful periods and repeatedly been beaten.

It stressed that confessions have been extracted under duress, and Bahraini security forces have resorted to "secret sources" in order to implicate the three defendants.

On Monday, a Bahrain court sentenced three family members of Alwadaei, who is a member of the rights group the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD), on the charge of planting a "fake bomb" in January 2017. Alwadaei's 49-year-old mother-in-law, Hajer Mansoor, and 18-year-old brother-in-law, Sayed Nizar Alwadaei, were each sentenced to three years in jail.

His 30-year-old cousin Mahmood Marzooq was also sentenced to one month and a half for carrying a knife.

Thousands of anti-regime protesters have held demonstrations in Bahrain on an almost daily basis ever since a popular uprising began in the country in mid-February 2011.

## Palestinian Killed as Zionist Troops Fire at 'Suspect' Vehicle

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – A young Palestinian man has been killed and another wounded after Zionist troops opened fire on what they called a "suspect" vehicle in the occupied West Bank.

The incident took place near the illegal settlement of Haramish to the north of the city of Ramallah on Tuesday, AFP reported.

The Israeli military said in a statement

that its soldiers "perceived the vehicle as a threat and consequently fired towards it in order to stop it."

The victim was taken to a nearby hospital, where he succumbed to his injuries, the Palestinian news agency Ma'an reported.

The fire also seriously wounded the driver's sister, who was accompanying him in the vehicle.

The Palestinian Authority's Health

Ministry identified the victim as 26-year-old Mohammed Mussa.

Also on Tuesday, the Palestinian Al-Quds TV said Zionists had arrested 26 Palestinians in troop raids across the West Bank. The detainees were mostly youths under 25 years of age, according to the report.

The arrests triggered clashes between Palestinians and the troops. A number of Palestinian protesters were injured during the confrontation.

The occupied Palestinian territories have witnessed a rise in tensions ever since the occupying regime introduced restrictions on the entry of Palestinian worshippers into the al-Aqsa Mosque compound in East Jerusalem al-Quds in August 2015.

More than 300 Palestinians have lost their lives at the hands of Zionist troops since the beginning of October 2015.

Palestinian Authority Foreign

Minister Riad Malki said Tuesday that the Palestinian leadership is still waiting for the United States to present its ideas about the so-called peace process.

Malki said in statements to the official Voice of Palestine that the Palestinian side is waiting to discuss such ideas and respond to them, but has not mentioned when the U.S. would make its proposal.

He said the Palestinian side cannot say no to any U.S. attempt to push forward the Zionist-Palestinian "peace process", but it wants Washington to "realize that the party failing its work is the Israeli government and not us."

"We are aware that the Israeli government will hinder and foil any attempts by the Americans or others to reach an agreement to end the occupation and allow the establishment of the independent Palestinian state," he said.

## Blast Hits Kabul Diplomatic Zone, Leaves Multiple Casualties

KABUL (Dispatches) – Multiple casualties have been reported after a bomber blew himself up in the diplomatic zone of Afghanistan's capital, Kabul.

According to Afghan Defense Ministry spokesman Dawlat Waziri, the attacker, riding a motorcycle, detonated his explosives inside the heavily fortified area on Tuesday.

"Our initial information shows the attacker was on a motorcycle. He made it through the first checkpoint but was stopped at the second checkpoint and detonated," Waziri said.

"We don't know the target but it happened a few meters from the defense ministry's foreign relations office. No casualties to our personnel."

An Afghan Health Ministry official said that at least three people were killed and 15 others wounded in the fatal blast. Some media reports put the death toll at 13.

Witnesses said they saw multiple casualties being carried from the scene of the explosion and driven away in ambulances.

The loud explosion was heard around 4:00 p.m. just as workers were leaving their offices. There has been no claim of responsibility for the bombing.

It was the first attack targeting Kabul's so-called Green Zone since a massive truck bomb ripped through the area on May 31.

The Taliban, which ruled Afghanistan before the US-led invasion in 2001, have increased attacks on security forces and foreign troops in recent years. The militants have warned that there will be no letup in their attacks until foreign forces fully withdraw from Afghanistan, which is still suffering from insecurity and violence years after the United States and its allies invaded the country as part of Washington's so-called war on terror.

## Shelling Hits Besieged Syrian Ghouta School Gate

BEIRUT (Reuters) – Shelling killed around ten people, including five children at a school gate, in a besieged enclave near Syria's capital Damascus on Tuesday, a day after a U.N. aid delivery to the area, a war monitor said.

The shelling also injured 30 other people in the Eastern Ghouta area, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

The Britain-based monitor said the ongoing shelling which began Tuesday morning hit the towns of Jisreen, Douma, Saqba, Mesraba, Harasta, Ain Terma, Hazza and

Kafr Batna.

On Monday a United Nations and Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) convoy delivered aid to the towns of Kafr Batna and Saqba.

In another development, a senior Russian diplomat says humanitarian issues will top the agenda of the intra-Syrian talks, mediated by Iran, Russia and Turkey, in the Kazakh capital, Astana.

Speaking at a press briefing after attending the first day of the seventh round of the discussions, Alexander Lavrentyev, Russia's special envoy to the Astana peace process, said

Moscow has been doing everything in its power to help the Syrian government and opposition groups strengthen mutual trust.

"We take up the measures to build trust between the conflicting sides, to resolve the problem of humanitarian mine clearing, and to adopt a document on the forcibly held persons and exchange of bodies of the dead," he said.

The exchange of the detainees and the deceased is "a rather complicated issue" whose solution requires "scrupulous coordination with due account of legal aspects

and details," he added.

The seventh round of the Astana talks began on Monday with the participation of representatives from the Damascus government and opposition as well as the three guarantor states, the United Nations, Jordan and the United States.

The discussions have brought representatives from Syria's warring sides to the negotiating table in a bid to end the foreign-backed militancy in the Arab country, which broke out in March 2011.