

NEW YORK (Press TV) – The United Nations says more than 13 million Syrians are in need of aid despite a relative drop in fighting between the government troops and foreign-backed militant outfits in the war-torn Arab country in recent months. “Some 13.1 million people in Syria require humanitarian assistance. Of these, 5.6 million people are in acute need,” said the UN’s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in a statement on Tuesday, adding that the figure showed a slight drop comparing to 13.5 million people in need last year.

Do not feel ashamed if the amount of charity is small because to refuse the needy is an act of greater shame.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

# Turkey Expects S-400 System From Russia in 2019



This file photo shows a Russian S-400 air missile system.

ANKARA (Reuters) – Turkey expects to receive its first Russian S-400 surface-to-air missiles in 2019, Defense Minister Nurettin Canikli said on Wednesday, the first time Ankara has given a firm timeline for a deal that has alarmed its NATO allies.

Turkey has been in negotiations with Russia to buy the S-400 for

more than a year, a decision seen by Washington and some of its other allies in NATO as a snub to the Western military alliance.

Giving the most detail yet on the deal to parliament’s budget committee, Canikli said it called for delivery of two S-400 systems, but that the second one was optional.

The deal has raised concern among NATO countries in part because the weapons cannot be integrated into the alliance’s defenses. Ankara has said it had no choice but to buy the Russian missiles, because NATO countries did not offer a cost-effective alternative.

“Once these systems are received, our country will have se-

cured an important air defense capability. This solution aimed at meeting an urgent need will not hinder our commitment to developing our own systems,” he said.

Relations between Turkey and Russia deteriorated sharply over years during which they backed opposite sides in the war in neighboring Syria, but have improved markedly over the past year. The countries are now cooperating on Syrian peace efforts.

Canikli said Turkey was also in talks with the Franco-Italian EU-ROSAM consortium on developing its own missile systems, after signing a memorandum to strengthen cooperation between the three countries in military projects.

“With the memorandum in question, Turkish, French and Italian firms have started cooperation to identify, develop, produce and use a more advanced version of the SAMP-T (missile system) in a common consortium,” he said.

Turkey aimed to bring talks with EUROSAM to a “definitive end” soon, he said, adding that Ankara aimed to finalize the deal by the end of 2017 at the latest.

## Syrian Opposition Conference Starts in Riyadh

RIYADH (Dispatches) – A Syrian opposition meeting began in Riyadh on Wednesday in a bid to unify the group’s position ahead of “peace talks” backed by the United Nations to end the country’s six-year war.

Saudi Arabia backs the High Negotiations Committee (HNC) group whose leader, former Syrian prime minister Riyad Hijab, resigned on Monday without explanation.

The summit comes after a visit by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to Russia a day earlier to meet President Vladimir Putin, who later discussed the conflict with U.S. President Donald Trump and other Middle East

leaders.

Assad has made major gains against opposition forces and Daesh terrorists with the help of Russia as well as Iran, the arch-rival of Saudi Arabia, which backs terrorists in Syria.

U.N. peace talks mediator Staffan de Mistura urged the opposition figures gathered at a five-star hotel in Riyadh to have the “hard discussions” necessary to reach a “common line”.

“A strong unified team is a creative partner in Geneva and we need that, one who can actually explore more than one way to arrive to the goals that we need to have,” he said in opening remarks.

It was not immediately clear how Hijab’s absence would affect the talks. Several opposition figures said he had taken an uncompromising line that rejected a role for Assad in a U.N. sponsored Geneva based peace process.

Some opposition members have hinted that the new communique would drop the long-standing demand by the Riyadh-based opposition, referring to the next round of U.N.-sponsored talks.

The summit, which Saudi Arabia called “expanded”, was opened to more than 140 opposition figures from the Turkey-based coalition and mainstream Free Syrian Army factions as well as independents including

about a dozen women.

The HNC has represented the Syrian opposition at previous Geneva talks, while a number of other political opposition groups and figures backed by other countries including Russia and Egypt also exist.

Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir said the only solution to the conflict was through a consensus that would achieve the demands of the Syrian people.

“There is no solution to the crisis without a Syrian consensus that would achieve the demands of the Syrian people on the basis of Geneva 1 and (U.N. Security Council) resolution 2254,” he said.

## Zionist Troops Demolish Palestinian Structures

RAMALLAH (Dispatches) – Palestinian sources said on Wednesday that Zionist troops demolished residential and herding structures in several areas in the West Bank and East al-Quds.

A local activist who monitors the settlement activities in al-Khalil area said Zionist troops, supported by bulldozers, demolished a residential structure and a barracks used as a shelter for herds in the southern al-Khalil town of Masafer Yatta.

Another residential structure and a herd barn were demolished in Jiftlik and three other structures in Froush Beit Dajan in the Jordan Valley, as well as a structure under construction in Battir Village, near Bethlehem.

Zionist troops also tore down two houses belonging to Palestinians in East al-Quds town of Issawiyye earlier on Wednesday.

Israeli sources said the demolitions are all based on the lack of construction permits.

According to UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Zionist authorities approved only 1.5 percent of building permits applied by Palestinians.

Hanan Ashrawi, a member of Palestine Liberation Organization Executive Committee, accused Israel of “ethnic cleansing” against Palestinians.

“Israel is seeking to isolate Jerusalem (al-Quds) completely and disconnect it from the West Bank, taking advantage of the international si-

lence toward its actions that undermine the two-state solution and the establishment of the state of Palestine,” Ashrawi said in his statements to Xinhua.

Two days ago, Palestinian sources said Israeli army issued an eviction order to the Palestinian Bedouin community in Pope Mountain near Bethany, East Jerusalem, before demolishing their residences.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas’ Fatah party said the regime’s plan to evacuate Palestinians from the periphery of East al-Quds is “a declaration of the death of the two-state solution and waging a comprehensive war against the Palestinian people.”

## Iraqi Forces Unearth Izadi Mass Grave in Sinjar



The file photo shows people looking at a mass grave of Izadi Kurds murdered by Daesh terrorists near the Iraqi town of Sinjar.

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – Iraqi security officials say government forces have found a mass grave in the country’s northern province of Nineveh, containing the bodies of dozens of members of Izadi minority, who are believed to have been executed by Daesh terrorists when they were in control of a terrain.

Local official Chokor Melhem Elias told AFP on Wednesday that “the mass grave contains the bodies of 73 people, men, women and children executed by Daesh terrorists when they controlled... Sinjar.”

He said Iraqi forces made the latest discovery in the Rambussi area near the town of Qahtaniyah, located about 100 kilometers (62 miles) from Mosul.

Back in August 2014, Daesh terrorists overran Sinjar, killing, raping, and enslaving large numbers of Izadi Kurds.

The region was recaptured in November 2015, during an operation by Kurdish Peshmerga forces

and Izadi fighters.

The Office of Kidnapped Affairs in the northern Iraqi city of Dohuk said earlier this year that around 3,500 Izadi Kurds were still being held captive by Daesh terrorists, adding that a large proportion of the abductees were women and children.

The Endowments and Religious Affairs Ministry of the semi-autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government announced in early August that Daesh’s genocide against Izadis had forced nearly 360,000 members of the minority to flee their hometowns, and another 90,000 had left Iraq and taken refuge in others countries.

It added that Daesh terrorists have kidnapped 6,417 Izadi Kurds, including 1,102 women and 1,655 children, since 2014.

Additionally, 2,645 children have lost their first line of protection, and the number includes 220 kids whose parents are still being held captive.

## Bahrain Sentences Rights Campaigner to 2 Years in Jail

MANAMA (Dispatches) – A prominent human rights activist in Bahrain has been sentenced to two years in prison for complaining about the human rights situation in the country.

On Wednesday, Bahrain’s High Court of Appeal handed down the sentence to Nabeel Rajab for “spreading false news” about the rights situation in comments to foreign media outlets.

Rajab was first detained on June 13, 2016 for tweets critical of Manama’s role in the ongoing Saudi Arabian-led war on Yemen.

On December 22, 2016, Bahraini authorities accused Rajab of making comments that “harm the interests” of the Manama regime and other Persian Gulf Arab countries through an article attributed to him and published by French daily Le Monde.

His trial came a day after a number of human rights campaigners protested Manama’s policies during rallies in front of Bahraini embassies in London and Washington.

Bahrain, which is a close ally of Saudi Arabia and a regional partner of the United Kingdom and the United States, has been facing peaceful demonstrations against its abuse of its Shia-majority population’s rights since February 2011.

Bahraini officials have come down hard on the protests, killing scores of people, stripping many

dissenters of their Bahraini nationality, and imprisoning hundreds of others.

On March 5, Bahrain’s parliament approved the trial of civilians at military tribunals in a measure blasted by human rights campaigners as being tantamount to the imposition of an undeclared martial law countrywide.

Human Rights Watch has strongly censured the Bahraini regime over keeping Rajab behind bars over his criticism of the ruling Al Khalifah family and the Wahhabi ideology.

Kenneth Roth, the executive director of the New York-based international non-governmental organization, wrote in a post published on his Twitter page that the 52-year-old president of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights has not committed any offenses considering his remarks.

“None of these alleged offenses should be considered crimes. All of these comments are legitimate exercise of the right to free speech,” Roth wrote.

Meanwhile, tens of human rights advocates have staged a protest rally in front of the Bahraini Embassy in London, calling for the immediate release of Rajab.

The protesters activists chanted “Free, Free Nabeel Rajab” and held up posters of Bahraini prisoners of conscience.