

Around 8,000 Syrian Refugees in Lebanon Hit Hard by Storm

BEIRUT (Xinhua) – The Spokesperson of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Lisa Abou Khaled said Wednesday that 150 camps hosting about 8,000 Syrian refugees were affected by the storm that started Sunday in Lebanon.

“Around 66 camps were heavily affected by the storm in Lebanon while 15 were completely destroyed, and 850 camps are at high risk of flooding,” she said.

Khaled told Xinhua in an exclusive interview that UNHCR’s winter program for the support of Syrian refugees has started in November with a target to help 166,000 families, or over 650,000 refugees, with a monthly financial support of 75 U.S. dollars per family for them to buy basic needs of diesel, clothes and food.

She explained that UNHCR’s winter support program takes place in addition to another one by the agency where 30,000 extremely poor families receive 173 dollars per family every month.

However, some of the Syrian refugees in the Bekaa region said that they are not receiving any support by the international community.

“Our tents are full of water. We are suffering tremendously and nobody offered us any help or support so far,” said Taha Aldouri, a Syrian refugee.

Aldouri said that he does not even have any heating system and his family is wrapped with blankets all day long to warm up.

Ahmad Ibrahim, another Syrian refugee, said that the camps in Bar Elias are flooded with rainwater.

“It’s been raining for four days and we do not know what to do. Our kids are suffering,” he said.



A refugee woman walks in flood water at a Syrian refugee camp on the outskirts of Tripoli, Lebanon, Jan. 8, 2019.

This is not the first time that Syrian refugees suffer from cold weather and floods due to heavy rain.

Last month, around 300 Syrian refugees were evacuated from their camps in Akkar to other neighboring camps after being flooded with rainwater.

Khaled commented on refugees’ complaints, saying that “most refugees” are receiving humanitarian support in Lebanon, and the UNHCR is trying to meet all refugees’ needs which is not an easy task.

“It took us time to reach these people,” she said, adding that UNHCR is working with Lebanese authorities to focus on people who have their tents completely destroyed in a bid to move them to other places.

“Lots of these refugees are living in very bad conditions, and I understand when they say they do not receive enough help,” she said.

Khaled noted that the UNHCR’s program will continue until March, and the World Food Programme is also assisting more than 70 percent of Syrian refugees in Lebanon by distributing food.

Leader... (Continued From Page One)

Ayatollah compared opponents of the Islamic Revolution of Iran to the pharaohs.

“Those who are opposed to the Islamic Revolution are the world’s pharaohs. Based on the Qur’an, Pharaoh knew that Prophet Moses was right... Every one God is with will be victorious. If we rely on God’s promise, our victory is certain and absolute. Wherever we retreated and acted weakly, we did not win.”

Ayatollah Khamenei further hit out at U.S. leaders for praising Saudi Arabia over its human rights record and criticizing Iran at the same time.

“Some U.S. officials are like clowns. A U.S. authority had said a while ago that Iran should learn from Saudi Arabia how to observe human rights. What can we name such a person other than a clown?”

The Leader told Iranian officials that “in the face of nonsensical words of the American officials, you should be brave and act wisely” and not fall for their promises and overtures.

“The threats, promises, and signatures of such folks are not reliable; you should not believe them. Choose appropriate methods wisely and advance with motivation and vigor,” Ayatollah Khamenei said.

The Leader further called on state officials to value their responsibilities and serve their country which “is a great blessing from God.”

“Secondly, observe the requirements of this great divine blessing. You should be vigilant not to incline to extravagance, prodigality and behaviors typical of the shahs.”

“The path is the path of Islam. We cannot act like Imam Ali (AS), but we should try to move in the direction of his principles. The problems of the underprivileged classes should be the priority for the state officials,” he said.

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Space Center consistent with steps that were taken prior to a previous launch in 2017, according to researchers at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey,” it said.

“There are no indications the launch is for military use despite Pompeo’s argument that the launch vehicle incorporates technology used in ballistic missiles,” it added.

Several Iranian media outlets have recently suggested that a launch is imminent. CNN said the new images appear to show preparations are already underway to send the satellites into orbit using a Simorgh space launch vehicle.

“The Simorgh is a two-stage space launch vehicle that uses a cluster of four Shahab-3 engines in its first stage and smaller steering engines in its upper stage,” according to according to Jeffrey Lewis, of the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey.

Last week, Pompeo implored Iran to scrap its planned satellite launches. While he stopped short of outlining how the U.S. might react, Pompeo suggested the move could lead to new sanctions.

“We advise the regime to reconsider these provocative launches and cease all activities related to ballistic missiles in order to avoid deeper economic and diplomatic isolation,” he said.

“This action includes launching SLVs, which incorporate technology that is virtually identical to that used in ballistic missiles, including in intercontinental ballistic-missiles (ICBMs),” Pompeo claimed in last week’s statement.

But that assertion is misleading, according to Lewis, who told CNN that “the Simorgh is not an ICBM and it cannot, if used as a ballistic missile, strike the United States.”

According to Lewis, Pompeo’s argument linking Iranian space launches to ballistic missile activity is reminiscent of the Obama administration’s stance on developing various rockets for civilian and military missions.

Pompeo, speaking in Jordan on Tuesday, insisted Trump’s decision to withdraw U.S. troops from Syria was not going to put a dent in efforts to contain Iran, though the planned move is widely seen as giving Tehran a victory. Pompeo also hinted at new economic sanctions against Tehran.

“You’ll see in the coming days and weeks we are, we’re redoubling not only our diplomatic, but our com-

mercial efforts to put real pressure on Iran to achieve what it is we set out for them back in May,” Pompeo said. “The President’s decision to withdraw our folks from Syria in no way impacts our capacity to deliver on that,” he insisted.

Referring to 12 conditions that the U.S. laid out in May for Iran to meet -- which were widely seen as a demand for regime change in everything but name -- Pompeo said, “these are simple asks we ask of the Islamic Republic of Iran, to behave like a normal nation and the coalition is just as committed to it today as it was yesterday.”

Pompeo... (Continued From Page One)

He said a number of “possibilities” had been suggested that could keep trade routes open with Iran, “including dealing in Iraqi dinars in bilateral trade”.

Last month, President Salih visited Iran and discussed strengthening economic ties between the two countries with Iran’s President Hassan Rouhani.

“The economic exchange between the two countries is \$12 billion and we can increase this to \$20 billion,” said Rouhani after the meeting.

On December 20, the U.S. granted Baghdad a 90-day extension to a waiver on abiding by the sanctions.

Earlier in December, however, U.S. Energy Secretary Rick Perry urged Iraq to sever its energy dependence on Iran and open its energy sector to American companies.

Pompeo’s visit came amid unconfirmed reports that the U.S. planned to set up new military bases in Iraq in order to house troops evacuated from Syria.

On Monday, an Iraqi group of volunteer fighters who crushed foreign-backed takfiri terrorists in the country threatened to attack U.S. forces.

In a statement, a spokesman for Asaib Ahl al-Haq group said it had spotted new U.S. troop deployments in the country, threatening to target the forces if the Iraqi government and parliament failed to act.

Asaib Ahl al-Haq Jawad al-Talebawi said the group is closely monitoring the U.S. military’s “illegitimate” movements and deployments across the country.

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and Iran is ready to work with Pakistan in order to realize what the Pakistani leaders have been telling us that they believe fighting extremists groups is in their national security interest and we believe analytically, that that is the case.”

India says it is worried about instability in Afghanistan, particularly after Trump announced he would withdraw 7,000 U.S. troops from there. Zarif, however, said Iran believes the presence of U.S. troops did “nothing to help on the security and stability of Afghanistan.”

Asked about the U.S. sanctions which have brought down India’s oil imports from Iran, Zarif said, “We have been able to engage with each other even under more difficult circumstances and I am confident that Iran and India will find possibilities to evade these illegal measures.”

“Let’s remind ourselves that these are illegal measures. We are not trying to evade law; we are trying to evade lawlessness, we are trying to evade bullying,” he said.

Ex-Zionist... (Continued From Page 2)

anti-espionage section of Iran’s Intelligence Ministry was quoted as saying by Iranian media last month that Netanyahu had given Israeli security services a confidential order to check if Zionist officials, lawmakers and security personnel had contacts with Iran over the past six months.

His remarks came after Netanyahu bragged that Zionist agents periodically visited Iran to monitor the country’s nuclear program.

The Iranian intelligence official rejected Netanyahu’s claims, saying the Zionist leader had made the false assertion because he was under immense pressure following the Segev case.

The Tasnim news agency’s national security correspondent Hussein Dalirani said Iran’s access to the confidential order by Netanyahu showed Tehran’s infiltration into the highest echelon of the Zionist regime.

‘Lebanon’s Berri Urges Postponement of Arab Economic Summit’

BEIRUT (Dispatches) – Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri called on Wednesday for an Arab League economic summit due to take place this month in Beirut to be postponed because Lebanon had failed to agree a new government.

Berri also asserted “again the necessity of having Syria participate in such a summit”, lawmakers from his parliamentary bloc quoted him as saying at a meeting.

The Arab League suspended Syria’s membership seven years ago after the foreign-backed war broke out against President Bashar al-Assad.

Some Arab states, including ones that had backed militants, are now seeking to reconcile with Assad’s state, which has recovered most of the country with Russian and Iranian help.

Last month, the United Arab Emirates re-opened its embassy in Damascus and Suda-

nese President Omar al-Bashir became the first Arab head of state to visit since the conflict began. For Syria to be reinstated, the League must reach a consensus.

Egypt’s Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry said on Tuesday Damascus must take several steps before it can return to the League, including making political progress in defunct UN peace talks.

“When this happens, we can

talk about the matter. At this time, there is nothing new qualifying it,” he said.

Assad’s Lebanese allies, including Berri and Hezbollah fighting alongside the Syrian army, have ramped up calls for Syria to join the summit.

The Lebanese presidency seemed to be pressing ahead with plans to host the summit in Beirut, inviting journalists on Wednesday to apply for accreditation in time.

‘Zionist Regime Must Respect Int’l Law, Leave Occupied Golan Heights’

AMMAN (Dispatches) – Jordan has hit out at the Zionist regime over its recent call for the United States to recognize the regime’s occupation of the Golan Heights, saying Tel Aviv will have to eventually pull its forces out of the Syrian region.

“The Golan Heights are occupied Syrian territory. International law is clear on that. It has to be treated as such,” Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi told a press conference with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in Amman.

He then called on the Tel Aviv regime to leave the Golan Heights based on the 1974 Golan ceasefire deal with the Damascus government.

“Our position is that Israel needs to withdraw from that territory in the framework of a peace agreement,” Safadi said.

Just two days earlier, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stressed that Israel would “never leave the Golan Heights,” urging all countries to recognize the regime’s grip over the occupied territory. Netanyahu made the comments in a meeting with US National Security Adviser John Bolton in the occupied al-Quds.

In 1967, the occupying regime waged a full-scale war against Arab territories, during which it occupied a large swathe of Syria’s Golan and

annexed it four years later, a move never recognized by the international community.

In 1973, another war, known as the Arab-Israeli War, broke out. A year later, a United Nations-brokered ceasefire came into force, according to which Tel Aviv and Damascus agreed to separate their troops and create a buffer zone in the Golan.

Israel has over the past decades built dozens of settlements in the Golan Heights in defiance of international calls for the regime to stop its illegal construction activities.

Syria has repeatedly reaffirmed its sovereignty over the Golan Heights, saying the territory must be completely restored to its control.

Since 2011 – when foreign-sponsored militancy first broke out across Syria – the Zionist regime has been using Golan to prop up anti-Damascus terrorists.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Safadi, whose country is the custodian of al-Quds’ Muslim holy sites, described the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict as the region’s central problem.

While Amman and Washington “don’t always agree on every issue, we will continue to work together to solve the region’s problems,” he added.

Saudi Private Jet Industry Stalls After Corruption Crackdown

DUBAI (Reuters) – A crackdown on corruption in Saudi Arabia has severely dented the kingdom’s private jet industry in a sign of the impact the campaign has had on private enterprise and the wealthy elite.

Dozens of planes, owned by individuals and charter companies and worth hundreds of millions of dollars, are stranded at airports across the kingdom including Riyadh and Jeddah, four people familiar with the matter told Reuters.

Some were handed over to the state in settlements reached after the crackdown was launched in late 2017, when dozens of princes, businessmen and government officials were detained, they said.

Others belong to Saudis who either face travel bans or are reluctant to fly the planes because they

are wary of displays of wealth that might be seen as taunting the government over the anti-corruption campaign, two of the sources said.

The government media office did not immediately respond to Reuters’ requests for comment on the impact of the anti-corruption drive on the private jet industry.

The crackdown’s impact on the business community and private enterprise, which are already reeling from low oil prices and weakened consumer confidence, has shattered investor confidence and contributed to a sense of uncertainty around the policies of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

The idle aircraft, which one of the sources esti-

mated at up to about 70, include Bombardier jets, the sources said. There are also larger Airbus and Boeing aircraft that are more commonly associated with commercial airlines but are often used in the Middle East as private jets.

A Boeing 737 MAX or Airbus A320neo can cost up to \$130 million, though the final cost depends on how the jet is fitted out with technology and amenities, including private bedrooms, meeting rooms, and even gym equipment.

Most of the detainees held at Riyadh’s Ritz-Carlton Hotel last November were released after being exonerated or reaching financial settlements with the government, which said it aims to seize more than \$100 billion in total in either cash or assets.