

Russian Defense Ministry:

Almost 900,000 Refugees Can Return to Syria

MOSCOW (TASS) – Around 890,000 Syrian citizens can return to their home country in the coming months, Head of Russia's National Defense Control Center Colonel-General Mikhail Mizintsev said on Friday.

“According to data provided by the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, about 890,000 civilians are expected to return to Syria in the coming months,” Mizintsev said at a meeting of the interdepartmental coordination headquarters supervising the return of refugees to Syria.

Earlier on Friday, Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said 1.7 million people expressed the desire to return to Syria.

Mizintsev said Lebanon's regional refugee centers have received around 10,000 applications from Syrian refugees willing to return to their home country.

“Lebanon's government has established a working group to set up a joint committee on cooperation with Syria in matters concerning the return of refugees,” he said. “Lebanese regional refugee centers have reported receiving about 10,000 applications from Syrian citizens willing to return to their home country,” Mizintsev added.

According to the Russian general, the Jordanian authorities also continue active efforts to facilitate the return of refugees to Syria. “The government of



Syrian refugees returning home from Lebanon.

the Hashemite Kingdom has taken a number of steps which have encouraged more than 200,000 Syrian citizens to express a wish to return to their places of permanent residence. All this is happening amid

the Syrian army's successes in regaining control of the country's border with Jordan,” Mizintsev said.

He pointed out that a total of ten crossing points have been set up and started operating in Syria.

'Zionist Regime Used Excessive Force to Seize Gaza-Bound Ship'



The Zionist regime has violated international law by seizing a Gaza-bound humanitarian ship in international waters and using excessive force to arrest its crew and passengers, the boat's captain says.

GAZA STRIP (Dispatches) – The Zionist regime has violated international law by seizing a Gaza-bound humanitarian ship in international waters and using excessive force to arrest its crew and passengers, the boat's

captain says. “We were arrested in international waters and we were closer to Egypt than Israel,” Herman Reksten, the captain of the Norwegian Karstein ship, said upon arrival at Oslo International Airport

after being held for three days in an Israeli jail.

Captain Reksten said the Zionist troops used tasers against the activists, adding, “I still have a headache from being hit in prison.”

A Norwegian government spokesman also said the country was yet to receive a clarification from Israel on why the 22 pro-Palestinian activists on board the boat were arrested.

Norway's Foreign Ministry spokesman Frode Andersen said it had asked the occupying regime to “clarify the course of events and on what basis they think they are entitled to intervene on the ship.”

According to the group Ship to Gaza Norway, which organized the shipment, all of the activists have been released and expelled or are about to be deported soon.

However, the fate of an ailing Canadian passenger was uncertain on Thursday.

The intercepted vessel was one of the four ships that made up the Freedom Flotilla, which intended to break the Zionist regime's nearly 12-year blockade of the Gaza Strip.

Back in late May 2010, a raid by the Zionist regime on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla, comprising six civilian ships, killed 10 Turkish activists in high seas and sent the Ankara-Tel Aviv ties into a tailspin.

The regime's military raid against the civilian flotilla was met with global condemnation. The United Nations Security Council called for a prompt investigation into the incident and the United Nations Human Rights Council described the attack as “outrageous.”

Additionally, numerous attempts have been made throughout the years to draw the public attention to the ongoing siege of Gaza. From 2008 through 2016, international activists have sailed 31 ships and boats to challenge the Israeli naval blockade.

Jordan 'Not Yet Ready' to Open Border Crossing With Syria

AMMAN (Dispatches) – Jordan will reopen its border with Syria only when it is ready, Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi has said, in a signal that Amman could delay a decision that would boost President Bashar al Assad.

Billions of dollars in annual trade with Europe and the Persian Gulf moved through the Syrian-Jordanian Nassib crossing until fighting erupted in 2011. It was captured by terrorists in 2015 and its closure hurt the economy of Syria and neighboring states.

Damascus said this week the road was ready for use but Safadi

said he had received no request to reopen it.

“We will deal with the request with all positiveness that serves our interests,” he told a news conference with visiting French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian. “Matters have to stabilize,” he said.

Safadi said he discussed reopening the crossing with Moscow. The crossing's recapture by Syrian forces was a central goal of a campaign launched last June by the government and Russian forces to regain control of terrorist-held parts of the southwest.

Russia is a crucial backer of Assad and Russian bombing was central to a campaign by Assad that forced the mainstream so-called Free Syrian Army (FSA) terrorists once backed by Jordan and Assad's Western and Arab foes to surrender.

“Jordan in principle wants open borders with all its neighbors... But when and how (Nassib opening) this will depend on when we ensure our interests and our security,” he added.

In another development, the Zionist regime and Jordan said on Thursday that their forces

had killed Daesh terrorists who approached their borders after being squeezed out of southwestern Syria by the army of President Bashar al-Assad.

In a nod to his battlefield gains, the Zionist regime described victory by Assad, who is on a last push to restore his rule after more than seven years of war, as a fait accompli that could calm the Golan Heights.

The strategic plateau divides the occupied territories and Syria, old foes, and saw decades of stable stand-off before the foreign-backed war in Syria.

China ...

(Continued From Page One)

July volumes were about 85% higher than year ago shipments of about 415,000 bpd, the data showed.

State refiners that had cut imports from Iran in 2017/18 due to a dispute over development rights of a giant gas field, have tied up significantly higher volumes for this fiscal year that began in April.

Tehran had offered almost free shipping and an extended credit period for oil sales to India, its top oil client after China.

Iran was hoping to sell more than 500,000 bpd of oil to India in 2018/19, its Minister of Petroleum Bijan Zangeneh said in February.

State refiners accounted for about four-fifth of Iranian oil imports in July with Indian Oil Corp along with its unit Chennai Petroleum Corp getting about 300,000 bpd oil from Tehran, the preliminary data showed.

In April-July, the first four months of this fiscal year, India's oil imports from Iran has risen by an annual 40% to about 677,500 bpd, the data showed.

To keep its shipment flowing Iran has offered insurance for oil cargo and ships to supply oil to India, its top oil client after China.

In January-July, India's oil imports from Iran rose by more than 17% to about 612,000 bpd, the data showed.

Pompeo ...

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The Washington Post reported on Monday that North Korea appeared to be building one or two new liquid-fueled intercontinental ballistic missiles at the research facility, citing unidentified officials familiar with intelligence reporting.

North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho is also in Singapore and will attend the same regional meeting as Pompeo on Saturday, but the State Department has not said whether the two will meet.

Following his talks with Ri, China's top diplomat, State Councillor Wang Yi, said he hoped North Korea and the United States continue to move forward to implement their leaders' agreement.

“China all along has believed that the consensus reached by U.S. and North Korea's leaders meeting in Singapore is very precious,” Wang told reporters.

“That is, at the same time as realizing denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, to establish a peace mechanism. This direction is without a doubt correct,” he said.

China is North Korea's most important economic and diplomatic supporter and fought for the North in the 1950-53 Korean War against the U.S.-led United Nations forces that backed South Korea.

Pompeo, who has led the U.S. negotiating effort with North Korea, visited Pyongyang from July 5-7 for inclusive talks aimed at agreeing a denuclearization roadmap. Pompeo said at the time he had made progress on key issues, only for North Korea to accuse his delegation hours later of making “gangster-like” demands.

Trump hailed the Singapore summit as a success and even went as far as saying that North Korea no longer posed a nuclear threat, but questions have been mounting about Pyongyang's willingness to give up its weapons

programs.

Trump has pointed to North Korea's freeze on nuclear and missile tests and its agreement to return remains of Americans killed in the 1950-53 Korea War.

The White House said on Thursday that Trump had received a letter from Kim and had responded with a note that should be delivered shortly. But it said no second meeting was currently planned.

Terrorists ...

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Afghanistan is gripped by insecurity more than 17 years after the United States and its allies invaded the country in 2001 as part of Washington's so-called war on terror.

The offensive removed the Taliban regime from power, but ever since, the group has been involved in widespread militancy, killing thousands of civilians as well as Afghan and foreign forces and displacing tens of thousands of people across the country.

Since late last year, Daesh, which has already lost all its urban strongholds in Syria and Iraq, has also taken advantage of the chaos in Afghanistan and established a foothold in the Asian country's eastern and northern regions, launching brutal attacks against civilians and security forces alike.

Iranians ...

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“We did everything we could to attract foreign investment but without the banks it was limited. The U.S. election in 2016 was always a cloud over the agreement, and in the end it produced the worst possible result.”

There have been other positive signs, with a new central bank governor pledging fresh currency policies in the coming days, and an unprecedented transparency push that has seen dozens of arrests of profiteers with political connections.

But many Iranians are angry with the government for never putting a convincing economic plan together when it had the chance.

“It failed to take advantage when conditions were good,” said Muhammad Reza Behzadian, former head of the Tehran chamber of commerce. “It's much more difficult to act in a crisis.”

World ...

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Zarif also held talks with his Filipino counterpart Alan Peter Cayetano, during which the two sides discussed ways of developing bilateral relations and most important international developments.

The Iranian foreign minister held separate meetings with his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu and Russia's Sergei Lavrov, discussing the 2015 nuclear deal, the upcoming Caspian Sea summit and the Syria crisis.

Zarif earlier met with Singapore's President Halimah Yacob, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan, hailing relations between the two countries and calling for closer cooperation in various fields.

The Iranian foreign minister said all the officials he met expressed their resolve to preserve the JCPOA and use innovative methods to bolster economic relations with Iran.

For 2015 Ankara Bombings

Turkish Court Jails Nine Defendants for Life

ANKARA (Dispatches) – A Turkish court jailed nine defendants for life on Friday for twin bombings in the capital Ankara in 2015 that killed more than 100 people, Turkish broadcasters reported.

The bomb attacks targeted a peace rally of pro-Kurdish and labor activists outside Ankara's

main train station, just weeks before elections.

The Turkish government has declared three days of national mourning over the blasts, with then Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu saying that there were “strong signs” that the attacks were carried out by two bombers

who blew themselves up.

According to a statement released by Davutoglu's office, 245 people were wounded in the attacks, 48 of whom are in critical condition.

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani condemned twin bomb. In a message on Sunday, the Iranian president extended his

condolences to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the Turkish nation.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran, as a victim of terrorism, has always condemned such brutal acts,” Rouhani said, adding that such terrorist activities will lead nowhere.