

President Assad Blasts Europe for ‘Hypocrisy’ in Dealing With Syria



Syrian President Bashar al-Assad is seen in this file photo by SANA.

MOSCOW (Dispatches) – Syrian President Bashar Assad lambasted EU policy toward Syria, accusing European nations of supporting terrorists in the war-torn country and of attempting to push the Syrian people to rise up against the govern-

ment.

In an interview with RT, Assad contemplated the danger of supporting terrorists of European origin who may return to their home countries.

“The most dangerous on Europe

is to support the terrorists in Syria, this is the most dangerous part. So, this is hypocrisy; how can you fear those few millions, the majority of them are moderates and they have few terrorists, while you support those terrorists directly in tens of

thousands at least and maybe hundreds of thousands in Syria and you don’t fear that they’re going to go back to your country,” Assad said in the interview.

Assad went on to criticize the United Kingdom’s seizure of a Syria-bound Iranian tanker earlier this year an act of “piracy” intended to punish the people for siding with the government and not terrorists.

“They wanted to effect the people in Syria, why? Because those people were expected to rise up against their government during different stages of the war, but they didn’t. They were supposed to be supporting the terrorists, the ‘moderate rebels,’ ‘the angels of White Helmets’, but the people didn’t, they stood with their government. So, they have to suffer, they have to pay the price. First of all, they have to learn the lesson that they should have stood with their agenda. Second, this is maybe the last-ditch attempt in order to push them to be against their government,” the Syrian leader said.

The Adrian Darya 1 tanker was detained by British Royal Marine commandos in July off the coast of Gibraltar on suspicion of breaking EU sanctions. Gibraltar eventually released the vessel on August 15.

Iraq’s Umm Qasr Port Reopens, Operations Resume



A view of Umm Qasr Port is seen after protesters blocked its entrance, south of Basra, Iraq November 3, 2019.

BASRA (Dispatches) – Operations have resumed at Iraq’s Umm Qasr commodities port near Basra, a port official says.

All the port’s terminals were operating on Saturday, and ships began to unload cargo at terminals, the source said.

Umm Qasr receives imports of grain, vegetable oils and sugar shipments that feed a country largely dependent on imported food. Operations there had been halted for nearly 10 days as protesters blocked the port’s entrance.

Meanwhile, Iraqi security forces regained control over three bridges in the central parts Baghdad, ending days-long partial blockades of the key passageways into the capital city’s heavily-fortified Green Zone by anti-government protesters.

Iraqi forces were able to disperse protesters from the al-Sinek, al-Shuhada and al-Ahrar bridges and expand the safety buffer around the Green Zone, which is home to the offices of Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi and other government officials as well as foreign diplomatic missions, the AFP reported Saturday.

Over the past two weeks, demonstrators spilling over from Tahrir Square had managed to first take over the al-Jumhuriyah Bridge before occupying

the other three.

Security forces have in recent days tried to keep protesters from crossing the main bridges to the Green Zone, amid attempts by certain elements to infiltrate the area.

On Friday, Iraq’s most prominent Shia cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani called on security forces to avoid using excessive force.

The Iraqi army had warned that its forces will move in to break up any gathering outside Baghdad’s Tahrir Square, emphasizing its determination to put an end to chaos in the streets.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has speculated that he knows who is behind the recent anti-government protests in Iraq.

“We can guess who is behind the unrest in Iraq,” he said on Saturday, concluding that the unnamed conspirators behind the deadly protests in Iraq were after “dividing the Islamic World.”

Protesters in Iraq have directed their rage at a class of elite leaders, whom they accuse of pillaging the oil-rich country’s wealth while the population grows poorer.

The protests, which began more than a month ago, have often turned violent, with security forces opening fire and protesters torching government buildings.

Lebanon’s Grand Mufti Calls for Protesters’ Demands to Be Met

BEIRUT (Dispatches) – Lebanon’s grand mufti has called for the formation of a new emergency government of technical experts and for those in power to meet protesters’ demands.

The country is in political and economic turmoil after three weeks of nationwide protests that prompted Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri to resign last week.

“The time has come to meet the people’s demands and the national free will that transcends sects, political parties, and regions,” Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdul Latif Derian said

in a televised address on the occasion of Prophet Mohammed’s (Peace Be Upon Him) birthday.

“The time has come and is opportune, after this national wake-up call, for the reform process to begin and for those in power to form an emergency government made up of competent people, without delay,” Derian said.

Unemployment stands at more than 20 percent, according to official figures. Growth in Lebanon has plummeted in the wake of endless political deadlocks and an economic

crisis in recent years.

The Lebanese Finance Ministry says the national debt is hovering around \$85 billion, which accounts for more than 150 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Successive governments have failed to address a waste management crisis or improve the electricity grid, which is plagued by daily power cuts.

Hariri submitted his resignation to President Michel Aoun on October 29.

Under the constitution, Hariri’s cabinet would stay on in a caretaker capacity until a new

government is formed.

The protests began on October 17 when the government proposed imposing a tax on Whatsapp calls, along with other austerity measures.

Protesters in Lebanon have stopped blocking roads and setting up barricades, and instead shifted to holding sit-ins at state-affiliated sites.

They say they will maintain pressure on the political establishment until their demands for the departure of the ruling elite and an end to chronic economic mismanagement and corruption are met.

‘UAE Using Total Gas Facility in Yemen as Secret Prison’

SANAA (Press TV) – The United Arab Emirates is running a secret prison in a gas facility operated by the French group Total in southern Yemen, according to information confirmed by France’s Le Monde daily.

The detainees of the prison -- which is located in the industrial port town of Balhaf -- have suffered inhumane treatment and endured acts of torture with the knowledge of the UAE forces, the French newspaper reported Friday.

Total owns 39.6% of the gas liquefaction complex in the southern Balhaf region.

Le Monde obtained testimonies from a former prisoner and a relative of another detainee, who confirmed that the prison inside the Yemeni gas complex had held detainees until the middle of this year.

The French newspaper says it has drawn information from testimonies collected by Amnesty International, as well as a group of UN experts on Yemen.

Various non-governmental organizations and Yemeni activists have also confirmed the existence of the prison inside a military base set up

by the UAE in the same place.

Last year, a report by the Associated Press revealed that hundreds of detainees have suffered torture and sexual abuse by Emirati officers at the jails which the UAE runs in war-torn Yemen.

Citing victims and witnesses, the AP reported that the detainees, who are held without charge, have been sodomized, raped, probed and stripped down in at least five prisons.

Amnesty International said it had also documented “systematic grave violations” in UAE-run jails in Yemen. The group called the AP report “shocking,” saying U.S. officials “continue to dismiss these credible allegations.”

Militants backed by the UAE have reportedly kidnapped and tortured hundreds of people in southern Yemen.

The kidnapping spree took place under the pretext of clearing out suspected al-Qaeda-linked elements.

Last month, head of Yemen’s National Committee for Prisoners Affairs (NCPA) Abdulqader al-Mortada blamed Saudi Arabia and the

United Arab Emirates for obstructing prisoner swaps with Yemen’s Houthis.

The agreements had been agreed upon during UN-sponsored Yemeni peace negotiations in Sweden last year, but Mortada said Riyadh was insisting on the release of Saudi troopers only.

The United Arab Emirates is Saudi Arabia’s key partner in its deadly war against Yemen, which was launched in March 2015, with the goal of bringing the government of Hadi back to power and crushing the Houthi movement.

The U.S.-based Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), a nonprofit conflict-research organization, estimates that the Saudi war has claimed more than 100,000 lives over the past four and a half years.

Besides playing a significant part in aerial assaults and deploying troops to Yemen, the UAE has been training the pro-Saudi militants fighting on the ground against the Yemeni armed forces.

Yemen’s southern regions are mostly controlled by UAE-backed militants loyal to the former government.

Turkey Slams U.S. Claims About Syrian Oil Fields

ANKARA (Dispatches) – U.S. claims about Syria’s oil fields are absolutely illegitimate and have no basis in international law, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu says.

“They [the U.S.] acknowledge and openly state that they are present there [in Syria] because of oil fields. No one has a right to Syrian resources. They came here, travelling across thousands of kilometers, and said ‘We will evaluate the oil fields of this country’. This contradicts the norms of international law,” Cavusoglu said, his remarks quoted by the A Haber TV channel.

In recent weeks, U.S. President Donald Trump has repeatedly stated that the U.S. would be “keeping the oil” of Syria, with Pentagon Chief Mark Esper confirming that the U.S. mission in Syria will now be to prevent the country’s oil stocks from falling into the hands of either terrorists or the Damascus government.

The statements were made as the U.S. had pulled troops out of areas of northern Syria, including near sensitive areas between

Kurdish-controlled areas and the Turkish border, shortly before Turkey began an incursion into northern Syria.

Trump’s remarks on oil have led to criticism, both in the U.S. and abroad, about how Washington’s policy may violate international laws against pillaging, with Syrian President Bashar Assad recently praising Trump for at least being straightforward about the “criminal” nature of U.S. policy against his country.

The Russian foreign ministry along with Iran have condemned the U.S. seizure of Syria’s oil, stressing that this resource belongs to the Syrian people and that Damascus should be in control of its own national wealth.

This week, anonymous U.S. officials told AP that up to 800 U.S. troops may be kept in Syria to ‘protect’ oil fields in Syria’s northeast, including in the oil and gas-rich province of Dayr al-Zawr. Later, amid criticism of U.S. policy, a Pentagon spokesman told reporters that the revenues from Syrian oil under U.S. control would go to its Syrian Kurdish allies.