

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) – A Turkish court has ordered prominent journalist and author Ahmet Altan back to jail, a week after he was released from prison following a retrial on coup-related charges. Before his release last Monday, Altan had been in jail since his arrest in 2016 following an attempted coup which Ankara says was orchestrated by the network of U.S.-based cleric Fethullah Gulen. The court order to re-arrest Altan cited a risk of flight, the gravity of his crimes and his lack of remorse among the reasons for the detention order. Altan, 69, smiled and waved late on Tuesday as he was driven away by counter-terrorism police officers after being taken from his Istanbul home, videos and photos on Turkish media showed.

Blessed is the man who always kept the life after death in his view, who remembered the Day of Judgment through all his deeds, who led a contented life and who was happy with the lot that Allah had destined for him.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

# Protests in Lebanon Flare, One Killed



*Lebanese students wave national flags as they gather in an anti-government demonstration in the southern city of Sidon on November 6, 2019.*

BEIRUT (Dispatches) – Lebanese protesters blocked main roads Wednesday, angered by what they viewed as the president ignoring their demands in nearly a month of rallies, and after a man was shot dead.

Hundreds marched towards the pal-

ace of President Michel Aoun in the town of Baabda outside the capital, where security forces laid coils of barbed wire across the access road.

Aoun had said on television the previous night that Lebanese who did not see any decent person in power

should “emigrate” -- a comment that, despite the presidency scrambling to clarify it, immediately sent protesters onto the streets.

One man died of gunshot wounds overnight after the army opened fire to disperse protesters south of the

capital, in the second such death since the start of the largely peaceful protests.

Activists blocked roads inside the capital from the morning, as they did the main highways connecting Beirut to the north and south of the country, with the smoke of burning tires blackening the air in several places.

Lebanon’s unprecedented protest movement has since October 17 called for a complete overhaul of a system they charge is incapable of providing the most basic services and siphoning off state funds.

After the government stepped down on October 29, protesters demanded a fresh cabinet of experts. But Aoun in the interview argued that a government made up solely of technocrats would not be able to set policies and would not represent the people.

He criticized the street movement’s lack of leadership, after previously saying he would be prepared to meet representatives to hear their demands.

The Lebanese Finance Ministry says the country’s national debt is hovering around \$85 billion, which accounts for more than 150 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP).

More than 25 percent of the Lebanese live in poverty, according to the World Bank.

## Demonstrations in Iraq Continue, Gov’t Pushes Reforms

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – Rallies continued in Iraq’s capital and south Wednesday but the government pushes for reforms in order to put an end to weeks of demonstrations.

Protests demanding a new leadership have rocked the capital and south for weeks.

They dimmed for a few days in Baghdad and major southern cities but flared again Wednesday with demonstrations by striking students and teachers.

“We’re here to back the protesters and their legitimate demands, which include teachers’ rights,” said Aqeel Atshan, a professor on strike in Baghdad’s Tahrir (Liberation) Square, the epicenter of the protest move-

ment.

In the southern port city of Basra, around 800 students returned to camp outside the provincial government headquarters days after they had been pushed out.

Schools were also shut in the protest hotspots of Diwaniyah and Nasiriyah.

Protesters have felt revived after the country’s top Shia religious authority Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani said they “cannot go home without sufficient reforms”.

“Students, boys and girls alike, are all here for a sit-in,” another demonstrator in Tahrir told AFP.

Demonstrations erupted on October 1 in fury over a lack

of jobs and corruption, initially fracturing the ruling class.

Cleric Moqtada Sadr took to Twitter on Wednesday to call on parliament to enact reforms and for “a general strike, even for one day,” but did not demand the premier step down.

Sadr also lashed out at the United States for its interference in Iraq’s internal affairs, threatening to take millions of demonstrators to streets if Washington keeps meddling in the Arab country.

Iraqi President Barham Salih says reforms that the government of embattled Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi has pledged to implement in the wake of anti-government pro-

tests are a domestic Iraqi issue par excellence and will not be influenced by foreign diktats.

Salih, in a statement, announced that the expected reforms in Iraq are merely an Iraqi decision and will be implemented in response to the national will of the Iraqi people, and will be untouched by outside influences.

The statement added that the Iraqi president opposes any foreign interference in Iraq’s internal affairs, and will not accept it.

It further noted that Iraqi people make decisions within the framework of the constitution and based on national interests and respect for the will of the supreme religious authority.

## Kabul Car Bomb Kills 12, Including Kids



*This image purportedly shows Afghan security forces and medics at a bombing scene in the capital Kabul on November 13, 2019.*

KABUL (Dispatches) – A car bombing in Kabul during morning rush hour on Wednesday targeted a private security company’s convoy with officials saying 12 people were killed, including children.

The attack also wounded 20 people, including four of the company’s foreign staff, but their nationalities were not released. Reports in the immediate aftermath of the attack said seven died but a new death toll was later released.

The explosion occurred in the Qasaba area in the Afghan capital. The GardaWorld security company - based in Montreal, Canada - was the apparent target, according to Nasrat Rahimi, an interior ministry spokesman.

A vehicle belonging to the security company and two private cars were damaged in the attack, Rahimi added.

Ambulance sirens were heard shortly after the car bomb went off and a large plume of smoke rose from the area - scenes all too familiar for Kabul and other cities and towns across Afghanistan.

Among those killed were 12-year-old Dunya and her 7-year old brother who were on their way to school.

The two children were walking with their father when the car-bomb detonated. The father, who

was severely wounded and lost a leg and a hand, was in hospital, according to reports on social media. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack.

The Taliban and Daesh are active in the capital and have previously claimed attacks in Kabul.

The Taliban control or hold sway over half of Afghanistan, staging near-daily attacks that target Afghan forces and government officials but also kill scores of civilians.

In other violence, at least four Afghan army soldiers were killed on Monday night during an air strike by U.S. forces in eastern Logar province, said Anwar Khan Ishaqzai, the provincial governor. Six other troops were wounded in the attack near Puli Alam, the provincial capital.

The air strike came as a gun battle was under way between the army and the Taliban in the area, the governor said, adding an investigation was started into the “friendly fire” strike.

The violence came a day after President Ashraf Ghani announced the government in Kabul would release three high-ranking Taliban prisoners in an apparent prisoner swap for Western hostages who had been kidnapped by the group in 2016.

## U.S. in Talks With Russia on Returning Daesh Detainees From Syria

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – The United States is engaged in talks with Russia on the issue of the return of Russian foreign militants who are detained in Syria, a senior U.S. State Department official has told reporters.

“We’ve also been talking with the Russians. There are large numbers of detainees and family members from Russia”, the State Department official said. “The Russians have shown some interest in getting these people back, but that’s still in an early stage”.

The official noted the slow progress regarding the return of the foreign Daesh terrorists to foreign countries.

“We do this country by country. It requires a lot of background on the legal situation in the country, logistics of coordinating to get the people out”, the official said. “We’ve had some success with the Middle Eastern countries. We’ve had some success with Central Asian countries. We’ve seen

people being taken back to Europe only by, I believe, Bosnia, Kosovo, and one person taken back by Italy. Given that there are hundreds of people being held from Europe, Western Europe, and Central Europe, we are very troubled by this and it’s a major issue of diplomatic discussion”.

The official also pointed out that Washington is confident in the ability of the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to secure the detention facilities.

The Syrian Democratic Council (SDC), the political arm of the Kurdish-led SDF, is “desperate” for funding to protect the prisons with captured foreign militants who had joined terrorist groups, the co-chair of SDC Executive Council Ilham Ehmed said earlier in November.

Guarding captured terrorists became an issue in October when Turkey launched an incursion into northeastern Syria, where the SDF are operating.

## Egypt Pressed on Alleged Torture, Mass Arrests at UN Review

GENEVA (Dispatches) – Western countries have urged Egypt to investigate alleged killings and torture by its security forces and to release journalists and others arrested for exercising their right to freedom of expression.

Egypt has been trying to deflect criticism of its rights record and prison conditions ahead of the United Nations review that follows a new wave of arrests. Cairo says it is trying to balance fighting terrorism with respecting rights.

The UN Human Rights Council in Geneva is reviewing Egypt’s record for the first time in five years as part of a regular examination of all UN member states.

“While recognizing the terrorism threat Egypt faces, we call upon the government to better counter that threat by easing restrictions on freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly, and association, and

by ensuring fair trial guarantees,” rights counselor Daniel Kronenfeld told the Council.

Kronenfeld urged Egypt to “address impunity by credibly investigating allegations of extrajudicial killings, torture, and forced disappearances by security forces, publicly release findings, and prosecute those responsible”.

The United States left the UN forum in 2018 and only attends the reviews of member states.

Britain and Sweden also voiced concern at Egypt’s restrictions on activists, including through arrests, travel bans and asset freezes.

The head of Egypt’s delegation defended the record of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi’s government, saying there was a “blanket prohibition” on torture, though he added there may be “isolated cases”.

“During the past five years, many criminal and disciplinary actions were taken for incidents related

to torture, many trials were organized against perpetrators of torture and ill-treatment,” said Omar Marwan, Minister of Parliamentary Affairs.

Egypt’s latest wave of arrests, which rights activists say was the most intensive for years, came after rare protests against Sisi in Cairo and other cities in late September.

Around 3,000 people, including lawyers and academics, are being held under charges such as using social media to spread false news, joining a banned terrorist group, and protesting without a permit, the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms says.

Criticism from Western powers keen to develop security and economic ties with Sisi’s Egypt has been muted, and the session in Geneva provides a rare forum in which they can pose questions publicly.