

GAZA (Xinhua) – An explosion in a house in the northern Gaza Strip wounded at least 27 Palestinians on Saturday, Palestinian medics and security officials said. The security sources said that an explosion in a house wrecked the town of Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip. The cause is not immediately known. Medics said at least 27 citizens were injured, adding that the injured ones were taken to hospital for treatment. Meanwhile, Eyad al-Bozzom, the Interior Ministry spokesman, said in a press statement that the explosion caused severe destruction to the house and the other neighboring houses in the town.

People in this world are like travelers whose journey is going on though they are asleep. (Life's journey is going on though men may not feel it.)

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

## Asa'ib: Saudi-UAE Fingerprints Evident in Baghdad Blasts

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – Iraq's Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq movement, a subdivision of anti-terror Popular Mobilization Forces (PMU) or Hashd al-Sha'abi, says Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are behind the twin bomb blasts in the capital Baghdad which left scores dead and injured.

Saad al-Saadi, a member of Asa'ib's political bureau, told Lebanon's al-Mayadeen TV channel that the fingerprints of the Al Saud and Al Nahyan regimes are evident in the attacks.

Asa'ib spokesman Jawad Al-Talibawi took to Twitter to say that Saudi Arabia had once again mobilized its agents to shed the blood of the Iraqi nation after former U.S. president Donald Trump's criminal role came to an end in Iraq.

He warned that the Iraqi fighters will not remain indifferent in the face of the crimes committed by Riyadh.

Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi announced the firing of five senior security officials, stressing that he would personally oversee reforms to address "challenges" facing intelligence services in the country.

Following a Friday meeting with Defense Minister Juma Inad, Interior Minister Othman Al-Ghanimi and security chiefs in the aftermath of the twin bombings at a popular market in Baghdad that left 32 dead



A view shows the site of a bomb attack in Baghdad, Iraq, on January 21, 2021. (Photo by Reuters)

and 110 wounded, Al-Kadhimi asserted that he would personally oversee the security "challenges" in the country.

The Baghdad bombings were the deadliest in nearly three years. The first attacker drew a crowd at the bustling market in Tayaran Square by claiming to feel sick, and then detonated his explosives belt. As more people then flocked to the scene to help the victims, a second bomber set off his explosives.

The U.S.-sponsored Daesh terrorist group claimed responsibility for the attack.

Officials described it as a possible sign of the reactivation of the group. It came after recent reports said the

U.S. military had transferred Daesh prisoners to the Iraqi-Syrian border. American forces used helicopters to relocate the Daesh inmates from prisons in Hasakah province in northeast Syria to the Iraqi border, Lebanon's Al Mayadeen TV quoted local sources as saying last week.

In a statement, Al-Kadhimi declared that officials who are not capable of protecting citizens must "step down from their position."

Al-Kadhimi indicated that the bombing was a "breach" that would not be allowed to occur again. "We promised our people security," he said, "and this breach is an indication that there is a defect that must be urgently addressed."

Kata'ib Hezbollah group, another PMU faction, said the bombings were meant to implement the U.S. plot in the region and keep its forces in Iraq under security pretexts.

Saudi Arabia wants to bring war into Iraq in line with Trump's self-proclaimed "deal of the century", pushing Baghdad towards normalization with the Zionist regime, Kata'ib spokesman Muhammad Mohi stressed.

He further noted that some terrorist groups are being trained at American bases inside Syria as well as the Iraqi borders with Syria and Jordan.

Nouri al-Maliki, former Iraqi prime minister and current head of State of Law coalition, called for a comprehensive investigation into the terrorist attacks to determine whether they were supported from or planned abroad.

In a post on his Twitter account, he called for severe punishment of the military and security officials who will be found guilty of negligence.

The United Nations Security Council on Friday condemned the terrorist attack in Baghdad.

In a press statement, members of the Security Council expressed their deepest sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims and to the government of Iraq, and wished a speedy and full recovery to those injured.

## Fighting Continues in Afghanistan Amid Talks



In this May 19, 2020 photo, Afghan security forces are seen amid ongoing fighting between Taliban militants and the security forces, in Kunduz Province, Afghanistan.

KABUL (Dispatches) – In the conflict-battered Afghanistan fighting continues as more than 50 militants have been killed over the past 24 hours amid the ongoing talks in Doha, officials said Saturday.

In the latest wave of violent incidents, the armed militants attacked police in Kocha-e-Dash area of Police District 11 of Herat city, the capital of the western Herat province, on Saturday killing one police constable and wounding two others, provincial police spokesman Abdul Ahad Walizada said.

According to the official, two attackers have been arrested.

The ongoing conflicts, according to security officials, have left more than 50 dead with majority of them Taliban militants over the past 24 hours in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's 20 out of 34 provinces, according to media, have been the scene of fighting over the past two days.

Increase in fighting has been seen amid the ongoing Afghan talks in Qatar's capital Doha.

The Afghan peace talks which begun on Sept. 12 following the U.S.-Taliban so-called peace deal

inked in late February last year to end the U.S.'s longest war, paved the way for the pullout of thousands of U.S. troops in Afghanistan and facilitate the intra-Afghan dialogue has made little progress to achieve the goals.

In a new twist, the White House announced that the United States will review the agreement reached with the Taliban last year.

Contrary to expectations, the talks have failed to reduce violence and security incidents in Afghanistan.

Welcoming the decision by the new U.S. administration, Afghan government presidential spokesman Sediq Sediqi, according to local media, said Saturday that the U.S.-Taliban peace deal inked during Trump's administration had failed to control violence or to pave the way for ceasefire in Afghanistan.

Expressing concerns over increase in violent incidents, Chairman of High Council for National Reconciliation Abdullah Abdullah on Saturday said that the security incidents have increased, while Afghans need the ceasefire to make the talks succeed.

## Saudi Regime Claims 'Hostile Target' Intercepted

RIYADH (Dispatches) – Saudi Arabia claimed it intercepted an apparent missile or drone attack over Riyadh on Saturday, said state media in the kingdom, which has come under repeated retaliatory attacks from Yemen's Houthi Ansarullah movements since 2015.

Social media users posted videos of what appeared to be an explosion in the air over Riyadh. The incident came at about 11am (08:00 GMT).

"I heard a loud sound and thought that something had fallen from the sky," said one

resident, who lives in the Al-Sulaimaniyah district of Riyadh. "The whole house was shaking."

Saudi Arabia and a number of its regional allies launched the devastating war on Yemen in March 2015 in order to suppress a popular uprising that had toppled a Riyadh-friendly regime.

Houthi fighters launch attacks against Saudi position in retaliation against the deadly campaign.

The Saudi-led coalition said it "intercepted and destroyed a

hostile air target going towards Riyadh", without elaborating, according to state-run Al Ekhbariya television station.

The Ansarullah movement did not immediately acknowledge launching a missile or a drone towards Riyadh on Saturday.

Riyadh's King Khaled International Airport said there were a number of flight delays, but it was not immediately clear if they were linked to Saturday's incident.

The U.S. embassy in Riyadh issued a warning to Americans calling on them to "stay alert

in case of additional future attacks".

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

More than half of Yemen's hospitals and clinics have been destroyed or closed during the war by the Saudi-led coalition, which is supported militarily by the UK, the U.S., and other Western governments.

## UN Expert Slams Egypt's Detention of Activists

NEW YORK (Middle East Eye) – A UN rights expert has condemned Egypt for targeting journalists, human rights defenders and their families, and called on authorities to stop silencing dissent and shrinking civic space in the country.

Mary Lawlor, the UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, said in a statement on Friday that she was "extremely concerned by the seemingly unrelenting efforts of the Egyptian authorities to silence dissent... despite repeated calls from UN mechanisms and the international community".

"These individuals should never have been targeted for their human rights activities in the first place, and so I repeat calls for the Egyptian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release all detained human rights defenders, journalists, civil society actors and their family members."

Lawlor specifically pointed to the detention of

blogger Mohamed Ibrahim Radwan, who was charged by the Egyptian government with being a member of a terrorist organization and "misuse of social media" for his coverage of human rights.

She also cited the case of Patrick Zaki, a post-graduate student from Italy who was arrested in February last year while visiting his parents.

According to the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), security forces held Zaki incommunicado for 24 hours and tortured him before charges against him were announced.

"Not only are these human rights defenders, journalists and other civil society actors unduly targeted for their legitimate and peaceful defense of human rights and fundamental freedoms, they are wrongfully accused of belonging to terrorist organizations and portrayed as a national security threat under vague legal provisions," Lawlor said.

A coalition of rights groups, including Reporters Without Borders and Human Rights Watch, sent a letter to the European Union on Thursday, raising concerns over "Egypt's disregard for human rights."

UN experts have previously accused Cairo of using special terrorism courts to imprison rights defenders and also silence dissent.

The special courts were created in 2013 after former military intelligence chief and current Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi overthrew the country's first democratically elected government.

Egypt has embarked on a brutal crackdown on dissent since 2013, jailing more than 60,000 activists and imposing strict censorship measures on public discourse.

Sisi has consistently denied that there are political prisoners in Egypt, framing the crackdown as part of a fight against terrorism.

## Turkish Appeals Court Overturns Acquittal in Gezi Trial

ISTANBUL (Reuters) – A Turkish appeals court has overturned the acquittal of nine people, including philanthropist Osman Kavala, in a case related to nationwide protests in 2013, according to court documents.

The case had ended with the surprise acquittal of nine defendants last February due to insufficient evidence. The trial was followed closely by Turkey's Western allies and rights groups.

The total of 16 defendants in the case were accused of organizing and spreading the 2013 Gezi protests. The cases of seven defendants who did not attend the hearings were separated and their trial continues.

Court documents showed the appeals court had ruled on Friday to overturn the acquittal and sent the case back to the lower court.

Among the reasons for overturning the acquittal, the court said some evidence had not been included in the reasoning for the verdict, and that a second case against Kavala should also be considered while ruling in the Gezi case.

The demonstrations in 2013 saw hundreds of thousands march in Istanbul and elsewhere in Turkey against plans approved by then-premier Erdogan to build a replica Ottoman barracks in the city's Gezi Park.

Critics say Turkey's judiciary has been exploited to punish Erdogan's perceived opponents. The president and his AK Party say the courts make independent decisions.

Among those acquitted last year was philanthropist businessman Kavala, who was accused of financing the protests. He has remained in jail over charges related to a failed coup attempt in 2016 despite the European Court of Human Rights calling for his release.

After the acquittal, Erdogan said the protests were a "heinous attack" aimed at the state. He said the court had "set out to acquit (Kavala) with a maneuver", adding that the second arrest order must be respected.

All defendants in the Gezi trial deny the charges. Kavala also denies the charges related to the coup attempt.