

Death Toll of Afghan Wedding Ceremony Explosion Rises to 80

KABUL (Xinhua) – The death toll of a bomb explosion which struck a wedding hall in the Afghan capital of Kabul has risen to 80, authorities confirmed on Wednesday. “The latest figures released by health authorities found several wounded of Saturday night’s attack have succumbed to their injuries, bringing to 80 the death toll of the incident,” a public health official told Xinhua anonymously. Earlier, the Afghan Interior Ministry announced that 63 people were killed and 182 others wounded when a bomber detonated his suicide vest at the hall packed with guests. The Daesh terrorist group has claimed responsibility for the deadly attack.

Thought for Today

He says Pray to Me and I shall accept your prayers. About repentance He says: Whoever has done a bad deed or has indulged in sin and then repents and asks for His forgiveness will find Allah most Forgiving and Merciful.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

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Syrian Envoy to UN:

U.S., Turkey Must End Illegal Presence on Syria Soil



A convoy of Turkish military vehicles passes through the town of Saraqib in the northwestern province of Idlib heading toward the town of Khan Shaykhun in the southern countryside of the province on August 19, 2019.

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – Syria’s UN Ambassador Bashar al-Ja’afari has called on the United States and Turkey to end their “illegal military presence” in the Arab country and crimes against civilians.

Speaking at a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) session on Middle East peace and security challenges in New York, Ja’afari urged Washington and Ankara to

respect the UN Charter’s principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries and refrain from using force against them.

“The United States and its allies, including the Turkish occupation forces, must be obliged to end their illegal military presence on Syrian territory and to stop their aggressive practices in support of

terrorism and their crimes against Syrians, civilian installations and infrastructure,” he said.

He also criticized Turkey for sending a military convoy carrying ammunition into Syria’s Idlib Province in support of the terrorists holed up in the embattled region.

The Syrian envoy further highlighted the need for the world body to stay focused on the real root

causes of the Middle East conflict, including occupation, acts of aggression and destructive interventions in countries’ domestic affairs — such as those aimed at overthrowing governments by force, investing in terrorism and fabricating crises.

“Success in dealing with the challenges facing the region requires upholding the principles of international law and the provisions of the UN Charter and stopping attempts to distort and manipulate its provisions,” he said.

Ja’afari also described the Zionist regime’s occupation of Arab territories as the main reason for the crisis in the region.

“The main cause of the conflicts in the Middle East and the inability to achieve peace and stability has been and continues to be the Israeli occupation of Arab territories, including the occupied Syrian Golan,” he said.

Ja’afari further expressed concerns about the regime’s accumulation of weapons of mass destruction, saying it should join the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) without delay and subject its facilities to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)’s safeguards regime.

Iraq ‘Has Proof’ Zionist Drones Hit Bases With U.S. Consent



This black smoke is seen rising in the sky following several blasts at a position of Iraqi pro-government of pro-government Popular Mobilization Units, better known by the Arabic word Hashd al-Sha’abi, near Balad air base north of Baghdad, Iraq, on August 20, 2019.

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – Explosions that rocked two Iraqi military bases held by the country’s popular Hash al-Shaabi forces were the result of the Zionist regime’s unmanned aircraft strikes, a member of the Security and Defense Committee in the Iraqi parliament, Karim Alaiwi, told Lebanese broadcaster al-Mayadeen.

“We have proof that Israeli air forces hit several targets in Iraq, including the al-Saqr and Amerli bases. Israel claims that the Popular Mobilization Forces have connections to Iran and Lebanon’s Hezbollah,” the lawmaker claimed. According to Alaiwi, the occupying regime is vying to weaken the popular forces through such airstrikes and even kill their members. He noted that Iraqi airspace is controlled by the U.S. Air Force, indicating that the regime could not have struck the bases without Washington knowing it.

However, the Iraqi planes failed to detect drones in the sky over the bases, the official noted.

Previously, al-Mayadeen reported, citing sources familiar with the matter, that three unmanned aerial vehicles were spotted just before the explosion at the al-Saqr base.

An unnamed security source said thick plumes of black smoke are seen billowing from the site, adding that the circumstances surrounding the incident remain unknown.

However, Fadhil Abu Ragheef, a security expert close to Iraqi intelligence services, said the arms depot of Hashd al-Sha’abi forces had been specifically

targeted.

Hashd al-Sha’abi commanders also confirmed that the intended target of the blasts was the group’s position near Balad base.

Mohammad al-Baldawi, a representative of al-Bina party at the Iraqi parliament, stated that the incident is in line with repeated attacks against Hashd al-Sha’abi positions.

On August 13, Abu Ragheef had told Russia’s RT Arabic television news network that there is information that the Israeli military was planning to launch airstrikes against the arms depots of Hashd al-Sha’abi forces.

“Available information suggests that Israel is preparing to bomb the weapons caches of Hashd al-Sha’abi forces, and not the command centers or fortifications of the fighters. This is quite likely to happen,” he said.

He added that a powerful explosion, which rocked a military base in southern Baghdad on August 12, could be part of the Zionist regime’s scenario. Sayf al-Badr, spokesman of the Iraqi Health Ministry, said in a statement that at least one person was killed and 29 others were wounded in the blast.

In January, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo hinted during a visit to Iraq that the Israeli regime could launch attacks against Hashd al-Sha’abi forces, who played a key role in the Iraqi army’s counter-terrorism battles against the Daesh terror group and helped the government to rid the country of the Takfiri outfit in late 2017.

‘Tlaib Wants to Cut Off U.S. Aid to Zionist Regime’

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – U.S. President Donald Trump has said that Democratic Representative Rashida Tlaib “wants to cut off aid to Israel,” a day after he called Jewish people who vote for Democrats “disloyal.”

“Rep Tlaib wants to cut off aid to Israel. This is the new face of the Democrat Party?” he tweeted on Wednesday. “Read the AOC PLUS 3 statements on their hatred of Jews and Israel,” Trump tweeted, in reference to Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.), another frequent target

of his tweets.

The Tel Aviv regime last week banned Muslim Congresswomen Tlaib and Ilhan Omar from travelling to al-Quds and the occupied West Bank, after Trump urged the Zionist regime to not allow them to travel to the occupied Palestinian territories, saying it would show great “weakness.”

Tlaib and Omar, the first two Muslim women elected to Congress, are outspoken critics of the regime’s policies toward the Palestinians and vocal supporters of the Boycott,

Divest and Sanction movement (BDS).

Tlaib, with Palestinian roots and Omar, with a Somali origin, were scheduled to arrive in the Palestinian occupied territories last week on a trip that was initially approved by the regime. But Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, under pressure from Trump, announced that the regime had reversed its position.

The Zionist regime then granted Tlaib permission to visit her Palestinian grandmother in the occupied West

Bank, but the lawmaker rejected the regime’s offer, accusing it of using her family as leverage against her.

Tlaib’s grandmother – Muftiyah Tlaib – lives in the village of Beit Ur al-Fauqa in the West Bank, located about 24 kilometers from the occupied al-Quds.

On Monday, Omar said that billions of dollars of U.S. aid to the Zionist regime should be tied to its treatment of Palestinians, urging Washington to reconsider the funds to the Tel Aviv regime which is engaged in oppression of the Palestinian people.

Dozens Detained in Protest Over Elected Turkish Mayors’ Ouster

ANKARA (AP) – Turkish media reports say police have used water cannons to disperse crowds protesting a government decision to oust three elected mayors in Turkey’s mainly Kurdish-populated southeast and replace them with government appointees.

The private DHA news agency said at least 30 people were detained in the city of Diyarbakir Wednesday, on the third day of protests over the mayors’ dismissal.

The government removed the mayors of Diyarbakir, Mardin and Van from office over alleged links to militants of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party, or PKK, citing ongoing investigations or trials against them.

The mayors, members of the pro-Kurdish Peo-

ple’s Democratic Party, or HDP, were elected into office in local elections in March.

The Interior Ministry announced in a statement on Monday that Adnan Selcuk Mizrakli, Ahmet Turk and Bedia Ozgokce Ertan -- respectively the mayors of the southeastern provinces of Diyarbakir and Mardin as well as the eastern Van province -- had been suspended.

It added that the mayors – all members of the pro-Kurdish Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) which Turkey’s government has accused of having links to the PKK terror group – had active cases against them in which they were accused of crimes such as establishing or spreading propaganda for the militant group, or just being a member.

The charges included attending funerals and visiting graves of “terrorists”, renaming streets and parks after imprisoned PKK members, and offering jobs to the Kurdish militants’ relatives.

The interior ministry said the mayors’ roles would be taken over by their provincial governors, who are appointed by the central government.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has repeatedly claimed the HDP has ties to the PKK. The HDP denies any affiliation to the Kurdish militant group, but has tried to broker peace talks between the militants and Ankara government.

The PKK is considered a terror organization by Turkey, the United States and the European Union.

UN Envoy Arrives in Yemen’s Capital to Meet Houthis

SANAA (Dispatches) – The United Nations Special Envoy to Yemen Martin Griffiths has arrived in the capital Sanaa to meet Houthi Ansarullah movements leaders over stalled “peace” talks.

Talks between Houthis and the exiled regime have been stalled since they reached a UN-sponsored cease-fire agreement in Stockholm in December last year over the country’s Red Sea port city of Hudaydah.

Both Yemeni warring parties have failed to implement the deal or withdraw their forces from Hudaydah. The Houthis are still holding the port city while the former regime forces backed by a Saudi-led coalition are stationing on the southern outskirts of Hudaydah.

Meanwhile, the leader of southern Yemeni separatists has arrived in Saudi Arabia for talks

aimed at ending a standoff in Aden port between the separatists and Yemen’s Saudi-backed former regime, who had been nominal allies under a military coalition.

Saudi Arabia, the coalition leader, called for a summit after the separatists on Aug. 10 took over Aden in a move that fractured the alliance. The ousted Yemeni regime and coalition partner the United Arab Emirates traded blame over the crisis late on Tuesday.

It was not clear if a delayed meeting involving both Yemeni sides would go ahead after the separatists extended their grip on the south on Tuesday by seizing military camps in nearby Abyan.

The separatist fighters are part of the Saudi-led alliance that intervened in Yemen in March 2015.