



Muslims worldwide celebrate Eid al-Adha 2

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Assad vows to retake all of Syria

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad vowed to retake all of Syria from the terrorists, hours before a truce brokered by Russia and the United States was due to take hold on Monday.

Speaking in Daraya, a former terrorist stronghold recently surrendered to the government, Assad said, "The Syrian state is determined to recover every area from the terrorists," AFP reported.

"The armed forces are continuing their work, relentlessly and without hesitation, regardless of internal or external circumstances," he said.

Assad made a rare public appearance to celebrate the Muslim Eid al-Adha holiday in Daraya, where state media showed him attending prayers at the Saad bin Moaz mosque.

After years of government fighting, its remaining residents and terrorists evacuated the town in late August under a deal with the government, which has since retaken control.

"After five years, some people still haven't woken up from their fantasies," Assad said, referring to the anti-government protests that erupted in Syria in 2011.

"Some were betting on promises from foreign powers, which will result in nothing," he added.

Assad was joined at the prayers by a number of members of the ruling Baath Party, as well as several ministers and members of Parliament.

The mufti, or Muslim cleric, presiding over the prayers, hailed Daraya as an example for Syria, which has been ravaged by conflict since 2011.

"Daraya is living proof for all Syrians that the only option available to you is reconciliation and abandoning fighting," said Adnan al-Afiyuni, mufti for Damascus Province.

Foreign-backed forces said they had been forced to agree the deal with the government after the siege created a humanitarian crisis for Daraya's remaining residents.

But the government has touted the deal, and other similar agreements, as the best way to achieve local cease-fires and end the violence.

More than 290,000 people have been killed and over half the population displaced since the conflict began.

Terms of cease-fire

The cease-fire deal, announced on Friday after marathon talks between Russia and the United States, has been billed as the best chance yet to halt the bloodshed in Syria's five-year war.

As well as bringing a temporary end to the fighting, it aims to provide crucial aid to hundreds of thousands of desperate civilians.

Under the deal, an initial 48-hour cease-fire began at 7:00 p.m. local time (1600 GMT), halting fighting in areas not held by terrorists like the Daesh group.

Aid deliveries to the country's many besieged and "hard-to-reach" areas simultaneously begin, with government and foreign-backed terrorists ensuring unimpeded humanitarian access in particular to the divided and devastated city of Aleppo.

The cease-fire will be renewed every 48 hours and, if it holds for a week, Moscow and Washington will begin unprecedented joint targeting of terrorists including Daesh and the former Al-Qaeda affiliate Fateh al-Sham Front.

FM: Saudi Arabia's sectarian policies serve arrogant powers

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said Saudi Arabia has taken the holy sites of Islam hostage in order to implement its spiteful policies and serve the arrogant powers and the Israeli regime.

"The Al Saud regime, which has brazenly revealed its age-old alliance with the Zionist enemy, is taking the holy Islamic sites hostage to realize its lowly and spiteful sectarian and political policies and use them to serve the arrogance and the Zionism," Zarif said in a message on Sunday to commemorate the first anniversary of a deadly crush during last year's Hajj rituals in Mina, near the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia, Press TV reported.

The tragic Mina incident took place when two large masses of pilgrims converged at a crossroads during the symbolic ceremony of the stoning of Satan in Jamarat.

According to a count by the Associated Press, more than 2,400 people, including at least 460 Iranian pilgrims, lost their lives in the incident on September 24, 2015. Iran had the highest confirmed death toll among foreign nationals in the Mina stampede, Saudi Arabia claims that nearly 770 people had been killed in the incident.

Iran has canceled the participation of its pilgrims in this year's Hajj pilgrimage, which started on Saturday, due to Saudi Arabia's creation of obstacles in the way of Muslims seeking to perform the rituals.

Zarif further said the "unlimited obstinacy, imbecility, bigotry, and wealth of Saudi rulers have turned Al Saud into a ruthless and irrational regime" which has plunged the Middle East and the entire world into the "most deplorable and disastrous" conditions in modern history by creating, nurturing and spreading terrorism.

Regional governments and nations are now targeted by the Saudi regime's "imprudent spite and malevolence," he added.

The top diplomat emphasized that "suspicious, filthy, and evil hands" can be seen not only behind the Mina tragedy but in all crises that have plagued sensitive areas in the Middle East, from Bahrain to Yemen and from Iraq to Syria and Lebanon and even during the annual Hajj season in the territories where the Holy Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

These hands have targeted the fate of Muslim nations and the unity of the Muslim world in its confrontation with the common danger of Zionism and international terrorism, he added.

Zarif emphasized that the Iranian Foreign Ministry always considers itself as responsible regarding the life, dignity and property of Iranians outside the country and attaches the highest priority to such an Islamic and national undertaking in all of its interactions, consultations and relations with other countries and the international community.

The minister expressed regret that after the attack on the Saudi embassy in Tehran in January, Riyadh used the move as a pretext to block all paths for pursuing the issue of Mina crush with the purpose of evading responsibility vis-à-vis the victims and avoiding apology.

Saudi Arabia gave no response to the Islamic Republic's initiatives and efforts such as a proposal to set up a fact-finding Islamic committee via the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, he said, adding that Riyadh also refrained from giving a response to voluntary bids by some Muslim countries in the region to investigate the consequences of last year's bloody Hajj.

Despite all Saudi regime's acts of obstruction, the Iranian Foreign Ministry would proceed with efforts to restore the rights of the victims of the Mina disaster, Zarif pointed out.

Israeli MP slams Tel Aviv for aiding terrorists in Syria

An Israeli lawmaker criticized the Tel Aviv regime for supporting terrorists who are fighting in Syria to topple its government.

In a Facebook post on Sunday, Akram Hasson said the Fateh al-Sham terrorist group, formerly known as Nusra Front, is operating in Syria with "unprecedented logistical and medical" support from Israel and that the regime is directly aiding the group in the battles on the Syrian side of the Golan Heights.

Hasson said that since the weekend, the quiet village of Khadr near the Syrian border has been subject to persistent bombardments by Fateh al-Sham terrorists, Haaretz reported.

"We have gotten information from all fronts and from people who are responsible within the village that the Nusra Front is operating with unprecedented support from Israel, because the organization's terrorists are advancing in those places where the Israeli forces had previously bombed Syrian positions and the organization is holding those positions, in addition to the logistical and medical assistance it's getting from Israel."

Citing eyewitnesses, Hasson said that the Fateh al-Sham terrorists have advanced technological equipment that gives them an advantage over Assad's forces. "To date dozens have fallen and the fighting continues, all with Israeli support," he wrote.

"This new strategy led by Lieberman since he took office has strengthened the Nusra Front," Hasson wrote.



Afghanistan close to peace deal with warlord

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said on Monday a peace agreement with one of the country's most notorious warlords is close to being concluded, offering hope of progress toward ending decades of conflict.

Negotiations with Hizb-i-Islami, a group of several hundred militants led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a veteran of almost 40 years of fighting in Afghanistan, have been going on since May, when a draft accord was signed, Reuters reported.

But a final agreement has been held up with many on the government side suspicious of bringing the prominent Pashtun warlord into the political fold and civil rights activists concerned about longstanding accusations of human rights abuses against him.

Hekmatyar has been allied at various times with Pakistan, the Washington-backed anti-Soviet fighters in the 1980s and the Taliban, who are seeking to force the NATO-led coalition out of Afghanistan.

"Some issues are left and those are

issues that would be very important for implementing peace," Ghani said at the start of the three-day Eid holiday. "These issues should be solved within a limited period of time."

He thanked both Hizb-i-Islami and the High Peace Council for their efforts to negotiate a deal. "There is hope that, God willing, the agreement will be finalized soon and we will witness a major step toward the creation of peace environment and end of fighting," he said.

Hekmatyar, who was included on the US State Department's Specially Designated Global Terrorist list in 2003, has played relatively little direct part in the insurgency in recent years.

But an accord would offer some encouragement that the Kabul government can persuade militant groups to move away from the battle-

field and into the political process after failed efforts to start peace talks with the Taliban.

During the bloody civil war of the 1990s, Hekmatyar's forces were accused of killing thousands of civilians in heavy bombardments of the Afghan capital and more recently, they were linked with several Al-Qaeda and Taliban attacks on international forces in Afghanistan and the Kabul government.

Peace talks with the Taliban, the largest militant group in Afghanistan, have yet to get off the ground, but both sides have said they are open to the idea.

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Clinton cancels California trip after pneumonia diagnosis

Democratic White House hopeful Hillary Clinton faced questions about her health Monday after being diagnosed with pneumonia and falling ill at a 9/11 ceremony, renewing speculation about her fitness barely eight weeks from Election Day.

Clinton, who was forced to cancel a California fundraising trip on Monday and Tuesday, also faces questions over why her campaign took two days to reveal the pneumonia diagnosis.

A campaign spokesman announced the trip was cancelled just hours after the 68-year-old Democratic presidential candidate abruptly left the Ground Zero memorial in New York on Sunday, suffering from dehydration, AFP wrote.

During the ceremony Clinton "felt overheated" so she left for her daughter Chelsea's apartment "and is feeling much better," the statement said.

The incident, in which a wobbly Clinton appeared to lose her footing as she was helped into her vehicle, was caught on amateur video posted on social media.

The campaign later released a statement from her personal doctor, Lisa Bardack, revealing that Clinton had been diagnosed with pneumonia on Friday and was suffering from dehydration.

The video posted on Twitter showed Clinton appearing unsteady as she waited to enter a vehicle to leave the 9/11 service.

She appeared to stumble as she was helped to the vehicle, and had to be held up on either side by members of her entourage.

A few hours later, Clinton walked out of her daughter's home, smiling and posing for pictures with a young girl before departing for her home in Chappaqua, just northeast of Manhattan.

Trump—who also attended the 9/11 ceremony—was uncharacteristically silent about Clinton's illness, as both took a break from formal campaigning to mark the somber day.

Trump, 70, has said in past weeks that Clinton is "not strong enough to be president" and that she "lacks the mental and physical stamina" for the job.

The root of the claims lies in 2012, when Clinton was nearing the end of her State Department tenure. A stomach virus and dehydration prompted her to faint, causing what her doctor said was a concussion.

They said they found a blood clot on the brain and Clinton temporarily suffered from double vision. She later received the all-clear.