

World News Roundup

Libya

EU gives 46m euros to Italy

Tripoli peace deal masks deep 'rift'

CAIRO/TRIPOLI, July 29, (Agencies): Standing beside French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris this week, Khalifa Haftar, the most powerful military leader in eastern Libya, was smiling when he shook on a deal with the country's prime minister for a ceasefire and Spring elections.

But hours later and away from the diplomatic stage, Haftar exposed the reality of deep fractures in Libya's political landscape, saying any ceasefire was limited, he actually had no interest in elections and Prime Minister Fayed al-Serraj's power-sharing council was in the grip of the terrorists.

Keen to expand the French role in ending Libya's crisis, Macron had applauded the moment as a powerful act for peace among the country's rival armed factions who have skirmished over the oil-producing desert state since the fall of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.

Getting the rivals together for only the second time may have been an achievement. But Haftar's subsequent remarks were a reality check on the complexities of uniting Libya's fractious players and delivering on the ground after years of failed Western efforts to end the crisis.

The Paris deal was meant to revive a stalled UN-brokered deal to end the chaos in the OPEC state that has allowed Islamist militants and people smugglers safe haven, risking regional instability and opening up a flow of illegal migrants across the Mediterranean.



al-Serraj

Excluded

Yet Paris excluded key stakeholders, left major differences about Haftar's role to resolve later and, said Middle East analysts, risked emboldening Haftar further in his military campaign by appearing to bolster his international legitimacy over rivals.

Libya's war is on multiple fronts. Haftar has been battling in the east against an alliance of Islamist militants and ex-rebels in Benghazi and carrying out air strikes on armed groups in Derna.

Clashes among rival brigades sometimes break out over private feuds, but this year, heavy shelling and fighting has erupted several times between forces allied to a previous government and brigades backing Serraj. Haftar had rejected Serraj's UN-backed presidential council, even saying some members belonged to al-Qaeda.

The commander brands most opponents Islamist militants to be defeated as his self-styled Libyan National Army gains ground backed by powerful allies: Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, the United Arab Emirates and Russia.

"The ceasefire is just with moderate parties and youths who have some misdemeanors, we're in contact with them," he told France24 Arabic. "I do not care about elections. I care about the future of Libya as a stable and civil state."

Past attempts to negotiate peace in Libya have been undone by splits within each faction, who are often loose alliances of convenience among brigades of former rebels more loyal to cities, regions or tribes than to the idea of a Libyan nation.



EU gives 46 million euros to Italy: The European Union gave 46 million euros (\$54 million) to Italy on Friday to help it protect Libya's northern and southern borders, part of the bloc's efforts to stem arrival of African migrants across the Mediterranean.

Nearly 95,000 people reached Italy this year, embarking on smugglers' dinghies from the shores of the lawless Libya.

Rome plans to send navy vessels to Libyan waters next month to combat human trafficking, as well as looking to strengthen Libya's southern border, which many migrants cross on their way.

The EU has already deployed its mission further north in the Mediterranean and donated 90 million euros to improving living conditions for migrants stranded in Libya, as well as helping them get back home further south in Africa, to dissuade them from daring the deadly sea passage to arrive in the bloc.

It is supporting the UN-recognised government of Fayed Seraj in Tripoli, as well as training and equipping his coast guard to have it intercept migrants and put them back on shore. The bloc is also trying to step back deportations of those who still make it to Europe, but fail to win asylum.



Italy OKs naval support: Italy on Friday approved sending Italian naval ships to help the Libyan coast guard combat migrant trafficking following a request by the North African nation.

The measure is part of efforts to stanch the flow of hundreds of thousands of migrants who are smuggled out of Libya across the Mediterranean Sea to Europe each year by traffickers using unseaworthy boats.

Premier Paolo Gentiloni, who is under increasing pressure to manage their arrivals in Italy after being rescued at sea, said the initiative to help Libya patrol its shores "can give a significant contribution to reinforcing Libyan sovereignty. It is not an operation that we take against Libya sovereignty."

Details about the operation, including the rules of engagement, were not disclosed following the Cabinet's approval, but Gentiloni said Italy would "not be sending a huge fleet or air squadrons."

Warned

Human Rights Watch warned, however, that the Italian action could amount to a naval blockade that "could expose migrants and asylum seekers to even greater abuse."

"Given the horrible treatment of migrants in Libya, it is difficult to imagine how any European government could disembark anyone there, or hand anyone over to Libyan authorities, while also protecting their rights," Judith Sunderland, the associate Europe director at HRW, said in a statement.



Libya denies accord: Libya's UN-backed unity government chief has denied that an agreement has been struck with Rome to deploy Italian vessels in Libyan waters to combat human trafficking.

Prime Minister Fayed al-Serraj "denies having asked Italy to send naval vessels into Libya's territorial waters ... or fighter planes into Libyan airspace", his Government of National Accord (GNA) said in a statement late on Thursday.

"Such allegations ... are without any foundation," Serraj was quoted as saying in the statement. "Libya's national sovereignty is a red line that nobody must cross."



Palestinians pray outside the Damascus Gate in Jerusalem's Old City. The latest crisis over one of the most combustible spots in the Middle East has been defused, but has pushed the leaders of Israel, Jordan and the Palestinians into taking more uncompromising positions that could easily trigger new tensions. (AP)

Mideast



Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas speaking during a meeting of the Palestinian leadership in the West Bank city of Ramallah. The 82-year-old president was discharged from hospital in the Israel-occupied West Bank on July 29 after a brief 'routine checkup' the official Wafa news agency reported. (AFP)



Malek



Gulen

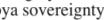
Mideast

Migrant boat sinks off Turkey:

Turkey's state-run news agency says a boat carrying migrants to a Greek island has sunk, killing five children and two adults on board.

Anadolu Agency says the boat sank off the Turkish resort of Cesme late on Thursday. Nine other people — four Iraqis, three Somalis and two Syrians — were rescued. One migrant was reported missing. Anadolu said police are searching for a smuggler who left the boat as it started to sink.

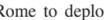
Hundreds of people fleeing poverty and war continue to arrive in Greece each week, although the main migration route to the European Union has shifted, from the short trip between Turkey and the Greek islands to the much longer and more dangerous journey across the Mediterranean from north Africa to Italy. (AP)



Ex-Algerian PM dies: Redha Malek, the last surviving member of Algeria's negotiating team of the March 1962 peace agreement that led to its independence from France, died on Saturday aged 86, state television said.

Malek embarked on an extensive diplomatic career after the Evian accords that ended an uprising against French rule, crafting Algeria's role as a key mediator in the region. He was ambassador to Paris, London, Moscow, Washington and Belgrade, and also held several ministerial portfolios including foreign minister.

Malek was one of the main negotiators during the US hostage crisis in Iran in 1980. He was a member of the high state committee which governed Algeria from 1992 to 1994 during its civil war against armed Islamists. (AFP)



Egypt sentences 8 to death: Egyptian criminal court has preliminarily sentenced eight people to death over charges of murder during an attack on a police station in a Cairo suburb in 2013.

Saturday's ruling referred the case to the Grand Mufti — the country's top theological authority — to solicit his non-binding opinion on the sentences, a formality in cases of capital punishment. The court will issue final sentences on October 10 in the

Israel bars men under 50

Palestinians pray outside holy site

JERUSALEM, July 29, (AFP): Israel barred men under 50 from Friday prayers at a sensitive Jerusalem holy site after two weeks of tensions and deadly unrest, leading thousands of Palestinians to hold mass prayers outside.

Thousands of others entered the Haram al-Sharif compound, known to Jews as the Temple Mount, for prayers after Palestinians ended a boycott of the site the previous day.

Despite fears of violent clashes around the compound, which includes Al-Aqsa mosque and the Dome of the Rock, the area was largely calm following Friday's midday prayers.

Shouted

Dozens of young Palestinians shouted and protested near one entrance to the compound and minor scuffles broke out with police.

Clashes did however erupt between Israeli forces and Palestinians in parts of the occupied West Bank, including in the Nablus, Bethlehem and Hebron areas, the Israeli army said.

A Palestinian also tried to stab soldiers at a junction in the West Bank and was shot dead by Israeli forces, the army said.

And Israeli troops shot dead a Palestinian teenager and wounded seven others during clashes near the border fence in Gaza, Palestinian authorities there said.

The Palestinian Red Crescent said 225 Palestinians were wounded, including at least 87 from live or rubber bullets.

Tensions at the holy site were high — even after thousands of worshippers returned to the compound Thursday, ending a boycott over new security measures set up following an attack that killed two policemen.

The outside prayers on Friday were due to the Israeli age restrictions and were not the start of a new boycott, after Israel removed the security measures this week.

By the evening, the gates to the mosque compound were open and Palestinians of all ages were allowed

in without any restrictions, an Israeli police spokesman and a Palestinian official said.

Police earlier barred men under the age of 50 from praying amid fears of disturbances.

Roads around Jerusalem's Old City, where the mosque compound is located, were closed and some 3,500 police were deployed. Police said people who tried to stay inside Al-Aqsa mosque overnight were removed.

"It is a cowardly act," Amjad Hasoun, a young man from Jerusalem, said of the age restriction.

At least 187 people were wounded inside the mosque compound and in adjacent areas as clashes erupted on Thursday, the Red Crescent said. Police said stones were thrown at officers.

Amnesty International said Israeli security forces fired "stun grenades, tear gas and sponge-tipped bullets into a peaceful crowd" at an entrance to the compound.

Tensions

The United States lauded "the efforts undertaken to de-escalate tensions in Jerusalem".

Jordan, the custodian of Jerusalem's Muslim holy sites, welcomed the removal of the security measures but said Israel should not provoke Palestinians there.

"Unless Israel acts responsibly, then we'll be facing another crisis that will push us all towards the abyss," Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi said.

Deadly unrest had erupted in the days after the new measures were introduced, with clashes breaking out around the compound, and in the West Bank, leaving six Palestinians dead.

A Palestinian also broke into a home in a Jewish settlement in the West Bank and stabbed four Israelis on July 21, killing three of them.

Israel removed the metal detectors on Tuesday after intense international diplomacy.

Newly installed railings and scaffolding where cameras were previ-

ously mounted were also removed on Thursday.

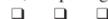
The removal was seen as a defeat for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who had ordered the security measures and was forced to backtrack after warnings the unrest could spiral out of control. It represented a rare victory for Palestinians, who remained united in their boycott.

Israeli officials said they were to replace the new security measures with "advanced technologies" — widely believed to be smart cameras with facial recognition technology.

The holy compound lies in east Jerusalem, seized by Israel in the Six-Day War of 1967 and later annexed in a move never recognised by the international community.

The third-holiest site for Muslims and the most sacred for Jews, it is at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and has served as a rallying cry for Palestinians.

In 2000, a visit to the compound by then Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon helped ignite the second Palestinian intifada, or uprising.



Jordan will not allow the return of Israel's ambassador until the shooting of two Jordanians by an embassy security guard has been properly investigated, a government official said on Friday.

"Jordan will not allow ambassador Einat Shlein or the rest of the embassy staff to return until a thorough investigation has been opened" into Sunday's shooting, the official said, adding Jordan informed Israel of its decision.

Israel's foreign ministry late Friday said it had launched a "verification procedure" into the shooting.

Israel's attorney general "gave instructions to implicated (Israeli) bodies to provide all elements in their possession concerning the incident", a ministry spokesman said in a statement.

"Israel will inform Jordan of developments and information gathered during this procedure," the spokesman said, without providing further details.

were good.

Abbas underwent routine checks, including blood tests and X-rays at the private Al Istishari Hospital near the West Bank town of Ramallah, and left after 90 minutes, said the hospital director, Dr Fathi Abu Mughli.

"The results are good," Abu Mughli told The Associated Press, but did not elaborate. Abbas was flanked by aides and smiling when he left the hospital.

Abbas has suffered heart problems in the past, but his doctors have said he is fine. A year ago, Abbas underwent an emergency heart procedure after suffering exhaustion and chest pains. (AP)



7 journalists freed: Seven staff members of an opposition newspaper were released from a Turkish jail early Saturday pending the outcome of their trial on charges of allegedly aiding terror organizations.

A court ruled for the release of Cumhuriyet newspaper's cartoonist Musa Kart and six others Friday, but ordered four others to remain held.

The daily newspaper is staunchly opposed to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and is one of the few remaining outlets in Turkey critical of the government. A total of 19 defendants went on trial Monday for allegedly aiding several outlawed organizations, including Kurdish militants, a far-left group and the network of U.S.-based cleric Fethullah Gulen, who the government blames for a failed coup last year. (AP)

case which involves a total of 68 defendants.

The attack, which killed six police officers, followed the deadly dispersal by security forces in Aug 2013 of two Cairo sit-in protests staged by supporters of Islamist President Mohammed Morsi, ousted a month earlier by the military after one

year in office. (AP)

Abbas in good health: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, 82, underwent a checkup at a West Bank hospital on Saturday and his doctors said the results



Palestinian relatives of 16-year-old Abed Hussian Abu Hasimeh, who was shot dead by Israeli during clashes, cry during his funeral in the Bureij refugee camp in central Gaza on July 28. Israeli troops shot dead a Palestinian teenager and wounded seven others during clashes near the border fence in Gaza, Palestinian authorities in the enclave said. (AFP)