

## More than 12,000 Mosul civilians wounded: UN

## In Iraq's Mosul, many survivors face future as amputees

QARAQOSH, Iraq, May 11, (AP): The young Iraqi woman remembers the night she lost her leg.

Wahad Ahmed and her family had hunkered down in their house in western Mosul, hoping to wait out the nearly constant shelling as fighting raged between Islamic State militants and advancing Iraqi government forces.

But after mortar shells destroyed the homes of their next-door neighbors, the 27-year-old and her relatives decided to flee. With four other families, they left in the middle of the night on April 1. Before they reached Iraqi lines, a bomb went off, wounding Ahmed's right leg so badly that it had to be amputated above the knee.

According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, she is one of at least 625 people from Mosul who have lost an arm or a leg as the nearly seven-month-old battle for the city. Like others, she is struggling to come to terms with her injuries and the future she faces as an amputee.

The United Nations says more than 12,000 Mosul civilians have been wounded, a count that only includes those who have made it to hospitals outside the city to receive treatment. In the first three months of this year, a small orthopedic facility run by the ICRC has treated 148 people from Mosul who lost limbs.

At the main hospital in Qaraqosh,

a town near Mosul, Ahmed balances at the edge of her bed, slowly raising and lowering her right thigh as a physical therapist watches over her. After the exercise was done, she gingerly stood up and balanced herself on her left leg — something she said got easier only after weeks of practice.

"I can say that it's cured. In the beginning it was swollen this big," she said, looking down on the stump of her right leg and spreading her hands wide to show the extent of the swelling.

Soon the doctors will be able to fit her with a prosthetic, and if she keeps up the exercises, in about three months, she will be able to walk

without crutches, she says.

At an orthopedic facility in the city of Irbil, about 90 kilometers (56 miles) away, half a dozen amputees practice simple movements with new prosthetic legs.

Mohammed Kahlan confidently walked the length of the room in smooth strides. The Sunni tribal fighter from western Anbar province lost his left leg while fighting IS a year ago but it took him an entire year to learn how to walk again, he said.

The only properly equipped orthopedic facilities are in Baghdad and Irbil. Kahlan says he initially had to travel for treatment to the Iraqi capital, relying on military flights

because civilian flights had been suspended and the roads were blocked.

"The hardest thing was having to travel to Baghdad every time by plane," he said.

While the fighting drags on, with Iraqi forces and US-led coalition officials saying it could be weeks more before all of Mosul is brought under government control, access to medical assistance remains one of the biggest challenges for residents with grave but not life-threatening injuries.

To get to a doctor, they have to pass through a myriad of military checkpoints now ringing the city, and Iraqi troops are often suspicious of the townspeople, who had lived

for nearly three years under IS rule.

Several aid organizations have physical therapists visiting camps for displaced civilians on Mosul's outskirts, showing people who have lost one or more limbs how to strengthen their muscles, to prepare them for prosthetic limbs.

Many of the amputees didn't even realize they would not have to spend the rest of their lives in a wheelchair.

"I thought, that's it, I won't be able to walk again," said Ahmed. "But when I came here, they told me: 'You'll walk again and we'll give you a leg'."

"It made me happy," she smiled. "I've lost a leg but I'll get another one."

## Grilling win

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and the speaker adjourned the session until May 23, 2017.

HH the Amir also sent a cable to Abul on Thursday, congratulating him for responding to the grilling points. He extolled the minister and MPs for their participation in the session which he described as a procedure that exemplified real democracy. He then wished the entire nation continuous development and prosperity.

## FIFA confirms

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"FIFA has failed and football has lost again," said Fadi Quran, senior campaigner with Avaaz.

In a press conference after the Congress finished, Infantino admitted it was a "sensitive issue" and noted that the new American leadership said it is was trying to find a peace settlement.

"Hopefully President Trump can find a solution. If he has any good ideas, I am happy take them on board," he said.

## Council seeks

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off from jobs and influence.

Zubaidi said the new body would continue to cooperate with the coalition and foreign powers to combat what he called Iranian influence and terrorism.

But Saudi Arabia and its key ally the United Arab Emirates, despite arming and funding southern troops during the war, do not back secession and say they fight for a unified Yemen.

Violence, famine and disease have killed more than 10,000 people since the start of the conflict, the United Nations says.

Al-Qaeda's powerful branch in Yemen has also taken advantage of the chaos to take refuge in lawless parts of the south.

The news coincided with a meeting between Hadi and UN special envoy Ismail Ould Sheikh Ahmed reported by Yemen's state news agency.

Ould Sheikh Ahmed has said he hopes to resume stalled peace talks between the Saudi-supported government and an Iran-backed rebel alliance by the end of May.

Thursday's announcement was a new blow to Hadi's efforts to keep together a loyalist coalition fighting the Shiite Houthi rebels who control the capital Sanaa and much of the north and Red Sea coast.

Hadi has relied heavily on militia recruited in the south, where separatist sentiment runs deep, a position that has often forced him into a difficult balancing act with Sunni Islamists and loyalist army units from the north.

Hadi sacked Zubaidi on April 27 along with cabinet minister Hani Bin Breik, in a move widely seen as reflecting divisions among his supporters.

The two men, who played key roles in restoring security to Aden and adjacent provinces after rebels were pushed out in 2015, are believed to be close to southern independence activists.

Thousands of southern Yemenis responded to the sackings by demonstrating in Aden, Hadi's hometown where his government is based, and urged Zubaidi to set up a new leadership body to represent the south.

The new council is made up of 26 members including the governors of five southern provinces and two government ministers.

Hadi's government did not immediately respond to the announcement.

South Yemen was an independent state until 1990, when it was unified with North Yemen and Ali Abdullah Saleh elected president.

Four years later, it launched a separatist rebellion which culminated in its occupation by northern forces.

Continuing resentment adds to the challenges facing Hadi, whose Houthi rivals are supported by Iran and forces loyal to his predecessor Saleh.

Al-Qaeda militants have also exploited the chaos to consolidate their presence in the south and east.

Zubaidi, speaking at a press conference, said the new council was "committed to maintaining partnership with the Arab coalition in the south to stand up to Iran ... and maintaining partnership with the international community in the fight against terrorism."

The World Health Organisation estimates the Yemen conflict has killed more than 8,000 people and injured another 44,500 since a Saudi-led Gulf coalition intervened against the Houthis in 2015.

Two-thirds of the country's population is now on the brink of famine, according to the United Nations.

Meanwhile, Saudi Finance Minister Mohammad Al-Jadaan asserted Wednesday that his country is following up closely the humanitarian situa-



A Yemeni student looks at a millenia-old mummy displayed at Sanaa University, in the Yemeni capital on May 10. Yemen's war has claimed thousands of lives and pushed millions to the brink of famine — and now the conflict threatens the fate of collection of millenia-old mummies. (AFP)

## 'Tangible evidence of a nation's history'

## Yemen war threatens millennia-old mummies

SANAA, May 11, (AFP): Yemen's war has claimed thousands of lives and pushed millions to the brink of famine. Now the conflict threatens to erase a unique part of the country's ancient history.

A collection of millennia-old mummies at Sanaa University Museum in the Yemeni capital could face destruction as a result of the fighting. With electricity intermittent at best and the country's ports under blockade, experts are fighting to save the 12 mummies in the face of heat, humidity and a lack of preservative chemicals.

Some of the remains, from pagan kingdoms that ruled the region around 400 BC, still have teeth and strands of hair.

"These mummies are tangible evidence of a nation's history," said Abdulrahman Jarallah, head of the archaeology department at Sanaa University, but "even our mummies are affected by the war."

"Mummies need a suitable, controlled environment and regular care, including sanitisation every six months," he told AFP.

"Some of them have begun to de-

cay as we cannot secure electricity and the proper preservative chemicals, and we're struggling to control the stench."

"We're concerned both for the conservation of the mummies and for the health of those handling them," Jarallah said.

The mummies are among a host of priceless ancient remains threatened by conflicts across the region. From Syria's Palmyra to Libya's Leptis Magna, millennia-old historical remains face looting and destruction in various parts of the Middle East.

The Islamic State group systematically demolished pre-Islamic monuments in Syria and Iraq after seizing swathes of both countries in 2014, looting and selling smaller pieces on the black market to fund their rule.

Swiss authorities last year seized cultural relics looted from Yemen, Syria and Libya that had been stored in Geneva's free ports — highly secured warehouses where valuables can be stashed tax-free with few questions asked.

Old Sanaa, inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List since

1986, faces other dangers.

Perched 2,300 metres (7,500 feet) up in Yemen's western mountains, it has been continuously inhabited for over 2,500 years and is home to some of the earliest Islamic architecture.

With more than 100 mosques and 6,000 houses built before the 11th century, the old city is famed for its multi-storied homes of red basalt rock, with arched windows decorated with white latticework.

But months after a Saudi-led coalition intervened against Iran-backed Houthi rebels in March 2015, UNESCO added the ancient city to its List of World Heritage in Danger.

In June that year, a bombing in the old city killed five people and destroyed a section including several houses and an Ottoman fort.

Witnesses blamed an air strike by the Saudi-led coalition on the rebel-held capital.

No party has claimed responsibility for the strike.

The coalition has also imposed an air and naval blockade on Houthi-controlled Red Sea ports that are crucial entry points for food and aid.

tion in Yemen and works hard with all friendly nations and GCC countries to rebuild Yemen on many fronts.

In a joint press conference with the Vice President of International Bank in the Middle East Hafez Ghanem, Al-Jadaan made his remarks at the conclusion of the rebuilding Yemen preliminary meeting.

## Iraqis surround

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doors shut on starving families to prevent the population from fleeing, residents say.

Iraqi forces are closing in fast on the Old City and its narrow streets, where the Islamic State group is expected to focus its significantly depleted military capabilities.

The most violent group in modern jihad has repeatedly resorted to human shields to cover its movements but in Mosul the jihadists appear to be taking the tactic to new levels.

"DAESH came to our house and welded the door. They gave us a small amount of water and a white cloth and said: 'Here's a shroud for you,'" said one resident of Zinjili neighbourhood.

The woman sent a voice message to a relative living in the "liberated" eastern side of Mosul and said she was now trapped in her own house with her husband, her four children and no food.

Resources were already scarce when the huge government offensive to wrest back Mosul from IS was launched in October last year.

After more than six months of fighting, the living conditions of residents of the last neighbourhoods IS still

holds are beyond dire.

A 35-year-old man who gave his name as Abu Rami and lives in the Old City of west Mosul said IS was desperate to keep the population from running away.

"They have been doing this lately. When they suspect a family of intending to escape to the security forces, they lock them in," he told AFP by phone.

"They have detained several families like this here, and in some cases they weld the doors to be sure," he said. Houses in Mosul often have barred windows or are built around walled courtyards with a single door onto the street.

"Those families have a choice of dying of hunger, disease or shelling," Abdulkarim al-Obeidi, a civil activist from Mosul, said an estimated 250,000 people were still trapped in the Old City and the handful of other areas that remain under IS control.

"DAESH is locking doors on families inside those areas that have not yet been liberated. They are detaining people," he said.

He put the number of IS fighters defending their last redoubts in west Mosul at around 600, meaning that the jihadists are massively outnumbered and making the resort to human shields an increasingly important part of their defence strategy.

"DAESH members have everything they need because they raided people's homes and took their food stockpiles," Obeidi said, advocating airdrops to save thousands from starving to death.

"DAESH wants to sow terror among civilians with this filthy tactic of welding doors shut on people," said Hosameddin al-Abbar, a councillor for Nineveh, the province of which Mosul

is the capital.

"There are people dying of hunger and disease now, especially children and elderly people," he said, adding that it was impossible to know exactly how many.

"At this stage, hunger is killing more than shelling and fighting."

Another method residents say IS has used to prevent a civilian exodus is booby-trapping, a weapon the jihadists had previously used mainly to kill or maim the advancing government forces.

A senior officer of the interior ministry's elite Rapid Response forces said they had found several families stuck in booby-trapped homes since the launch last week of an operation in northwestern Mosul.

"The DAESH gangs are booby-trapping houses with people inside them," Major General Thamer Abu Turab told an AFP reporter in west Mosul.

"We found eight such houses, where our EOD (ordnance disposal) teams were able to defuse the devices and get the families out," he said.

The jihadists' deterrence seems effective as cases of families attempting to flee IS-held areas before the arrival of the federal security forces are relatively rare.

Many of the civilians who are not locked in by IS essentially do it themselves and hunker down in basements with whatever food supplies they still have.

Abu Imad, a middle-aged former restaurant employee who lives with his family of five in the Zinjili neighbourhood, said the population was terrified.

"Behind the walls on the streets, there are rooms and cellars packed with people too scared to move. And hunger is killing people now," he told

AFP by phone.

"I know some people have started eating plants and are boiling paper. At this rate you will soon see people eating cats and dogs."

## IS town

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day after the Trump administration announced it will supply the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces with heavier weapons, a decision that infuriated Turkey, which views the main Kurdish militia in the group as an extension of an outlawed rebel movement fighting an insurgency in its southeast.

The SDF, which also includes Arab fighters, has captured large swathes of land in northern Syria from IS with the help of US-led airstrikes.

The spokesman for the Kurdish militia that forms the backbone of the fighting force known as the People's Protection Units, or YPG, told The Associated Press on Thursday that his group will seek "neighborly relations" with Turkey.

"From our side, we want to get good neighborly relations with Turkey," Redur Khalil said in a series of messages from Syria.

He called on Turkey to let go of its "unjustified" fears of the group.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan called on the US to reverse its decision, saying weapons in the hands of the Kurdish-led forces are a "threat" to his country. Unnerved by the Kurdish advances along the border, Turkey sent troops into Syria last year to help allied Syrian forces battle IS and block the SDF.

The Trump administration says it will supply the Syrian Democratic

Forces, of which the YPG is the main component, with heavier weapons ahead of a push on the northern Syrian city of Raqqa, the IS group's de facto capital. Talal Sillo, a commander with SDF, said no weapons have yet been delivered to the group but that the US-led coalition had said that fast delivery was expected from weapons already in Syria with the international coalition.

Pentagon chief Jim Mattis met Thursday with Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim in London, the most-high profile meeting between American and Turkish officials since the US announced it would arm Kurdish fighters in Syria.

In a brief readout of the approximately 30-minute meeting, a Pentagon statement said the two men discussed a range of bilateral security issues.

"The secretary reiterated US commitment to our NATO ally," stated the readout, provided by Pentagon spokeswoman Dana White. "Both leaders affirmed their support for peace and stability in both Iraq and Syria."

It was not immediately clear if the leaders discussed President Donald Trump's decision this week to arm the Kurdish YPG, who are fighting the Islamic State group in Syria.

The move announced on Tuesday has already provoked fury in Turkey, which says the YPG are linked to its own domestic Kurdish separatist group the PKK, or Kurdish Workers Party.

## Newswatch

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No militant group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack. (AP)

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**DOHA:** The US ambassador to Qatar has expressed her dissatisfaction with political events back home in a decidedly undiplomatic message posted on social media.

Dana Shell Smith, who has been the American envoy to the Gulf emirate since 2014, took to Twitter in the hours after the dramatic sacking of FBI director James Comey by President Donald Trump.

"Increasingly difficult to wake up overseas to news from home, knowing I will spend today explaining our democracy and institutions," Shell Smith tweeted, in apparent disapproval of the move. (AFP)

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**JERUSALEM:** Filipina Joana Chris Arpon's unusual journey to becoming one of the few non-Israeli and non-Jewish volunteers in Israel's military began with an earthquake — in the country her parents migrated from.

The disaster in 2013 struck a region where Arpon, an Israeli-born Filipino, had relatives. Amid the chaos, a search and rescue unit of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) was dispatched to provide disaster relief, and ended up rescuing her grandmother.

"Then I chose to serve in the same unit that saved her," Arpon told Reuters. (RTRS)

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**WASHINGTON:** A federal grand jury on Thursday charged an Ohio man with attempting to provide material support to the Islamic State by offering himself to the militant organization, the US Justice Department said in a statement.

Laith Waleed Alebbini, 26, of Dayton, was charged after being arrested on April 26 at Cincinnati/Kentucky International Airport, the statement said. He remains in custody, it said. (RTRS)

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**BERLIN:** Germany's federal cyber agency said on Thursday that Yahoo Inc had not cooperated with its investigation into a series of hacks that compromised more than one billion of the US company's email users between 2013 and 2016.

Yahoo's Dublin-based Europe, Middle East and Africa unit "refused to give the BSI any information and referred all questions to the Irish Data Protection Commission, without, however, giving it the authority to provide information to the BSI," Germany's BSI computer security agency said. (RTRS)

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**MOSCOW:** Moscow supports the resumption of dialogue between Israel and Palestine, Russian President Vladimir Putin said Thursday, as his US counterpart Donald Trump prepares to visit Israel.

Putin said Russia "will continue to give its full support to the resumption of direct dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis", following talks with Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas in the southern Russian city of Sochi.

"The peaceful coexistence of the two states — Palestine and Israel — is an indispensable condition to ensure genuine security and stability in this region," Putin said. (AFP)