



Recoveries top new cases in last count

US-backed fighters chase IS gunmen in Syria

58 in ICU

DAESH jailbreak, attacks in Syria, Iraq raise alarm

NewsWatch

JEDDAH: The Command of the Saudi-led Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen said its forces carried out airstrikes on hotbeds of maritime piracy and organized crimes in Hudaydah governorate, west Yemen, on Thursday.

Houthi elements use Hudaydah seaport as launch pad for their criminal activities that jeopardize the regional and international peace, the command said in a statement posted to the Saudi Press Agency's Twitter account.

The precise airstrikes neutralized the capabilities of the Houthi militias who used Hudaydah port as artery for weapon smuggling, according to the statement. (KUNA)

TUNIS: Tunisia's moderate Islamist party has blamed the death of one of its party members who was hospitalized following protests last week on the "excessive violence" of the security forces.

The Ennahdha party said that **Ridha Bouziane**, 57, died on Wednesday after succumbing to a brain hemorrhage that they say was caused by violence meted out by police officers at a protest on Jan. 14 against the president's policies.

On July 25 last year, following nationwide anti-government protests, Saied abruptly dismissed his government and suspended parliament, taking on sweeping powers himself. Observers have since warned of democratic backsliding, while rights groups have condemned a series of extrajudicial arrests and the increased use of military courts against civilians. (AP)

ISTANBUL: Turkey is ready to act as a mediator between Russia and Ukraine, said Turkish President **Recep Tayyip Erdogan** on Friday.

Erdogan affirmed that his country "will not accept" any unrest in the region, Turkish Anadolu news agency quoted the president as saying in press statements.

He also noted that his country enjoys good relations with both Russia and Ukraine, adding that he will visit Kyiv in the near future and a possibility to Moscow may also be a possibility. (KUNA)

TUNIS: Four people died after a boat carrying Europe-bound migrants on the Mediterranean Sea sank off Tunisia's coast, the Tunisian Defense Ministry said Friday.

Defense Ministry spokesman **Mohamed Zekri** said navy divers rescued 21 people on Thursday night and seven were still missing. The boat was heading to Italy, Zekri said.

Local media reported that a 10-year-old girl was among those who died.

RABAT: A Moroccan judge ordered a man suspected of fatally stabbing a French woman and injuring a Belgian visitor to undergo psychiatric evaluation, as authorities in three countries opened probes into the suspect's possible links to terrorism.

A 78-year-old French woman was killed in a knife attack in a market in the southern Moroccan town of **Tiznit** on Jan. 15, the French interior ministry said in a statement. (AP)

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia reported on Saturday 4,608 new coronavirus (COVID-19) infections, 4,622 recoveries and two deaths in the past 24 hours.

The Ministry of Health stated in a statement that the total number of cases reached 647,819 with 594,762 recoveries and a total 8,918 deaths. (KUNA)

DOHA: The Qatari Ministry of Health on Saturday announced 3,087 new coronavirus infections, pushing the tally of confirmed cases to 320,364 since the outbreak of the viral disease, the ministry said in a statement.

The ministry also noted that one person died due to the virus, taking the deaths toll to 633. (KUNA)

ABU DHABI: The UAE reported 3,020 more COVID-19 infections on Saturday in the country within the last 24 hours.

The Emirati health authorities announced that the tally of infections hit 822,886 cases, in addition to two fatalities.

Recoveries reached 767,315 with 1,333 new cases, it revealed. (KUNA)

BAGHDAD, Jan 22, (AP): The Islamic State group unleashed its biggest attack in Syria since the fall of its "caliphate" three years ago. More than 100 militants assaulted the main prison holding suspected extremists, sparking a battle with U.S.-backed Kurdish fighters that continued 24 hours later and left dozens dead on Friday.

Across the border in Iraq, gunmen stormed an army barracks north of Baghdad before dawn Friday while soldiers inside slept, killing 11 before escaping - the deadliest attack in months on Iraq's military.

The bold assaults suggest militants have been revitalized after maintaining a low-level insurgency in Iraq and Syria over the past few years. The group's territorial control in Iraq and Syria was crushed by a years-long U.S.-backed campaign, but its fighters continued with sleeper cells that have increasingly killed scores of Iraqis and Syrians in past months.

The attack in Syria targeted Gweiran Prison in the northeastern city of Hassakeh, the largest of around a dozen facilities run by U.S.-backed Syrian Kurdish forces holding suspected IS fighters. Gweiran holds some 5,000, including IS commanders and figures considered among the most dangerous, according to Farhad Shami, a spokesman for the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, or SDF.

The forces' commander, Mazloum Abadi, said IS mobilized "most of its sleeper cells" to organize the jailbreak.

The militants, armed with heavy machine guns and vehicles rigged with explosives, attacked Thursday evening, aiming to free their comrades, Shami said.

The fighting started with a large explosion around 7 p.m., followed by two more blasts later, said one resident whose home overlooks the area. The assault was complex. Prisoners inside the facility rioted and tried to break out simultaneously as a car bomb went off outside and gunmen clashed with security forces, Shami said. A car bomb hit a nearby petroleum depot, sparking a fire that still burned Friday.

On Friday, Kurdish forces were trying to retake the northern part of the prison, where inmates remained in control and attempted a second escape.

The SDF was also attacking in the nearby Zuhour neighborhood, where IS fighters were holed up. Fighting there was intense and movement slow because the militants have boobytrapped houses with explosives and were using civilians as human shields, Shami said. Coalition helicopters and other aircraft carried out strikes during the battle, including in Zuhour and on the prison, he said.

"Since yesterday, helicopters are always in the sky," said the resident, who spoke on condition of anonymity out of fear for his safety. Civilians were fleeing Zuhour, and shops were closed across Hassakeh as security forces fanned out, he said.

Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said Friday the U.S. used airstrikes to support the SDF in the prison break attack.

"We have provided some airstrikes to support them as they deal with this particular prison break," Kirby said, adding that the U.S. recognizes that the IS threat is not gone, and "we remain focused on that."

Shami said that the SDF had cordoned off the area and so far recaptured 104 militants who escaped from the prison. But he said the total number who had broken out was not determined.

He said seven Kurdish fighters and at least 28 IS attackers were killed in the battle.

A Syrian opposition war monitor reported a higher death toll, 67. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said at least 23 Kurdish security forces and prison guards were killed, along with 39 militants and five civilians.



In this photo provided Friday, Jan. 21, 2022, by the Iranian Army, warships attend a joint naval drill of Iran, Russia and China in the Indian Ocean. Iran's state TV said 11 of its vessels were joined by three Russian ships including a destroyer, and two Chinese vessels. Iran's Revolutionary Guard will also participate with smaller ships and helicopters. (AP)

Iran, Russia and China begin joint naval drill

Iran, Russia and China on Friday began a joint naval drill in the Indian Ocean aimed at boosting security at sea, Iranian state media reported.

State TV said 11 of the country's vessels were joined by three Russian ships, including a destroyer, and two Chinese vessels. Iran's Revolutionary Guard was also participating with smaller ships and helicopters.

The report said the maneuvers would cover some 17,000 square kilometers, or about 6,500 square miles, in the northern part of the Indian Ocean, and include night fighting, rescue op-

erations and firefighting drills.

Later in the day, the TV showed footage of a group of vessels sailing in a row and said a total of 20 ships participated in the drill. It also showed excerpts from practice firing of machine guns in darkness, daytime exercises, Iranian and Russian marines repelling down to a ship's deck and other video.

This is the third joint naval drill of the three countries since 2019. It coincided with a recent visit by Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi to Russia that ended on Thursday. (AP)

KFH honored at Global Finance awards

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In this photo provided by Ansar Allah Media Office, a man is rescued early Friday, Jan. 21, 2022, after Saudi-led airstrikes targeted a site in the contested city of Hodeida, Yemen. A Saudi-led airstrike targeting a prison run by Yemen's Houthi rebels killed and wounded detainees on Friday, rescuers said. (AP)

Houthi condemnation hailed

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs welcomed the statement issued by the UN Security Council earlier Friday to condemn strongly the terrorist attacks by the Houthi militias on facilities in sisterly UAE.

The statement of the Council reaffirms the seriousness of the Houthi militias' behavior, threatening peace and security in the region, the Ministry said in a press release tonight.

It also shows the importance the Council attaches to the Yemeni cause, the Ministry noted, urging the Council to double effort to force the Houthi militias into responding positively to the ceasefire calls and the UN envoy's efforts to resume political consultations among the Yemeni parties.

A political solution to the Yemeni crisis should be consistent with the three reference points,

namely the GCC initiative and its executive mechanisms, the outcomes of the national dialogue conference and the UNSC Resolution 2216, it stressed.

The Ministry renewed Kuwait's support to all efforts by the international community aiming to reach a political settlement to the crisis.

Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council Dr. Nayef Al-Hajraf welcomed the statement issued by the UN Security Council earlier Friday to condemn in the strongest terms the terrorist attacks by the Houthi militias on UAE facilities.

The statement affirms once again the importance the international community attaches to the Yemeni crisis caused by the Houthi militias through their coup against constitutional legitimacy in the country, Dr. Al-Hajraf said in a press release.

Prison toll hits 82

Saudi coalition asserts site not reported to UN

CAIRO, Jan 22, (AP): The death toll from a Saudi-led coalition airstrike that hit a prison run by Yemen's Houthi rebels climbed to at least 82 detainees, the rebels and an aid group said Saturday.

Internet access in the Arab world's poorest country meanwhile remained largely down as the coalition continued airstrikes on the capital of Sanaa and elsewhere.

The airstrike in northern Saada province Friday was part of an intense air and ground offensive that marked an escalation in Yemen's years-long civil war. The conflict pits the internationally recognized government, aided by the Saudi-led coalition, against the Iranian-backed rebels.

The escalation comes after the Houthis claimed a drone and missile attack that struck inside the United Arab Emirates' capital earlier in the week. It also comes as government forces, aided by UAE-backed troops and airstrikes from the coalition, have reclaimed the entire province of Shabwa from the Houthis and pressured them in the central province of Marib. Houthis there have for a year attempted to take control of its provincial capital.

Ahmed Mahat, head of Doctors Without Borders, a charity mission in Yemen, told The Associated Press his group counted at least 82 dead and more than 265 wounded in the airstrike.

The Houthis' media office said rescuers were still searching for survivors and bodies in the rubble of the prison site in the province of Saada on the border with Saudi Arabia.

Approach

Saudi coalition spokesman Brig. Gen. Turki al-Malki alleged the Houthis hadn't reported the site as needing protection from airstrikes to the U.N. or the International Committee of the Red Cross. He claimed the Houthis' failure to do so represented the militia's "usual deceptive approach" in the conflict.

The Houthis used the prison complex to hold detained migrants, mostly Africans attempting to cross through the war-torn country into Saudi Arabia, according to the humanitarian organization Save the Children.

But Mahat, of Doctors Without Borders, said the airstrike hit a different part of the facility housing other types of detainees, and no migrants were killed. "The migrants there are safe," he said.

Al-Malki said reports that the coalition targeted the prison were inaccurate and that the coalition would correspond "facts and details" to the U.N. and the ICRC, according to Saudi state-run television.

The Saada attack followed another Saudi-led coalition airstrike Friday at the Red Sea port city of Hodeida that hit a telecommunications center key to Yemen's connection to the internet. Access to the internet has remained "largely down for more than 24 hours" in the country, advocacy group NetBlocks said Saturday.

The Saada air attack, one of the deadliest of the war, was not the first to hit a Houthi-run prison. In September 2019, an airstrike hit a detention center the southwestern Dhamar province, killing more than 100 people and wounding dozens.

Rights groups have previously documented that the Houthis use civilian detainees as human shields by placing them in detention centers next to military barracks under constant threat of airstrikes.

Friday's airstrikes in Saada and Hodeida have renewed criticism of the coalition from the United Nations and international aid and rights groups.

Saudi-led coalition airstrikes have hit schools, hospitals and wedding parties, killing thousands of civilians. The Houthis meanwhile have used child soldiers and indiscriminately laid land mines across the country. They also launched cross-border attacks using ballistic missiles and explosives-laden drones on Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22, (Agencies): The Kuwaiti Ministry of Health announced on Saturday that 4,148 new COVID-19 infections, 4,991 recoveries and two deaths were confirmed in the last 24 hours.

The Ministry's official spokesman Dr. Abdullah Al-Sanad said in a statement to KUNA that the tallies for infections and recoveries hit 493,107 and 446,128 respectively.

Deaths went up to 2,485, said the spokesman, revealing that there were 58 patients in ICU, 330 in COVID-19 wards, and 44,494 active cases.

He indicated that swab tests hit 6,634,114 with 26,836 new tests carried out in the last 24 hours.

The US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced on Thursday that beginning on January 22nd, it will require "non-US individuals" seeking to enter the US via land ports of entry and ferry terminals at the borders with Mexico and Canada "to be fully vaccinated for COVID-19 and provide related proof of vaccination, as COVID-19 cases continue to rise nationwide."

Restrictions

The DHS said in a statement that these new restrictions "will apply to non-US individuals who are traveling for both essential and non-essential reasons" and will not apply to US citizens, Lawful Permanent Residents, or US nationals.

Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas said starting on Saturday, the DHS "will require that non-US individuals entering the United States via land ports of entry or ferry terminals along our Northern and Southern borders be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and be prepared to show related proof of vaccination."

He added that these updated travel requirements reflect the Administration's "commitment to protecting public health while safely facilitating the cross-border trade and travel that is critical to our economy."

The DHS noted that "COVID-19 testing is not required for entry via a land port of entry or ferry terminal."

Three studies released Friday offered more evidence that COVID-19 vaccines are standing up to the omicron variant, at least among people who received booster shots.

They are the first large U.S. studies to look at vaccine protection against omicron, health officials said.

The papers echo previous research - including studies in Germany, South Africa and the U.K. - indicating available vaccines are less effective against omicron than earlier versions of the coronavirus, but also that Boosters doses rev up virus-fighting antibodies to increase the chance of avoiding symptomatic infection.

The first study looked at hospitalizations and emergency room and urgent care center visits in 10 states, from August to this month.

It found vaccine effectiveness was best after three doses of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines in preventing COVID-19-associated emergency department and urgent care visits. Protection dropped from 94% during the delta wave to 82% during the omicron wave. Protection from just two doses was lower, especially if six months had passed since the second dose.

Stressed

Officials have stressed the goal of preventing not just infection but severe disease. On that count, some good news: A third dose was at least 90% effective at preventing hospitalizations for COVID-19, both during the delta and omicron periods, the study also found.

The second study focused on COVID-19 case and death rates in 25 states from the beginning of April through Christmas. People who were boosted had the highest protection against coronavirus infection, both during the time delta was dominant and also when omicron was taking over.

Those two articles were published online by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The Journal of the American Medical Association published the third study, also led by CDC researchers.



This photo provided by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces shows some Islamic State group fighters, who were arrested by the SDF after they attacked Gweiran Prison, in Hassakeh, northeast Syria, Friday, Jan. 21, 2022. (AP)