

# Rescuers say cannot keep up with air strikes

Fire breaks out in a building after a bombing raid

## Beirut

**R**escuers in Syria's eastern Ghouta said the bombing would not let up long enough for them to count the bodies, in one of the bloodiest air assaults of the seven-year war.

Warplanes pounded the rebel enclave on Saturday, the seventh day in a row of a fierce escalation by Damascus and its allies, an emergency service, a witness and a monitoring group said.

Residents holed up in basements and medical charities decried attacks on a dozen hospitals, as the United Nations pleaded for a truce in Ghouta, the only big rebel bastion near the capital.

The Damascus government and Russia, its key ally, say they only target militants. They have said they seek to stop mortar attacks injuring dozens in the capital, and have accused insurgents in Ghouta of holding people as human shields. There was no immediate comment from the Syrian military.

A surge of rocket fire, shelling and air strikes has killed over 500 people since Sunday night, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. The dead included more than 120 children.

The Britain-based monitor said raids hit Douma, Zamalka and other towns there on Saturday, killing 31 people.

First responders searched for survivors after strikes on Kafr Batna, Douma and Harasta, the Civil Defence in eastern Ghouta said. The rescue service, which operates in rebel territory, said it had documented at least 350 deaths in four days earlier this week.

"Maybe there are many more," said Siraj Mahmoud, a civil defence spokesman in the suburbs. "We weren't able to count the martyrs yesterday because the warplanes are touring the skies."

As the bombs rain down, some hitting emergency

centres and vehicles, workers have struggled to pull people from the rubble, Mahmoud said. "But if we have to go out running on our legs and dig with our hands to rescue the people, we will still be here."

A witness in Douma said he woke up in the early hours on Saturday to the sound of

a squadron of jets bombing nearby. The streets have mostly remained empty.

The United Nations says nearly 400,000 people live in eastern Ghouta, a pocket of satellite towns and farms under government siege since 2013, without enough food or medicine. (Reuters)

## UN backs Syria ceasefire

### United Nation

**T**he UN Security Council yesterday unanimously demanded a 30-day ceasefire in Syria, as new air strikes on the rebel enclave of Eastern Ghouta took the civilian death toll from seven days of bombing to more than 500.

With support from Russia, the Security Council approved a resolution calling for a ceasefire "without delay" to allow for humanitarian aid deliveries and medical evacuations.

"Every minute the council waited on Russia, the human suffering grew," the US ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley, told the Security Council, accusing Russia of stalling.

"As they dragged out the negotiations, the bombs from Assad's fighter jets continued to fall. In the three days it took us to adopt this resolution, how many mothers lost their kids to the bombing and the shelling?" (AFP)

## Both suspects in Kuwait murder of Filipina held

### Beirut

**T**he employers of a Filipina maid found dead in a freezer in Kuwait were both arrested in the Syrian capital Damascus, a Lebanese judicial official said on Saturday.

Syrian authorities surrendered Nader Essam Assaf to Beirut on Friday because of his Lebanese citizenship but his Syrian wife Mona remains in custody in Damascus, the official said.

The murder of Joanna Demafelis sparked outrage in the Philippines and prompted President Rodrigo Duterte to impose a departure ban for Filipinos planning to work in Kuwait.

The 29-year-old's body,

which allegedly showed signs of torture, was found earlier this month inside a freezer in the abandoned apartment unit of the detained couple.

The couple have been the subject of an Interpol manhunt since Demafelis's body was found more than a year after her family reported her missing.

"The couple were arrested in Damascus. They were the subject of an Interpol red notice and the Syrian authorities handed the husband over to Lebanese custody on Friday morning," the official said.

"Syria kept custody of the wife because she is a Syrian national," he added. (AFP)

## Dozens killed in multiple attacks in Afghanistan

### Kabul

**A**t least 23 people, mostly soldiers, were killed and more than a dozen wounded in a series of attacks and suicide bombings in Afghanistan on Saturday, officials said, the latest assaults on the war-torn country's beleaguered security forces.

In the biggest attack, Taliban militants stormed an army base in the western province of Farah overnight, killing at least 18 soldiers.

"Last night a big group of militants attacked an army base in Bala Buluk district of Farah. Unfortunately, we lost 18 soldiers, two soldiers were wounded. We have sent more reinforcements to the area," defence ministry spokesman Daulat Wazir said.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack. Deputy provincial governor Yunus Rasooli said the authorities had sent a fact-

finding delegation to Bala Buluk to investigate the assault.

In another attack, a suicide bomber detonated his explosives near the diplomatic area of Kabul during the morning rush hour, killing at least three people and wounding five others, deputy interior ministry spokesman Nasrat Rahimi told AFP.

"At around 8:30 am, a suicide bomber on foot, well-dressed with a necktie on, was identified at a checkpoint. He blew up his explosives, killing three and wounding five others," he said, updating an earlier toll.

A security source who requested not to be named said the explosion happened near a compound belonging to the National Directorate of Security (NDS), the Afghan intelligence agency. The NDS compound is located near the NATO headquarters and the US embassy. (AFP)

# Ivanka flashes a heart for Team USA



Ivanka Trump, left, watches with Kim Jung-sook, wife of the South Korean President and South Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha, right, during the men's Big Air snowboard competition at the 2018 Winter Olympics

### Pyeongchang

**I**vanka Trump played America's cheerleader at the Winter Olympics on Friday, when she flashed a heart sign for Team USA during the snowboarding.

But Ivanka ensured she kept on message when it came to politics and during an earlier dinner with South Korean President Moon Jae-in, she pledged to maintain her father's 'maximum-pressure campaign' to push for North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons.

Today, the First Daughter was pictured, in a Team USA hat and red snowsuit, cheering and smiling as she watched snowboarders vying for medals at the men's Big Air competition at the Pyeongchang Olympics.

She was joined in the stands by South Korean President Moon Jae-in, Kim Jung-sook, International Olympic Committee

member and 1998 ice hockey gold medalist Angela Ruggiero, as well as a rather gloomy looking White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders.

The trio watched as Team USA's Kyle Mack landed himself an Olympic silver medal in the men's snowboard big air, with some impressive stunts and twisting leap called the 'Bloody Dracula'. Gold went to Canada's Sebastien Toutant and bronze to Britain's Billy Morgan.

Ivanka, who will lead the U.S. delegation at the closing ceremony Sunday, was later seen posing for selfies and chatting with Kim Jung-suk.

The first daughter's arrival in the country is a deliberate riposte to North Korea after Kim Jong-un sent his sister Kim Yo-jong to the opening ceremony of the Winter Games, along with an army of 100 cheerleaders, completely upstaging Vice President Mike

Pence in the process.

Interestingly, Yo-jong was referred to by many as 'the Ivanka of North Korea' - as both wield a powerful influence over the respective leaders of their countries.

Last night, shortly after landing, Ivanka met President Moon Jae-in for dinner where the Korean leader joked that whenever he spoke to Donald Trump on the phone, he'd ask about ticket sales for the Olympics, the New York Times reports.

Moon also highlighted the importance of easing tensions between the North and South, and credited: 'President Trump's strong support for inter-Korean dialogue.'

'North Korea's participation in the Winter Olympic Games has served as an opportunity for us to engage in active discussions between the two Koreas, and this has led to lowering of tensions on the peninsula,' he said. (MailOnline)