

# IS relatives flee en masse from Syrian camp

● **Attack in northern Syria against Kurdish forces widened to target the town of Suluk**

● **Turkey's stated objective is to set up a "safe zone" inside Syria**

Reuters | Beirut/Istanbul

Women affiliated with Islamic State and their children fled en masse from a camp where they were being held in northern Syria yesterday after shelling by Turkish forces in a five-day-old offensive, the region's Kurdish-led administration said.

Turkey's cross-border attack in northern Syria against Kurdish forces widened to target the town of Suluk which was hit by Ankara's Syrian rebel allies. There were conflicting accounts on the outcome of the fighting.

Turkey is facing threats of possible sanctions from the United States unless it calls off the incursion. Two of its NATO allies, Germany and France, have said they are halting weapons exports to Turkey. The Arab League has denounced the operation.

Ankara launched the assault against the Kurdish YPG militia after U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew some U.S. troops from the border region. Ankara says the YPG is a terrorist group aligned with Kurdish militants waging an insurgency in Turkey.

Turkey's stated objective is to set up a "safe zone" inside Syria to resettle many of the 3.6 million Syrian war refugees it has been hosting. President Tayyip Erdogan has threatened to send them to Eu-



An elderly man is evacuated from a building in the Turkish border town of Akcakale after it was hit by a rocket reportedly fired from Syria



**In the latest criticism, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson told Erdogan the offensive may worsen the humanitarian situation and undermine progress toward weakening Islamic State, urging an end to the operation.**

rope if the EU does not back his assault.

But the Turkish incursion has raised international alarm over large-scale displacements of civilians and, amidst the upheaval, the possibility of Islamic State militants escaping from prisons run by the Kurdish-led authorities.

The Kurdish-led forces have been the main regional ally of the United States against Islamic State in Syria.

The region's Kurdish-led administration said in a statement that 785 IS-affiliated foreigners had fled the camp at Ain Issa.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, citing sources in the camp, said around 100 people had escaped.

In apparent refer-

ence to Turkish-backed rebels, the Kurdish-led administration said "mercenaries" attacked the camp where "Daesh elements" - a reference to Islamic State - in turn attacked camp guards and opened the gates.

The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) hold swathes of territory that was once part of Islamic State's "caliphate". The SDF has been keeping thousands of IS jihadists in jail and tens of thousands of their family members in camps.

SDF official Marvan Qamishlo told Reuters there were not enough guards for the camp, which is north of Raqqa and about 30 km (20 miles) south of the Turkish border.

"The guarding is very weak

now," he said, adding there were now just 60-70 security personnel at the camp compared with a normal level of no less than 700 in the camp of 12,000 people.

## Turkish-led advance

Along the front lines, Turkish forces and Syrian rebels entered Suluk, some 10 km (6 miles) from Turkey's border, the Observatory said yesterday.

Turkey's state-owned Anadolu news agency said the rebels seized complete control of Suluk. But the SDF's Qamishlo said SDF forces had repelled the attack and were still in control. Suluk is southeast of the Syrian border town of Tel Abyad, one of the two main targets in the incursion, which was bombarded by Turkish howitzers on Sunday afternoon, a witness in the neighboring Turkish town of Akcakale said.

Machinegun fire resounded around the Syrian frontier town of Ras al Ain, 120 km (75 miles) to the east of Tel Abyad, while Turkish artillery continued to target the area, a Reuters reporter across the border in Turkey's Ceylanpinar said.

Turkish-backed Syrian rebels, known as the National Army,

advanced into Ras al Ain on Saturday but by Sunday there were still conflicting reports on which side was prevailing in the town.

The Syrian Observatory said the SDF, in which the YPG comprises the main fighting element, had recovered "almost full control" of Ras al Ain after a counter-attack.

A spokesman for the National Army denied this, saying its forces were still in the positions they took on Saturday.

## 130,000 displaced

More than 130,000 people have been displaced from rural areas around Tel Abyad and Ras al Ain as a result of the fighting, the United Nations said on Sunday.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said OCHA and other relief agencies estimated up to 400,000 civilians in the Syrian conflict zone may require aid and protection in the coming period.

Erdogan has dismissed the growing international condemnation of the military operation, saying Turkey "will not stop it, no matter what anyone says".



Aid groups warn of a new humanitarian crisis in Syria's eight-year civil war as 100,000 civilians fleeing the Turkish offensive seek relief



Smoke rises from town of Tel Abyad, as seen from village of Yabisa, near the Turkish-Syrian border, Syria

## Cargo ship runs aground in Corsican reserve

Ajaccio | France

A 90-metre (295-foot) cargo ship ran aground yesterday in a pristine marine reserve in the Strait of Bonafacio off the French Mediterranean island of Corsica, but no oil appears to have been spilled, maritime police said.

The Rhodanus, transporting 2,650 tonnes of steel coils and seven crew, ran into trouble in the Mounds of Bonifacio nature reserve in the early morning hours after missing an opening in the strait, the authority said in a statement.

The captain "did not turn in time and headed straight for the coast despite repeated calls" for nearly an hour from traffic controllers in Corsica and nearby Sardinia, it said.

The ship got lodged in sand without tilting, and does not appear to have shed any oil, according to the statement. But an-



The Rhodanus, transporting 2,650 tonnes of steel coils and seven crew, ran into trouble in the Mounds of Bonifacio nature reserve

ti-pollution measures are being deployed as a precaution.

"The ship is stuck in the middle of the islands of the Natural Reserve of the Mounds of Bon-

ifacio in a protected area that is environmentally very sensitive," the reserve's director Jean-Michel Culioli said at the scene. "It (the ship) should never

have been there. We remain vigilant," he added.

The reserve, stretching over 80,000 hectares, is the largest in mainland France, a scuba di-



**The ship is stuck in the middle of the islands of the Natural Reserve of the Mounds of Bonifacio in a protected area that is environmentally very sensitive**

JEAN-MICHEL CULIOLI  
THE RESERVE'S DIRECTOR

vers' paradise with several small islands in the strait separating French Corsica from Italian Sardinia.

The authorities have prohibited any ships or other nautical activities in a one-kilometre (0.6-mile) radius of the stranded ship.

## Bangladesh indicts 8 for 2015 killing of publisher

AP | Dhaka, Bangladesh

A court in Bangladesh's capital yesterday indicted eight suspected Islamist militants tied to a banned group over the 2015 killing of a man who published books on secularism and atheism.

Anti-Terrorism Special Tribunal Judge Majibur Rahman read out the charges to six of the suspects, who pleaded not guilty. Another two remained fugitives, but the judge issued arrest warrants for them.

In October 2015, suspected militants hacked Faisal Abedin Deepan of the Jagriti Prokashoni publishing house. On the same day, another publisher, Ahmed Rashid Tutul, survived an attack in Dhaka.