

## IS TRUCK BOMBS KILL UP TO 60 IN SYRIA

**BEIRUT:** A triple truck bomb attack claimed by Islamic State in northeastern Syria killed at least 50 people and wounded 80 others, a spokesman for the Kurdish militia that controls the area said yesterday. The town in the northeastern province of Hasaka is controlled by the Kurdish YPG militia, which has been battling Islamic State with the support of US-led air strikes. Kurdish fighters have advanced against the militants in the last few weeks in Hasaka, notably taking over the town of al Houli backed up by a US-backed rebel alliance that includes the YPG.

The three blasts, carried out by at least two suicide bombers, struck outside a hospital, at a marketplace and in a residential area in the town of Tel Tamer late on Thursday, the YPG's Redur Xelil said via an internet messaging service. "There is massive destruction in the town and the number killed

is between 50 and 60, all of them civilians," he said. Islamic State later said in an online statement that three of its fighters driving three separate vehicles had detonated the suicide bombs targeting "bases" belonging to Kurdish fighters.

Earlier the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights gave a death toll of at least 22 people in the attack, saying that number was likely to increase. The Observatory said one of the bombs exploded near a health centre and another near a vegetable market. It said there was "confirmed information" about casualties among the Kurdish internal security force, known as the Asayish. The YPG has been the most effective partner on the ground in Syria for the US-led coalition that is fighting Islamic State. In October, it became part of the new US-backed alliance, called the Democratic Forces of Syria. — Reuters



**ALEPPO:** Syrian government forces walk past the bodies of reported members of the Islamic State group who were killed during a battle with regime forces in the area, as the corpses are displayed on the ground at the Kweyris air base in the east of this province yesterday. — AFP

## 3 PALESTINIANS KILLED IN WEST BANK, GAZA

### ISRAELI TROOPS USE LIVE ROUNDS

**HALHUL:** Three Palestinians were killed yesterday in the occupied West Bank and in the Gaza Strip, one after allegedly attempting to run down Israeli soldiers and two in clashes with troops. Palestinian youths clashed with Israeli forces near the northern entrance of the West Bank city of Hebron, and the soldiers responded with live fire, witnesses said. "Uday Jihad Irshaid, 22, was killed by live ammunition in his chest during clashes in

warning shots into the air." Irshaid's 17-year-old sister Dania was killed six weeks ago after trying to stab security forces, according to Israeli police. On the border with the Islamist Hamas-run coastal enclave of Gaza, a Palestinian was shot dead and 12 wounded in clashes with Israeli forces on the other side of the frontier fence. The Palestinian health ministry said Sami Maadi, 41, died in the incident east of the refugee camp of Al-Bureij.

Palestinian security sources identified the driver as Issa Haroub from Dir Samat village west of Hebron.

About an hour beforehand, a Palestinian fired at Israeli forces at a crossing between the northern West Bank and Israel and was shot and wounded, the Israeli defence ministry said. "An armed Palestinian assailant fired shots on the Gilboa crossing from several dozen metres (yards) away," said a statement from the ministry, which employs civilian guards at the site. "No casualties or damage have been reported to the crossing or its operators. The assailant, wounded, was picked up by a van and fled the scene," it added. The checkpoint is one of the main crossings in the northern area. Since Oct 1, near daily attacks and clashes between Palestinians and soldiers have killed 116 on the Palestinian side, 17 Israelis, an American and an Eritrean.

#### 'Return the Bodies'

More than half of the Palestinians killed have been alleged attackers. Israel has withheld the corpses of many attackers, a policy authorities say acts as a deterrent but critics argue leads to more anger. Yesterday, protesters in Silwad northeast of Ramallah called for Israel to return the bodies. Bassam Hamad, whose son Anas was killed this month after he tried to ram Israeli soldiers with his car, led a protest. "If (Israel) wants to make us suffer by stealing and keeping the bodies of the martyrs, we will make it suffer by being patient and resilient," he told AFP.

After yesterday's protest, clashes broke out between Palestinian stone throwers and Israeli soldiers, with six Palestinians wounded, an AFP correspondent said. In a separate incident in central Ramallah, Israeli security forces raided a shop in the early hours of yesterday, leading to clashes between residents and soldiers, witnesses said. Three Palestinians were shot during the clashes, one resident said. Their condition was not known. — AFP

#### Attack at Crossing

Earlier on Friday, a 57-year-old was shot dead as he tried to drive his car into a military checkpoint at Halhul, near Hebron, the Israeli army said. "A Palestinian attempted to ram his vehicle into security forces near Hebron" in the south of the territory, an army statement said. It said that forces present "shot the attacker, resulting in his death", adding that no Israelis were injured in the attack.



**HEBRON:** The mother of Uday Jihad Irshaid, a 22-year-old Palestinian man who was killed during clashes with Israeli security forces in this West Bank city, mourns during his funeral yesterday. — AFP

Hebron," a Palestinian health ministry statement said.

The Israeli military confirmed the use of live rounds but not the fatality. "A violent riot is taking place in Hebron. Hundreds of Palestinians are attacking forces, hurling rocks and rolling burning tyres at them," an army spokeswoman told AFP. "In order to disperse the crowd, (forces fired) 0.22 calibre rounds towards the main instigators and

## SISTANI CRITICIZES DEPLOYMENT OF TURKISH FORCES

**BAGHDAD:** Iraq's top Shiite cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani yesterday criticized the deployment of Turkish troops and tanks to the country's north that Baghdad says took place without its approval. Iraq has demanded that Ankara remove the newly-deployed forces, which were sent to a base near the city of Mosul, but Turkey has pushed for them to stay. No country should "send its soldiers to the territory of another state under the pretext of supporting it in fighting terrorism without the conclusion of an agreement... between the governments of the two countries," Sistani said in remarks delivered by a representative at weekly Friday prayers.

Turkey has been training forces opposed to the Islamic State jihadist group, which overran large areas north and west of Baghdad last year, at the base where the recently-deployed troops were sent. Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu has defended the deployment as an "act of solidarity" and said: "When the threats (to the trainers) increased, we sent troops to protect the camp." But the base also gives Turkey a foothold in an area where a major ground operation against IS is eventually to take place, and where its archfoe, Turkish Kurdish rebel group the Kurdistan Workers' Party, has also sought to expand its presence. Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi, whose high-profile reform program has accomplished little in the way of lasting change, can ill afford another setback now, but repeated calls for a Turkish withdrawal have gone unheeded. Abadi said yesterday that he directed the foreign ministry to make a "formal complaint" over "the Turkish incursion."

#### 'Out of the Question'

And he called on the United Nations Security Council to "protect Iraq and its security, sovereignty, safety and territorial integrity, which were violated by Turkish forces", a statement from his office said. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said Friday that "it is our duty to address the Baghdad government's concerns" but indicated that Ankara wanted to obtain Iraqi approval for the deployment. "Especially after starting the fight against (IS), threats have increased against Turkey and our forces on the ground. It is the Turkish republic's duty to ensure our troops' security," Cavusoglu said during a live interview on NTV television.

IS "still controls around 35 percent of Iraqi territory. Do you (Iraq) have a force to ensure security of our troops providing training there? No. Then who will protect them? We are discussing this," he said. The foreign minister also reiterated that Ankara had stopped further deployment of troops to the region due to "our respect (for) Iraq and the Baghdad government". Earlier this week, Iraq gave Turkey 48 hours to remove the forces, but the deadline passed without Ankara doing so and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan subsequently ruled out a withdrawal. "What they do in Bashiqa and at the camp is training," Erdogan told a news conference in Ankara late on Thursday, referring to the area where the base is located. "The number of our soldiers will increase or reduce according to the number of peshmerga (Iraqi Kurdish forces) who are trained. (Their) withdrawal is out of the question," Erdogan said. — AFP