

# Regime assault looms on Syria's 2nd city

## Ban admits UN's failure in Syria

AFP, Aleppo



Ban Ki-moon

Fighting raged in Syria's second city Aleppo on Thursday afternoon, a watchdog said, as regime forces and rebels sent reinforcements to the embattled city.

Intermittent clashes were also reported in the southern belt of Damascus, with the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights watchdog saying at least seven people were killed there on Thursday.

Across Syria, at least 28 people were killed yesterday, most of them civilians, according to the group.

The violence came as a security source told AFP that troops were preparing to launch an offensive on rebel-held districts of Aleppo.

Rebels also said a regime assault appeared imminent.

Meanwhile, UN chief Ban Ki-moon yesterday said the UN was failing in its duty to protect Syria's civilians as he paid a landmark visit to Srebrenica, the scene of Europe's worst massacre since World War II.

Ban, the first UN chief to visit Srebrenica since blue helmet peacekeepers failed to prevent the killing of around 8,000 Bosnian Muslims in 1995, said it was essential the international community learned the lessons of history.

"We have to do all to protect civilians and to stop bloodshed particularly in Syria now, when we have learned the message of Srebrenica," Ban said.

"The international community must be united not to see any further bloodshed in

Syria because I do not want to see any of my successors after 20 years visiting Syria apologising for what we could have done now to protect the civilians in Syria which we are not doing."

Ban was speaking after meeting survivors at the Potocari cemetery near Srebrenica, where more than 6,500 victims of the genocide

are buried. The attacks took place after Bosnian Serbs brushed aside lightly armed Dutch peacekeepers in a so-called UN "safe area" where thousands of Muslims from surrounding villages had gathered for protection.

The episode caused huge damage to the reputation of the UN's peacekeeping operations, which were at the time headed by Kofi Annan -- Ban's predecessor and the man now tasked by the UN and Arab League to bring peace to Syria.

Meanwhile, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has accused Syria of giving Kurdish rebels a free hand in its north and warned that Ankara would not hesitate to strike.

He said the move was explicitly directed against Turkey and warned that "there will undoubtedly be a response on our part to this attitude", adding that rebels had put up posters of jailed leader Abdullah Ocalan in the area.

Nationwide, at least 143 people were killed on Wednesday, according to Observatory figures, including 75 civilians, 41 soldiers and 27 rebel fighters.

## SECURITY ISSUE Pakistan halts Nato supply to Afghanistan

AFP, Peshawar

Pakistan has temporarily stopped Nato supply trucks crossing its northwestern border into Afghanistan over security concerns due to fears of Islamist attacks, officials said yesterday.

"Movement of Nato vehicles has been temporarily suspended since Wednesday evening to beef up security," a paramilitary official told AFP.

He said the Nato route would "resume very soon", but that until then trucks carrying supplies for the Nato troops in Afghanistan had been told not to approach the border.

# Violence continues in Assam, toll rises to 44

AGENCIES

Clashes between Bodos and immigrants in four Assam districts yesterday continued for the seventh day, leaving 44 people dead even as state Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi insisted the situation was "improving" and rapped the media for portraying the state as "burning".

India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh would visit Assam tomorrow to take stock of the situation and the steps being taken to control the unrest.

Indefinite curfew and shoot-at-sight orders were in force in worst-affected Kokrajhar district, while night curfew was on in Chirang and Dhubri districts.

Nearly 2 lakh people are taking shelter in 150 relief camps while 11 persons are missing.

Train services, which came to a complete halt for two days, have resumed with three special trains one each to New Delhi, Kolkata and Bangalore being run from Guwahati to take passengers who were stranded at different places along the route.

Gogoi, who arrived in Kokrajhar in the morning, said the toll had risen to 44 with three more deaths reported from Chirang district and one from Dhubri while 11 were still missing.

Meanwhile, terming the situation in violence-hit districts of Assam as "deplorable", West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee yesterday said the state will provide shelter to refugees fleeing trouble-torn areas.

"Bengal will give shelter to the people coming from Assam in the wake of the conflict," she said.

## ROHINGYA ISSUE Pak Taliban threaten Myanmar

AFP, Islamabad

The Pakistani Taliban yesterday threatened to attack Myanmar to avenge crimes against the Muslim Rohingya, unless Pakistan halts all relations with the government and shuts its embassy in Islamabad.

In a rare statement focused on the plight of Muslims abroad, the umbrella Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP) group sought to present itself as a defender of Muslim men and women in Myanmar, saying "we will take revenge of your blood".

Spokesman Ehsanullah Ehsan demanded that the Pakistani government halt all relations with Myanmar and close down its embassy in Islamabad.

"Otherwise we will not only attack Burmese interests anywhere but will also attack the Pakistani fellows of Burma one by one," he said in a statement.

The TTP frequently claims attacks on security forces in Pakistan but its ability to wage violence in countries further afield has been questioned.

But US officials say there is evidence the group was behind a failed 2010 attempt to bomb Times Square in New York, for which Pakistani-American Faisal Shahzad was jailed for life.

# China charges Bo Xilai's wife with murder

AFP, Beijing

The wife of disgraced Chinese political leader Bo Xilai and an orderly working in the couple's home have been charged with murdering a British businessman, state news agency Xinhua said yesterday.

Gu Kailai, a former international lawyer whose husband was one of China's most promising political leaders until his downfall earlier this year, will face trial for intentional homicide, Xinhua reported in a brief dispatch.

Zhang Xiaojun, previously described as an orderly who worked for the high-flying couple, will also be prosecuted on the same charge, it said, citing authorities.

Xinhua said there was "irrefutable and substantial" evidence that the pair had poisoned Neil Heywood, a British businessman who had commercial dealings



Gu Kailai

with Bo and his wife.

"Investigation results show that Bogu Kailai, one of the defendants, and her son surnamed Bo had conflicts with the British citizen Neil Heywood over economic interests," said Xinhua, using Gu's married name.

"Worrying about Neil Heywood's threat to her son's personal security, Bogu Kailai along with

Zhang Xiaojun, the other defendant, poisoned Neil Heywood to death."

The pair have been interrogated and will be tried at a court in the eastern Chinese city of Hefei "on a day to be decided", Xinhua said, adding that their families had been informed.

The scandal, which first came to light in February, has sent shockwaves through the highest echelons of power in China and led to Bo being sacked from his post as Communist Party leader of the megacity of Chongqing.

# Azad 'involved' in 10 types

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and it has evidence against Azad in connection with 10 incidents of genocide, killing, rape and other crimes during the 1971 war.

"He [Azad] was one of the brutal killers and rapists [during the war]. We have strong evidence [about his involvement]," Sanaul Huq, senior member of the investigation agency, yesterday told reporters at the Bailey Road office of the agency.

Expelled Jamaat-e-Islami member Azad went on the run around seven hours before International Crimes Tribunal-2 issued an arrest warrant against him on April 3.

"We have completed investigation into the allegations against Azad and will hand over our report [384 pages in all] to the prosecution on Sunday," Mohammad Abdul Hannan Khan, coordinator of the investigation agency, told The Daily Star.

Prosecutor of the case Sahidur Rahman told The Daily Star that after getting the investigation report, the prosecution would inform the tribunal about it and then they would prepare formal charges against Azad based on the report.

"In accordance with the law, the war crimes trial against Azad could start in his absence," added Sahidur.

Sanaul Huq told reporters that Azad had been involved in ten types of crime: genocide, killing, rape, abduction, confinement, torture, arson, looting, forced religious conversion and deportation of people in Faridpur during the nine-month-long war.

"We have evidence that [Azad] directly killed at least 14 people during the war," said Sanaul, adding that the agency had over 50 witnesses, some of them victims, to prove the allegations. The investigation against Azad started on April 10 last year and was completed yesterday [Thursday], he added.

The investigation agency claimed that Azad was at least involved in the rape of three women, abduction of nine people, detention of 10 people and torching of five houses and looting of 15 houses. He had also forcefully converted nine people of other religions to Islam and forced numerous people of Faridpur to leave the country during the war, said the sources.

Sanaul said Azad, a resident of Barakhardia of Saltha upazila of Faridpur, started atrocities with his father-in-

law Chand Gazi, who was also a Razakar, and was "personally involved" in repression on women.

"At first, he operated in Nagarkanda, Saltha and Boalmari but when he gained the trust of the Pakistan army, Faridpur town came under his operation," added Sanaul.

Quoting intelligence sources, Sanaul said, Azad might be in Pakistan now.

He said as a member of the Islami Chhatra Sangha, the then student wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami, Azad had "direct links" with Jamaat leader Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed, another war crimes accused at the tribunal.

Mojaheed was president of Faridpur district Chhatra Sangha during 1968-1970, as prosecution documents placed before the tribunal show.

Azad and Mojaheed were seen together in Faridpur stadium, which was the torture centre of the Pakistan army and their local collaborators during the war, said Sanaul.

Replying a question about Azad's running away, Sanaul said, "We have no right to arrest anyone and the court directed Dhaka Metropolitan Police to arrest him. But police could not arrest him."

Investigation agency coordinator Hannan told reporters that with the court's authorisation the agency would take steps to seek the help of Interpol to nab Azad and bring him to justice.

Following a prosecution petition and after going through the progress report of the investigation, Tribunal-2 on April 3 issued the arrest warrant against Azad.

The trial of eight Jamaat and BNP leaders is ongoing at the two tribunals set up to deal with war crimes committed during the Liberation War.

Meanwhile, a prosecution witness yesterday told Tribunal-1 that he had fled to India during the Liberation War and upon return he was told that BNP leader Salauddin Quader Chowdhury's father Fazlul Quader Chowdhury had led the looting of his house.

A case was filed in this regard after independence but witness Parag Dhar, who was just seven during the war, could not name the accused of the case.

Parag, the ninth prosecution witness against Salauddin said different organisations had gone to

their home to record their testimonies.

In his 20-minute deposition before the court, Parag said during the war Razakars--an auxiliary force of the Pakistani army--looted homes in Jagatmallopara, Modhya Gohira, Sultanpur and Kundeshwari areas of Chittagong.

"We also heard that Al-Badr and the Razakars began mass killing in those places," the witness said, adding that his family had to flee the country and go to Agartala of India.

Parag said they returned to Bangladesh in December, 1971.

"After return, I found my father's Jeep and paddy processors stolen by Razakars and Al-Badr men. They also looted the furniture of our home," he said, adding, "I heard that the loot took place under the leadership of Fazlul Quader Chowdhury."

When a prosecution lawyer asked the witness if Salauddin Quader or others had been involved in the lootings, the defence objected saying that the prosecution was leading the witness.

However, tribunal Chairman Justice Md Nizamul Huq then asked the witness himself whether he could mention who else were involved.

"I could not say," Parag replied.

Prosecutor Sultan Mahmud then asked the witness whether he could identify the accused Salauddin Quader.

The tribunal then told the prosecution that it was not necessary as the witness had not said anything about Salauddin Quader.

Defence counsel Ahsanul Huq Hena then completed cross-examining the witness with 12-13 questions.

Ahsanul made a suggestion that the investigation officer had taught the witness what to say against Fazlul Quader Chowdhury.

"It's not true," the witness said.

The proceeding of the trial was adjourned until August 5.

Salauddin Quader is facing 23 specific charges of crimes against humanity.

Meanwhile, Tribunal-2 yesterday completed recording of the cross-examination of Poet Quazi Rosy, the fourth prosecution witness in the war crimes case against Jamaat leader Abdul Quader Mollah.

Mollah and his accomplices killed pro-liberation poet Meherun Nesa, her mother, and two brothers at their home in Mirpur during the Liberation War.

During cross-examination yesterday, Ekramul Huque, defence counsel for Quader Mollah, asked the 63-year-old witness, "Are you a supporter of Awami League?"

Rosy said she did. Ekramul then said the witness had given "false testimony" against Jamaat leader Quader Mollah "to suppress him politically".

"It is not true," replied Rosy.


"Did you mention the name of Quader Mollah in your book 'Shaheed Kabi Meherun Nesa?'" said Ekramul.

Rosy said she did not mention anyone's name in her book as there was no scope for trial.

"As the trial has started, I have given my testimony against Abdul Quader Mollah and I was waiting for this day," she said.

The three-member tribunal, led by its Chairman Justice ATM Fazle Kabir, adjourned the case proceeding until Sunday when the fifth prosecution witness is expected to appear before the court.

Quader Mollah is facing six counts of crimes against humanity charges at the tribunal.




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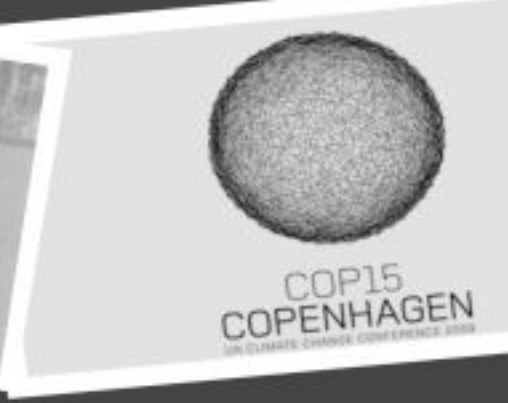

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