



240 Skiers were airlifted after a chair lift in French Alps broke down



Weather table with columns for location, temperature, and weather conditions.

UN in Syria ready to collect proof of Assad's crime

UNITED NATIONS

THE UN organisation assisting in investigating the most serious crimes in Syria said on Monday the country's new authorities were 'very receptive' to its request for cooperation during a just-concluded visit to Damascus, and it is preparing to deploy.

The visit led by Robert Petit, head of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism for Syria, was the first since the organisation was established by the UN General Assembly in 2016. It was created to assist in evidence-gathering and prosecution of individuals responsible for possible war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide since Syria's civil war began in 2011.

"The fall of the Assad rule is a significant opportunity for us to fulfill our mandate on the ground," Petit said.

"Time is running out. There is a small window of opportunity to secure these sites and the material they hold."

UN associate spokesperson Stephane Tremblay said Monday the investigative team 'is preparing for an operational deployment as early as possible and as soon as it is authorised to conduct activities on Syrian soil.'

"The representatives from the caretaker authorities were very receptive to our request for cooperation and are aware of the scale of the task ahead," the spokesperson said.

"Even at one facility," Petit said, "the mountains of government documentation reveal the chilling efficiency of systematising the regime's atrocity crimes."

He said that a collective effort by Syrians, civil society organisations and international partners will be needed, as a priority, to preserve evidence of the crimes committed, and ensure that all victims are inclusively represented in the pursuit of justice.

Protests have broken out in Syria over the burning of a Christmas tree, prompting calls for the new Islamist authorities to take steps to protect minorities, BBC reported.

A video posted on social media showed the tree on fire in the main square of Suqaylabiyah, a Christian-majority town in central Syria.

Demonstrators took to the streets across the country in Hama province

11 KILLED, 7 HURT IN BLAST AT TURKEY EXPLOSIVES PLANT

ISTANBUL

A powerful blast ripped through an explosives plant in northwestern Turkey on Tuesday, killing 11 people and injuring seven others, officials said. Footage showed shards of glass and metal scattered outside the plant north of the city of Balikesir, where ambulances stood by.

"There are unfortunately 11 deaths... eight women and three men. And we have seven injured," Turkey's Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said at the scene. Two of the seven injured were "under observation" in hospital, he added.

According to the governor of Balikesir province, Ismail Ustaoglu, the blast happened shortly before 8.30 am because of a "technical malfunction" on a production line at the factory, which produces munitions and explosives for civilian use.

Six employees of the same factory were injured in a previous explosion in 2014, according to Turkish media. Images broadcast by Turkish television channels showed part of the factory completely destroyed, as well as metal panels and shattered glass on the ground.

One witness on the 24-hour news channel NTV described the scene as a "battlefield".

A fire that broke out following the explosion was extinguished by firefighters, and the factory was quickly evacuated.

An investigation has been opened and the theory of sabotage has already been ruled out, according to the authorities.

The factory is located about a kilometre from the nearest village, according to satellite images.

Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan offered his condolences and as well as the interior minister, he also sent defence and labour ministers to the scene.

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This handout image shows the moment of an explosion in Turkey | AFP

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