

WORLD

SYRIA

Peace talks won't resume next week in Geneva setback

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BEIRUT — In another setback to international efforts to resolve Syria's devastating civil war, peace talks are not to resume next week in Geneva, a U.N. envoy announced as Turkey on Friday intensified cross-border artillery shelling on areas dominated by Syria's U.S.-backed, mostly Kurdish militia.

But reinforcing its image as a key force battling the Islamic State group on the ground, the predominantly Kurdish coalition, known as the Syria Democratic Forces, on Friday captured the town of Shaddadeh in the country's northeast. The town was one of the biggest strongholds of the extremists.

Meanwhile, Russia called for an urgent Security Council meeting over the deteriorating border situation. A statement

posted on the Russian foreign ministry's website said it intends to submit a draft council resolution calling on Turkey to "cease any actions that undermine Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity."

In comments to Swedish newspaper Svenska Dagbladet, U.N. Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura, said the Syria talks won't resume in Geneva on Feb. 25 as he had previously hoped. He said that he cannot "realistically" get the parties in the Syrian conflict back to the table by then, "but we intend to do so soon."

Fighting has intensified in Syria over the past weeks and a deadline to cease military activities has not been observed. The United States, Russia and other world powers agreed Feb. 12 on a deal calling for the ceasing of hostilities within a week, the delivery of



Umit Bektaş / AFP / Getty Images

Foreign diplomats lay carnations at the site of a car bomb attack in Ankara blamed on Syria's Kurdish militia. Turkey then intensified its shelling on areas dominated by the Kurdish group.

urgently needed aid to besieged areas of Syria and a return to peace talks in Geneva.

De Mistura halted the latest Syria talks on Feb. 3, because of major differences between the two sides, exacerbated by increased aerial bombings and a wide military offensive by Syrian troops and their allies under the cover of Russian airstrikes.

In an interview published

late Thursday on the Swedish daily's website, he said, "We need real talks about peace, not just talks about talks."

En route to Jordan for talks about Syria and other issues, Secretary of State John Kerry said Friday he is still hopeful about a cease-fire and peace talks for Syria, even though Geneva talks will not resume next week.

Kerry said tough and com-

plex issues remain and there is more work to do to resolve them. He added that the U.S. wants the process to be sustainable so that hostilities can be halted.

In recent weeks, Syrian government forces captured dozens of villages and towns across the country while the SDF evicted opposition fighters from areas near the border with Turkey.

UMBERTO ECO 1932-2016

Best-selling Italian author wrote 'Name of the Rose'

NEW YORK TIMES

Umberto Eco, an Italian scholar in the arcane field of semiotics who became the author of best-selling novels, most notably the blockbuster medieval mystery "The Name of the Rose," died Friday in Italy. He was 84.

Mr. Eco's Italian publisher, Bompiani, confirmed the death, according to the Italian news agency ANSA. His fami-

ly told the Italian newspaper la Repubblica that he had died at home. No cause was given. Mr. Eco had homes in Milan and Rimini; it was unclear where he had been at his death.

As a semiotician, Mr. Eco sought to interpret cultures through their signs and symbols — words, religious icons, banners, clothing, musical scores, even cartoons — and published more than 20 non-fiction books on these subjects



Umberto Eco infused his half-dozen novels with many of his scholarly preoccupations.

while teaching at the University of Bologna, Europe's oldest university.

But rather than segregate his academic life from his pop-

ular fiction, Mr. Eco infused his half-dozen novels with many of his scholarly preoccupations.

In bridging these two worlds, he was never more successful than in "The Name of the Rose," his first novel, first published in Europe in 1980. It sold more than 10 million copies in about 30 languages. A 1986 Hollywood adaptation directed by Jean-Jacques Annaud and starring

Sean Connery got only a lukewarm reception.

The book is set in a 14th century Italian monastery where monks are being murdered by their co-religionists bent on concealing a long-lost philosophical treatise by Aristotle. Despite devoting whole chapters to discussions of Christian theology and heresies, Mr. Eco managed to enthrall a mass audience with a rollicking detective thriller.

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UGANDA

Opposition candidate detained again

ASSOCIATED PRESS

KAMPALA, Uganda — As election returns showed a strong, early lead Friday for incumbent President Yoweri Museveni, the longtime leader's security forces briefly detained the main opposition candidate and cracked down on protesters with beatings, tear gas and stun grenades.

The actions were condemned by the United States, which gives financial support to the

East African nation and helps train its military.

Thursday's vote was extended for a second day in two main districts because ballots and other election materials had not arrived in time.

Museveni, who has ruled Uganda for three decades, led in the returns, but votes remained to be cast and counted in strongholds for opposition leader Kizza Besigye.

With results counted from about 47 percent of polling stations across

the country, Museveni had about 63 percent of the vote and Besigye had about 33 percent, the election commission said. Final results are expected Saturday.

Police surrounded the headquarters of Besigye's Forum for Democratic Change party as he met with party members, and a helicopter fired tear gas at a crowd outside. Then police took Besigye, a 59-year-old doctor, to an unknown location, according to Semuju Nganda, a party spokesman.

Police spokesman Fred Enanga said Besigye was transferred for his own safety and because police wanted to talk to him "to

exercise restraint until the final results are announced." Besigye was driven to his home and his movements are not restricted, he said.

Secretary of State John Kerry spoke by phone with Museveni "to underscore that Uganda's progress depends on adherence to democratic principles in the ongoing election process," the State Department said.

Kerry "expressed his concern about the detentions of ... Besigye and harassment of opposition party members during voting and tallying, and urged President Museveni to rein in the police and security forces."

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