

Activists: Shelling in northern Syria kills 20
Diaa Hadid, Associated Press
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BEIRUT — Regime forces and Syrian rebels fighting for control of a small but strategic town in the country's embattled northern province of Aleppo have killed at least 20 people, most of them civilians, activists said Friday.

Meanwhile, rebels killed at least 30 Syrian soldiers, including ten who were executed after they were captured, the British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

The Observatory, which relies on a network of activists on the ground, said the civilians in the town of Tel Aran in the northern Aleppo province were killed in a series of attacks.

It said a family of seven people - including four children - were killed when their vehicle was shelled. Another 12 people were killed in shelling that hit a residential building, including six children, the group said. On Thursday, a father and son were also killed in the shelling, it said.

The town of Tal Aran lies close to Safira, which forces loyal to President Bashar Assad have been trying to wrest from hard-line Muslim rebels for the past few weeks. A military complex near Safira is believed to include an underground facility for chemical weapons production and storage.

Tal Aran's residents are mostly ethnic Kurds whose militias were pushed out by rebels of al-Qaida's Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in July. Now they are caught in crossfire between the extremist rebels and Syrian forces.

Near the town of Khanaser in the same province, rebels killed 20 Syrian soldiers in clashes, the Observatory said. It wasn't immediately clear which rebel group killed the soldiers.

And in the eastern Syrian town of Deir al-Zour, rebels of the al-Qaida-linked Jabhat al-Nusra or Nusra Front executed 10 soldiers they captured during clashes, the Observatory said. The executions came a day after a top military intelligence officer was killed in clashes in the city.

Also Friday, the international agency overseeing the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons stockpile said that inspectors have visited 14 sites in the country since they started work on Oct. 1.

The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the United Nations are working to verify Syria's initial declaration of its weapons program and render production and chemical mixing facilities inoperable by Nov. 1. Their work on the ground involves smashing control panels on machines and destroying empty munitions.

The OPCW said earlier that inspectors carried out destruction work at six sites.

In neighboring Lebanon, a Canadian lawyer who was abducted while serving with the U.N. observer force in Syria's Golan Heights flew out hours after he arrived in Beirut. Lebanese officials said Carl Campeau, held captive since February, boarded a plane to Turkey amid tight security.

Also in Lebanon, European Union ambassadors met President Michel Suleiman and discussed how the Syrian civil war is affecting his country, which hosts the largest percentage of Syrian refugees in the region.

Ambassador Angelina Eichhorst said after the meeting that an additional 70 million euros (\$95 million) will be allocated by the EU's humanitarian agency to help the poorest refugees through the winter.

At least 100,000 Syrians have been killed in the country's civil war, now in its third year.