

[UAE records less than 3,000 COVID-19 cases for first time in nearly 3 weeks](#)

Mon, 2021-02-01 01:27

LONDON: The UAE on Sunday recorded less than 3,000 new COVID-19 cases for the first time since Jan. 12.

The Ministry of Health and Prevention (MOHAP) said there had been 2,948 new coronavirus infections and 12 deaths in the previous 24 hours.

The figures represented a marked drop from the 3,647 cases announced Saturday and 3,962 cases on Friday, amid hope that a sharp increase since the end of December had reached its peak.

Officials from the MoHAP said the total number of cases since the pandemic began had reached 303,609, while the death toll rose to 850.

It also said that 4,189 people had recovered from the virus over the past 24 hours. The total number of recoveries is 276,958.

The new figures come as the Emirates races ahead with its inoculation campaign.

In line with the directives of our leadership that prioritizes human health & the great efforts of the health sector, today we have reached the highest daily vaccine doses. [#UAE](#) also ranks second globally in the daily vaccine distribution rate per 100 people. [#TogetherWeRecover pic.twitter.com/yRKaggWdh4](#)

– NCEMA UAE (@NCEMAUAE) [January 31, 2021](#)

Some 220,000 vaccines were administered in one day – the highest figure since the launch of the drive.

Health minister Abdul Rahman Al-Owais praised the efforts of the authorities and front line workers. The country aims to immunize half of the UAE's population of 10 million by April.

The ministry said it had vaccinated over 3.185 million people, at a rate of 32.21 doses per 100 people, making it the second fastest country in the world after Israel for vaccine rollout.

The Sinopharm vaccine will be available at Nadd Al Hamar Health Centre, Al Twar Health Centre and Al Mankhool Health Centre. Vaccination is currently available to those who already have pre-registered appointments. [pic.twitter.com/lq7euzlPhD](#)

– هيئة الصحة بدبي (@DHA_Dubai) [January 30, 2021](#)

In a boost to the campaign, Dubai Health Authority said it would begin providing the Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccine to those aged 60 and above, starting

on Sunday.

Meanwhile, Dubai Police called on the public to report coronavirus violations as the emirate seeks to strengthen precautionary measures.

Dubai Police encourages the public to report violations of COVID-19 precautionary measures through:

– Hotline 901

– ‘Police Eye’ service on Dubai Police App

Stringent legal action will be taken against violators, in order to safeguard public health and safety. @DubaiPoliceHQ

pic.twitter.com/MzrJdS8Pc8

– Dubai Media Office (@DXBMediaOffice) [January 31, 2021](#)

Two shops in the emirate were closed and 26 others fined for not adhering to anti-coronavirus measures.

A fitness center was also ordered to close and warnings issued to 34 businesses, the municipality said.

Daily inspections are carried out by @DMunicipality to check compliance to precautionary measures at construction sites and labour accommodations across #Dubai, with 48,000 visits carried out so far. pic.twitter.com/dcjc85A2cy

– Dubai Media Office (@DXBMediaOffice) [January 31, 2021](#)

Dubai Tourism also said it closed 23 establishments and fined 238 others during January.

Elsewhere in the Gulf, Kuwait reported 635 new cases of COVID-19, raising the total in the country to 165,257. The death toll remained 959 after no additional deaths were reported.

تعلن [#وزارة_الصحة](#) عن تأكيد إصابة 635 حالة جديدة، وتسجيل 527 حالة شفاء، ولم تسجل أي حالة وفاة جديدة بـ [#فيروس_كورونا_المستجد](#) COVID-19 ، ليصبح إجمالي عدد الحالات 165,257 حالة pic.twitter.com/mKM6yECu6k

– (@KUWAIT_MOH) [وزارة الصحة - الكويت](#) [January 31, 2021](#)

Oman’s Health Ministry said that its total number of cases had reached 134,326 and the death toll was 1,529.

[#Statement](#) No. 278

January 31, 2021 pic.twitter.com/xt0CfZDFfj

– عمان – وزارة الصحة – (@maniMOH) [January 31, 2021](https://twitter.com/maniMOH/status/1355111111)

In Bahrain the death toll stands at 375 after three new deaths were reported. The number of confirmed cases in the country increased by 431.

Out of 12637 COVID-19 tests carried out on 31 January 2021, 431 new cases have been detected among 204 expatriate workers, 218 new cases are contacts of active cases, and 9 are travel related. There 439 recoveries from [#COVID19](https://twitter.com/WHO/status/1355111111), increasing total recoveries to 98599 pic.twitter.com/jRpxvcXv6S

– مملكة البحرين | وزارة الصحة | (@MOH_Bahrain) [January 31, 2021](https://twitter.com/MOH_Bahrain/status/1355111111)



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Saudi health minister warns of second COVID-19 wave as infections increase UAE confirms 3,962 new COVID-19 cases, 7 deaths amid UK travel ban

[Egypt nominates Aboul Gheit as Arab League chief for second term](#)

Mon, 2021-02-01 01:34

CAIRO: Egypt re-nominated Ahmed Aboul Gheit as secretary-general of the Arab League for a second term.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi sent messages to Arab leaders, expressing Egypt's intention to re-nominate Aboul Gheit to serve for five more years, adding he was looking forward to receiving their support for the nomination in accordance with the league's charter.

"The re-nomination of Aboul Gheit comes within the great interest that Egypt attaches to the work of the Arab League and President El-Sisi's keenness to provide all possible support for the organization, under whose roof the Arabs meet and embody their aspirations for collective Arab action," said Bassam Radi, spokesman for the Egyptian presidency.

"Egypt is keen on coordinated Arab action aimed at serving Arab peoples and interests, which marked the role of the secretary-general during his first term," Radi added.

The former Egyptian foreign minister, Aboul Gheit was chosen for the position of secretary-general of the Arab League in 2016 to succeed Nabil Elaraby.



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Egypt to head urgent Arab League peace talksArab League hails outcome of Libya talks

[Egypt and France begin joint air exercises](#)

Author:

Sun, 2021-01-31 22:29

CAIRO: Egyptian-French joint air exercises have begun at an Egyptian airbase with the participation of a number of multi-mission combat aircraft.

An Egyptian military spokesman stated via Facebook that the training comes within the framework of the joint training plan for the armed forces with countries that share close ties with Cairo.

The primary stages of the exercises include a series of lectures aimed at the standardization of combat concepts and the exchange of training expertise, in addition to the implementation of training flights on the operational tasks of the participating forces.

Egypt recently completed joint maritime training exercises in the Mediterranean with Greek forces, with the participation of the Egyptian frigate Taba and the Greek warship HS HYDRA F-452.

The exercises aim to support efforts for security and maritime stability in the region, and to strengthen bilateral capabilities.



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Sat, 2021-01-30 23:19

RIYADH: One seldom discussed byproduct of Iran's Islamic Revolution, which ended with the fall of the Shah and the rise of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in 1979, is the diplomatic, economic and strategic collusion between Tehran and several Latin American regimes – right in Washington's own backyard.

Tehran has worked hard to consolidate these friendships since the revolution, in particular its entente with fellow oil producer Venezuela during the presidency of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad between 2005 and 2013.

The Iranian regime has simultaneously intensified its efforts to disrupt the international power dynamic in the Middle East and wider region in its favor through an array of secretive military interventions and its illicit nuclear program.

To curb these aspirations and malign activity across the region, the US has reimposed a raft of sanctions on Iran's economy, leaving the regime isolated and financially crippled.



Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro (L) shaking hands with Iran's President Hassan Rouhani (R) before a bilateral meeting at The Convention Centre in Baku on October 25, 2019. (AFP/Miraflores Palace Presidential Office/Jhonn Zerpa/File Photo)

From this position of weakness, Tehran has looked to its friends in Caracas – another international pariah – in search of dependable allies.

Tehran's relationship with Latin America dates back to 1960, when Venezuela was among the founding members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). From here, Iran's diplomatic ties quickly branched out to include Brazil, Mexico, Argentina and Cuba.

But it was not until 2005, early in Ahmadinejad's presidency, that the company Tehran was keeping in Latin America came under scrutiny. Several of these budding friendships appeared to be based on a mutual dislike for the US and its policies.

After the First World War, waves of refugees began to arrive in Venezuela from the Middle East. The trend gained more traction after the Second World War and reached a peak after the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war in 1975.

Iran and its Lebanese proxy militia Hezbollah exploited this trend, using religious and intellectual infiltration to convert Christians and Sunni Muslims to Shiite Islam and Khomeinist teachings on the Wilayat Al-Faqih (Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist).



Iranian revolutionary guards secure the area during the inauguration ceremony of a joint petrochemical plant in the Asaluyeh industrial zone – where Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and his Venezuelan counterpart Hugo Chavez sealed their anti-American alliance in 2007. (AFP/File Photo)

Keen to expand its ideological presence and confront what it viewed as Western hegemony, Iran launched a Spanish-language satellite news channel in 2011 called HispanTV, broadcasting a variety of cultural, political and religious programs targeting people across the continent.

Iran has established more than 36 Shiite cultural centers in 17 countries around the world, many of which are allegedly being used as spy rings to gather intelligence. In Latin America they act as a hub for recruiting expatriates and building popular support for Iranian policies.

After OPEC was established, political and economic relations between Iran and Venezuela were initially based on their shared oil production and price-related challenges. This relationship later flourished and expanded to include several Latin American countries through common membership of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Founded in 1961, the forum of 120 states, who do not consider themselves formally aligned with any major power bloc, claims to remain neutral and independent in world affairs.

Challenging the will of the international community, Venezuela has long hinted it will defy sanctions and supply Iran with petroleum products in an attempt to weaken US efforts to exploit Tehran's dependence on foreign refined oil.

HISPAN TV IRANIAN SOFT POWER



WHY VENEZUELA IS VITAL FOR IRAN?

- 1** Amplifies and serves as a platform for anti-American and anti-Western views of world events.
- 2** Enhances Iranian influence in Latin America.
- 3** Channels Iran's foreign policy propaganda through soft power across the continent.
- 4** Targets Muslim communities in the Latin region and exporting the Islamic Iranian revolution ideology.
- 5** Secures sympathy for its perceived victimhood and champions its self-declared 'struggle' against Western imperialist powers.

ARAB NEWS

Nicolas Maduro, Venezuela's socialist president, has maintained this stance since taking the helm following the death of Hugo Chavez in 2013.

Itself under a strict US embargo, Venezuela is grappling with its own economic crisis, causing unprecedented inflation and shortages of food, fuel and medicine. Despite possessing the world's largest proven oil reserve, the nation's gross domestic product (GDP) has nosedived and its currency has collapsed.

In December, Iran reportedly sent tankers loaded with gasoline and petroleum components to Venezuela in defiance of international sanctions. After the US

imposed its latest round of sanctions on Venezuela in 2019, Iran also supplied Caracas with tools, supplies and technical expertise to support Petroleos de Venezuela, SA – the state-run oil and gas company.

Through its warm relations with Latin American governments, Iran hopes to project the image of a global power, overcome its political and economic isolation, garner diplomatic support for its nuclear program and respond to the US from close proximity.

HISPAN TV IRANIAN SOFT POWER

WHAT IS THE IRAN-FUNDED HISPAN TV?

Launched December 2011

Owner State-owned Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting

What it does HispanTV's programming has been distributed in Venezuela, Spain, Argentina, Cuba and other countries worldwide and is intended to reinforce ties between Iran and Latin American states as well as to counter what the Iranian government sees as unfair coverage in the Western media.

ARAB NEWS



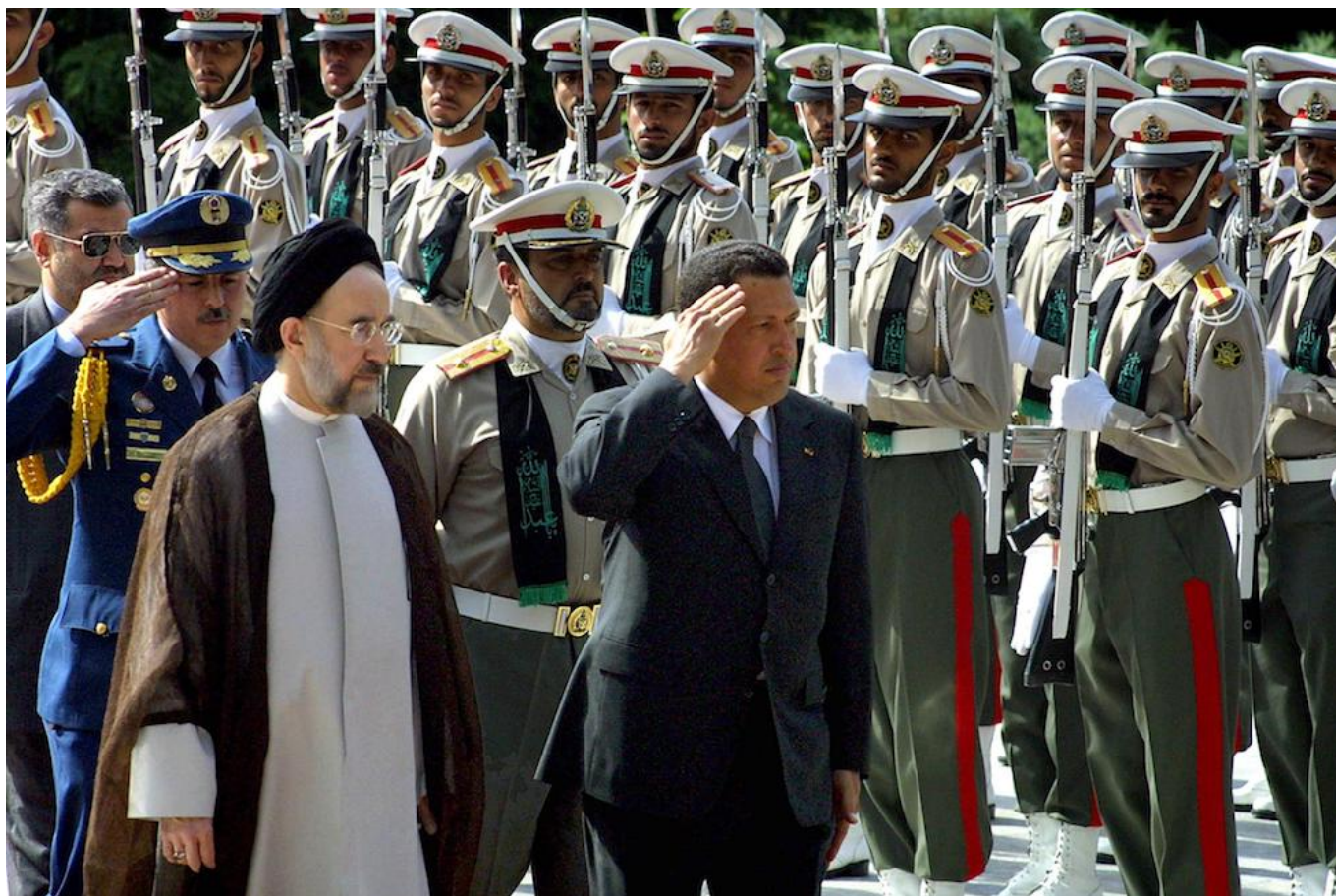
Venezuela's former president Chavez strengthened his country's ties with Iran during his time in office. In 2003, he appointed Syrian-Venezuelan Tareck El-Aissami to lead the Administrative Service of Identification, Migration and Foreigners (formerly known as ONIDEX), who is alleged to have used his powers to assist Hezbollah.

During a year-long joint investigation, CNN and CNN en Espanol exposed major anomalies in the issuance of Venezuelan passports and visas, including allegations that documents were issued to individuals with extremist ties.

According to intelligence reports, El-Aissami was involved in the issuing of 173 Venezuelan passports and IDs to individuals from the Middle East, including people affiliated with Hezbollah.

Venezuelan opposition groups also accuse El-Aissami of drug smuggling. He is listed by the US Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control as one of the 10 most-wanted drug traffickers.

Since April last year, he has been working in Venezuela's Ministry of Petroleum.



Iranian President Mohammad Khatami (L) and his Venezuelan counterpart Hugo Chavez review the honor guard during a welcoming ceremony in Tehran 20 May 2001. (AFP/File Photo)

In June 2008, the US Treasury named naturalized Venezuelans Ghazi Nasreddin and Faouzi Kanaan as supporters of terrorism. Nasreddin worked as charge d'affaires at the Venezuelan embassy in Syria and also held a position at the nation's embassy in Lebanon.

According to the Treasury, Kanaan owned a travel agency, organized trips and raised money in Venezuela for Hezbollah members. It also says Kanaan met senior Hezbollah officials to discuss kidnappings and potential terrorist attacks.

According to a US State Department report on terrorism in 2019, Venezuela operates a lenient framework for armed groups, including FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) rebels, the Colombian National Liberation Army (ELN), and members of Hezbollah.

The report says financial ties with FARC and ELN rebels have helped enable repression and graft schemes carried out by the Maduro administration.

Hezbollah has established close ties with drug-smuggling rings and has developed a sophisticated money-laundering scheme. An article published by Politico in 2017 revealed Hezbollah has made \$1 billion annually from drug- and weapon-smuggling, money-laundering and other criminal activities.



A handout picture released by the official website of the Centre for Preserving and Publishing the Works of Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, shows him (R) meeting with Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro in the capital Tehran on January 10, 2015. (AFP/Khamenei.ir/File Photo)

Iranian involvement in drug smuggling in Venezuela is well documented. Detailed reports from the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) reveal an extensive cocaine trade route from eastern Venezuela to western Africa and on to Europe.

It is suspected that the pipeline's supply comes from Iranian facilities located in Venezuela's Orinoco River delta, where vessels are loaded with cocaine. Some shipments end up in West Africa, Europe and the Middle East. The proceeds are laundered by various means, including the purchase of used American-made cars for export to Africa.

Launderers allegedly used their relationship with governments, particularly those in the Bolivarian countries (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Peru and Venezuela), to move their dirty money through Latin American banks, making it available to Western markets.

Iran has gained considerable influence in Latin America and has consolidated its network of allies. The regime in Tehran is actively expanding this list of friends in the hope of counterbalancing the international community's stance against its nuclear weapons program and to mobilize support for its policies.

In addition to its nuclear ambitions, Tehran's politico-economic relationship

with Venezuela and other Latin American nations is primarily a means of diversifying its means of survival and overcoming international sanctions. There is little doubt, however, that much of this illicit arrangement is handled and overseen by Hezbollah.

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[Lebanon PM threatens mass arrests over deadly clashes](#)

Sat, 2021-01-30 22:35

BEIRUT: Lebanon's caretaker Prime Minister, Hassan Diab, broke his silence on Saturday to condemn days of violent protest in Tripoli, the country's most impoverished city, as "an assault on the state and its integrity."

"Everyone who participated in the riots will be arrested," Diab said.

His comments followed deadly clashes during the week when protests at Lebanon's extended coronavirus lockdown and worsening economic crisis turned violent.

Frustrations boiled over after 30-year-old Omar Taibi was shot by security forces during protests. The ensuing clashes left more than 220 people injured.

Protesters set fire to several buildings in Tripoli on Thursday as outrage grew.

Violence escalated quickly as molotov cocktails, hand grenades and stones were launched at the security forces, who responded with tear gas, rubber bullets and then live ammunition.

However, that did not deter others from expressing their outrage with the caretaker government as protests spread to other parts of the country.

On Saturday, groups of female protesters blocked the highway linking Tripoli, Lebanon's second-largest city, with Akkar. The women complained that they were no longer able to secure basic needs for their families.

SPEEDREAD

The political dispute between Saad Hariri and the Free Patriotic Movement, led by Gebran Bassil, worsened on Saturday as both men swapped accusations.

Another group of protesters marched to the Beirut home of Mohamed Fahmi, Lebanon's interior minister, to voice their anger at the security forces' handling of the Tripoli protests.

A shooting in Beirut's Hamra commercial district late on Saturday sparked fears of worsening violence in the capital.

However, security forces described the attack as "an isolated incident."

A security source told Arab News: "The problem started between a delivery driver and one of the residents. Young men from the Syrian Social Nationalist Party interfered and defended the Syrian delivery driver, then started shooting into the air."

After nearby residents appeared on the street, troops arrived and cordoned off the site, the source said.

Meanwhile, former prime minister Fouad Siniora, the leader of the Future Movement's parliamentary group, warned that the violence in Tripoli has deepened Lebanon's political divisions, making the formation of a rescue government even more difficult.

"The most dangerous thing about the current situation is the inability of the political forces to take initiative in determining a national rescue destination," he said.

"Every sectarian party is waging two battles: A fierce internal battle to impose itself as its sole representative, and a grinding battle against other sects to identify the sect's quota in the government."

The political dispute between Saad Al-Hariri, Lebanon's prime minister-designate, and the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM), led by Gebran Bassil, worsened on Saturday as both men swapped accusations.

Bassil urged Al-Hariri to "head immediately to the Baabda Palace and form a government in agreement and full partnership with the president – a government that enjoys broad political and national support."

The FPM described the demand for partnership in the government formation as "a right."

However, the Future Movement responded later, accusing the FPM of "reducing the rights of Christians to the rights of a few men."





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