

[UAE daily coronavirus cases surge to near peak level as 931 new cases reported](#)

Author:

Fri, 2020-09-11 23:34

DUBAI: The UAE on Friday recorded 931 new coronavirus cases, bringing the total number to 77,842, the health ministry said, following a recent surge in infections that are near the highest since the pandemic broke out.

All the cases, who bare various nationalities, are in "stable (condition) and subject to the necessary health care," it added in a statement on WAM.

Until last month, there had been a generally falling trend since the UAE's new daily cases peaked at 994 in May, but numbers have surged from 164 cases on Aug. 3.

The ministry said that 517 new cases have "fully recovered from the symptoms of the virus after receiving the necessary health care upon entering hospital, bringing the total number of recovery cases to 68,462."

The Ministry of Health and Prevention also said that no deaths have been recorded over the past 24 hours. The UAE has recorded 398 deaths from coronavirus since the pandemic began.

The ministry launched a campaign to increase the scope of examinations in the country for early detection and to be able to count the number of cases infected with Covid-19, in order to isolate them and those whom they have been in contact with.

It said that it conducted 75,177 new examinations over the past 24 hours on various groups, using the best and latest medical examination techniques.

A health ministry official on Thursday asked the public to adhere to social distancing and avoid gatherings and mixing with people known to have the virus, which she said accounted for about 88% of cases.

The UAE had earlier enforced strict measures to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus, including locking down tourism hub Dubai for a month and months-long evening curfews nationwide.

Most business and public venues have now reopened with some restrictions, and people must wear a mask outside homes.

Dubai reopened to foreign visitors in July, although airports in the rest of the country remain closed to visitors.

Abu Dhabi, the UAE capital and the largest and richest emirate, has restricted movement into the area to those with a negative Covid-19 test.

Meanwhile, Kuwait on Friday reported one death and 653 new infected cases, bringing the total number to 557 and 93,475 respectively.

The Ministry of Health said that 620 cases have recovered bringing the total to 83,660.

The ministry's spokesperson, Dr. Abdullah Al-Sanad, renewed the call for everyone to continue adopting all preventive measures, avoiding mixing with others, implement the social distancing rule, and keep reviewing the ministry's instructions and recommendations to contain the spread of the virus, Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) reported.

The coronavirus pandemic has affected over 28 million people globally and the death rate has topped 900,000.

(With Reuters)



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COVID-19 recoveries cross 300,000 mark in Saudi Arabia UAE records highest daily COVID-19 infections since early July

[Turkey's belligerence roils gas-rich eastern Mediterranean](#)

Fri, 2020-09-11 23:21

DUBAI: Time was when Turkey pursued a foreign policy devised by an academic turned foreign minister that came to be known as "zero problems" with

neighbors.

Even though 10 years is a very short time by the standards of the rise and fall of nations, Turkey's current diplomatic doctrine does not bear even a smidgen of similarity to what Ahmet Davutoglu had formulated in 2010.

If anything, his former boss, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, is pursuing a policy that has been described variously as "zero friends" and "nothing but problems."

It is a policy that has now brought US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to the divided Mediterranean island of Cyprus in an attempt to solve some of Turkey's proliferating problems with its neighbors.

"We hope there will be real conversations and we hope the military assets that are there will be withdrawn so that these conversations can take place," Pompeo told reporters on the flight to Qatar.

The military assets he referred to belong mainly to Ankara and Athens, but in fact a number of countries are ranged against Turkey over what they view as unchecked energy piracy coupled with gunboat diplomacy.

Turkey has occupied and controls one-third of Cyprus since 1974, when it invaded the north in response to a coup engineered by military leaders in Athens. Now it is embroiled in simultaneous disputes with Greece and Cyprus – a fellow NATO member – over maritime borders and gas-drilling rights.

Fueling Turkey's great-power ambitions are investments in a domestic arms industry geared to the production needs of everything from warships to submarines, frigates to attack helicopters, and armed drones to light aircraft carriers.

For months now, Turkey has been prospecting for gas and oil reserves in eastern Mediterranean waters claimed by Greece. When it deployed a research ship accompanied by military frigates in August, Greece fired a warning shot by staging naval exercises.

Opinion

This section contains relevant reference points, placed in (Opinion field)

The same month, a minor collision between a Turkish military ship and a Greek navy vessel ratcheted up tensions to a level not seen since a war almost broke out over two Aegean Sea islands in 1996.

As both countries use naval drills in the Mediterranean to reinforce their sovereign claims, the EU has asked Ankara to de-escalate or face sanctions.

US President Donald Trump's administration has upped the ante by temporarily lifting a decades-old arms embargo on Cyprus. The US embargo had been imposed

in 1987 with the aim of facilitating the reunification of Cyprus, but its strategic impact was viewed by many as counterproductive. From Oct. 1, the US will remove blocks for one year on the sale or transfer of "non-lethal defense articles and defense services" to Cyprus.

Karol Wasilewski, an analyst with the Polish Institute of International Affairs, told Arab News that the US decision had hurt its standing as an honest broker from the Turkish perspective.

"As for Greece, the US cannot provide the carrots that might coax it to start negotiations with Turkey without preconditions. Obviously, it is a good thing that Pompeo has supported peaceful resolution and praised Germany for its de-escalation efforts. But the problem is, the US does not have much leverage," he said.

Many analysts believe the mounting geopolitical tensions give Erdogan yet another tool with which to counter eroding support for his government among rightwing nationalist voters, particularly young conservatives.

More specifically, they say, the authoritarian leader is insisting on an iron-fist approach to Turkey's disputes with Cyprus and Greece in order to divert attention away from flagging economic growth, high unemployment, a volatile currency, and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

Regardless of the rationale, Erdogan's pan-Islamist zeal and neo-Ottoman world view have put Turkey on a collision course with Sunni Arab powers.



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan speaks during an introductory ceremony for Turkey Insurance at Bestepe People's Convention and Culture Center in Ankara on September 7, 2020. (AFP)

Addressing a recent Arab League ministerial committee meeting, Sameh Shoukry, Egypt's foreign minister, described Turkey's military involvement in Libya, Syria, and Iraq as a threat to regional security and stability and appealed for a unified stance.

Reports indicate that in July, Turkey deployed in Libya 25,000 mercenaries, who included 17,000 Syrian militants besides 2,500 fighters of Tunisian, Sudanese, and other nationalities.

More broadly, Turkey's actions have drawn international attention to the hunt for natural gas fields in the eastern Mediterranean. Along with Turkey, Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, and Israel have staked their claims to the deposits in the seabed.

Recent discoveries off the coasts of Israel, Cyprus, and Egypt have underscored the potential of the area, especially since the announcement of a massive gas field off Egypt's coast in 2015 boosted these countries' hopes of becoming energy exporters to Europe.

The newly discovered energy reserves have spawned regional alliances shaped by Turkey's increasingly antagonistic relations with the EU, Egypt, Israel, and the UAE, not to mention Greece and Cyprus.

An initial agreement involving Greece, Cyprus, Italy, and Israel on the East-Med Pipeline Project morphed into the East-Med Gas Forum with the entry of Egypt, Jordan, and Palestine. Together with Lebanon and Syria, Turkey, a nation of 83 million people led by an authoritarian leader, found itself isolated.

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In an apparent bid to reassert its authority, Turkey signed in late July a "delimitation of maritime jurisdiction" agreement with the Government of National Accord (GNA), the Libyan faction in control of Tripoli, and claimed the right to conduct research activities in the disputed waters between Cyprus and Crete.

However, Greece, Cyprus, Egypt, together with France and the UAE, have voiced their objections, saying the Turkey-Libya maritime deal "cannot produce any legal consequences for third states."

Athens insists that islands must be taken into account in measuring a country's continental shelf, in line with the UN Law of the Sea, to which Turkey is not a signatory. Ankara believes that a country's continental shelf should be measured from its mainland, rejecting the argument that offshore islands should supersede mainland claims to as many as 150,000 square kilometers of continental shelf.

For its part, the Cyprus government says its policy of "actively promoting close cooperation" between the region's countries and "creating synergies for the benefit of all" has resulted in "establishing an attractive environment based on the rule of law." As evidence, Nicosia has cited the presence of oil

majors such as Eni, Total, and Exxon in Cyprus' Exclusive Economic Zone.

"Turkey on the other hand is the instigator of the current crisis and instability in the eastern Mediterranean," according to an informal diplomatic note. "Not only does it refuse to engage in negotiations with Cyprus in order to reach an agreement on their respective maritime boundaries, but it persistently violates the sovereignty and sovereign rights of Cyprus, using the protection of the rights of the Turkish Cypriot community ... as a pretext."

What Greece and Cyprus might lack in military heft, they make up for with diplomatic backing. In the run-up to a special summit of EU leaders on Sept. 24 to 25 to discuss the Cyprus-Turkey crisis, Athens has called for "severe" economic sanctions to be slapped on Ankara for a limited time if it does not remove its military vessels and gas-drilling ships from waters off Cyprus.

In a statement on Sept. 10, the heads of state and government of the southern countries of the EU (Med7), said: "We reiterate our full support and solidarity with Cyprus and Greece in the face of the repeated infringements on their sovereignty and sovereign rights, as well as confrontational actions by Turkey."

So, what might Davutoglu, the architect of the "zero problems" doctrine, make of Turkey's "confrontational actions?"

Having broken away from Erdogan's Justice and Development Party to set up his own party and position himself as a potential political challenger, he recently warned that Turkey risks military confrontation in the eastern Mediterranean because it prizes power over diplomacy. "Unfortunately, our government is not doing a proper diplomatic performance," Davutoglu told Reuters.

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Turkey says EU Mediterranean statement biased, open to talks with Greece
EU must consider 'severe' sanctions on Turkey, Greece says
NATO sets up talks in search for solution to Turkey-Greece conflict
Pompeo to visit Cyprus, calls on Turkey to withdraw forces from Mediterranean

[Exhausted rescue workers soldier on at Beirut port](#)

Author:

Fri, 2020-09-11 22:58

BEIRUT: Firefighters and civil defense workers were continuing their efforts on Friday to cool down a site at the Port of Beirut where a fire had broken out a day earlier, with white smoke billowing out and agencies estimating \$4 million worth of losses as a result of the incident.

According to the army, the fire broke out in a warehouse containing tires and

oil. The fire was due to the cutting of iron columns that had collapsed after a massive explosion on Aug. 4. Warehouse workers had wanted to remove the columns in order to pull out the goods trapped underneath. However sparks from the cutting fell on inflammable goods in the warehouse and caused a fire.

The military police, who are in charge of investigating the fire, have questioned 20 people including eyewitnesses.

The port has been under army control since Aug. 4, when the explosion of 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate in a warehouse destroyed wheat silos, the port's warehouse zone, Beirut waterfront and neighboring areas.

The explosion killed 192 civilians including children, in addition to 10 rescue workers and firefighters. It injured 6,000 civilians and displaced 300,000 people whose houses were either totally or partially destroyed. According to testimonies, nine people are still missing.

Col. Roger Khoury, who is commander of the army's Engineering Regiment, said during a meeting with President Michel Aoun that 24 bodies had been retrieved from the site eight days after the Aug. 4 tragedy, including the bodies of nine firefighters and nine silo workers.

"During the search operation in the port we discovered 4,350 kilos of ammonium nitrate that had been stored in a warehouse since 2004 or 2005, so they were destroyed in special fields. In addition, we discovered that there were warehouses which have been storing inflammable materials for the past 15 years, noting that 143 warehouses containing inflammable materials were checked," he added.

Col. Youssef Haidar said that 1 million square meters of the port's 1.4 million square meter area had been cleared, 15,000 tons of rubble had been removed and 20 tons of cargo had been sorted.

The port's two disasters have been mainly handled by the fire services and civil defense.

Georges Abou Moussa, head of operations at Lebanese Civil Defense, said there were huge pressures on the team.

He went to Qartaba, northern Lebanon, to fight forest fires caused by unusually high temperatures. "We are working round the clock," he told Arab News. "I had to move from the Port of Beirut to a region 2,000 meters high up in the mountains to fight forest fires. Yes, we are exhausted but we did not lose our enthusiasm, this is our duty and we are used to always confronting disasters. However, the number of these disasters has drastically increased lately."

Abou Moussa said that some civil defense employees were working without pay, while others were getting minimum wage.

Lt. Michel Murr, from Beirut Fire Brigade, said that firefighters had been working at the port for 24 hours.

“Our conditions are lamentable,” he told Arab News. “Our vehicles are overused and have started to break down. Yesterday the water pump broke down yet we continued fighting the fire and called on anyone who had a water tank to bring it over so that we could extinguish the fire.”

The fire brigade had just three vehicles and if they broke down then operations would come to a halt, he said.

“According to the international firefighting system, the vehicles should be replaced every three or four years. In Lebanon we never replace them with brand new ones because the state has no money. We are working with minimal resources and we still rush into the field whenever we hear of a fire breaking out somewhere. Firefighters did not lose hope despite losing some of our colleagues who got killed in action. Yesterday, our aim was to spare Beirut from the fire and pollution resulting from burning tires and oil. Our equipment consists of the bare essentials, in spite of this we work with high professionalism to spare ourselves from human and material losses.”



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Explosive material found in Beirut port after blast was stored for years, says president
Lebanon faces hurdles to deliver cabinet on time

Bahrain agrees to normalize relations with Israel

Fri, 2020-09-11 19:08

LONDON: US President Donald Trump said on Friday Bahrain will normalize ties with Israel.

Trump tweeted out the news after he spoke via phone to Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the White House said.

Another HISTORIC breakthrough today! Our two GREAT friends Israel and the Kingdom of Bahrain agree to a Peace Deal – the second Arab country to make peace with Israel in 30 days!

– Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [September 11, 2020](#)

A joint statement issued by the three leaders said the two nations had agreed on “establishment of full diplomatic relations between Israel and the Kingdom of Bahrain.”

The statement added: “This is a historic breakthrough to further peace in the Middle East. Opening direct dialogue and ties between these two dynamic societies and advanced economies will continue the positive transformation of the Middle East and increase stability, security, and prosperity in the region.”

Netanyahu hailed the agreement as marking a “new era of peace.”

On August 13, the UAE and Israel agreed to normalize ties under a US-brokered agreement which is scheduled to be signed on Sept. 15.

Friday's deal makes Bahrain the fourth Arab country to reach such an agreement with Israel since exchanging embassies with Egypt and Jordan decades ago.

Last week, Bahrain said it would allow flights between Israel and the UAE to use its airspace.

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Bahrain-Israel-US joint statement in full:

“President Donald J. Trump, His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel spoke today and agreed to the establishment of full diplomatic

relations between Israel and the Kingdom of Bahrain.

This is a historic breakthrough to further peace in the Middle East. Opening direct dialogue and ties between these two dynamic societies and advanced economies will continue the positive transformation of the Middle East and increase stability, security, and prosperity in the region.

The United States expresses its gratitude to the Kingdom of Bahrain for hosting the historic Peace to Prosperity workshop in Manama on June 25, 2019, to advance the cause of peace, dignity, and economic opportunity for the Palestinian people. The parties will continue their efforts in this regard to achieve a just, comprehensive, and enduring resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to enable the Palestinian people to realize their full potential. Israel affirmed that as set forth in the Vision for Peace, all Muslims who come in peace may visit and pray at the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Jerusalem's other holy sites will remain open for peaceful worshippers of all faiths.

King Hamad and Prime Minister Netanyahu express their deep appreciation to President Trump for his dedication to peace in the region, his focus on shared challenges, and the pragmatic and unique approach he has taken to bringing their nations together.

The parties commend the United Arab Emirates and Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed for his leadership on August 13, 2020, in announcing full diplomatic relations with Israel.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has also accepted President Trump's invitation to join Israel and the United Arab Emirates at the historic signing ceremony on September 15, 2020, at the White House where Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel and Foreign Minister Abdullatif Al Zayani of Bahrain will be signing a historic Declaration of Peace."

In a press statement, Bahrain's Foreign Minister Abdullatif Al Zayani said that the Gulf country stresses the importance of intensifying efforts to reach a just solution to the Palestinian- Israeli conflict.

Al Zayani added that peace is a strategic option to end the conflict in a just manner in accordance with international resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The foreign minister said that the peace agreement between Bahrain and Israel will contribute to security and stability in the region whilst ensuring that the rights of the Palestinians are protected.

He added that the UAE-Israel agreement to normalize relations between the two countries has contributed to stopping the annexation of Palestinian land.

Meanwhile, Egypt's president Abdel Fattah El-Sisi said he appreciates the "important step" of Israel and Bahrain establishing diplomatic relations.

The agreement would help establish “stability and peace in the Middle East, in a way that achieves a just and permanent settlement of the Palestinian issue,” he said.

The UAE also welcomed the agreement saying it hoped it would have a positive effect on the climate for peace and cooperation in the region and around the world.

“The move represents a significant step towards an era of security and prosperity ... (and) would expand the scope of economic, cultural, scientific, and diplomatic avenues of cooperation,” the UAE foreign ministry said in a statement.





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Israeli minister says visit by UAE delegates under review as lockdown looms
Gargash: UAE-Israel agreement will not be at the expense of the Palestinian issue

[Morocco warns of Sahel 'time bomb' after Daesh-linked cell busted](#)

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1599841320610693000

Fri, 2020-09-11 16:16

SALÉ, Morocco: The Sahel region of Africa is a ticking "time bomb" of terrorism and organized crime, a Moroccan police chief told AFP on Friday, a day after a suspected Daesh group-affiliated cell was busted.

"It was a dangerous cell primed to go into action at any moment," Abdelhak Khiame, head of the Central Bureau of Judicial Investigation (BCIJ), said in an interview at its offices in Sale, near Morocco's capital Rabat.

Five "extremists," aged between 29 and 43, were detained Thursday in simultaneous operations at sites in Tangiers and the Rabat region, said the Central Bureau of Judicial Investigations.

Explosive belts, three kilograms (6.6 pounds) of ammonium nitrate, electronic equipment and bladed weapons were seized in raids on homes and businesses of the suspects, the bureau said.

Khiame said the Daesh-affiliated group was plotting suicide attacks targeting "public personalities, military figures and the headquarters of security services" in the North African kingdom.

Three kilos (6.5 pounds) of ammonium nitrate, the chemical behind the August 4 cataclysmic Beirut blast, was also netted.

Pledges of allegiance to the Daesh were discovered. Two of the suspects put up "fierce resistance," leaving a policeman with serious knife wounds.

The alleged head of the group, a 37-year-old fish salesman, had been convicted of a common law crime in 2004 and radicalized since.

Khiame said it was the first such large-scale bust since the 2003 Islamist suicide attacks in Casablanca, Morocco's economic capital, that left 33 dead. He warned that Daesh "has developed in the Sahel-Sahara region, with the conflict in Libya and in countries like Mali which do not control not their security."

The Sahel covers western and north-central Africa.

"Terrorist cells and terrorism are growing in the region but also organized crime networks, drug trafficking, weapons and human beings," said the BCIJ chief.

"All of this... makes the Sahel region, in my opinion, a time bomb."

Khiame said the dismantled cell had apparently had no direct contact with the extremists of Daesh.

But "even if Daesh was defeated in the Levant, in the region of Syria and Iraq, its ideology... does not need territory, it can develop where it finds sympathizers," he said.

Daesh-inspired "cells underground act like sleeper cells which in most cases have no relationship to each other," he said.



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Sahel allies have 'shifted the dynamic' in fight with extremists:
Macron 3,000-strong African force planned against Sahel extremism