

# Lebanese expats launch job-creation initiative

Tue, 2020-04-07 00:18

DUBAI: A team of young Lebanese expatriates and locals is hoping to turn the tide on the country's unemployment crisis with the launch of an ambitious online job-creation initiative.

Lebanon's recent economic woes had already contributed to a significant rise in the number of people out of work before the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak delivered another hefty blow to its fragile employment market.

But the 28 team members behind JobsForLebanon.com aim to share the best of their expertise to build positive change and help potential jobseekers find work in Lebanon.

They are calling upon the diaspora of 16 million Lebanese to hire skilled talent on a freelance basis in the country.

The catalyst for the project was the anti-government protests that started in Lebanon in October last year.

Roy Baladi, 36, a San Francisco-based computer scientist who specializes in recruitment technology, said: "It started with a phone call from a childhood friend of mine. That was in December, when the hopes of the revolution were high, and everybody was excited.

"She (Baladi's friend) had just returned from maternity leave and had 10-12 messages and emails from highly educated people, who were looking for a job or money. That rang an alarm bell in my mind.

## **SPEEDREAD**

**The 28 team members behind JobsForLebanon.com aim to share the best of their expertise to build positive change and help potential jobseekers find work in Lebanon.**

"The (Lebanese) Ministry of Finance showed that 45 percent of the population makes less than 5 million liras a year, that's \$3,300 a year. Half the population is making less than 250 bucks a month – who can live on that? You can't pay for tuition, gasoline, and groceries. It's beyond unemployment – it's no jobs and severe levels of poverty."

Baladi began connecting with socially engaged Lebanese organizers from around the world, such as Expats United, in a bid to get a campaign going and when he returned to Lebanon for Christmas his New York-based brother, Edwin Baladi, 34, helped with others to bring JobsForLebanon to life.

The team launched its website last month and visitors can view a video of members of the Lebanese international community encouraging involvement in the jobs initiative with the message, "together, we can unleash the power of the Lebanese community. No matter where we are, together we can keep the economy alive."

Powered by SmartRecruiters – a major recruiting software platform – the

website allows employers to post job offerings and candidates to apply for them. Already the site has had visits from users in 131 countries, more than 100 jobs have been posted, and at least 1,000 candidates have registered. Five hires have been confirmed.

The team plans to grow its partnerships and collaborate with embassies to promote the initiative. Australia and the Netherlands are also among countries looking to launch similar hiring e-platforms based on the JobsForLebanon model.



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## [Lebanese govt vows reform with help of \\$11bn international aid package](#)

Tue, 2020-04-07 00:13

BEIRUT: The Lebanese government has called for international financial

support to help it implement plans to tackle the country's crippling economic crisis.

President Michel Aoun and Prime Minister Hassan Diab told a meeting of representatives of member states of the International Support Group (ISG) for Lebanon that their priority was to resolve the nation's financial meltdown which had been compounded by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Asking for ISG help in line with its \$11 billion CEDRE conference aid pledges – made on condition of internal reforms in Lebanon – was seen by major Lebanese parties, especially Hezbollah and the Amal Movement, as the preferred option to seeking assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The impact of restrictions on movement imposed to stop the spread of COVID-19 has only served to deepen the economic turmoil in Lebanon, paralyzing business activity and adding to the hardships of its people. According to the World Bank, poverty rates in the country have increased to 40 percent.

During the meeting with the ISG delegates – which was attended by UN special coordinator for Lebanon, Jan Kubis – President Aoun said: "Lebanon was preparing to launch a workplan to address its economic, financial and social crises when the coronavirus pandemic struck the world.

"The country was forced to declare a health emergency, which froze its recovery and exacerbated its crises, adding to them a health crisis, and now we face all these crises and repercussions and we welcome any international assistance.

## **BACKGROUND**

- **The impact of restrictions on movement imposed to stop the spread of COVID-19 has only served to deepen the economic turmoil in Lebanon, paralyzing business activity and adding to the hardships of its people. According to the World Bank, poverty rates in the country have increased to 40 percent.**
- **Lebanese prime minister says his government has pledged to carry out a complete reform program to restructure the banking sector and the budget of the Central Bank.**

"Lebanon suffers from a significant economic contraction, a decline in domestic demand and import, a severe shortage of foreign currencies, high unemployment and poverty rates, high prices and a low exchange rate of the Lebanese pound in the black market, in addition to the deficit in public finance due to a decline in tax revenues.

"The state decided to suspend payments for Eurobonds to contain the budget deficit and stop the depletion of its foreign currency reserves that have reached very low levels."

He added: "The state is about to complete preparing a comprehensive economic-financial plan, with the aim of correcting the deep imbalances in the economy.

"Given the gravity of the financial situation and the significant economic

effects on the Lebanese people, the residents, and the refugees, the reform program will need foreign financial support, and we rely heavily on \$11 billion which CEDRE pledged to offer to Lebanon.”

Diab urged the ISG to launch “the economic, financial, monetary, and social reform plan based on good governance, and we are putting the final touches on it.”

The premier said his government pledged to carry out a complete reform program to restructure the banking sector and the budget of the Central Bank. “We decided to conduct an audit of the Central Bank accounts for full transparency, and to strengthen our negotiating position in this difficult period in the history of Lebanon.”

Kubis said: “The COVID-19 crisis poses an unprecedented challenge for the Lebanese people due to the country’s economic problems, rampant corruption, and social pressures which cause despair.”



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Palestinian, Syrian refugees in Lebanon camps brace for virus

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# Gaza sewing factories try to meet growing demand for protective gear

Tue, 2020-04-07 00:09

GAZA CITY: Emad Haboub works around the clock to produce protective clothing, the demand for which has increased worldwide with the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

His factory used to supply hospitals before the crisis, but he now produces protective gear – such as medical overalls – to be sold to both the local market as well as the West Bank.

“We currently work on a daily basis, even on weekends and for 12 hours a day, to produce protective gear in order to meet the growing need,” Haboub, 47, told Arab News.

“There is an acute shortage of raw materials in the Gaza Strip, and we are currently trying to import them from abroad so that we can continue the work,” he added.

While the needs of the local market can be covered, the demand in the West Bank increases daily with the rise of confirmed cases.

At least 252 Palestinians have been infected with COVID-19, 12 of whom were in the Gaza Strip while the rest were in the West Bank. One fatality has been reported.

The Gaza Strip suffers from a severe economic recession due to the Israeli blockade that has been imposed on it for about 14 years. The unemployment rate reached 52 percent during 2019, according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics.

Majed Shubair, who has been sewing for 40 years, believes that the current period is one of the best in terms of continuous work since Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip in 2007. “I work all week without stopping, and this has not happened for many years,” Shubair, who has 7 children, said.

## **FASTFACT**

**The Gaza Strip suffers from a severe economic recession due to the Israeli blockade that has been imposed on it for about 14 years. The unemployment rate reached 52 percent during 2019, according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics.**

“We hope that this global crisis ends, but at the same time we hope that work continues and that the Gaza Strip can live like the rest of the world. We have been suffering for many years without respite.”

Hassan Shehada, 56, whose sewing factory has been producing clothing for Israeli merchants for many years, has switched to producing medical masks, which he has been doing for three weeks now.

“With the closure of markets and stores in Israel, the production of clothing for Israeli merchants is no longer important. The demand for medical masks has increased, and production here has shifted accordingly,” Shehada said.

"I produce for the local market, but there is shortage of raw materials. Without them, I cannot produce for the Gaza Strip," he said.

"What Gaza needs is work. This pandemic may end, but the Gaza Strip crisis will not end."



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## [Dengue fever outbreak swamps Yemeni hospitals](#)

Tue, 2020-04-07 00:32

AL-MUKALLA: An outbreak of the deadly dengue fever in Yemen is putting the country's strained health system under huge pressure as it prepares for the prospect of dealing with a flood of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) patients, doctors have warned.

Health workers at Ibn Sina hospital in Al-Mukalla, the capital of Yemen's southeastern Hadramout province, staged a protest calling for staff to be issued with personal protective equipment (PPE) after they were forced to

treat a patient who died with suspected COVID-19, without having even gloves or masks to wear.

Recent flash floods across Yemen have led to a new wave of dengue fever that has killed as many as 59 people and infected more than 7,400 others. The virus, spread by mosquitoes, causes respiratory problems and symptoms very similar to COVID-19.

Due to a lack of cash, local health authorities in Yemen have been unable to carry out vital insecticide spraying and they are calling for immediate intervention from the Yemeni government and international aid organizations to curb the spread of dengue fever before the number of patients with the disease overwhelms hospitals.

Tawfeeq Balteour, a doctor at Ibn Sina Hospital, said that although tests later found the young male patient had died from dengue fever and not COVID-19, worried medics held a demonstration the next day appealing for PPE. "The (hospital) administration says it will release its stock of the equipment (PPE) when the first case (of COVID-19) occurs," said Balteour, who joined the protest. "Seasonal fever deaths are causing fear among doctors." Officials told Arab News there was a severe shortage of PPE and the hospital was conserving stocks until new World Health Organization (WHO) supplies arrived.

Aden, Taiz, Lahj, Hadramout, Abyan and Shabwa have been the areas worst affected by the latest outbreak of dengue fever said Dr. Yasser Abdullah Baheshm, director of the Aden-based National Malaria Control Program, adding that 42 people had died from the disease in Aden alone. Doctors in Yemeni hospitals are becoming increasingly wary about treating patients showing symptoms of COVID-19.

## **BACKGROUND**

**Health workers at Ibn Sina hospital in Al-Mukalla staged a protest calling for staff to be issued with personal protective equipment (PPE) after they were forced to treat a patient who died with suspected COVID-19, without having even gloves or masks to wear.**

Farouq Qaid Naji, a doctor at Al-Jumhuriya Hospital in the port city of Aden, told Arab News: "We receive at least 25 new cases (of dengue fever) daily. Each new case frightens doctors, nurses and health workers."

Hospital administrators have set up a special tent to handle dengue fever cases in a bid to help ease fears and pressure in emergency rooms.

Baheshm called for swift Yemeni government action to tackle the spread of dengue fever in case COVID-19 sweeps the country.

"Health facilities are burdened with dengue fever cases and the diseases have distracted attention and efforts to fight COVID-19. Most of beds at Ibn Sina hospital are taken by dengue fever patients. We need those beds for coronavirus patients.

"After the recent rains and floods, I expect the number of cases and deaths will increase rapidly. We are urgently in need of a health education campaign. We also seek to target vector breeding sites and launch indoor and outdoor fogging spray," he added.



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## [Dubai says essential trips during curfew hours require permit](#)

Sun, 2020-04-05 23:40

DUBAI: The Dubai Government said members of the public who need to leave their houses "for essential purposes" during sterilization operations must obtain a permit.

The announcement by the Supreme Committee of Crisis and Disaster Management allows members of the general public to register on the website <https://dxbpermit.gov.ae/home> to seek permits for leaving during the 24-hour restriction set to last two weeks.

Registering and obtaining permission through the portal is "mandatory" for leaving for essential purposes, the statement said.



Supreme Committee of Crisis & Disaster Management in Dubai: The movement permit website is for general members of the public who are allowed to go out for essential needs such as buying food and medicine, medical emergencies and for COVID-19 testing.

[pic.twitter.com/FepsvrjR3w](https://pic.twitter.com/FepsvrjR3w)

– Dubai Media Office (@DXBMediaOffice) [April 5, 2020](#)

Employees of vital exempt sectors do not need to apply if leaving for work, it said, adding that they should obtain a letter from their employer stating the purpose of their commute.

The Committee stressed that those violating the restrictions will face stringent legal action.

Dubai police has also called on the public to stay at home and abide by the precautionary measures that were extended in the emirate for two weeks around the clock.

Maj. Gen. Kamel Al-Suwaidi said methods and technologies such as radars and police patrols will be used to determine any trips by individuals during the sterilization hours.

He said individuals who need to pass through Dubai onto other emirates will be allowed to use Emirates Road, formerly known as Dubai Bypass Road. A fine of Dh3,000 will be issued against individuals violating the curfew.

Dubai Police urges the public to stay home and maintain physical distance [#StayHome](#) [pic.twitter.com/0cdTjD42rE](https://pic.twitter.com/0cdTjD42rE)

– Dubai Police شرطة دبي (@DubaiPoliceHQ) [April 5, 2020](#)



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