

# Egypt to reopen historic Jewish synagogue in January

Author:

Fri, 2019-12-27 01:53

ALEXANDRIA: Egypt is set to reopen a historic Jewish synagogue in Alexandria after a three-year process of restoration. The Ministry of Antiquities announced that the Eliyahu Hanavi synagogue will be reopened in January.

It is one of the largest Jewish temples in the Middle East and has undergone a series of restorations since 2017.

Egypt's Minister of Antiquities Khaled Al-Anani visited Alexandria to see the latest developments at the synagogue and other archaeological sites, including the Greco-Roman Museum, the Alexandria National Museum and some jewelry museums.

The ministry said: "The renovation work included the structural reinforcement of the building, architectural and precise restoration of the main facades and the decorative walls, as well as wooden and copper elements in the temple. In addition to the development of modern lighting systems, insurance and warning, in preparation for its opening in January."

The statement added that the restoration of the synagogue and the Greco-Roman Museum comes within the interest of the Egyptian government in preserving its heritage, whether it be pharaonic, Jewish, Coptic or Islamic.

After the decrease of the Jewish population in Egypt, Eliyahu Hanavi is one of the two remaining synagogues in Alexandria. It was built in the 1850s but closed at the end of 2012 due to security reasons.

The temple was included in the 2018 Archeology List of the World Monuments Fund for Endangered Monuments.

According to its website, it is a "symbol of Egypt's historical pluralism, when diverse national and religious communities lived together in a spirit of coexistence and religious freedom."

This restoration is a part of a cooperation protocol signed between the ministry and the Armed Forces Engineering Authority in April 2017, with a goal to develop and repair eight archeological sites, including Al-Baroun Palace in the Heliopolis district and the Mohammed Ali Shubra Palace.

The agreement also commits them to the development of the pyramids of Giza and the restoration of Alexan Palace in Assiut.

The protocol is an attempt to stimulate tourism and encourage Egyptian visitors – especially children – to visit regional museums to discover the greatness of their country's civilization and raise their archeological and cultural awareness.



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Two killed in attack on German synagogue UAE's first official synagogue to open in multi-faith complex in 2022

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## [\*\*A decade of opportunities awaits Arab countries\*\*](#)

Author:

Fri, 2019-12-27 01:42

ABU DHABI: From China's emergence to the need for smart cities, the Middle East is well placed to benefit from what the future holds, according to a number of experts who attended the region's first SALT Conference, held recently in Abu Dhabi.

Their verdict chimes in with the remarks made by the UAE's Minister of Cabinet Affairs and the Future Mohammed Al-Gergawi in his opening speech at Dubai's Arab Strategy Forum earlier this month, where he spoke of the possibility of a "bright future," provided Arab states take advantage of upcoming opportunities.

“Our region still has an increasing strategic importance and possesses huge human potential,” said Al-Gergawi, who noted that more than 100 million Arab youth were predicted to enter the labor market over the next 10 years.

## **QUESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

- Can OPEC survive in a decarbonizing world economy?
- Will economic sanctions lead to Iran regime collapse?
- Will nuclear proliferation accelerate?
- Will water scarcity heighten security risks for the Middle East and North Africa?
- Will gas fields off the Cyprus-Lebanon-Egypt coasts promote regional stability?
- Will countries fragment in the 21st century?
- Is US dominance in military, economic and other spheres weakening?
- Will US-China tech conflicts become opportunities for collaboration?
- Will the world trade system survive the populist trend?
- Are the world’s major economies increasingly vulnerable to cyber warfare?
- Will steady growth with brief downturns define the global business cycle?

**Source:** Good Judgment and Arab Strategy Forum

Parag Khanna, managing partner of FutureMap, a data and scenario-based strategic global advisory firm, used the term “West Asia” to describe the Middle East while discussing the region’s prospects in the context of the Asian growth story.

“If this collection of countries in Asia, such as Pakistan and India, grow at just 5 percent, (they will have) a combined GDP equal to China’s present GDP in less than 10 years,” he said.

Among the key drivers of Asian financial growth and reform identified by Khanna are savings and consumption, local currency liquidity, capital-account liberalization, and purchasing-power parity.

“Asia has been getting a lot of things right in economic and structural reforms. What Japan and South Korea have already done, and China is doing with its capital account, means a lot of countries want to do that too and manage their balance of payments. This copycat effect is going to continue to play out,” he added.

“We are currently living in a tripolar economic world, with North America, Europe and Asia standing as very important pillars today.

“The mobility of people and the growing mobility of capital are going hand in hand. In the last 15 years, China accelerated (the pace of) its outbound investments into infrastructure.

“The regions that have benefited the most from Chinese outbound investments are Europe, Africa, West Asia, East Asia and the Middle East and North Africa, namely Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt,” said Khanna.

Referring to China’s One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative, he pointed out that the trend it represented was irreversible, adding that the regions that belonged together in the “Silk Road” spirit were going to continue to reconnect no matter what.

Today, the UAE is China’s largest trading partner and is increasing its trade with Southeast (and South Asia), particularly India.

“In terms of the geography of the UAE and Abu Dhabi, when historians talk about the ancient Silk Roads and the pre-colonial world, (we talk about) Afro-Eurasia,” Khanna added. “It captures Africa, Europe and Asia – and the 16th-century world was Afro-Eurasia.

“What’s happening today is the resurrection of this Afro-Eurasian system. So, there couldn’t be a better time to be based in the UAE and looking multi-directionally into how to be a connector and a bridge between these three very important demographic and economic regions.”

In his remarks at the future-focused Arab Strategic Forum, Al-Gergawi had also posed the crucial question: In which direction are (Arab) countries heading?

The answer, strictly from the standpoint of urban development, is smart cities.

Conceptually, a smart city integrates information and communication technology and various physical devices connected to the Internet of Things (IoT) network to optimize the efficiency of different operations and services and connect to citizens.

In recent years, interest in smart cities has grown in tandem with technological, economic and environmental changes such as the shift toward online retail and entertainment, climate change, greying societies, urban population growth, and pressures on public finances.

With 60 percent of the global population – or 5.5 billion people – expected to live in cities by 2050, a gradual move over to smart cities is inevitable, according to Thomas Bardawil, director at Plug and Play Smart Cities.



A \$16 billion high-speed railway linking Makkah and Madinah highlights major changes in the 'mobility industry' as technology drives the rise of smart cities. (AFP)

However, the way cities have been built, reflected in current levels of traffic, pollution and property prices, is "unsustainable," said Bardawil. "We are not changing to smart cities because we think it's cool. We are changing because we have to."

In an interview with Arab News on the sidelines of the SALT Conference, Bardawil said that Europe, with its built infrastructure, did not hold as much promise in regard to smart-city development as the Middle East did with its vast swathes of unused land.

So, cities in the GCC region, including Saudi Arabia and the UAE, are where he expects to see some of the first smart cities emerge, as well as in China, where "promising" work is currently underway.

Bardawil cited three industries that he works closely with as part of the value chain of a smart city and essential for its development: mobility, energy and real estate.

"There is a big shift in the mobility industry and new generations don't seem to want to own cars anymore. So, we see mobility as a service becoming a major disruptor of the mobility industry, specifically for car manufacturers.

"They will not be about producing cars anymore. Rather they will be about how they can move cars around in the most efficient way possible," he added.

As far as energy was concerned, a revolution was happening in the industry at the moment, and Bardawil said: "Producing one kilowatt of renewable energy

today practically costs as much as producing it with traditional energy sources. The marginal cost of producing renewable energy is close to zero, with solar and wind.

“So, we see that everyone is going to be producing their own green energy and then sharing this energy with networks. People will be buying and selling energy off the grid.

“In a nutshell, it will bypass all these vertically integrated energy companies and all those middlemen that kept us from connecting to each other, and this is what we call ‘power to the people.’”

As people’s lifestyles evolved under the influence of sustainability, industries such as real estate would have to follow suit, Bardawil added. And with less human interaction thanks to innovation, he expected new technologies centered on the community as well as mixed-use buildings to gain ground.

“We build an ecosystem for innovation. We bring all the players together to connect them and provide them with information and the best practices because, at the end of the day, it’s about the knowledge.

“We need startups, governments, regulators and corporations, but it’s about doing it as a team. It’s all about the network.”

Bardawil pointed out that the construction of more efficient, resistant, sustainable and safe buildings using wood would soon be a reality.

“We are working on technology startups to actually make wood smart,” he said. “A smart city is one that has been thoroughly thought-out to be efficient, sustainable and able to adapt to the growing population, without having to compromise on the well-being of its people.”



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## [Turkey to warn Russia over Idlib attacks](#)

Author:

Fri, 2019-12-27 01:32

ANKARA: Turkey will warn Russian President Vladimir Putin that escalating fighting in Syria's Idlib province could threaten the country with a flood of Syrian refugees.

Escalating fighting in the nearby province is likely to be a major focal point of talks between Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Putin during the Russian leader's visit to Turkey on Jan. 8.

Erdogan last week warned Europe that Turkey cannot handle a new wave of Syrian refugees fleeing increased bombardment in Idlib. The country already has more than 3.7 million registered Syrian refugees.

More than 80,000 Syrians have fled toward the Turkish border in the past week following a Syrian regime offensive backed by Russian airpower in the Maaret Al-Numan region.

Turkey's leader told Europe to prepare for a "new wave" of Syrian refugees, saying his country "will not carry the migration burden alone."

The Syrian offensive is part of Bashar Assad's strategy to secure the M4 and M5 highways running through Idlib, both key routes connecting the government-controlled cities of Aleppo and Hama with the rest of the country.

"Idlib is the last stronghold of the rebels and extremists, all opponents of the Assad regime," Sinan Hatahet, an Istanbul-based Syrian analyst, told Arab News.

"For the stability and survival of the Syrian regime, it is important Assad completely destroys it," he added. The province is already home to about 3 million people, including many displaced from other parts of Syria.

Hatahet warned that rebels linked with Al-Qaeda could pose a risk of future insurgency in the province. He said that from a Russian perspective, the humanitarian crisis in Idlib offers the Kremlin leverage in its negotiations with Ankara, Brussels and Washington.

Turkey has backed Syrian rebels fighting to oust Assad, while Moscow and Tehran support the regime. A senior Turkish delegation traveled to Moscow on Dec. 23 to discuss the escalating fighting in Syria.

Turkey recently reinforced 12 military observation posts along the border of Idlib following attacks that resulted in the death and injury of its soldiers.

The observation points were established following a September 2018 deal between Russia and Turkey aimed at preventing a regime assault against the rebels. However, the Damascus regime continued its bombardment despite the cease-fire agreement.

## **FASTFACT**

Last Saturday, Russia and China vetoed a UN Security Council resolution on allowing cross-border humanitarian aid to Syria.

"Turkish observation points do not have a tactical and functional presence anymore because their original objective – observing any regime breach of the cease-fire – failed. It is only a matter of time before Turkey withdraws these posts," Hatahet said.

Syrian regime forces surrounded a Turkish observation post in Al-Surman on Monday, but there were no clashes.



Navvar Saban, a military analyst at the Omran Center for Strategic Studies in Istanbul, said that the Russian military escalation in Idlib shows Moscow is determined to achieve its goals.

Saban said that the latest attacks by the regime and Russia are targeting civilians and some rebel groups while ignoring the presence of Al-Qaeda-linked extremists.

“What happens now is an initial attack for an upcoming operation in Syria,” he told Arab News. “There are different scenarios, but the most likely one is that the Russians will take control of the M4 and M5 highways, and won’t care about the rest of the area.”

Last Saturday, Russia and China vetoed a UN Security Council resolution on allowing cross-border humanitarian aid to Syria.

The resolution would have extended for one year all cross-border UN-funded aid distributions from Turkey and Iraq to millions of Syrian civilians, especially those in Idlib region and other opposition-held areas of Syria.



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Trump warns Russia, Syria, Iran against killing civilians in Idlib Strikes kill 8 in Syria’s Idlib as Turkey, France urge de-escalation

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## [Palestine govt, Christians slam Israel for insufficient action on church attack](#)

Author:

Thu, 2019-12-26 23:48

AMMAN: The Palestinian government and church leaders condemned the Israeli police's handling of an incident on Tuesday – Christmas Day – when a young Jewish man armed with a knife entered the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem.

A spokesman for the Israeli police, Miki Rosenfeld, told Arab News that the incident was not dangerous and that the man was released without charge after questioning.

“An individual approached the area. He was spotted by the police when he walked into the church. The police removed him and asked him what he was doing, and it became clear from his replies and his behavior that this was an unstable man,” Rosenfeld said. “After he was questioned, he was released.”

Rosenfeld refused to name the man, claiming: “People don't have the right to know his name because he was not arrested.” Asked if Israeli police would extend the same right of anonymity to Palestinians in similar circumstances, he declined to comment.

Hanna Issa, head of the Islamic Christian Committee for Jerusalem, told Arab News that the police's actions were insufficient and would cause concern among local Christians and tourists.

“If the attacker committed a crime he should be sent to jail,” Issa said. “If he was mentally ill, he should be sent to a mental hospital. But in either case, he should not (have been) released.”

The Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement saying that the perpetrator was released 30 minutes after the incident.

“The church was full of Christian worshipers and tourists; the aim was to terrorize them and to indicate that Christians are not wanted in the occupied Palestinian areas,” the statement claimed.

Palestinian Minister of Tourism Rula May'ah told Arab News that the attack was part of an orchestrated campaign targeting tourism in Palestine. “This is part of a continuous set of attacks by the Israeli occupiers on our people and our holy places, but it will not succeed in affecting tourism to Palestine,” May'ah said, adding that a record 3.25 million tourists visited Bethlehem in 2019.

Rosenfeld insisted that the man armed with a knife posed no threat, and that tourism was unaffected. "Tourism in the area is functioning, thousands are able to visit the church without any problems," he said.

Dimitri Diliani, president of the Jerusalem-based National Christian Coalition, said he held the Israeli government responsible for the incident, and for the leniency that was shown to the attacker.

"This is a ridiculous claim," Diliani said of Rosenfeld's remarks that the incident was not dangerous. "The Israeli police acted to protect a Jewish terrorist. There is clear evidence of Israeli institutional racism and the dehumanization of Palestinians. If (the detained man) was Palestinian, he would have been shot on the spot, even if he didn't pose a threat – as we have witnessed many times."

The Foreign Ministry's statement also questioned whether the man was acting of his own accord or whether he was following someone else's directives. "Was he sent on purpose at this special time for Christians around the world to hurt Christian tourism in the Palestinian areas?" the statement asked.



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Bethlehem prepares for Christmas Pope prays for Middle East peace

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# Two Iran prisoners begin hunger strike, supporters say

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1577372673389151500

Thu, 2019-12-26 14:17

PARIS: Two foreign academics detained in Iran have begun a hunger strike in protest against their incarceration, according to a letter published by their supporters.

Franco-Iranian researcher Fariba Adelkhah and British-Australian academic Kylie Moore-Gilbert said in the letter dated Dec. 24 they had begun refusing food and water at the Evin prison in Tehran where they are being held.

The women's protest was also announced in a tweet by the international research institute at France's Sciences Po school, where Adelkhah is employed as a senior research fellow.

"CERI confirms the hunger strike begun by Fariba Adelkhah and her co-detainee Kylie Moore-Gilbert," the institute said on Wednesday.

Iran has stepped up detentions of foreign and dual nationals amid a protracted standoff with Western powers, after the United States withdrew from an international agreement to curb Iranian nuclear activities and reimposed sanctions on Tehran.

Moore-Gilbert, a specialist in Middle East politics at the University of Melbourne, has been detained for more than a year. British and Australian media have reported that she has been sentenced to 10 years in jail by Iranian authorities.

Adelkhah was arrested by Iran's Revolutionary Guard this year and accused of spying.

In their letter, the academics said they had been "subjected to psychological torture and numerous violations of our basic human rights", without elaborating.

Iran has rebuffed French President Emmanuel Macron's demands that it release Adelkhah and Roland Marchal, her Sciences Po colleague who was also arrested in October.



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