

Up to 85,000 children 'dead of starvation or disease in Yemen'

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DUBAI: As many as 85,000 infants under the age of five may have died from starvation or disease since 2015 in war-ravaged Yemen, humanitarian organization Save the Children said Wednesday.

It said the estimate was based on data compiled by the United Nations, which has warned that up to 14 million people are at risk of famine in Yemen.

"Dozens are starving to death and it's entirely preventable," said Tamer Kirolos, Save the Children's country director in Yemen.

"Children who die in this way suffer immensely as their vital organ functions slow down and eventually stop," he said.

"Their immune systems are so weak they are more prone to infections with some too frail to even cry. Parents are having to witness their children wasting away, unable to do anything about it."

Meanwhile, UN envoy Martin Griffiths prepares to hold talks with the Houthis in the capital Sanaa during a visit aimed at laying the groundwork for peace talks in Sweden.



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UN envoy to Yemen arrives in Sanaa Saudi Arabia, UAE announce \$500 million aid program for Yemen

Joint media release with the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs – Global Compact for Migration

Australia is the most successful immigration nation on earth.

Egypt celebrates antiquities museum before new institution takes the limelight

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CAIRO: Bright lights illuminated the Egyptian Museum in Cairo's Tahrir Square on Monday during a celebration that could mark the last time the two-story museum is feted as one of Egypt's main tourist attractions.

Located in one of Egypt's most famous squares, the museum has been the country's principal keeper of antiquities for over a century, but a bigger museum is under construction.

Officials celebrated the 116th anniversary of its founding and insisted it will not become obsolete once the Grand Egyptian Museum opens its doors. Antiquities will be moved to the new museum, which is expected to partially open next year.

"Our ceremony this evening is to tell the world this museum will never die," said Antiquities Minister Khaled Al-Anany.

The old museum will be used to display recent discoveries as well as antiquities from store rooms, the minister said.

Housing the world's biggest collection of pharaonic antiquities has been a challenge for the museum building, which was established in 1902.

Tens of thousands of objects have been sitting in its storerooms and galleries were often said to be too packed. The Grand Egyptian Museum will be located near the Pyramids and Cairo hopes it will help a tourism industry that has suffered from the turmoil that followed a 2011 uprising. Highlights of the evening were exhibitions of mummies and the ornamented coffin covers of pharaonic courtier Yuya and his noblewoman wife Thuya. A 20-meter-long papyrus said to be the longest on display in Egypt was also on show during the ceremony.





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[Top Egyptian travel company sees sector recovering as tourists return](#)

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Reuters

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CAIRO: One of the biggest Egyptian travel companies, Travco Group, said on Tuesday that hotel bookings are rising as tourists return to the country after years of political turmoil and security concerns.

Tourism is a cornerstone of Egypt's economy, a source of income for millions of citizens and a major source of foreign exchange. But the sector suffered severely in the years following 2011's popular uprising and was further hampered by a spate of militant attacks which targeted visitors.

Egypt's revenues from tourism jumped 77 percent year-on-year in the first half of 2018 to \$4.8 billion, while the number of tourists arriving in the country increased by 41 percent to just over 5 million.

Travco Group, which owns over 40 hotels in Egypt and abroad and is the local agent for Germany's TUI Group, raised its prices by 30-35 percent at the beginning of this winter season, its CEO Hamed El Chiaty told Reuters in an interview.

"The level of tourist bookings during the current winter holiday season in Egypt is promising," Chiaty said, adding that bookings from Germany, Italy, Poland and Ukraine were particularly promising.

In a devastating blow to the already struggling sector, Russia halted all flights to Egypt, and Britain stopped flights to Sinai, after an Islamist militant bomb attack brought down a Russian passenger plane in October 2015, killing everyone on board.

There have not been any major attacks aimed at the tourist sector in well over a year and Russia resumed flights to Cairo in April, although it has yet to authorize its aircraft to land in the Red Sea resort of Sharm Al-Sheikh. Chiaty said that Travco's price increases were the highest in seven years, rising to pre-2011 levels, while occupancy levels at the group's hotels were more than 80 percent, with the exception of Sharm Al-Sheikh.

Travco has market share of between 15 and 20 percent of the Polish, Belgian, English, Italian, Ukrainian and Austrian markets, Chiaty said, adding that it had recently refurbished its hotels.



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Egypt says cheap new drug 'Strox' threatens its youth

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CAIRO: For years, Mostafa Mahmoud struggled to pay for his expensive drug addiction, spending much of his meagre income on hashish. A few months ago, he switched to a cheaper way to get high which he says is pushing him to his death.

The 27-year-old man is among a growing number of Egyptians using Strox, a potent narcotic that is mixed with tobacco and smoked, and that Egyptian officials see as one of the biggest threats to the country's young population.

Drug addiction has long been a problem in Egypt, the most populous country in the Arab world with nearly 100 million. But the speed at which Strox use is spreading has posed a new challenge.

Experts say the drug is made in local workshops by adding chemicals often used by veterinarians to a herb like marjoram. Some add pesticides for greater impact, but effectively make the drug more deadly.

Users describe painful convulsions leading to hallucinations and loss of consciousness.

Authorities say the drug has killed dozens of people and has caused a spike in crime.

"It is cheaper than hashish, but when you smoke it you choke, pass out and suffer cramps," said Mahmoud, who lost his job at a fruit shop due to his drug habit.

While the price for one hashish joint was 50 Egyptian pounds (\$2.80), he said two Strox joints cost 30 pounds.

It is spreading in impoverished areas, where living standards have plunged since a 2016 IMF-backed reforms package forced currency devaluation and cut state subsidies. Many victims are aged 15 to 20, according to Amr Othman, director of the state-run drug rehabilitation fund.

While statistics are scarce, officials say some 104,000 drug addicts were receiving free treatment at a rehabilitation center run by the ministry of social solidarity.

Of those, about 25 percent are Strox addicts, officials said, up from 4.5 percent last year.

The number of arrests is also up. Over the past six months, the number of Strox-related arrests soared by 300 percent, and Strox addicts have surged to 40 percent of total drug users in Egypt from 9 percent of the total at the start of the year, according to a security source estimate.

Experts say Strox is a type of synthetic narcotic like those that spread in Western nations more than a decade ago.

"Some are 100 times more potent than others," said Justice Tettey, chief of the laboratory and scientific section at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Egypt.

"The frightening part is not that it's more potent than cannabis," he said. "It's that most people have no idea what they're taking. Your first one or next one could be your last one," he added.

"I don't know why I use it. It is awful," Mahmoud said, describing waking up after one session to find a friend had died in his sleep from an overdose. Mahmoud and his friends were held for a few months but later freed without charge.

Recognizing the threat, authorities in September banned the unlicensed sale of chemicals used to make Strox.

Othman said the decision came due to combined efforts by the ministries of health, justice and interior.

Authorities have also enlisted the country's mosques, devoting a Friday sermon to rally Muslims against drugs.

"Just as we are in a comprehensive fight against terrorism, we need a quick and comprehensive battle against addiction and drugs," the sermon said.

"Drugs are another kind of terrorism."

(\$1 = 17.8600 Egyptian pounds)





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Egyptian enthusiasts get American wrestling off the ground