

Lebanese PM expects progress in talks with IMF over meltdown

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BEIRUT: Talks between the Lebanese government and the International Monetary Fund over an economic recovery plan should make progress in the next two weeks, Prime Minister Najib Mikati said Saturday.

Speaking to reporters in Qatar, where he is attending the Doha Forum, Mikati said an IMF delegation will resume talks with the government in Beirut on Tuesday over the country's economic meltdown that began more than two years ago.

Talks between Lebanon and the IMF began in May 2020, and then stopped for months amid a political deadlock in the small country. They resumed after Mikati took office in September but no breakthrough has been made since. A main sticking point in the talks has been estimating the amount of financial losses. But late last year, Deputy Prime Minister Saadeh Shami, who is heading the talks with the IMF, put the losses of the financial sector at \$69 billion.

"Hopefully it's going to take, I guess, two weeks and by the end of the two weeks we can see the light differently," Mikati said in English about the next round of talks. He added that Lebanon has no other option but to reach an agreement with the IMF.

Mikati said Lebanon's economic meltdown, described by the World Bank as one of the worst the world has witnessed since the 1850s, has been made worse by the war in Ukraine.

Mikati refused to answer a question about corruption charges filed by a judge against the country's central bank Gov. Riad Salameh, saying it was "not the right place to talk about what's going on domestically." But he said Salameh's case will be solved "the right legal way." He did not elaborate. Mikati said the war between Russia and Ukraine has become "a new source of pressure" on small countries. He said Lebanon imports all its wheat from Russia and Ukraine. He said the government is trying to guarantee food security for people in Lebanon in the coming year.

Lebanon's economic crisis that began in October 2019 is rooted in decades of corruption and mismanagement. It has left three-quarters of the population of 6 million people, including 1 million Syrian refugees, in poverty. The Lebanese pound has lost more than 90 percent of its value.



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Lebanon PM Mikati says he will not run in May parliamentary election
Lebanon optimistic about resumption of relations with Gulf states

[Egypt launches yacht race to boost tourism](#)

Author:

Sat, 2022-03-26 19:07

CAIRO: Egypt's Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities has launched the first edition of a yacht race in the Red Sea governorate.

Amr El-Qadi, CEO of the Egyptian General Authority for Tourism Activation, said holding the two-day race comes within the framework of the ministry's efforts to promote yacht tourism, which attracts high spenders. The authority

is planning to sponsor a series of yacht races, he added.

Khaled Sherif, assistant minister of tourism and antiquities for digital transformation, said 13 yachts are participating in the race, each led by a crew of no fewer than five sailors. He added that the race covers 10-12 nautical miles.



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Emaar Misr launches yacht marina in Egypt

[Arab leaders meet in Aqaba](#)

Sat, 2022-03-26 18:52

CAIRO: Egypt's President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, Jordan's King Abdullah II, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan and Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi met in the Jordanian city of Aqaba to discuss the impact of global developments on food security and energy.

They discussed ways to enhance cooperation “in all fields, especially trade and economy,” said Bassam Rady, spokesman for the Egyptian presidency.

“The meeting witnessed an exchange of views and visions on the overall political and economic situation at the regional and international levels, especially with regard to confronting the repercussions and effects of the current global conditions on the sectors of food security, energy and trade, in a way that preserves regional stability and security.”

Al-Kadhimi’s media office said they discussed the promotion of joint Arab action in various fields, expanding economic cooperation and increasing trade exchange “to achieve the interests of brotherly peoples in prosperity and development.”

This is the second summit of its kind hosted by Jordan. The first was held last August in Amman between the leaders of Egypt, Jordan and Iraq.

The latest meeting comes days after a summit in the Egyptian city of Sharm El-Sheikh between El-Sisi, Abu Dhabi’s crown prince and Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett.

The meeting preceded a regional tour that US Secretary of State Antony Blinken started on Saturday that includes Israel, the Palestinian territories, Morocco and Algeria.





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Egypt's FM to join summit of Arab, US diplomats in Israel
Egypt's President El-Sisi receives phone call from Ukrainian counterpart

[Arab League chief slams Houthi attacks against Saudi Arabia](#)

Sat, 2022-03-26 18:36

CAIRO: Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit has condemned "in the strongest terms the recent Houthi attacks on Saudi oil facilities and infrastructure."

These attacks by the Iran-backed Yemeni militia pose "a grave threat to security in the region and to energy supplies at a time when the international economy is going through a delicate circumstance," he said.

“The targeting of civilians and civilian facilities, including those of (Saudi) Aramco in Jeddah, represents a dangerous development that the international community must pay attention to.”

The international community “must deal more firmly with these terrorist operations, and the ongoing violations of international law by the Houthi militia,” Aboul Gheit said. “Saudi forces dealt efficiently and vigilantly with the attacks.”

He added: “International solidarity with the Kingdom must be reflected in a clear position ... regarding these attacks, and those behind them or supporting them.”



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World condemns Houthis as US says Iran ‘clearly enabled’ Jeddah oil attack
Houthi crimes highlighted at European Parliament

Houthi crimes highlighted at European Parliament

Fri, 2022-03-25 21:27

BRUSSELS: The international community has been urged to do more to tackle human rights violations committed by the Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen.

And speakers at a special conference on the issue also called for the militia group's leaders to be prosecuted in international courts for their war crimes.

Atrocities carried out by the Houthis against women and children were among a catalogue of incidents highlighted at the recent meeting in Brussels organized by the Group of the European People's Party in the European Parliament.

Guest speaker, Dr. Wesam Basindawa, head of the Yemeni Coalition of Independent Women, told members of the European Parliament and representatives of EU institutions about cases of physical and sexual violence toward women and children, the recruiting of children as soldiers, and brutal attacks against minorities.

She said the Houthis had obstructed the delivery and distribution of humanitarian aid and carried out cross-border terrorist attacks on civilian targets in neighboring Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

The group had also turned schools and educational facilities into camps and weapons stores, breaching international humanitarian and human rights laws.

And she pointed out that religious and ethnic minorities in Yemen, such as the Jewish and Baha'i communities, had seen many of their rights and basic freedoms restricted by the Houthis.

Basindawa said: "We and the international community must do more work and put pressure on this terrorist militia, tighten sanctions against it, prosecute its leaders, and try them in international courts as war criminals."

MEP Isabella Tovaglieri, a member of the European Parliament Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, said women were the worst-affected and most vulnerable category in conflict zones and needed to be protected against rape, kidnapping, forced marriage, and poverty.

"Europe should help women in peacebuilding and in conflict resolution," she added.

Addressing the conference, MEP Luisa Regimenti spoke about physical and psychological violence toward women and the importance of providing victim support services.

Another MEP, Ryszard Czarnecki, said the Houthis had targeted civilians

during attacks in Marib and at Al-Thwara hospital, adding that the group had set fire to an overcrowded detention center housing African refugees.

Also speaking at the conference was MEP and Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality member, Isabella Adinolfi. She noted the need to support female teachers, intellectuals, and journalists who were working to raise awareness about the humanitarian crisis in Yemen.

MEP Gianna Gancia said the war in Yemen had created a critical situation for women and girls and that "from the beginning of the conflict seven years ago, the EU had made diplomatic efforts and provided financial support to Yemen through humanitarian assistance and development."

Alessandra Illuticini, president of Progetto Donna 2021, told delegates of the atrocities meted out toward women in Houthi-controlled areas such as the forced wearing of niqabs, child marriage, honor killings, and domestic violence.

She pointed out the need to work closely with the UN and human rights organizations to empower women and protect them as well as support their fight for rights.

MEP Lucia Vuolo said: "Yemen remains one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. Conflict across Yemen continues to endanger civilians, trigger displacement, and damage civilian infrastructure such as hospitals and schools."

Simona Russo, coordinator of the Fight Impunity association, said the serious situation in Yemen was one "that we should not forget."

Program host, MEP Fulvio Martusciello, said he had been working for more than three years on raising awareness about the humanitarian crisis in Yemen.

He and his European Parliament colleagues had written to Joseph Borrell, high representative of the EU for foreign affairs and security policy, calling for the Houthis to be designated as a terrorist group.

MEP Anna Cinzia Bonfrisco said: "We need to encourage women peacebuilders and help them establish a dialogue between the different parties in Yemen. Women should be active members of the peace negotiations in Yemen."

Closing the session, conference moderator, Manel Msalmi, said the EU as a peace actor should work closely with civil society organizations in Yemen to empower female leaders.



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Houthis under fire for ruining peace efforts to end war