

# [Around a dozen people injured in explosion at south Lebanon Palestinian camp](#)

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BEIRUT: A large explosion rocked a Palestinian camp in the southern Lebanese port city of Tyre on Friday night, injuring about a dozen people, according to rescue workers on scene and a Palestinian source inside the camp.

The state-run National News Agency (NNA) reported an unspecified number of deaths, but local media and civil defense workers on scene said there had been no fatalities. A security source also said fatalities had not been recorded.

The NNA reported that the blast emanated from a Hamas weapons depot in the Burj Al-Shemali camp and a judge had ordered security forces to launch an investigation.

A number of armed Palestinian factions, including Hamas and the Fatah Movement, hold effective control over roughly a dozen Palestinian camps in the country, which Lebanese authorities by custom do not enter.

Shehab News Agency, seen as close to Hamas, quoted a Palestinian source as saying the explosion was caused by the ignition of oxygen canisters stored for use in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.

The security source said the fire had since been brought under control. Hamas has not officially commented.

The area surrounding the blast had been evacuated and rescue crews had deployed, the Palestinian source said.

Videos from the scene shared by local media show a number of small bright red flashes above the southern city, followed by a large explosion and the sound of glass breaking.



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Anger in Lebanon as Palestinian refugees granted work rights  
Palestinian teen facing East Jerusalem eviction arrested after stabbing

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## [Anger in Lebanon as Palestinian refugees granted work rights](#)

Author:

Fri, 2021-12-10 22:34

BEIRUT: Labor Minister Mustafa Bayram finalized the decision on Wednesday, but it has been met with criticism, particularly from the Christian right, which has launched a campaign against the minister.

The decision allows Palestinian refugees – many of whom are doctors, lawyers and nurses – to work in the managerial, business, tourism, industrial, information, health, education and service sectors.

It includes “Palestinians born in Lebanese territories, born to a Lebanese mother or married to a Lebanese citizen, and non-registered Palestinians who were born in Lebanon,” but forbids them from joining state security services

or free profession syndicates.

Major political parties and figures criticized Palestinian refugees and condemned the decision, warning that it was the beginning of a push for naturalization.

Gebran Bassil, head of the Free Patriotic Movement, said: "The decision violates the labor law and the constitution. It is veiled naturalization and it is rejected."

In a tweet, he called on labor syndicates to reject the decree and urged the Lebanese public to ignore it. "This is unacceptable and we will not allow the stealing of jobs from Lebanese in such circumstances," he said.

Former labor minister Sejaan Kazzi said that Bayram's decision "contradicts the decision issued in 2015," adding: "This new resolution will increase the Lebanese people's unemployment rate by 40 percent and open the door to settlement and naturalization."

The Kataeb Party said: "Instead of Bayram increasing the opportunities for Lebanese people to prevent their state of destitution – with hundreds of them being laid off – he allowed non-Lebanese to compete with them for their livelihoods."

A source examining the right of Palestinian refugees to work in Lebanon told Arab News that former labor minister Trad Hamadeh tried to push through a similar decree that was canceled by the next prime minister.

The source said: "There is no specific mechanism for the adoption of a ministerial decree.

"Bayram's decision does not affect Palestinians whose specializations require membership in powerful syndicates. These syndicates also prevent Lebanese who are not members from practicing their professions.

"This decision only allows the use of Palestinian labor in professions that do not require advanced degrees. These are modest craft and manual professions that the Lebanese do not want to work in.

"Simultaneously, this decision prevents a social crisis in the camps as a result of the economic collapse and many unemployed young Palestinians turning to drugs and theft. In other words, it is a decision to defuse the situation.

"Palestinian refugees contribute to Lebanon's economy; thousands of them are paid in dollars by the Palestine Liberation Organization or international organizations and they spend their money in Lebanon."

In a press conference on Friday, Bayram said: "What was prohibited by the constitution and laws is still prohibited for the non-Lebanese. Foreign workers in all sectors work under an exception license issued by the labor minister. However, the Lebanese people have the priority in all professions."

He added: "90 percent of people criticizing us have not read the whole decision. The Lebanese worker holds the priority, and the exception is granted to the foreign worker. Some sectors do not appeal to the Lebanese, such as the construction and agriculture sector, where we gave foreign workers priority.

"The decree gives Palestinians privileges by exempting them from having a work permit and allowing them membership of social security. We are in trouble in the job market and trying to fill the gaps. The Lebanese market needs foreign labor."

On social media, FPM supporters launched a campaign against Bayram. Some activists referred to the employment of "strangers," a term that was used to describe Palestinian refugees during the civil war.

Separately, at the end of his tour in Lebanon to examine the Palestinian refugee situation, UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini said: "The living conditions in the camps continues to deteriorate, and Palestinians, who are some of the most marginalized groups in Lebanon, are now extremely desperate, frustrated and angry."

He added: "I met graduates whose only hope for a better future is to emigrate. I met a young father who has nightmares about how to buy milk for his child. I heard of a man who killed his wife because she shared the family's food basket with neighbors who were hungry. In addition, there is an increased child labor rate, divorce and the collapse of the social fabric."

Lazzarini welcomed any measures that would ease restrictions on the rights of Palestinian refugees and promised to "make an effort to increase the required funding."

He said: "The economic and financial collapse in Lebanon was accompanied by the UNRWA's financial difficulties in maintaining the basic services of refugees, such as education, health and social networking."



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Riad Kobeissi, Lebanon's very own Bob Woodward fighting corruptionEgypt to supply Lebanon with gas to alleviate power crisis

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## [Vienna talks on Iran nuclear deal resume amid tensions](#)

Author:

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Fri, 2021-12-10 00:11

VIENNA: Negotiations between Iran and world powers aimed at salvaging a tattered 2015 nuclear deal resumed in Vienna on Thursday after a few days' pause, with tensions high after Tehran made demands last week that European countries strongly criticized.

EU diplomat Enrique Mora, who chaired Thursday's meeting of all the deal's remaining signatories – Iran, Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China –

said afterward that he felt “a renewed sense of purpose on the need to work and to reach an agreement on bringing the (agreement) back to life.”

Mora said: “Whether that will be confirmed and endorsed by negotiations on the details, we will see in the coming days,” adding that the positive impression “has to be tested.” He said that it is becoming “more imperative” with time to reach an agreement quickly.

Mora said participants are approaching the task “with the realism necessary to get an agreement, because it’s difficult, because there are different positions, because some points are still extremely open.” He added: “We have to close them, and we don’t have all the time of the world.”

The US has participated indirectly in the ongoing talks because it withdrew from the accord in 2018 under then-President Donald Trump. President Joe Biden has signaled that he wants to rejoin the deal.

Washington plans to send a delegation led by Robert Malley, the special US envoy for Iran, to Vienna over the weekend.

Meanwhile, the US will send a senior government delegation to the UAE next week to meet with banks over concerns about Iran sanctions compliance, a State Department spokesperson said on Thursday.

The move suggests Washington is looking to crank up economic pressure on Tehran amid Western doubts about Tehran’s determination to salvage the accord.

The US delegation, which will include the head of the US Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control, Andrea Gacki, will warn banks that have business with Iran and are not in compliance with the sanctions.

A State Department spokesperson said the US had evidence of noncompliance, and that the banks could later be sanctioned or penalized over their dealings.

Russia’s Ambassador to the UN in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov told the TASS agency that Thursday’s talks had “removed a number of misunderstandings that had created some tension,” but did not elaborate.

The current round of talks is the seventh since they started in April.

Iranian officials have insisted they are “serious about the talks.”

“The fact that the two sides are continuing to talk indicates that they want to narrow the gaps,” said Iran’s chief negotiator Ali Bagheri.

The EU’s top foreign policy official Josep Borrell asked Iran’s Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian to “respond to worries concerning its current nuclear program,” which has intensified in recent months.



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US says Iran's escalation of nuclear program will test mutual return to deal  
Renewed Iran nuclear talks seen Thursday, but France believes Tehran playing for time

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## [Israeli foreign minister arrives in Cairo to strengthen relations](#)

Author:

Thu, 2021-12-09 23:39

CAIRO: Israel's foreign minister arrived in Cairo on Thursday on a diplomatic visit aimed at strengthening ties and shoring up a tenuous cease-fire between Israel and Gaza's militant Hamas rulers.

Foreign Minister Yair Lapid met with Egypt's President, Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, and the country's foreign minister, Sameh Shoukry, for talks that reflected budding ties between Egypt and Israel's new government. Egypt's intelligence chief also participated in the meetings.

Egypt, the first Arab country to reach a peace agreement with Israel, has served as a key mediator between Israel and Hamas.

Israel's Foreign Ministry said Lapid presented a plan to develop Gaza's economy in return for assurances of quiet, and eventually disarmament, by Hamas. It said the plan must address "the issue of captives and missing persons."

Lapid also discussed Israeli efforts to strengthen the rival Palestinian Authority, whose forces were toppled by Hamas in 2007. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas governs only limited autonomous areas in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Lapid raised Israel's concerns about Iran's nuclear program and expressed his country's desire to ramp up cooperation with Israel in the civilian fields of economics, energy, agriculture, and trade, according to the Israeli Foreign Ministry.

"Egypt is an especially important strategic partner for Israel," Lapid said. "My goal is to strengthen our security, diplomatic, and economic relations with Egypt. It's important to continue to work on the peace between our two nations."

## **FASTFACT**

Egypt, the first Arab country to reach a peace deal with Israel, has served as a key mediator between Israel and Hamas.

Upon his arrival, Lapid was welcomed by El-Sisi, who stressed his country's commitment to a two-state solution and to achieving a "comprehensive and just" peace in the Middle East, according to a statement released by El-Sisi's office.

During separate talks with his Egyptian counterpart, Lapid handed over 95 stolen Egyptian archaeological items that were seized in Israel.

Israel's Foreign Ministry said a smuggler was caught with some of the items in 2013 at the airport when arriving from a flight from Egypt. More than 90 others were found at a Jerusalem antiques store the same year.

It said the items included hieroglyphic inscriptions on stone, a fragment of a wooden sarcophagus, inscriptions on papyrus, figurines of Egyptian goddesses and other figures placed inside tombs as burial offerings. Israel released a photo of Lapid and Shoukry in front of a table filled with the artifacts.

Egypt and Israel reached a historic peace accord in 1979. Relations have generally been cool between the countries, though behind-the-scenes security cooperation remains strong. There have been growing signs of overall cooperation in recent months.





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## [Yemen army kills Hezbollah military expert in Marib](#)

Thu, 2021-12-09 23:32

AL-MUKALLA: A Hezbollah military leader fighting for the Iran-backed Houthis has been killed in clashes with government forces in the central province of Marib, Yemen's information minister revealed on Thursday.

In a tweet, Moammar Al-Eryani said that expert adviser Akram Al-Sayed died when Yemeni army troops shelled Houthi positions south of Marib, inflicting a blow to a Houthi militia push to seize control of Marib city.

The Houthis are being supported by thousands of fighters, including many from Iran, Lebanon, and Iraq.

Al-Eryani called on the international community and UN Security Council

permanent members, "to condemn this blatant interference, which undermines de-escalation efforts in Yemen, continues bloodshed, and exacerbates humanitarian suffering of Yemenis."

The minister urged an intensification of sanctions against Lebanese Hezbollah and demanded that the government in Lebanon curb the influx of Hezbollah fighters to Yemen.

The Yemeni government has long accused Iran of deploying fighters from its proxy militias in the region to reinforce the Houthis.

In August, the Yemeni government announced the death in a coalition airstrike in Serwah of an Iranian military officer who was providing the Houthis with frontline military advice in Marib.

Last year, Arab coalition warplanes killed two Hezbollah military experts in Yemen during airstrikes on a training camp outside Houthi-held Sanaa.

Meanwhile, sources in Marib reported an increasing number of attacks by the Houthis on government troops over the past two weeks which had been concentrated on a chain of mountains known as Al-Balaq, on the southern edges of Marib. Heavy fighting had left dozens of combatants dead on both sides, they said.

Yemen's Defense Ministry denied Houthi claims that the group had seized control of strategic eastern parts of Al-Balaq saying that army troops and allied tribesmen had repulsed attacks.

Several civilians were wounded on Thursday when two missiles fired by the Houthis ripped through Al-Hamma camp that hosts 264 internally displaced families on the outskirts of Marib, the government's Executive Unit said.

It added that the number of displaced people living in Marib city and its surrounding areas had increased to 2,231,460 after 96,328 people had fled districts south of Marib since early September.



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Yemen army advances in Shabwa as coalition pounds Houthi targets