

# Yemen government troops make limited advances in Marib province

Author:

Tue, 2021-08-03 21:39

ALEXANDRIA: Yemeni Army troops on Tuesday scored limited advances in the province of Marib as the president warned that the Iran-backed Houthis are destroying the country and threatening regional and international security.

Yemen's Defense Ministry said that its troops and allied tribesmen liberated a mountain in Al-Mushairef area, in the south of Marib province, after launching an attack on the Houthis.

At least 14 Houthis were killed and many others wounded during clashes on Al-Bayadh mountain. The rebels were forced to flee the battlefield, leaving behind the bodies of their dead comrades and weapons, the ministry added.

Warplanes from the Arab coalition carried out several sorties, targeting Houthi military reinforcements arriving from Al-Bayda province, killing many fighters and destroying military vehicles.

Forces from the internationally recognized government have recently purged the Houthis from another "strategic" mountain in southern Marib province. By seizing control of the two mountains, loyalists have further secured the region from Houthi attacks.

Despite their gains in the south, government troops have continued battling relentless attacks from the Houthis west of the city of Marib, with no confirmed gains for both sides.

Local media reports said the Arab coalition on Tuesday intensified air raids on Houthi targets in Al-Mashjah and Al-Kasara, both west of Marib, as the rebels pressed ahead with deadly attacks on government forces in an attempt to break months of stalemate.

Over the last six months, the Houthis have stepped up their attacks against government forces with the aim of seizing control of the strategic city of Marib, the Yemeni government's last bastion in the northern half of the country.

Yemeni Army commanders said that thousands of Houthis have been killed or wounded in the fierce fighting, adding that loyalist forces halted their advance to Marib.

Government forces in the western province of Hodeidah on Tuesday shot down a Houthi explosive-rigged drone over Beit Al-Faqih district as other loyalist elements sporadically traded mortar fire with the Houthis in flashpoints in the province, the Giants Brigades media reported.

Yemen President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi warned that the Houthi "destructive

and aggressive” policies – such as detonating opponents’ houses and attacks on civilians – are ruining the country and causing fractures in its social fabric. Hadi vows to defeat the rebels. During an “exceptional” meeting with his deputy, Ahmed Mohsen Al-Ahmer and Prime Minister Maeen Abdul Malik Saeed in Riyadh on Monday evening, Hadi said the Houthi planting of sea mines and their attacks on ships in the Red Sea show that they pose a threat to international maritime navigation. He also thanked the Arab coalition for military and humanitarian assistance to Yemenis.

The Yemeni Landmine Monitor said on Tuesday that landmines planted by the Houthis in various liberated areas had recently killed 18 civilians, including 10 children and five women. The blasts wounded 32 others, including seven children and two women, over April, May and June.

On Monday, a man was killed and two more wounded when his vehicle ran over an anti-tank mine planted by the Houthis in Al-Dhahyah village in Hays district, south of Hodeidah province. Last week, another landmine planted by the Houthis killed three civilians and wounded 11 in Hodeidah’s Al-Durihimi district, the monitor said.



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## Why the trauma does not end for Beirut blast survivors

Tue, 2021-08-03 20:47

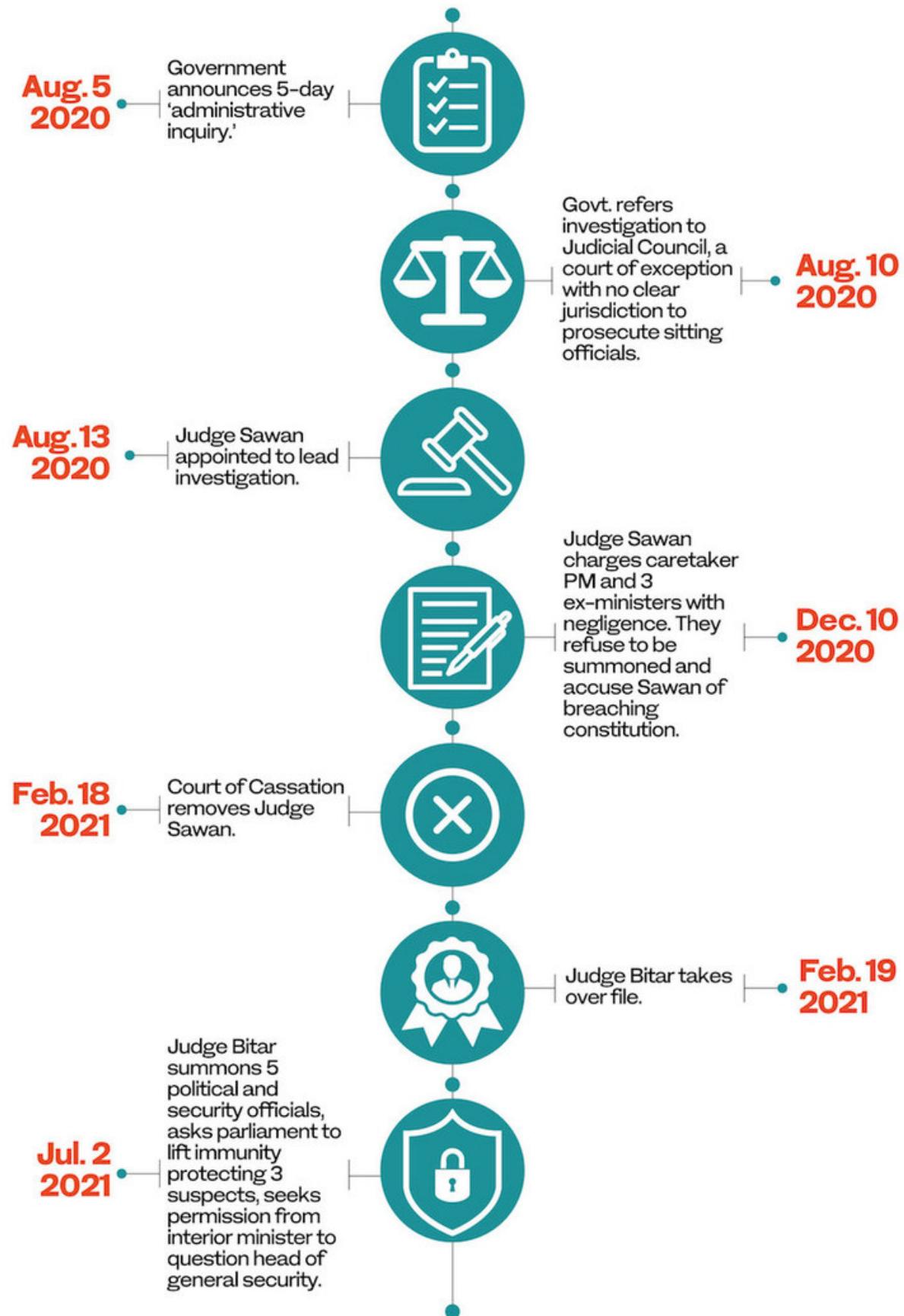
BEIRUT: A year after narrowly avoiding death, Hadi's heart still races when he hears sudden loud noises. The 27-year-old was lucky to survive when, on Aug. 4, 2020, a huge cache of ammonium nitrate ignited inside a warehouse at the Port of Beirut, close to his home in the Mar Mikhael neighborhood.

At least 217 people were killed, more than 6,500 injured, and at least 300,000 left homeless by the resultant blast, which devastated Lebanon's main port. It was equivalent to the force of 1.1 kilotons of TNT and caused damage to buildings up to 20 kilometers away.

Despite promising the victims and their families that justice would be swift, Lebanese authorities are yet to hold anyone accountable.

# BEIRUT BLAST INVESTIGATION

Lebanese officials accused of deliberately obstructing accountability for Aug. 4, 2020, explosion



"It was fight or flight after the explosion," Hadi, who declined to give his full name, told Arab News in advance of the first anniversary of the blast.

"I packed whatever I could find. In my mind this was the first bomb out of hundreds more to come – and if this was the first one, God knows what was coming."

After scrambling out of his apartment block with whatever he could carry, Hadi found the surrounding streets he knew so well were damaged beyond recognition.

"The sights I saw that day after leaving the building were absolutely petrifying," he said. "People lying on rugs, gushing blood. Some without arms, some without legs, scarred all over, as people were trying to help them. Cars in the middle of the road, destroyed, gasoline leaking on the streets. No one understood what was going on."

## **INNUMBERS**

- \* **300,000 – People left homeless.**
- \* **70,000 – Jobs lost after the explosion.**
- \* **163 – Schools destroyed.**
- \* **6 – Hospitals destroyed.**
- \* **0 – Number of people sentenced over blast.**

*Source: UN*

Thousands of Beirut residents share similar traumatic memories of a day that was the bloodiest and most devastating since the civil war. The explosion, which was so powerful it was felt in Cyprus, more than 200km away, was one of the biggest non-nuclear blasts in history.

The world was horrified by images and video footage on social media and news broadcasts that showed the scale of the damage caused by the shock wave that rocked the city, the destruction in the streets, and the dirty-pink mushroom cloud hanging over the city.

Among the youngest victims were two-year-old Isaac Oehlers and three-year-old Alexandra Naggear. But equally tragic is the number of lives the explosion continues to claim indirectly.

"We continue to hear about people losing their lives to suicide every day, and we continue to be overwhelmed with requests for psychological support, with an ongoing waiting list of 70 to 100 patients in our clinics every month," Mia Atoui, a clinical psychologist and co-founder of Embrace, a nonprofit organization dedicated to mental health, told Arab News.



A wounded man receives help outside a hospital following the explosion.  
(AFP/File Photo)

A year after the blast, Embrace's public helpline, called National Lifeline, is receiving more than 1,100 calls each month. Staff at its free clinic conduct more than 500 mental health consultations a month.

"It has indeed been a turbulent year," Atoui said. "There is a collective sense of depression and anxiety among every person you meet and talk to. People are down, worried, hopeless, helpless, despaired and unable to enjoy any of life's pleasures."

The aftermath of the Beirut explosion is just one of a multitude of overlapping crises blighting a country wracked by an ongoing economic crisis, mass unemployment, a fresh wave of coronavirus infections, and shortages of fuel and electricity – all of which is made worse by seemingly endless political paralysis.

Lebanon has been experiencing a socio-economic implosion since 2019. In the autumn of that year, nationwide protests erupted over rampant corruption among the political class that has ruled the country since the end of the civil war under a sectarian banner.



On August 4, 2021 Lebanon will mark the first anniversary of the devastating port blast that thundered through the city, levelling entire neighbourhoods, killing more than 200 people and wounding 6,500 others. (AFP/File Photo)

Public anger grew when an economic meltdown caused the nation's currency to lose 90 percent of its value and the banks held depositors' money hostage. Thousands of young people have fled abroad. Those who remain struggle to get by, often turning for help to a flourishing black market.

But the trauma caused by the port explosion and its aftermath has been compounded by the failure of the government to move forward with its investigation into the disaster.

"The lack of accountability is triggering on all fronts," Atoui said. "It not only leaves our wounds open, it reinforces the idea that our lives don't matter, that the lives of our loved ones we have lost don't matter and are of no value. It means that we cannot feel safe or secure again.

"It threatens our existence, both present and future, and there is nothing more painful, more distressing and more overwhelming to our quality of life than the sense of injustice and living in an unjust world where your rights are robbed."



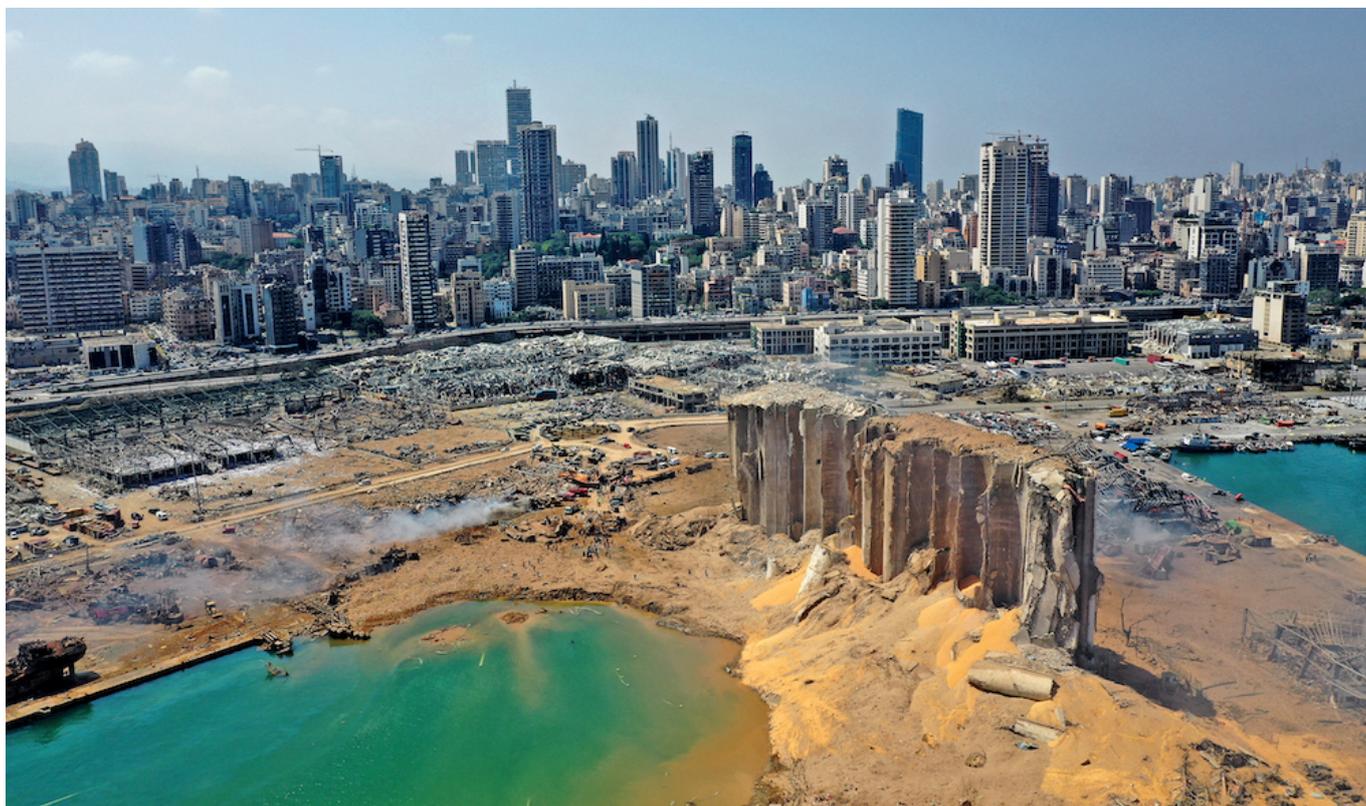
UGC footage filmed from an office building shows a fireball exploding while smoke is billowing during the chemical explosion at the port. (AFP/Mouafac Harb/Handout/File Photo)

The Lebanon Relief Network, a digital platform launched after the blast to help individuals affected by it to connect with trauma experts and therapists, considers the failure to deliver justice and accountability a recipe for long-term mental illness.

“The lack of accountability reduces trust in communities and has a significant negative effect on mental health. This is clearly exacerbated in times of crisis,” the network said in a statement to Arab News.

The FBI reportedly estimated that about 552 tons of ammonium nitrate exploded inside the Beirut port warehouse on August 4, much less than the 2,754 tons that arrived on a Russian-leased cargo ship in 2013. The Reuters news agency said the FBI report did not give any explanation for the discrepancy, or where the rest of the shipment might have gone.

Amnesty International, the international rights-advocacy group, has accused Lebanese authorities of “shamelessly obstructing victims’ quest for truth and justice” in the months since the blast, actively shielding officials from scrutiny and hampering the course of the investigation.



An aerial view shows the massive damage at Beirut port's grain silos and the area around it, one day after the explosion. (AFP/File Photo)

In February, Lebanese authorities dismissed the first judge appointed to lead the investigation after he summoned political figures for questioning. So far they have rejected requests by his replacement to lift the immunity granted to officials, and to question senior members of the security forces.

Leaked official documents indicate that Lebanese customs officials, military and security chiefs, and members of the judiciary warned successive governments about the danger posed by the stockpile of explosive chemicals at the port on at least 10 occasions during the six years it was stored at the port, yet no action was taken.

MPs and officials are clinging to their right to immunity, effectively shielding suspects whose actions are blamed for causing the explosion, and denying thousands of victims the justice they demand.

## **FASTFACTS**

**\* Victims of the blast have seen little accountability, despite promises that justice would be swift.**

**\* The blast killed more than 200 people, injured 6,500 and made at least 300,000 homeless.**

"Lebanese authorities promised a swift investigation; instead they have brazenly blocked and stalled justice at every turn, despite a tireless campaign for justice and criminal accountability by survivors and families of

victims,” said Lynn Maalouf, Amnesty International’s deputy director for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

“The Lebanese government tragically failed to protect the lives of its people, just as it has failed for so long to protect basic socioeconomic rights. In blocking the judge’s attempts to summon political officials, the authorities have struck yet another blow to the people of Lebanon. Given the scale of this tragedy, it is astounding to see how far the Lebanese authorities are prepared to go to shield themselves from scrutiny.”

According to a report this year by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Regional Program Political Dialogue and Regional Integration South Mediterranean, Lebanon ranks lowest in the MENA region in terms of public trust in the national government, parliament, prime minister, head of state and local government – all of which are rated below 28 percent.

In the absence of trusted government institutions, civil-society groups have been forced to step in to address the widespread mental trauma caused by the explosion, and to feed and provide new homes for people who lost everything.



Wounded people, just a few of the estimated 6,500 who were injured in the explosion, are pictured outside a hospital following the blast. (AFP/File Photo)

“People are asking for different kinds of support, but many right now have asked for support to deal with the trauma of the blast – many are seeking support for the first time, one year after the traumatic event,” Atoui said.

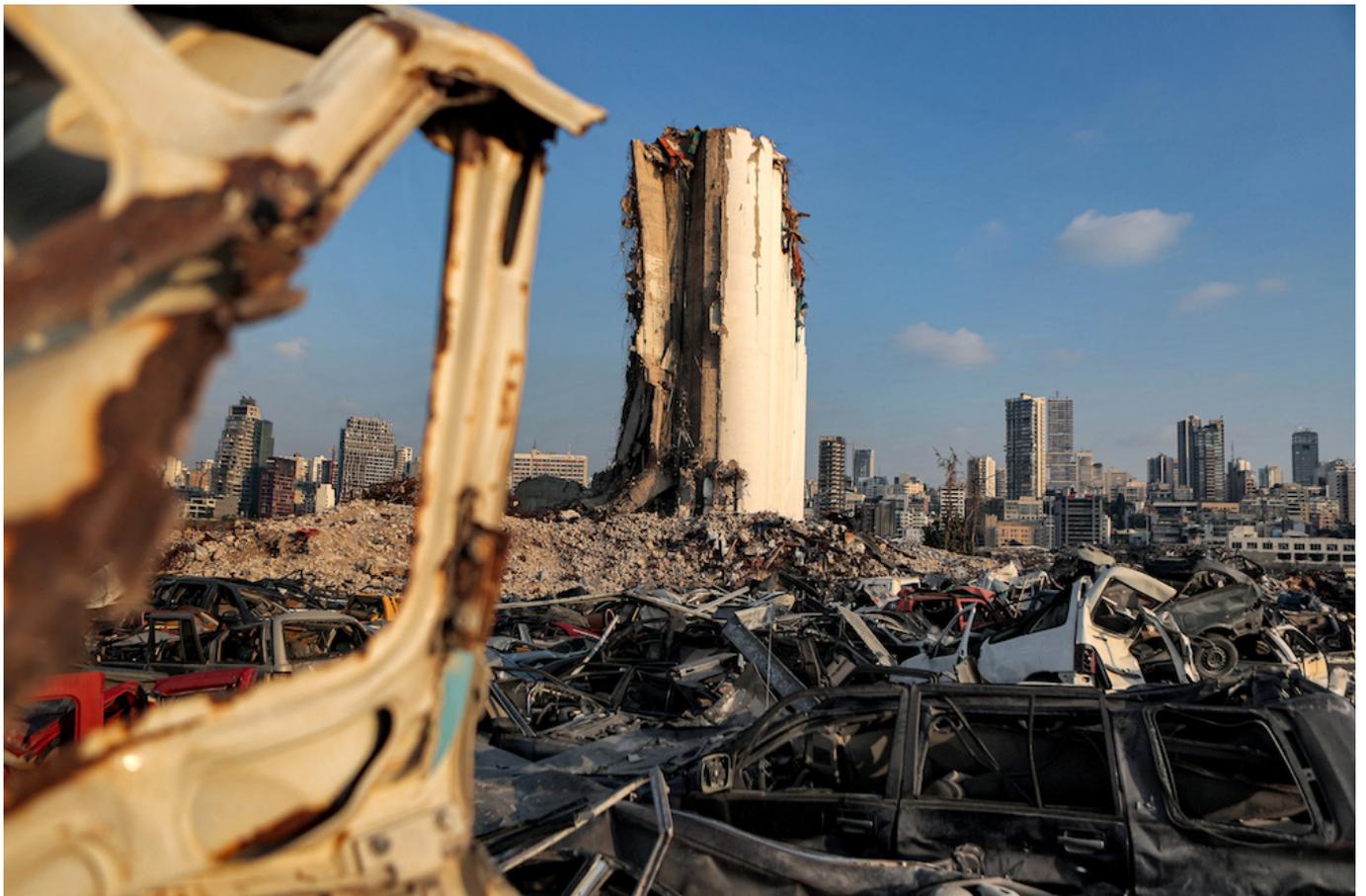
“This reinforces the fact that the long-term effects of the blast will

persist for many years and that the healing process is a long journey. Many people will need ongoing support.”

Hadi, the Beirut resident, said he returned to the Mar Mikhael neighborhood only once after the blast, to salvage what remained of his possessions. He now lives in a part of the city far away from the port and anything that could trigger him.

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*Twitter:* [@Tarek\\_AliAhmad](https://twitter.com/Tarek_AliAhmad)





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## [Morocco to extend night curfew to limit COVID-19 surge](#)

Author:

Mon, 2021-08-02 23:14

RABAT: Morocco will lengthen its night curfew, starting two hours earlier at 9 p.m. (2000 GMT) from Tuesday, as it tightens restrictions to counter a surge in coronavirus infections, the government said on Monday.

The business and tourist hubs of Casablanca, Agadir and Marakech will be closed except to holders of the vaccine pass or those on necessary travel, the government said in a statement.

The move is expected to hurt tourism business which pinned hopes on the summer season to attract national tourists after travel receipts dropped 70 percent in the first half this year.

Daily COVID-19 infections have oscillated between 4,000 and 9,000 over the past week as the total number of cases people rose to 569,452 cases, including 9,885 deaths.

However, Morocco has outpaced other African peers in its vaccine push, administering 24 million doses of the AstraZeneca and Sinopharm vaccines. Last week, the country started administering Johnson and Johnson doses after receiving a shipment of 300,000 jabs.



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## [Israel free to make decisions it deems appropriate on Iran: White House](#)

Mon, 2021-08-02 23:07

WASHINGTON D.C.: Israel was “free to make the decisions it deemed appropriate” on Iran after an attack on an Israeli-managed tanker off the coast of Oman last week which has been blamed on Tehran, a White House statement said on Monday.

The US, Britain and Israel have blamed Iran for the fatal attack on the Israeli-linked oil tanker. Iran denies involvement.

In Washington on Monday, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the US was “confident that Iran carried out this attack.”

He added that Iran’s steps posed a challenge and a threat in light of an unrestricted nuclear program.

Meanwhile, Israel’s defense minister also said Monday that Iran’s alleged attack on the ship was “a stepping-up of the escalation” of hostilities by Iran, and called for international action.

Benny Gantz addressed Israel’s parliament, the Knesset, and said the drone strike on the Mercer Street that left two crew members dead – one from the UK and one from Romania – was “in violation of international law and human morality.” He charged that Iran was behind at least five attacks on international shipping in the last year.

While no one has claimed responsibility for the attack, Iran and its militia allies have used so-called “suicide” drones in attacks previously. The region has seen a rise in attacks on commercial vessels in the aftermath of the disintegration of the Iran nuclear deal in 2018.

“This is exactly the reason why we must act now against Iran, which is not only striving toward nuclear arms, but is also bringing about a dangerous arms race and intends to destabilize the Middle East with terrorist militias who are armed with hundreds of drones in Iran, Yemen, Iraq and other countries in the region,” he said.

Gantz said that any future agreement between world powers and Iran to rein in its nuclear program must also address Iranian’s “aggression in the region and harming both innocent people and to the global economy.”

“This is not a future threat, rather a tangible and immediate danger,” he said.

Blinken said the US was in close contact with the UK, Israel and Romania and “there will be a collective response.” He did not elaborate on what that response might be.

“It follows a pattern of similar attacks by Iran, including past incidents with explosive drones,” he told reporters at the State Department. “There is no justification for this attack on a peaceful vessel on a commercial mission, international waters rise action is a direct threat to freedom of navigation and commerce, took the lives of innocent sailors.”

\* *With AP*



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Israel says it has evidence linking Iran to deadly tanker attack; Tehran denies

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## [Egypt, Algeria agree on 'full support' for Tunisian president](#)

Author:

Mon, 2021-08-02 22:03

CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi and Algerian Foreign Minister Ramtane Lamamra agreed to support embattled Tunisian leader Kais Saeid in a bid to maintain stability in the country.

The consensus was reached during a meeting in Cairo after the two sides

discussed recent developments in the nearby country.

As a result of the meeting, El-Sisi agreed with Lamamra to “fully support” President Saied.

The announcement came in an official statement following the talks.

Both sides agreed to implement the “will and choices” of the Tunisian people in order to preserve the security of the North African country.

El-Sisi also affirmed Egypt’s keenness to develop relations with Algeria in various fields and boost cooperation, construction and development between the two countries.

He also reiterated his firm stance over Egypt’s “historical rights to the Nile waters” and the country’s position on maintaining its water security.

El-Sisi urged the importance of engaging in the negotiation process to reach a comprehensive and legally binding agreement on the rules for filling and operating the Renaissance Dam, according to a statement from the official spokesman for the presidency.

The statement said that the meeting of El-Sisi and Lamamra also focused on developments of common concern, especially the situation in Libya.

The two parties discussed political and security coordination and the exchange of information in regard to combating terrorism and extremist ideologies, which pose a threat to the entire region.



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