

# Iran's Khamenei insists US sanctions must be lifted first

Author:

AFP

ID:

1616360664976501300

Sun, 2021-03-21 16:42

TEHRAN: Iran's supreme leader on Sunday reiterated the Islamic republic's "definite policy" that Washington must lift all sanctions before Tehran returns to its commitments under a 2015 nuclear deal.

"The country's policy regarding interaction with JCPOA parties and the JCPOA itself has been clear," Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said in a televised speech, referring to the accord by its official name, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

It "entails that the Americans must lift the sanctions, all the sanctions, and then we will verify and if they are truly lifted, then we will return to our JCPOA commitments."

Khamenei stressed that lifting sanctions "on paper is not acceptable" and had to be implemented "in practice."

The deal was meant to provide Iran with international sanctions relief in exchange for limitations on its controversial nuclear program.

But it has been on life-support ever since former US president Donald Trump withdrew from it in 2018 and reimposed sanctions as part of a "maximum pressure" campaign against Tehran.

Joe Biden, who defeated Trump at the ballot box in November, has signalled his readiness to revive the accord, but his administration insists Iran must first return to its nuclear commitments, most of which Tehran has suspended in response to US sanctions.

Tehran has insisted Washington make the first move by scrapping the sanctions.

"If they accept and implement the policy we have announced then everything will be fixed. And if they don't, things will continue as they are now, and it is not an issue," Khamenei said.

He also repeated Tehran's stand that "maximum pressure has failed" and warned if the Biden administration "wants to continue maximum pressure, they will fail as well."

On upcoming presidential and municipal elections, Khamenei said intelligence services of Iran's "enemies," mainly the US and Israel, had been trying to utilize social media to discourage voters and "reduce participation."

"They either accuse those holding it, (saying) the elections have been rigged or whatever, or they accuse the respected Guardian Council," a vetting body, he said.

"Or they discourage the people, saying: 'Your vote has no impact, it will not help improve the situation, (so) why bother?'"

Voters are on June 18 to elect a successor to President Hassan Rouhani, who is in his final four-year term.

Under Iranian law, candidates must be vetted by the powerful Guardian Council

watchdog before being allowed to run.

Voter turnout hit a historic low of less than 43 percent in 2020 parliamentary polls after thousands of reformist candidates were barred from running, leading to a conservative landslide.

Khamenei also said Iranian social media “must not be left to the enemy that they would conspire” against Iran, calling for them to be “managed.”

His warning comes after a report in Israeli media that a “No to Islamic Republic of Iran” campaign was gaining traction on social media.

The hashtags #NoVote and NoToIslamicRepublicOfIran have spread on Twitter, in both Farsi and English.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Ayatollah Ali Khamenei](#)

[Iran](#)

[JCPOA](#)

[Iran nuclear deal](#)

Iran threatens US Army base and top general: AP sources  
Twitter suspends Khamenei-linked account after posting Trump-like golfer ‘revenge’ image

---

# Turkey's COVID-19 deaths rise above 30,000, total cases top 3 million

Author:

Reuters

ID:

1616351746035624500

Sun, 2021-03-21 17:34

ISTANBUL: Turkey's COVID-19 death toll rose above 30,000 on Sunday, while the cumulative number of cases topped 3 million, weeks after the country started easing restrictions, health ministry data showed.

The country recorded 102 deaths in the past 24 hours, bringing the total to 30,061, according to the figures. It was the first time the daily tally has broken through the 100 mark since early February.

A total of 20,428 cases were recorded in the same period, raising the cumulative number of cases to 3,013,122.

Turkey began easing restrictions against the pandemic on a province-by-province basis in early March, at a time when the nationwide daily infection rate was below 10,000.

Cases have been rising in provinces across Turkey since then, but President Tayyip Erdogan said on Monday no new restrictions would be imposed for now. He said he hoped people would follow existing restrictions.

Authorities have blamed the rise in infections on the new variants of the coronavirus.

The daily average of cases per 100,000 people in Istanbul rose to 251.12 as of March 19, and to 107.99 in Ankara, according to the data.

Those numbers compared with 89.9 in Istanbul and 39.84 in Ankara, both on Feb. 26.

Turkey, with a population of 83 million, has administered about 13 million vaccine doses in a campaign that began in mid-January. Nearly 8.02 million people have received a first shot and nearly 5.05 million a second dose of the vaccine developed by China's Sinovac Biotech.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Coronavirus](#)

[Turkey](#)

Tourism to Turkey under threat due to rising coronavirus cases  
Anger over Turkish withdrawal from violence against women treaty

---

## [Israel takes Palestinian minister's VIP pass over ICC meeting: Palestinians](#)

Author:

Reuters

ID:

1616350322445496300

Sun, 2021-03-21 18:04

RAMALLAH: Israeli authorities confiscated the VIP border pass of Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad Al-Maliki upon his return to the West Bank from a meeting at the International Criminal Court, a Palestinian official said on



Sunday.

Ahmed Al-Deek, an official at Maliki's office, told Reuters the Israeli move was linked to Maliki's meeting with ICC lead prosecutor Fatou Bensouda at her office in The Hague on Thursday.

Israel's Walla news website cited unnamed Israeli officials who said Maliki's ICC visit was the reason for the revocation of his VIP card, an Israeli-granted pass that enables dozens of senior Palestinian officials to move freely through border crossings.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office declined to comment and the Israeli foreign ministry did not respond to a request for comment.

"This is the Foreign Minister of the State of Palestine. He doesn't represent himself. He represents the State of Palestine, and we regard this as an attack against the State of Palestine," said Deek.

He added that Israeli officers detained and questioned Maliki's aides for 90 minutes at the Israeli-operated border crossing between Jordan and the West Bank.

Deek said that the minister left the crossing without the card. It was not clear when it would be returned to him.

Bensouda announced this month she would formally investigate war crimes in the Palestinian Territories, a move welcomed by the Palestinian Authority and denounced by Israel.

On Friday, ICC prosecutors said they have sent Israel and the Palestinians notifications of the opening of a war crimes probe, a move that leaves the parties with one month to seek a deferral.

Maliki's office said on Thursday that he met with Bensouda to urge that the investigations be accelerated.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Palestinian](#)

[Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad Al-Maliki](#)

[ICC](#)

[Israel](#)

ICC prosecutor to open formal probe into war crimes in Palestinian Territories  
Israel and UAE rugby teams face off in sporting first after new ties

---

## [First Turkish air strikes on Kurdish zone in Syria in 17 months: monitor](#)

Author:

AFP

ID:

1616280859959369600

Sun, 2021-03-21 02:52

BEIRUT: A Turkish warplane on Saturday bombed a zone in northern Syria held by Kurdish militias, Ankara's first strike on the country in 17 months, a monitor said.

"A Turkish warplane targeted military positions of the Syrian Democratic Forces in the village of Saida on the outskirts of Ain Issa," the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

Turkey launched airstrikes and fired artillery against Kurdish fighters in northern Syria in October 2019 after then President Donald Trump pulled US troops back from the area, abandoning the Syrian Kurdish fighters, known as YPG, who have been America's only allies in Syria fighting the Daesh group.

Turkish President Recept Tayyip Erdogan has accused the YPG of being allies of rebels who have been seeking self-rule from Ankara.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[syrian kurds](#)

[Turkish aggression](#)

Crackdown on Turkey's pro-Kurdish party intensifies after dawn raids

---

## [Lebanese women mourn on Mother's Day amid currency crisis and political stalemate](#)

Author:

Zaynab Khojji

ID:

1616271744328571200

Sat, 2021-03-20 23:24

BEIRUT: Women took to the streets on Saturday afternoon on the eve of Mother's Day, despite warnings from doctors about the risk of the coronavirus spreading.

Mothers' anger at the current situation, which has prompted a generation of

young people to migrate, pushed dozens to protest.

A group of mothers gathered in the Bechara Al Khoury area in Beirut and went to downtown Beirut and to the port, site of the port blast seven months ago. They wore face masks and waved Lebanese flags and banners.

The mothers cried and shouted slogans, demanding that the politicians leave. The protests took place as dozens of flowerpots, wrapped in glossy colorful paper, were spread out in front of flower shops in Beirut and its suburbs on Saturday. Among their leaves were signs showing their price of 40,000 Lebanese pounds (\$26).

The front of bakeries and patisserie shops were filled with cakes, whose prices ranged from 50,000-150,000 Lebanese pounds.

Mother's Day on Sunday in Lebanon coincides with the beginning of spring. The Lebanese traditionally spend lavishly on gifts for their mothers or wives. But celebrating the occasion this year is different. Compared to the situation in previous years, there are hardly any customers in the clothing and perfume stores in the main shopping centers.

The prices, as Mrs. Samar said, "are extremely high for those who get their salary in Lebanese pounds. They can barely buy food and baby milk, if they can find them at all, so how can I buy a jacket for my mother whose price is twice my salary? Or how can buy her a bottle of perfume whose price is more than 1.5 million Lebanese pounds?"

The dollar continued its decline on Saturday, trading at between 10,100-11,000 Lebanese pounds.

The country is waiting for the outcome of the meeting between President Michel Aoun and Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri on Monday, but expectations are not high.

After meeting President Michel Aoun on Saturday, Lebanese Progressive Socialist Party Leader Walid Jumblatt, said: "We have reached absolute stalemate amid the economic collapse. Hunger is knocking on people's doors, and reconciliation has become necessary. God bears witness that I have told people (the reality of the situation)."

Legal money changers are also cautious.

Bilal Ghandour, an owner of a jewelry store in Beirut, said: "On Saturday, money changers refrained from selling dollars. They only bought dollars, fearing that the exchange rate of the dollar would rise on Monday after the meeting at the Republican Palace."

Ghandour described sales in his shop as "very light."

He said: "The price of a gram of 18-carat gold is \$42, which means 462,000 Lebanese pounds, as per the exchange rate on Saturday, and a small piece of gold must be more than five grams. The situation is very difficult."

"Those who have dollars can buy, but they only buy pieces whose prices do not exceed \$200-\$300."

In a statement, the Syndicate of Money Changers in Lebanon praised the decision of the Banque du Liban to launch its electronic platform and allow banks to trade in currencies similar to legitimate money changers.

The decline in the dollar's exchange rate did not lead to a decrease in the price of the commodities on the market.

"Everyone wants to compensate for their future losses," said Antoine, a shopkeeper in Furn El Chebbak.

Mohammed, who sells flowers and plants at Tayouneh Roundabout, said: "The price of the tulip plant this year is 30,000 Lebanese pounds, compared to its



price last year of 7,000 Lebanese pounds.

“The price of the cyclamen plant last year did not exceed 10,000 Lebanese pounds, and now it is 50,000 Lebanese pounds,” he said.

“We are not the ones raising the prices. People are tired. Their priorities have changed, and flowers have become a luxury.”

However, demand for cakes had not been affected, according to Ali, the manager of one of the patisserie stores in the Chiyah area, Ain el-Remmaneh. He said: “Although the prices of sweets intended for Mother’s Day have increased relatively, jumping from 50,000 to 95,000 Lebanese pounds, people are still buying. Perhaps because they are cheaper than clothes, perfumes, and gold, of course.”









Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Lebanon](#)

[Mother's Day](#)

[Protests](#)

Why Lebanon ran out of money and what it can do now Aoun and Hariri ease tensions but fail to solve Lebanon's political deadlock