

Israeli police prevent Dome of the Rock repairs

Author:

Mon, 2021-01-25 03:21

AMMAN: Israeli police have stopped workers from the Jerusalem Islamic Waqf from renovating the Dome of the Rock for two consecutive days, raising tensions in the old city.

Azzam Khatib, director of the Jordanian Waqf department in Jerusalem, informed Jordan's Ambassador in Tel Aviv Ghassan Majali and Minister of Waqf in Amman Mohammed Khalaileh of the news.

Israeli officials claim the decision was made after an individual tried to renovate the ceiling of the Bab Al-Rahmeh mosque, which Israel has demanded Muslims to vacate, without reason.

The Jerusalem Waqf Council is expected to issue a strong statement denouncing the Israeli action, calling it a violation of understandings.

Bassam Hallaq, the Waqf engineer in charge of the renovation, said that Israeli police stopped work on the gold-plated Dome of the Rock on Saturday and Sunday, and prevented urgent electric work, too.

Israel insists that any renovation or repair must be pre-approved. The renovation is not structural.

Arab News has learned that the Israeli actions on Saturday and Sunday followed the efforts of an unknown Palestinian whose face was covered, who climbed the roof of the Bab Al-Rahmeh mosque in order to apply cement to stop leaks.

Israel has forbidden any repair work on the mosque.

Hallaq said that all repair work in the entire Al-Aqsa compound has also been suspended by Israel.

The mosque's engineer insists that the Waqf has no cement materials inside the Al-Aqsa mosque compound and that Friday was a holiday when staff did not work.

Sheikh Omar Kisswani, director of Al-Aqsa Mosque, told reporters that repairs to the entire 144 dunum Haram Al-Sharif/Al-Aqsa mosque compound were the right of the Islamic Waqf and that the Israeli police have no right to interfere in their work.

A spokesman for the Israeli police told Arab News that the "subject isn't under the responsibility of the Israeli police."



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Dome of Rock](#)

[Palestine](#)

[Jerusalem](#)

Israel to ban incoming passenger flights to contain COVID-19 spread
US will work with Israel to build on regional normalization agreements: Biden adviser

[Egyptian revolution: A dream unfulfilled](#)

Mon, 2021-01-25 01:19

DUBAI: Abdel Latif El-Menawy had a unique perspective on the events of Jan. 25, 2011, and the tumultuous weeks that followed. As head of news at the state-owned Egyptian Radio and Television Union, he watched the revolutionary upheaval unfold from his newsroom in the Maspero television building on the Nile Corniche. Now, a decade on, El-Menawy looks back at Hosni Mubarak's fall from power and the events that led to this reckoning.

Most narratives of the Arab Spring begin the same way, over 2,000 miles west of Cairo in the Tunisian capital, Tunis, where, on Dec. 17, 2010, a poor street vendor named Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire after police confiscated his fruit cart. His anguished cry for justice set off a chain

reaction, drawing vast crowds onto the streets and forcing Tunisia's ruler of 23 years, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, to step down.

There is no doubt that Jan. 25 is an important chapter in Egypt's modern history, regardless of its results or the security and political turmoil that occurred after it in Egypt.

Abdel Latif El-Menawy

Bouazizi's sacrifice and the "Jasmine Revolution" it inspired were felt across the Middle East and North Africa, where swathes of the population had endured years of economic stagnation, mass unemployment and official corruption, coupled with limited personal freedoms and heavy-handed policing. Emulating the rage of Tunisians, crowds of young Egyptians spilled onto the streets on Jan. 25 to demand change. Tahrir Square in downtown Cairo became the symbolic center of the movement, where protesters camped out under the watchful eye of the world's media. Aggressive police tactics to quell the protests stoked anger further, culminating in calls for the removal of Mubarak.

"Egyptians like to give the impression that they are as calm as the waters on the surface of the Nile, the banks of which we have been living on since the dawn of civilization," Menawy wrote in his 2012 book "Tahrir, the last 18 days of Mubarak" – his account of those remarkable weeks.



“But if you look a little deeper into the water, you will see underneath a plethora of whirlpools and currents. The fatal error committed by former President Mubarak’s regime, and its predecessors, was that they never grasped the true essence of the Egyptians.”

Indeed, Menawy believes several opportunities were missed by the Mubarak government to address the public grievances that ultimately led to its demise. Looking back with a decade’s hindsight, the veteran journalist wonders whether history could have played out differently.

“I felt that there were changes that had taken place in Egypt, and these changes were not born on Jan. 25, but some time before that, as the political situation in Egypt was suffering from great fluidity as a result of mistakes



committed by the Mubarak regime,” Menawy told Arab News. “When the regime couldn’t take advantage of the opportunities to correct the situation, these opportunities were wasted. That is why it was natural for the streets to move to demand change.”

Egypt is the most populous country in the Arab world – home to almost 85 million people at the time of the revolution in 2011. Today the figure is closer to 104 million.

Poverty rates on the eve of the upheaval vary, with some studies estimating almost 40 million Egyptians – roughly half of the population – were living below the poverty line on less than

\$2 a day.

Despite an annual economic growth rate of 7.2 percent during the first decade of the new millennium, the proportion of the population below the poverty line increased from 17.8 percent to 23 percent, according to Egyptian Council of Ministers data in 2010.

TIMELINE

Jan. 25, 2011: Thousands of protesters gather in Cairo’s Tahrir Square.

Feb. 11: Mubarak steps down, transitional military council takes power.

March 19: Egyptians approve constitutional amendments, paving way for elections.

June 24, 2012: Muslim Brotherhood candidate Mohammed Morsi wins presidential election.

June 30, 2013: Egyptians begin days of protests demanding Morsi’s resignation.

July 3: Defense Minister Abdel Fattah El-Sisi announces Morsi’s removal.

Dec. 25: Muslim Brotherhood designated a terrorist organization.

May 28, 2014: El-Sisi wins presidential election.

Moreover, the gap was widening between rich and poor, with a small elite living in luxury while whole segments of society struggled with the spiraling cost of living. Petrol prices were rising and there were even cases of food shortages.

When the years of pent-up frustration found their expression in the Arab Spring, it was almost impossible to the genie back in its bottle. Menawy vividly recalls the moment at 5 a.m. on Jan. 28, 2011, when a republican guard officer walked into his office, flanked by two soldiers, to tell him the Maspero television building was now under military control.

Protesters, angered by the state media's coverage of events, had attempted to storm the television studio. Security forces would now decide who was allowed in or out of the building, as a countrywide crackdown got underway. Another moment seared into Menawy's memory came two weeks later, when Omar Suleiman, then-vice president and head of intelligence, entered the building on Feb. 11 to announce Mubarak's resignation.



"In the name of God the merciful, the compassionate," Suleiman told the nation in a short broadcast.

"Citizens, during these very difficult circumstances Egypt is going through, President Hosni Mubarak has decided to step down from the office of president of the republic and has charged the high council of the armed forces to administer the affairs of the country." A military council was formed to run the country's affairs.

There was jubilation in Tahrir Square, where young Egyptians felt their moment had finally come to create a fairer society. In reality, it was only the beginning of a fresh period of upheaval and uncertainty.

"There is no doubt that Jan. 25 is an important chapter in Egypt's modern history, regardless of its results or the security and political turmoil that occurred after it in Egypt," said Menawy.

"I think all parties are responsible for what happened. Everyone made mistakes. But it was a cornerstone of change in political life in Egypt. I think that we are still in the reform phase and there is no doubt that it will continue for a long time, because change is difficult."

The dreams hatched in Tahrir Square were not fulfilled by Mubarak's exit.

Instead, the country was rocked by new economic calamities and the rise to power of Mohamed Morsi – a leading figure of the now-outlawed Muslim Brotherhood.

“I think that Jan. 25 has not achieved any successes other than throwing a stone into the stagnant political life,” Menawy said.

“Among the failures is also the deterioration of the Egyptian economy after stability. The events also created a state of extreme violence in society, whether physical violence or even at the level of ideas.”

Libya, Syria and Yemen were also swept up in the tumult of the Arab Spring. But rather than emerging as renewed forces, these nations were thrown into a decade of civil wars, the outcomes of which remain undecided.

Tunisia, meanwhile, is “trying to rearrange society through elections,”

Menawy said. “Only Egypt corrected its path with the June 30 revolution.”

The “second Egyptian revolution” came in 2013, a year after Morsi’s inauguration. The resumption of street protests that summer saw Morsi forced from power and his Muslim Brotherhood designated as a terrorist organization. The following year, Morsi’s defense minister, Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, won the presidential election and was sworn into office.

Contemplating why the Egyptian revolution took the path that it did, Menawy says the country is fortunate to have a strong sense of national identity and solid institutions.

“Egypt is a big country. It has its roots in the history of human civilization. It has a diverse, yet harmonious society,” he said. “Egypt also has a strong and united national army, which may not be found in other countries that are full of sectarian, ethnic and tribal conflicts.”

As Egypt looks ahead to the coming decade, Menawy hopes the process of political, social and economic reform will continue in order to reflect the country’s competing visions of the future.

In his view, the most important lesson to take away from the Jan. 25 revolution is that “the majority of Egyptians love their country dearly, but everyone loves it in a different way.”

Twitter: @jumanaaltamimi



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Egyptian Revolution](#)

Arab Spring weakened many states, benefited Iran and Turkey, says Arab League secretaryPost revolution, Sudanese cinema struggles to find recognition at home

[**UAE confirms 3,579 new COVID-19 cases, 9 deaths**](#)

Author:

Mon, 2021-01-25 01:12

DUBAI: The UAE on Friday recorded 3,579 new confirmed cases of COVID-19 and nine more deaths related to the disease.

Officials from the Ministry of Health and Prevention (MoHaP) said the total number of cases in the country has reached 277,955, while the death toll stands at 792.

The ministry said that 4,166 patients have recovered from the virus in the previous 24 hours, bringing the total number of recoveries to 251,484.

Abu Dhabi's Department of Health said it had approved three faster types of testing to diagnose cases of COVID-19 in hospital emergency departments or urgent care centers.

They include a rapid 15 minute antigen test, an RT-LAMP test, and a saliva

test that can be used in children's health facilities when it is not possible to obtain a nasal swab.

.@DoHSocial has approved 3 new Covid-19 diagnostic tests to be used in ER departments & urgent care centres in #AbuDhabi emirate. The new tests which are based on the latest global scientific developments, provide faster results & support physicians to provide better patient care pic.twitter.com/Mmq6hT0lIa

– مكتب أبوظبي الإعلامي (@admediaoffice) [January 24, 2021](#)

Jamal Mohammed Al-Kaabi, the department's undersecretary, said the new tests have been approved based on the latest scientific developments in detecting the virus.

Currently, the PCR nasal swab test is available in 24 health centers and laboratories and eight drive-through centers throughout the emirate.

During daily inspection tours, officials from Dubai Economy said they closed down three businesses, including two gyms and a department store, and issued fines to 28 commercial establishments over failures to adhere to COVID-19 precautions.

Dubai Municipality announced it has intensified its inspection campaigns. It said five businesses were ordered to close, one was fined and warnings were issued to 26 for not complying with precautionary measures.

Elsewhere, Kuwait reported 384 new cases of COVID-19, raising the total in the country to 161,285. The death toll remained 952 after no additional deaths were reported in the previous 24 hours.

تعلن [#وزارة_الصحة](#) عن تأكيد إصابة 384 حالة جديدة، وتسجيل 507 حالة شفاء، ولم تسجل أي حالة وفاة جديدة بـ [#فيروس_كورونا_المستجد](#) COVID-19 ، ليصبح إجمالي عدد الحالات 161,285 حالة pic.twitter.com/lIrU6UDQtY

– وزارة الصحة - الكويت (@KUWAIT_MOH) [January 24, 2021](#)

Oman's Health Ministry said that its total number of cases had reached 133,044 and the death toll was 1,521.

[#Statement](#) No. 273

January 24, 2021 pic.twitter.com/5HcwxYrdNj

– وزارة الصحة - عُمان (@OmaniMOH) [January 24, 2021](#)

In Bahrain the death toll stands at 367 after no new deaths were reported. The number of confirmed cases in the country increased by 361.

Out of 11440 COVID-19 tests carried out on 24 January 2021, 361 new cases have been detected among 190 expatriate workers, 160 new cases are contacts of active cases, and 11 are travel related. There were 420 recoveries from [#COVID19](#), increasing total recoveries to 96532 pic.twitter.com/dSHvx8ZvYr

- مملكة البحرين | وزارة الصحة (@MOH_Bahrain) [January 24, 2021](#)



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[UAE](#)

[Ministry of Health and Prevention](#)

[COVID-19](#)

[Coronavirus](#)

Saudi Arabia announces lowest number of COVID-19 deaths since March Another record daily high as UAE confirms 3,552 new cases of COVID-19, 10 deaths

Lebanon's top Christian cleric lashes out at 'stubborn and destructive' officials

Author:

Sun, 2021-01-24 23:26

BEIRUT: Lebanon's top Christian cleric lashed out at "stubborn and destructive" officials on Sunday for blocking the formation of a new government.

Maronite Patriarch Bechara Boutros Al-Rai used his sermon to denounce those who were blocking the process, painting a grim picture of how Lebanon was struggling during the pandemic and a financial crisis.

Politicians have failed to agree on a new administration since the last one resigned after the devastating Aug. 4 explosion in Beirut. There has also been a sharp increase in tension between President Michel Aoun and Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri.

Al-Rai led mediation efforts to resolve the deadlock and complications, but failed in his endeavors.

The patriarch fumed at "the obduracy of the officials in Lebanon in their stubborn and destructive stances for the state as an entity and institutions."

"With what conscience, what justification, what kind of authority and right, and by whose mandate do you not form a government?" he demanded to know. "Why do you not form a government when the people are crying out from pain, starving from poverty and dying from disease?"

Hospitals were full of patients, he continued. Clinics and pharmacies lacked medicines, stores lacked food, and the monetary and economic crises had reached their climax.

"The economy is fading away, agricultural production is destroyed, people are standing at the doors of banks hopelessly begging for their money, the major military, financial and judicial state institutions are hit in their prestige, morale and officials due to programmed campaigns and malicious rumors."

Borders had no control, there was smuggling at the country's expense, sovereignty was incomplete, independence was suspended, corruption was rampant, and unemployment and poverty affected more than half of the population, he added. "The capital is afflicted, the port is destroyed, the wealth of oil and gas is seized and the country (has) entered the orbit of final collapse."

His anger followed an intense period of bickering between the country's

political factions about why a government was not being formed.

Aoun said the president had a constitutional right to approve the entire Cabinet formation before signing it off, while Hariri said the problem did not lie with him but “rather with the president who objects and says that he does not approve this or that name, but does not give an explanation for his objection.”

A statement on Saturday night from the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM), led by Aoun’s son-in-law MP Gebran Bassil, attacked Hariri.

“The time of foreign tutelage has ended and it is an illusion that some are trying to replace it with internal hegemony,” it said. “This means giving up attempts to seize the political rights of any Lebanese component.”

FPM MP Cesar Abi Khalil said that Aoun would not resign and that the FPM lawmakers had not named Hariri to head the government because they did not trust him with the task required at this stage.

Insults lit up social media, with lurid comments such as “Senile Aoun” and “Berri for theft and corruption,” a reference to Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri.

Former minister Nazem El-Khoury said that the patriarch had expressed the pain of all Lebanese people in his sermon.

He addressed the FPM, saying: “For those who claim to defend the rights of Christians, please do not be more Christian than the patriarch of the Maronites and the whole of Lebanon.”

The Lebanese daily Ad-Diyar reported on Sunday that a political and parliamentary official was concerned about “attempts to disrupt solutions in Lebanon as if there was a plot to bring down Lebanon.”

The official expressed fears that what was required was the “survival of the caretaker government headed by Hassan Diab until the end of the term.”

Diab formed his government last January to tackle the country’s worst economic crisis in decades. His administration came to office after his predecessor, Hariri, resigned in the face of mass protests.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Lebanon](#)

[Maronite Patriarch Bechara Boutros Al-Rai](#)

[Saad Hariri](#)

[Michel Aoun](#)

Hezbollah should have no role in Lebanon's future, says Bahaa Hariri, son of Rafik Hariri
Lebanon MPs accuse Aoun of 'acting as a party'

[Will Turkey's refugees be vaccinated against the coronavirus?](#)

Author:

Sun, 2021-01-24 23:35

ANKARA: While Turkey's COVID-19 vaccination program has been under way since Jan. 13, there has been no official declaration about whether refugees, registered or unregistered, will be immunized.

Turkey has so far received 3 million doses of vaccine and has vaccinated about 2 million citizens.

There is, however, uncertainty as to what extent the whole population will be inoculated in the shortest timeframe amid speculation that the number of vaccines available is insufficient.

The lack of any official declaration about the inclusion of migrants in the vaccination timeline may be to avoid any public backlash given negative public sentiment about Syrian refugees in Turkey.

However, experts draw attention to the responsibility of state authorities to protect members of this vulnerable group by allocating vaccines for them, not only for their own safety but also for the general health of the public.

There are about 4 million refugees registered in the country but it is difficult to estimate the number of unregistered migrants in Turkey. Last year, about 122,000 unregistered migrants were caught in Turkey, while this number was 454,000 in 2019. Hundreds of thousands more are believed to live in precarious conditions that make it impossible to follow hygiene measures to protect against the coronavirus, such as buying masks.

Metin Corabatir, former spokesman for the UN refugee agency UNHCR in Turkey and president of the Research Center on Asylum and Migration (IGAM) in Ankara, said that thousands of unregistered migrants continued to arrive in Turkey due to its long maritime and land borders with neighbors.

“Some nationals of countries with which Turkey signed visa exemption agreements over recent years also stayed in the country irregularly, including domestic workers, after their short-term visa expired,” he told Arab News.

Corabatir said that some EU countries had already begun projects to include refugees in their vaccination program to prevent a risk of contagion in the coming months.

“You cannot be sure whether the man who sits near to you in the bus is an irregular migrant or not. Therefore, an exhaustive vaccination program without discriminating against any vulnerable group is a must,” he said.

Refugees in Turkey, who live close to or below the poverty line, have been hard hit by the pandemic.

Working mostly in the informal sector without any social security, they have always been vulnerable to economic shocks. Lockdown practices, restrictions of movement and the acute economic difficulties of some sectors have added to their difficulties.

Omar Kadkoy, a migration policy analyst at the Ankara-based think tank TEPAV, thinks that not vaccinating migrants in Turkey is counterproductive in curbing the spread of the virus.

“The virus does not discriminate based on nationality or based on legal status. Everybody is at risk of contracting the virus and everybody has the potential to spread COVID-19,” he told Arab News.

For Kadkoy, it is no surprise that registered and unregistered refugees have not been included in the vaccination process.

“Refugees must be included in the government’s designated groups of priority. For the unregistered, it already means exclusion from accessing the basic right of health services,” he said.

For the time being, Kadkoy said, the government should issue temporary IDs so that anybody who is undocumented becomes eligible for vaccination.

“Thereafter, the given IDs could be used to process claims for complete documentation. In doing so, Turkey would stand at an equal distance from birth rights and human rights,” he said.

More than 3,400 health care service staff are employed in 177 migrant health centers, putting extra emphasis on the danger of exposure of migrants to the contagion.

Access to health care services also appears to be a serious barrier for migrants during the pandemic.

“Hospitals in Turkey have to accept migrants under emergency situations. But unregistered migrants know very well that after their treatment the hospital authorities will inform the officials about their access to the health care services. Therefore, they will quickly be taken to the deportation centers,” Corabatir said.

Experts warn that by not including migrants in the vaccination program there is a serious risk that they will not go to hospitals, even after they have contracted the coronavirus.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Turkey](#)

[Coronavirus](#)

[anti-coronavirus vaccine](#)

Russia's RDIF signs vaccine production deal with Turkey
Erdogan: 10 million CoronaVac doses could reach Turkey by weekend