

# Egypt suspends medical staff vacations as virus cases surge

Author:

Tue, 2020-12-22 21:19

CAIRO: The Egyptian Ministry of Health and Population has suspended vacations for medical staff in hospitals and health units in an effort to step up its anti-coronavirus campaign.

An official source told Egyptian media that the ministry will stop granting or renewing vacations to doctors, nursing staff, technicians, administrators and health sector workers as part of a plan to confront the second virus wave.

The source added that the ministry will also end non-compulsory vacations, including travel abroad.

On Monday evening, Egypt recorded its highest rate of coronavirus cases and deaths during the second wave, with 718 new cases and 32 deaths.

Hossam Hosni, head of Egypt's coronavirus committee in the Ministry of Health and Population, said that Egypt is facing three strains of coronavirus, one of which is weak, meaning that rumors of dangerous new strains of the virus entering the country are false.

Hosni said that Egypt will forbid entry to anyone entering the country from abroad until negative tests are returned.

Egyptian media reported that about 30 hospitals have been rehabilitated in Cairo to isolate coronavirus patients.

A source said that although coronavirus cases are increasing, the surge in specially designed facilities means Egypt is prepared against a second wave.

"We wish people to abide by the precautionary measures, as the virus spreads faster and most of the infected people do not show symptoms, and the precautionary measures are a lifeline at this stage," the source said.

Minister of Health Hala Zayed held a meeting on Sunday evening with several major medical oxygen companies to discuss ways to provide strategic stocks of medical gas in all Egyptian governorate hospitals.



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Egypt cancels New Year's Eve celebrations due to coronavirus  
Egypt ministry halves workforce to curb virus surge

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## [Daughter of British-Iranian political prisoner sends plea to UK PM](#)

Tue, 2020-12-22 20:09

LONDON: The 6-year-old daughter of one of Iran's most high-profile political prisoners has written a card to British Prime Minister Boris Johnson asking him to bring home her mother Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe in time for Christmas.

Zaghari-Ratcliffe, who turns 42 on Saturday, is expected to spend her fifth Christmas away from her family, having been imprisoned since 2016 on highly contentious allegations of espionage and an attempt to overthrow the Iranian regime.

In the card to the prime minister, her daughter said: "Dear Boris Johnson,

please can you bring my mummy home for Christmas. She has been good. When she comes back I want to cuddle her first and then go to the toy shop with her. Merry Christmas to you and your family. Love Gabriella.”

Zaghari-Ratcliffe’s family has been campaigning for her release non-stop since her imprisonment.

Measures to draw attention to the case have included a joint hunger strike between her and her husband Richard, who camped outside the Iranian Embassy in London.

Zaghari-Ratcliffe was given a temporary release from the notorious Evin Prison in March because of the coronavirus pandemic, which Tehran struggled to contain.

She is now back under house arrest at her parents’ home in Tehran. No date has been set for her next court hearing.



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# Gunman fires at Israeli officers in Jerusalem's Old City, is shot dead

Author:

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ID:

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Mon, 2020-12-21 18:53

JERUSALEM: A gunman opened fire on Israeli police in Jerusalem's Old City on Monday, before being chased down by officers who shot him dead, police said. "The suspect reached Huta gate (near the Al-Aqsa mosque compound) and shot at the police position with an (assault) rifle," a police statement said. "The officers went in pursuit after the terrorist while shooting at him," the statement added, with a spokesman confirming to AFP the suspect had been killed.

One police officer was lightly wounded when he fell during the chase, the statement said.

The police spokesman could not provide details on the assailant's identity. Similar past attacks have been carried out by Palestinians from Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem and the occupied West Bank, as well as by Arab Israelis.

From October 2015, Israel and the West Bank saw a wave of "lone wolf" attacks on Israelis by predominantly young, knife-wielding Palestinians.

Car-ramming attacks were also used, and more rarely, firearms. The attacks have become less frequent but have not stopped altogether.

Israel annexed east Jerusalem, which includes the Old City, following the 1967 Six-Day War, in a move not recognized by most of the international community.



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## [\*\*UAE records 1,077 new COVID-19 cases, 2 deaths\*\*](#)

Author:

Mon, 2020-12-21 22:37

DUBAI: The UAE on Monday recorded 1,077 new cases of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and two related deaths.

Officials from the country's Ministry of Health and Prevention said the total number of cases since the pandemic began had reached 194,652, with the death toll now running at 639.

It was also announced that over the previous 24-hour period, 845 people had recovered after contracting the virus, taking the total number of recoveries to 169,840.

During daily inspection tours, Dubai Economy issued a warning to one establishment for not adhering to anti-COVID-19 measures, but 421 other businesses inspected were found to be compliant.

Etihad Airways said that it would require all passengers arriving from the UK

to provide a negative polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test taken within 72 hours of their departure time, following an announcement from the UAE's National Emergency Crisis and Disasters Management Authority. "Etihad is the only airline in the world requiring 100 percent of its passengers to show a negative PCR test before traveling and again on arrival into Abu Dhabi, ensuring peace of mind for all on board," Abu Dhabi's national carrier said in a statement on its website. Meanwhile, the UAE was ranked among the top countries in world for its efficiency in dealing with the repercussions of the COVID-19 epidemic and the speed of its recovery phase. According to a recent Global Soft Power Index questionnaire issued by UK-based Brand Finance, the Emirates ranked first in the Middle East and 14th globally in dealing with the virus outbreak. Elsewhere, Kuwait recorded 230 new COVID-19 cases, upping the total for the country to 148,209, with the death toll reaching 922 after one new fatality was registered.

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Oman's Health Ministry confirmed 264 new cases and one death, moving the totals to 127,931 and 1,489, respectively.

[#Statement](#) No. 249  
December 21, 2020 [pic.twitter.com/Tugn5eValo](https://pic.twitter.com/Tugn5eValo)

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## [Iraq's cabinet approves 2021 draft budget of \\$103 bln](#)

Mon, 2020-12-21 21:11

BAGHDAD: Iraq's cabinet on Monday approved a 2021 draft budget of 150 trillion Iraqi dinars (\$103 billion) as the country wrestles with a major economic and financial crisis due to low crude prices. The budget deficit would be estimated at 63 trillion dinars (\$43 billion), two government sources said.

Draft 2021 budget is based on a world oil price of \$42 a barrel, sources said.

(\$1 = 1.450 Iraqi dinars)



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