

Egyptian authorities confirm second wave of COVID-19

Tue, 2020-11-24 01:28

CAIRO: Egypt's Minister of Health and Population Hala Zayed on Monday confirmed that the country is experiencing the start of a second wave of coronavirus infections.

The official confirmation came during her meeting with Bahaa El-Din Zidan, the head of the Unified Medical Procurement Authority, and Tamer Essam, head of the Egyptian Drug Authority, to discuss the availability of drugs and medical supplies required to treat infected patients. Essam said the authority is prepared to meet the increasing demand for COVID-19 treatments.

Khaled Mujahid, an adviser to the minister of health and population for media affairs, said that the participants in the meeting reviewed the inventory of medicines and other medical equipment.

"The minister emphasized the importance of providing medicines and medical supplies that Egypt (distributes) to various countries to support them in facing crises, in accordance with the directives of the political leadership," he added.

Mujahid said the minister also discussed ways to address online sales of medications, which can put people's health at risk. The public was urged only to obtain drugs and medical supplies from pharmacies or official healthcare providers.

Egyptian Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly has ordered ongoing assessments of the readiness of hospitals across the country to receive coronavirus patients, and the availability of the drugs and equipment needed to treat them.

Ahmed El-Ezaby, chairman of Pharmaceutical Industry Chamber, said all medicines are available as usual in pharmacies and there have been no complaints of any shortages. Manufacturers have altered production schedules to meet current demands and have built up enough inventory of completed items, or the ingredients to make them, to last for between six and nine months, he added.

The Egyptian Ministry of Health on Sunday announced 351 new confirmed cases of infection and 13 additional deaths. The total number of coronavirus cases in the country stands at 113,027. Of those, 101,881 patients have recovered and 6,548 died. The remaining cases remain active.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Egypt](#)

[Coroanvirus](#)

Egypt joins major Arab military training exercise with KSA, UAE
Egypt sets shop opening hours as second coronavirus wave approaches

[Turkey blasts 'unauthorized' German search of Libya-bound ship](#)

Author:

AFP

ID:

1606152616860338900

Mon, 2020-11-23 17:25

ISTANBUL: Turkey accused the German navy on Monday of conducting an "unauthorized" search on a Turkish-flagged cargo vessel in a bid to enforce a United Nations arms embargo on Libya.

But the European Union's Operation Irini – tasked with halting arms shipments to the strife-torn north African country – said it had made a "good faith" effort to get Turkey's consent for the inspection and aborted it as soon as Ankara made its objections clear.

The Turkish foreign ministry said Germany's Hamburg frigate stopped and

searched the Roseline A commercial vessel without permission on Sunday evening off the coast of Greece's Peloponnese peninsula.

Footage filmed by the vessel's crew and aired repeatedly on Turkish television showed a quarrel between crew members and armed German soldiers who landed on the ship from a helicopter.

The Turkish foreign ministry said the vessel was carrying paint and humanitarian supplies headed to the Libyan port of Misrata.

"This intervention was carried out with the consent of neither our country as the flag state nor the ship's captain," the Turkish ministry said.

"I am strongly condemning this unlawful intervention," Turkish Vice President Fuat Oktay added.

Ankara on Monday summoned the EU and Italian ambassadors as well as the German embassy's charge d'affaires to the foreign ministry, conveying a diplomatic note protesting the "unauthorized" inspection, the foreign ministry said.

The action was "against international law," the ministry said in the note, adding that Turkey reserved its right to compensation.

But both the operation's European command and officials in Berlin said Turkey raised its objections only after the German soldiers had boarded the vessel.

"Everything went exactly according to protocol," a German foreign ministry spokeswoman said.

Operation Irini said in statement that it had "made good faith efforts to seek (Turkey's) consent."

"When (Turkey) made it clear that it denied the permission to inspect the vessel, Operation Irini suspended the activities during which no evidence of illicit material was found," it said.

Operation Irini's official website says the mission reserves the right to board ships without permission when conducting so-called "friendly approaches."

Libya has endured almost a decade of violence since the 2011 NATO-backed uprising that toppled and killed dictator Muammar Qaddafi.

Turkey backs the UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) in western Libya and views the EU mission as biased in favor of the eastern command – backed by the United Arab Emirates as well as Russia and France.

The warring sides agreed a cease-fire deal last month that paves the way for national elections on December 24.

But the process remains fragile and four EU powers involved in efforts to end the conflict issued a joint statement Monday threatening sanctions against "all Libyan and international parties" standing in the way of peace.

Operation Irini said the aborted inspection of the Turkish vessel was the fifth since the mission was officially launched on March 31.

Turkey last sparred with EU powers over inspections when a French frigate under NATO command sought in June to search a Tanzanian-flagged cargo ship. Paris then complained that one of its ships was subjected to radar targeting by Turkish frigates while trying to inspect the cargo.

Ankara denied the charge.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Turkey](#)

[Germany](#)

[Libya](#)

[Operation Irini](#)

German frigate and 250 soldiers join EU mission to enforce Libya arms embargo
Libya's rivals meet to discuss transitional government

[Iraq in mourning after deadly new Daesh attack north of Baghdad](#)

Mon, 2020-11-23 00:31

SAMARRA/IRAQ: Iraq's Salahaddin province declared three days of mourning from Sunday over a deadly attack blamed on Daesh, as some criticized authorities for failing to fight back militants.

Late Saturday, a roadside bomb hit a civilian car on an open road near Mt. Makhoul, about 200 km north of Baghdad, police and a local official said. When security forces arrived at the scene, militants opened fire on them, police said.

The attack killed at least six Iraqi security personnel and four civilians, including one who died of his wounds overnight, according to local medics. There was no claim by Daesh, but both the local mayor and police blamed the group, which Iraq's government said in late 2017 it had defeated.

That victory came after three years of brutal fighting to wrench back the one-third of Iraqi territory that had been captured by Daesh.

Although the militants no longer hold territory, sleeper cells wage hit-and-run attacks on state infrastructure, particularly in desert areas north of the capital.

Two weeks ago, 11 people were killed in a Daesh attack on a lookout post at Al-Radwaniyah on Baghdad's outskirts.

According to a study published this month by the International Center for Counter-Terrorism in the Hague, the extremist group has claimed more attacks in Iraq than in any other country where it is active over the period December 2018 to May this year.

The study said that Daesh activity in Iraq "accelerated precipitously from February 2020 onwards," reaching levels that are "worryingly close" to those preceding its sweep across a third of Iraq in 2014. Still, death tolls remain low. Daesh in Iraq "generally appears to be moving from a (re) building phase into one that is characterised by brazen guerrilla-style attacks," the study noted.

The attacks have coincided with a new campaign by Iraq's security forces to arrest jihadists hiding out in rugged terrain in the country's north and west.

In fact, just a day before the attack, the head of Iraq's federal police Jaafar Al-Batat told state media that the area around Mt. Makhoul had been cleared.

"The incidents carried out by IS (Daesh) in some remote areas are isolated cases and now under control," he said.

That outraged local figures. "Iraqi security forces just assured us this area had been cleaned," wrote Mashaan Al-Jaboury, a lawmaker representing Salahaddin, on Twitter after the violence late on Saturday.

FASTFACT

The extremist group has claimed more attacks in Iraq than in any other country where it is active over the period December 2018 to May this year, according to a study published this month by the International Center for Counter-Terrorism in The Hague.

For Jamal Al-Dhari, another Sunni figure writing on Twitter, the latest ambush "sheds light on the repeated failures in the fight against terrorism." "The government of (Prime Minister) Mustafa Al-Kadhemi must seriously put in place a national strategy ... and stop being satisfied with 'investigative committees,'" said Dhari.

Iraqis regularly mock their government for establishing investigative bodies that do not produce results.

The tensions come as the US-led coalition, which helped Iraq fight Daesh starting in 2014, is drawing down its troops.

This year, the US has already shrunk its contribution to the coalition from 5,200 to some 3,000 troops, as other countries have reduced their numbers as well.

The US announced last week it would withdraw another 500 troops by mid-January, which Iraqi officials say is the fourth and final phase of the coalition's drawdown.

The top US commander for the Middle East, Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, said the progress made by Iraqi security forces in recent years had allowed the US to draw down.

Troops remaining in Iraq would focus on training local forces, carrying out air strikes in support of their operations and running drone surveillance over the country.

The US military presence remains a source of controversy.

Iraq's parliament voted in January to oust all foreign troops, following a US drone strike on Baghdad that killed top Iranian general Qassem Soleimani and a leading Iraqi paramilitary commander.

Al-Kadhemi, whose government is seen as US-leaning, has slow-walked the implementation.

Pro-Iran factions have organized a series of rallies in recent months to demand Al-Kadhemi implement the decision.

"If you don't leave on your own, our rockets will force you out!" one sign at a recent protest read.

It was in reference to dozens of rocket attacks on Western diplomatic and military installations since October 2019.

The US has threatened to close its embassy in Baghdad unless rocket attacks stop.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Iraq](#)

Iraq to re-issue entry visas for tourists to bolster coronavirus-hit economy
Iran vows to crush any Israeli attempt to hit its 'advisory' role in Syria

[Palestinians may limit Christmas celebrations in Bethlehem](#)

Author:

Sun, 2020-11-22 23:55

RAMALLAH: The Palestinian Health Ministry has recommended strict limits on Christmas celebrations in Bethlehem this year due to the coronavirus outbreak.

Celebrations in the biblical town revered by Christians as Jesus' birthplace are usually attended by thousands of people from around the world.

But this year, the ministry has recommended the upcoming Christmas tree lighting ceremony in Manger Square be limited to 50 people, with the lights of the tree and area restaurants closed at 9 p.m. throughout the Christmas season. In its recommendations Saturday, it said religious services on Christmas Eve should also have limited attendance.

Bethlehem's economy, filled with hotels, gift shops and restaurants, relies heavily on the Christmas season. The cancelation or scaling back of the celebrations will deal another blow to an economy that already has been hit hard by the coronavirus crisis this year.

Palestinian officials are expected to make a final decision on Christmas celebrations in the coming days. Israel's international airport – the main entry point for foreign travelers – has been closed to tourists for months, limiting the potential numbers of pilgrims in any case.

The West Bank is in the midst of a spike in coronavirus cases, while Israel is only slowly emerging from a lockdown imposed in September to control a raging outbreak. The northern Israeli town of Nazareth, revered by Christians as the place of Jesus' childhood, has been designated a "restricted" zone by authorities, limiting movement in and out of the area for at least the next few days.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Bethlehem](#)

[Palestine](#)

[Christmas](#)

[Nazareth](#)

[Jesus](#)

[Religious Tourism](#)

Oxford scientists expect COVID-19 vaccine data by ChristmasThe long journey of Palestinian director Ameen Nayfeh's '200 Meters'

[Egypt sets shop opening hours as second wave approaches](#)

Author:

Mon, 2020-11-23 00:20

CAIRO: In preparation for the expected second wave of the coronavirus (COVID-19), the Egyptian government has announced new opening hours for shops, restaurants, cafes, and workshops and handicrafts shops. The changes will come into effect from Dec. 1.

The government said that the new times were part of its continued efforts to achieve stability, prevent chaos, maintain the state's infrastructure, preserve the people's health and safety and reduce the spread of the coronavirus.

Minister of Local Development General Mahmoud Shaarawy spoke of the many benefits of this ruling, which was approved by the Supreme Committee for Public Shop Licensing, including saving energy, regulating working hours, allowing local authorities to remove garbage and keep Egyptian streets clean across the country.

General Shaarawy said that shops and malls, excluding restaurants, cafes, and bazaars, will open at 7:00 a.m. and close at 11:00 p.m. daily during the summer, and at 10:00 p.m. in winter. He said that they will close at midnight in summer and 11:00 p.m. in winter on Thursdays and Fridays, as well as on official holidays.

Restaurants, cafes, and bazaars, including those in shopping malls, will open at 5:00 a.m. and close at 1:00 a.m. in summer and midnight in winter. He added that during winter times will be extended on Thursdays and Fridays, as well as on official holidays, so these establishments will close at 1:00 a.m. He said that home delivery services of cafes and restaurants will be available 24 hours all year round.

The minister said that the opening hours for workshops and handicrafts shops in populated areas will be daily from 8:00 a.m. till 7:00 p.m. in summer, and from 6:00 a.m. in winter. He underlined that these hours exclude service establishments such as gas stations, which will be covered by a regulation to be issued by the chairman of the Supreme Committee for Public Shop Licensing. The opening hours for workshops and handicrafts shops inside populated areas may be amended if needed.

Coronavirus cases have surged again in Egypt following a decline during the summer.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Coronavirus](#)

UAE reports 1,205 new COVID-19 cases, 4 deathsPompeo: Other Arab countries will normalize relations with Israel