

[UAE reports 1,205 new COVID-19 cases, 4 deaths](#)

Author:

Sun, 2020-11-22 23:11

DUBAI: The UAE on Sunday recorded 1,205 new coronavirus cases and four deaths.

The Ministry of Health and Prevention said the total number of cases in the country since the pandemic began has reached 158,990, with the death toll now at 552.

The ministry added that 791 people recovered over the previous 24 hours, bringing the total number of recoveries to 148,871.

The emergency, crisis and disaster management committee in the emirate of Fujairah announced that it will ban all types of camping, including caravans, as part of coronavirus precautionary measures.

The decision, announced by Maj. Gen. Mohamed Ahmad bin Ghanem Al-Kaabi, commander in chief of Fujairah Police, comes as the emirate begins its camping season and as the hot summer weather begins to cool down.

As part of daily inspection tours, Dubai Economy shut down a gaming center located on Sheikh Zayed Road for violating anti-COVID-19 measures on Saturday.

Elsewhere, Kuwait recorded 322 new COVID-19 cases, bringing the total to 140,056. The death toll reached 866 after three new fatalities were registered.

Oman's Health Ministry said the country's total number of cases had reached 122,081 and the death toll was 1,380.



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Saudi Arabia announces 19 more COVID-19 deathsUAE confirms 1,269 new COVID-19 cases, 3 deaths

[COVID-19 cases soar to record levels in Turkey](#)

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By Associated Press

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Sun, 2020-11-22 17:26

ANKARA: Turkey saw a record number of people diagnosed with COVID-19 for the second day running on Sunday as 6,017 new symptomatic patients were documented, the health ministry said.

The number of new daily cases has surpassed the outbreak's previous peak in April.

Evening lockdowns were introduced over the weekend for the first time since June, with businesses such as restaurants and bars ordered to close.

The ministry said 446,882 patients with symptoms have been identified since the country's first recorded case in March. Turkey does not publicly report confirmed coronavirus cases in people without COVID-19 symptoms, a policy that has been criticized for masking the true scope of the national outbreak. Turkey recorded 139 COVID-19 deaths over the previous 24 hours, taking the country's total to 12,358, the health ministry reported.



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Turkey's daily COVID-19 deaths hit a record high of 141
Pompeo in Turkey for fraught visit with no official talks

[Ethiopia pushes toward Tigray capital, rebuffs African mediation](#)

Sat, 2020-11-21 23:50

ADDIS ABABA: The Ethiopian government said on Saturday its forces had seized another town in their advance on the rebel-held capital of northern Tigray region, and rebuffed an African diplomatic push to mediate.

More than two weeks into Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's offensive, his government said Tigrayan forces were digging in and using bulldozers to plow up roads around the regional capital Mekelle, home to about half-a-million people.

Hundreds, possibly thousands, have died and more than 30,000 refugees have

fled to Sudan. The conflict has spread beyond Tigray, whose forces have fired rockets at the neighboring Amhara region and the nation of Eritrea, spurring concern of a wider war and the splintering of multi-ethnic Ethiopia. Abiy's government has said it will soon reach Mekelle after taking various surrounding towns. On Saturday, it said Adigrat had also fallen, about 116 km north of Mekelle.

The Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) rebels said nine civilians had died in artillery hits on Adigrat where it accused Eritrea of backing the Ethiopian army.

The army of Abiy and Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki "inflicted heavy casualties on innocent civilians in Adigrat," the TPLF's communications bureau said in a statement on Facebook.

The government and military could not immediately be reached for comment, but have previously repeatedly denied targeting civilians, saying they strike only TPLF targets.

Assertions on all sides are hard to verify because phone lines and internet have been down since the beginning of the conflict on Nov. 4 and media are largely barred.

FASTFACT

The conflict has spread beyond Tigray, whose forces have fired rockets at the neighboring Amhara region and the nation of Eritrea, spurring concern of a wider war and the splintering of multi-ethnic Ethiopia.

Eritrea denies TPLF allegations of sending soldiers over the border to back Abiy's offensive against the Tigrayan forces, who are also an old foe of Eritrea's.

Refugees and rights group Amnesty International have also recounted civilian deaths, though Reuters has been unable to verify those reports.

The African Union bloc has appointed former presidents Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia and Kgalema Motlanthe of South Africa as special envoys to seek a cease-fire and mediation talks.

Abiy, who won the Nobel Peace Prize last year for a peace pact with Eritrea, has said he wants to remove the TPLF leaders before talking.

"News circulating that the envoys will be traveling to Ethiopia to mediate between the Federal Government and TPLF's criminal element is fake," the government tweeted on Saturday.

Abiy accuses the Tigrayan leaders of revolting against central authority and attacking federal troops in the town of Dansha. The rebel leaders say Abiy's government has marginalized and persecuted Tigrayans since taking office two years ago.

Abiy denies that, saying he is seeking only to restore law and order and preserve the unity of Ethiopia and its 115 million people.

The UN and other aid agencies have said the conflict is creating a humanitarian crisis in Tigray, where many among the more than 5 million population were already displaced and relying on food aid even before the conflict.

Satellite images given to Reuters by US-based space company Maxar

Technologies showed destroyed buildings lining the main road near the airport in Dansha, where the conflict broke out.

The TPLF is popular in its home region and dominated national politics from 1991 until Abiy took office. Abiy's parents are from the larger Oromo and Amhara ethnic groups.

"We will do all that is necessary to ensure stability prevails in the Tigray region and that our citizens are free from harm and want," the prime minister tweeted on Saturday.



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Sudan boycotts faltering talks over Ethiopia's mega-dam
Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam talks resume as political tensions mount

[Turkish government's shaky strategy against Kurds goes on](#)

Author:

Sat, 2020-11-21 23:39

ANKARA: The gap between words and deeds from the Turkish government regarding the Kurdish conflict is widening.

Bulent Arinc, a founding member of Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party, recently criticized the continued imprisonment of Selahattin Demirtas, former co-chair of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), and called for his release.

On Nov. 4, Demirtas will have spent four years in prison after he was arrested on terror support charges – a governmental tactic that the HDP called a “political coup” against the country's one and only pro-Kurdish party.

Being in detention without trial since 2016, Demirtas is kept in prison in the northwestern border city of Edirne, 1,700 km away from his hometown Diyarbakir where his family resides, making it difficult for his wife and daughters to reach him.

Referring to Demirtas' recent storybook “Devran,” which he wrote in prison, Arinc, who is also top adviser to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, said: “Everyone should read ‘Devran.’ Maybe your ideas about Demirtas will not change, but you will understand what Kurds have gone through. Your ideas about Kurds might change. Our prosecutors and judges should operate on the principle of freedom.”

These groundbreaking comments theoretically suited Erdogan's statement last week saying that Turkey was initiating a new democratization period, hinting at the new judiciary reform packages that are expected for next year.

BACKGROUND

Being in detention without trial since 2016, Selahattin Demirtas is kept in prison in the northwestern border city of Edirne, 1,700 km away from his hometown Diyarbakir where his family resides, making it difficult for his

wife and daughters to reach him.

Turkey's Justice Minister Abdulhamit Gul also recently criticized the lengthy pretrial detention in Turkey.

In an interview last month, Demirtas said that he believes he is behind bars because Erdogan is afraid of him.

The "renaissance" pushed forward by the government looks hopeful, but at the end of the day, deeds matter more than words.

Demirtas' book, which is available on Amazon and at all bookstores in Turkey, was recently labeled "terrorist propaganda" by a Turkish prosecutor.

A day after the bombshell remarks of Erdogan's top adviser, Turkish authorities also issued detention warrants on Nov. 20 for 101 Kurdish lawyers and NGO representatives in house raids as part of an investigation. As of Saturday, half of them were released, but their personal phones were seized.

"The detentions are part of a systematic policy of threatening and silencing us," the Diyarbakir Bar Association said in an official statement.

"The raids that were undertaken today have once again shown that the Diyarbakir Bar Association's voice wants to be silenced and there is a direct intervention against the work of NGOs."

Human Rights Watch and Article 19 on Nov. 19 released a joint statement saying that the Turkish government "distorted and perverted the legal process" to keep Demirtas and other HDP politicians behind bars by "misusing detention and criminal proceedings in a campaign of persecution against Demirtas in particular."

For some experts, the latest detention wave might be related to a political wing inside the government that intends to favor its alliance with the nationalist party MHP, that did not conceal its discomfort at the party's latest statements about Demirtas.

Mehmet Emin Aktar, former head of the Diyarbakir Bar Association, said there were no accusations while issuing detention warrants to the lawyers.

"During 2019 local elections, lawyers of our bar association were assigned as electoral watchdogs and they performed this professional duty with legal documents that were issued by us. Turkish authorities allegedly found some documents having the names of these lawyers and activists during a raid on the Democratic Society Congress, or DTK, which Turkish authorities claim is linked to the outlawed PKK," he told Arab News.

DTK was founded as a wide-ranging political forum gathering Kurdish civil society groups in Turkey, and played a role between 2009 and 2015 as a bridge between the government and different Kurdish groups during the peace process that aimed at ending more than three decades of conflict that cost the lives of thousands of people. However, the peace process was shelved in July 2015. Aktar said that, beyond the rhetorical promises for judicial reform in Turkey, this move was meant to intimidate Kurdish lawyers and activists in the region into silence.

"I have to say that we were expecting such a move for a long time. However, I don't suppose that Kurds will be intimidated and halt their civil society activism with such tactics," he said.



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Iraqi Kurds look to diversify in face of energy crunch
Syrian Kurds free hundreds of Daesh militants as part of amnesty

[Lebanon's president pledges to revive forensic audit of central bank](#)

Author:

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Sat, 2020-11-21 19:27

BEIRUT: Lebanese President Michel Aoun said on Saturday that a forensic audit of the central bank was vital to combat corruption, and that he would get it back on track after the consultancy contracted to carry it out withdrew. Aoun said "interest-driven roadblocks" had derailed the audit, which is a key condition for foreign donors to help Lebanon out of a deep financial crisis that has posed the biggest threat to its stability since its 1975-1990 civil war.

Among Lebanon's multiple crises are growing poverty, a political vacuum, coronavirus and the fallout from a massive explosion at Beirut port in August that killed 200 people.

"Our reality today is not promising," the president said in a televised speech to mark Independence Day, adding that Lebanon was a prisoner of corruption, political scheming and external dictations.

"If we want statehood, then we must fight corruption ... and this begins by imposing the forensic financial audit," he said, adding he would not "back off" on the issue.

The caretaker finance minister announced on Friday that the restructuring consultancy Alvarez & Marsal had pulled out of the audit because the central bank had not provided all the information required to carry out the task, citing bank secrecy.

Lebanon has not yet formed a new government since the last one was brought down by the blast. Saad Al-Hariri, the Sunni prime minister-designate under a sectarian power-sharing agreement, is struggling to form a cabinet amid turf wars.



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Forensic auditor pulls out of Lebanon central bank probe
Five members of Lebanese family dead from COVID-19