

# Ankara sanctions loom ahead of EU summit

Fri, 2020-11-20 23:18

ANKARA: Turkey is facing a renewed threat of EU sanctions over its controversial drilling activities in the eastern Mediterranean after European leaders lined up to condemn Ankara's "provocations" in the region.

The latest salvo of criticism comes ahead of a major EU summit in December when Brussels will discuss punitive measures against Turkey over its natural gas exploration in the contested waters.

Statements by European leaders, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel, show that Brussels is unlikely to step back from its threat to impose curbs following Turkey's insistence on carrying out drilling in disputed zones.

"Things haven't developed the way we would have wished," Merkel said following a meeting with EU leaders late on Thursday.

Earlier in the day, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said that the EU could consider imposing sanctions against Turkey in December if Ankara failed to halt its "provocations" in the region.

"If we see no positive signals coming from Turkey by December, only further provocations such as Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's visit to Northern Cyprus, then we are heading for a difficult debate," he said.

On the same day, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell also warned Ankara that it is "widening its separation from the EU," adding that the bloc was "approaching a watershed moment in our relationship with Turkey."

The EU leaders' summit will take place on Dec.10-11 in Brussels.

Turkey's recent statements regarding Cyprus also have been criticized by the EU as contrary to UN resolutions.

During a visit earlier this week condemned as "provocative and illegal" by the Cypriot government, Erdogan called for a "two-state" solution in Cyprus.

Experts believe that Brussels is likely to introduce specific sanctions, including the ban on entering European ports for some individuals and companies.

However, Charles Ellinas, a Cypriot energy analyst and senior fellow at the Global Energy Center at the Atlantic Council, said that limited EU sanctions are unlikely to deter Erdogan.

According to Ellinas, the Turkish leader is pursuing an aggressive agenda in the eastern Mediterranean to bolster support at home.

“With the deteriorating economy, the pandemic and the shock resignation of his son-in-law and finance minister Berat Albayrak, he is trying to deflect public opinion,” Ellinas told Arab News.

France, Austria and Greece are pushing the EU to take tough measures, including the suspension of the customs union with Turkey.

However, Ellinas said Brussels is unlikely to take stronger action.

“We will need to wait and see what Biden does once he takes over the US presidency. Erdogan’s sway over Trump will no longer help him,” he added.

The new US administration under Joe Biden is expected to focus on the eastern Mediterranean – a potential flashpoint in US-Turkey relations.

Madalina Sisu Vicari, an independent expert on energy geopolitics, said that relations between the EU and Turkey are likely to become “more bellicose and strained.”

She said that Turkey will be reluctant to enter negotiations with the EU if sanctions are introduced since this would be seen as a capitulation.

“The best option is to avoid missteps that would lead to escalation and an activation of the sanctions agenda,” she said.

Turkey has not renewed the Navtex for the seismic research activities of its Oruc Reis survey vessel in the eastern Mediterranean since Nov. 14.

Gabriel Mitchell, a policy fellow at the Mitvim, Israeli Institute for Regional Foreign Policies, said “appropriate” sanctions would target the Turkish energy industry, ports and shipping.

“The question will be whether the affected industries will get Erdogan to listen. With the changes at the finance ministry and the comments about a possible reset with the US, there is a possibility that this will push Turkey toward negotiations, but it could just as easily be used by the Turkish government to paint the EU as the villain,” he told Arab News.



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Turkey's behaviour 'widening its separation' from EU, Borrell says  
Pompeo says Europe, US need to work together to address Turkey

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## [LAU's incoming president talks Lebanon crises, education, coronavirus](#)

Author:

Fri, 2020-11-20 23:15

LONDON: While Lebanon grapples with economic, healthcare and political crises, brighter days are still on the horizon, the Lebanese American University's (LAU) incoming President Dr. Michel Mawad said on Friday during a webinar hosted by media partner Arab News.

"You have to believe in this country, stay the course, have faith in the

country, have faith in the past, the future, the mission of this country. Being Lebanese isn't a passport, it's a state of mind that can withstand these difficulties," he added.

"We need to survive. There's no better description for this than survival for those in Lebanon."

On Aug. 4, a huge blast at the Port of Beirut – largely blamed on government negligence – rocked the capital and left at least 200 dead and thousands injured. More than 300,000 people lost their homes.

Meanwhile, an unprecedented financial crisis has left thousands of Lebanese higher education staff unemployed, and many others opting to leave the country out of sheer desperation,

Mawad said the LAU is doing all it can to retain its best and brightest from what is being described as a second brain drain – the first coming decades earlier during the civil war.

"We accept the fact that we're going to have some erosion, but at the same time we're constantly thinking of ways to retain our faculty," he added.

Mawad also spoke of the LAU's hybrid online / on-campus teaching model during the coronavirus pandemic, which has forced Lebanon into its second lockdown after a recent spike in cases.

"The main challenge is the healthcare crisis in Lebanon because of the COVID-19 pandemic. There's a challenge in taking care of our sick people, of securing basic medical care for COVID-19 victims, of protecting our constituents both on and off campus," he said.

"We're taking all precautions for the courses that need to be taught on campus, and we're keeping our curriculum and classes going within a combination of online and in-class learning."

Amid the financial toll on the LAU, Mawad spoke of rises in tuition fees, but with parallel increases in financial support for many students.

Taking questions from the audience, he was repeatedly asked about the incentive for students and staff to stay in a country reeling from what seems to be blow after blow. "Stay here because we're here next to you," he said.

Watch the full conversation here:



Dr. Michel E. Mawad

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## [Egyptian startup creates potentially lifesaving medical e-ID system](#)

Fri, 2020-11-20 00:20

CAIRO: When Andrew Saad was faced with an elderly patient on his hospital ward, complaining of vague abdominal pain but with no medical history on hand to guide a working diagnosis, the freshly graduated Egyptian doctor realized just how scary it can be for patients and medical providers when details are scarce during an emergency.

The incident motivated Saad to search for an inventive way to get health records into the hands of medical professionals quickly during an emergency – particularly in cases where a patient is unconscious, in a poor mental state or is unaccompanied.



“Health records are either electronic or paper-based. Both are usually kept at the hospital and are not typically available with the patient whenever he or she presents to another medical provider in case of an emergency,” Saad said.

The portability of medical records is a problem that extends beyond Egypt and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Even in developed countries – including the US, where electronic medical recording is far more widely adopted – the exchange of patients’ medical records between different healthcare systems is a complex and inefficient process.



The portability of medical records is a problem that extends beyond Egypt and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. (AFP/File Photo)

In February 2019, Saad and his five business partners joined Egyptian accelerator program Falak Startups and launched Bypa-ss. The company offers a unified medical ID card connected to an online platform where medical records are saved and can be accessed by medical providers.

Prior to the launch, Saad and his team presented the concept at several medical conferences. The idea garnered a positive reception. “The initial market response was very encouraging,” Saad said.

The HealthTag, as the product is called, is a physical card connected to the company’s online platform.

## FASTFACT

**\* Andrew Saad and his business partners joined accelerator program Falak Startups and launched Bypa-ss in 2019.**

In addition to basic medical information such as blood type, allergies and chronic medical conditions, Bypa-ss offers free software for medical providers, as well as free technical support to enable them to communicate with the online platform to save patients' medical data, send lab results and place prescription drug orders. Some providers will also offer discounts for cardholders.

Getting initial support from the medical community for a new-to-market tech product was challenging but also critical if it was to gain the traction needed to move forward.

"For medical providers, personal brands are extremely precious," Saad said, explaining why it is typically quite difficult to introduce a new product in the medical space.

Even with initial traction, maintaining growth remains a challenge. "Paper is our worst enemy. It was pretty tough to learn how to educate and advocate for a change within clinics and medical institutions," Saad said.



In addition to basic medical information such as blood type, allergies and

chronic medical conditions, Bypa-ss offers free software for medical providers. (AFP/File Photo)

The company currently has more than 1,000 partners among medical care providers, including major laboratories, hospitals, clinics and pharmacies.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected Bypa-ss in unusual ways. Although its customer base grew faster, its revenues declined as many medical providers, particularly smaller clinics, ceased operations during Egypt's enforced lockdown period. The company responded by directing more of its efforts to boosting online services.

"We're looking forward to adding more features by partnering with other digital medical services/platforms, such as appointment booking platforms, drug delivery services and telemedicine platforms," Saad said.

The company is already in talks with telemedicine providers to offer such services to its HealthTag cardholders.

Saad and his team are also moving their network beyond Cairo and Alexandria.

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***This report is being published by Arab News as a partner of the Middle East Exchange, which was launched by the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives to reflect the vision of the UAE prime minister and ruler of Dubai to explore the possibility of changing the status of the Arab region.***





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## [Lebanese rugby players tackle Beirut blast relief challenge](#)

Fri, 2020-11-20 00:06

BEIRUT: In the months leading up to the Beirut port blast, Lebanon was

already going through unprecedented crises. From the protests of Oct. 2019 to the collapse of the banking sector, the devaluation of the currency and the COVID-19 pandemic, the country has faced relentless challenges throughout the past year.

“The explosion was the straw that broke the camel’s back. And as I’m sure you have seen from the footage and carnage caused by the explosion, it was much more than just a straw,” said Sol Mokdad, CEO of Lebanon Rugby, a group established to promote the sport.

The explosion was a devastating experience for Mokdad. Although he survived the blast with no considerable damage to his property, many others were less fortunate.

“Seeing our capital in pieces and the tragic loss of life has taken a toll on all Lebanese citizens, in Lebanon and abroad. It was a challenge holding back tears for the first few days, just dealing with the trauma and the aftermath,” he said.

But Mokdad and his teammates knew they had to act quickly, joining the relief effort by instilling what they describe as the “values of rugby” into their community.



As football remains the most popular sport in the MENA region, courting a huge fan base, generous investments and billions of dollars in revenue, more niche sports such as rugby struggle to secure the resources they need to survive. (Supplied)

As a federation, the group launched the Lebanon Rugby Disaster Fund with help

from one of their board members based in the UK. A GoFundMe campaign was set up to collect donations from the global rugby community.

At the time of writing, the campaign has raised almost £15,000 (\$19,500), with the federation planning to donate the money to trusted relief organizations such as the Lebanese Red Cross.

The team also raised funds internally to support one of the players who lost his home in the blast. The amount needed to rebuild the house was raised almost instantly.

Lebanon Rugby players also contributed to the physical relief effort by volunteering to clear rubble, prepare food for displaced families and deliver medicine.

“Rugby Union is a beautiful sport, and the culture that it brings to its participants both on and off the field is unlike any other sport,” Mokdad said.

## **INNUMBERS**

### **Beirut Blast**

**\* \$10-15 billion – Estimated cost of blast damage.**

**\* \$2-3.5 billion – Estimated insured losses.**

As football remains the most popular sport in the MENA region, courting a huge fan base, generous investments and billions of dollars in revenue, more niche sports such as rugby struggle to secure the resources they need to survive.

“When it comes to Lebanon Rugby and our efforts to develop Rugby Union in Lebanon, it has always been an uphill battle,” Mokdad said. The sport faces similar challenges elsewhere in the region.

Lebanon Rugby gained official status from the government in 2009 and is currently a full member of Asia Rugby and an associate member of World Rugby. Only six other nations in the region are members of the World Rugby Federation.

And the sport has built a successful community in Lebanon with little to no funding, relying on its volunteers and annual player fees to operate. Lebanon Rugby also runs a fledgling junior section with over 300 young people playing regularly at their schools and academies.





Volunteers at the Lebanese Civil Defence work in the the control room at the headquarters of the public emergency service in the capital Beirut, on September 28, 2020. (AFP/File Photo)

The fact that the region organizationally falls under Asia Rugby further complicates things for the sport in MENA.

“The challenges we face here are very different from a country like Thailand, which falls under the same banner. Asia Rugby covers a huge area, and efforts need to be made to split Asia geographically to be able to focus on specific regions,” Mokdad said.

While rugby may still be a long way from competing with more established sports in the region, recent achievements for The Phoenix, the Lebanese Rugby Union national team, in addition to local initiatives around the region, have already increased awareness of the sport.

Mokdad is hopeful about the future. “The formation of the Arab Rugby Federation, and the appointment of Qais Al-Dhalai – president of UAE Rugby – as the president of Asia Rugby has given a boost to development in the region,” he said.

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'Tasteless' Beirut blast stamp angers Lebanese

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## [UAE committed to two-state solution in Palestine, says UAE minister](#)

Author:

Thu, 2020-11-19 23:58

ABU DHABI: The Emirates Society, the UK-based institution focused on strengthening ties between the UK and UAE on economic, political and cultural affairs, hosted a high-level online roundtable discussion on Thursday on the historic Abraham Accords. The participants explored the advancement of UAE-Israel, regional and Muslim-Jewish cooperation.

Representing the UAE at the event was Reem bint Ebrahim Al-Hashimy, Minister of State for International Cooperation, who spoke alongside Ban Ki-moon, the former UN secretary general, and Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth.



Speaking on the impact of the historic accords for the UAE and Israel, Reem Al-Hashimy said: “The UAE believes in the importance of dialogue and in shaping what this region could look like for many generations to come. We are committed to a two-state solution in a Middle East that will fight extremism and that believes in plurality, multiculturalism, the right of minorities, and the opportunities that exist for young people by embracing technology, innovation, and economic empowerment.”

Ban Ki-moon reflected on the role of multilateral organizations, the importance of religious tolerance, and how lessons from the Abraham Accords can be applied to other longstanding issues. He said that the Abraham Accords offer a “cooperative space not only for leaders but also for citizens of all the participating countries.”

He continued, “The architects of this important agreement must ensure that the Accords are not an agreement just for their countries, but for their people. The Abraham Accords should serve as a launchpad for the sustainable peace and prosperity in the region.”

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis said: “The Abraham Accords have unlocked a range of exciting opportunities for closer political, economic, and diplomatic collaboration between the UAE and the State of Israel. In addition, I am particularly hopeful that they will also herald a new era of Muslim-Jewish interfaith dialogue. This is a time for faith leaders to be courageous and work together to build a culture of peace and cooperation in our communities.”

Chairing the event was Alistair Burt, former UK Minister of State for the Middle East and Chair of the Emirates Society, who commented: “The UK has supported the Abraham Accords as a bold diplomatic move to suggest a different future for the Middle East, beyond the conflicts which have afflicted it for so long.”

Building on the positive impact the accords have had on the Gulf region, Reem Al Hashimy noted that the event was a welcome step in furthering the discussion on how diplomacy and goodwill are central to a peaceful Middle East and showcase what is possible for not only the region, but the rest of the world.

The virtual event was attended by more than 100 high-level guests from the UK, UAE, and across Europe and the Middle East.



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Bahrain tells Pompeo there must be two-state solution for Israel-Palestine  
Pompeo visits occupied West Bank settlement, infuriating Palestinians