

[Egyptian COVID-19 infections to rise in winter if measures not adhered to, minister warns](#)

Sun, 2020-11-08 22:39

CAIRO: Egypt is expected to witness an increase in coronavirus infections and deaths during December and January if citizens do not observe preventive measures, the country's health minister said on Sunday.

Health Minister Hala Zayed said that a study model, carried out in coordination with the World Health Organization, predicted a spike in infections and deaths in the coming two months.

"The infection rate is expected to at least double and the death toll is expected to triple in December and January if citizens ignore wearing face masks," the minister said in statements carried by Ahram Online.

She also recommended wearing protective face masks in enclosed or poorly ventilated places.

A total of 108,962 infections and 6,355 deaths have been reported in Egypt since the outbreak began in February.



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Egypt slams Israeli demolition of Palestinian homes
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[Biden's presidency won't go smoothly on Turkey, say experts](#)

Author:

Sun, 2020-11-08 21:19

ANKARA: Joe Biden's presidency is likely to lead to new developments in US relations with Turkey as his approach differs from that of his predecessor, who was providing shelter to Turkey's assertiveness in the region.

Experts said that bilateral relations could even get worse and much more vulnerable, given the two nations' divergent priorities.

Ozgur Unluhisarcikli, Ankara office director at the German Marshall Fund of the United States, said there were several factors that could complicate matters during Biden's presidency.

He explained that the personal relationship between former President Donald Trump and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, which formed a buffer between an increasingly upset Washington and a defiant Ankara, could not be created between Biden and Erdogan because the two leaders had demonstrated a dislike of each other and because Biden, unlike Trump, was expected to give priority to institutionalizing relationships rather than personalizing them.

The new US administration was likely to bring forward the democracy and human rights deficit in Turkey, while also trying to contain its moves in Libya, Syria and naval ambitions in the eastern Mediterranean.

According to Unluhisarcikli, the people Biden brought on board would also play key roles in the relationship and that some of these individuals were likely to be from former President Barack Obama's administration whom Erdogan had scapegoated.

"Biden, unlike Trump, is not likely to overlook democratic backsliding in Turkey and Erdogan will not take his criticism lightly," he told Arab News.

Turkey's testing of the Russian-made S-400 air defense system and a possible green light on sanctions against it will also be on the agenda. The US Congress remains stubborn and has bipartisan support to take measures against Ankara as Washington is concerned that the Russian missiles could compromise NATO defenses.

So far, Washington's only "stick" to Turkey's purchase of the S-400 has been kicking it out of the F-35 fighter jet program.

Although the impact of punitive measures from the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) would be catastrophic for Ankara, especially in economic terms, the country currently gives no signal of walking back from its controversial rapprochement with Russia.

Turkey's main opposition leader, Kemal Kilicdaroglu, was the first Turkish politician to congratulate Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris for their electoral victory.

"I look forward to strengthening Turkish-American relations and our strategic alliance," he tweeted late Saturday.

In an interview with The New York Times last December, Biden described the Turkish president as an autocrat and criticized his policy toward the Kurds. He also suggested emboldening the Turkish opposition leadership, comments that provoked much reaction.

As Biden's priorities will focus on containing Russia and Iran and bolstering the commitment to multilateral alliances, especially NATO, Ankara's chances to mend ties with Washington will depend on how its policies align with this pattern.

Soner Cagaptay, a Turkish academic from the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, said Biden was going to prioritize developing relations with key allies.

"Democracy, human rights, rule of law and freedom of expression are also important for Biden, who would expect Erdogan to take positive steps on these issues," he told Arab News.

Cagaptay said as Biden would prioritise reviving NATO's vision and forming a unified bloc against Russia, that he would see Turkey as an important ally.

"Of course the US can implement its policies without Turkey but, with Turkey, those policies are easier, less cumbersome, less costly, and more effective. The worst-case scenario is preventing Turkey from being a spoiler of US policy against Russia, and the best-case scenario is Turkey becoming an ally and joining US efforts to unify NATO."

Cagaptay added that, with Trump out, it was now more likely that the US would implement CAATSA sanctions. But he expected Biden to prefer symbolic sanctions over those that destroyed Turkish economy.

Back in Oct. 2014 a diplomatic rift emerged after Biden officially apologized to Erdogan for implying that Turkey had helped the rise of Daesh by letting foreign fighters cross the border into Syria.

Unluhisarcikli said there was an element of self-prophecy when it came to relations between Biden and Erdogan, that their ties would start on a downward spiral because both leaders assumed they would be negative.

"However, things could also move in the opposite direction if Erdogan provides Biden with a perspective toward the convergence of policies. What

Turkey decides to do with its S-400s will be taken as an early sign of Turkey's approach," he added.



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Turkey gives muted first response to Joe Biden win Biden, pledging unity, begins transition as Trump refuses to concede

[Rights groups slam Houthis as Yemeni reporters face execution](#)

Author:

Sat, 2020-11-07 21:30

LONDON: Four Yemeni journalists arbitrarily detained by Houthi militants since 2015 face death sentences and are being held in appalling conditions, Human Rights Watch (HRW) has revealed.

The Houthi-controlled Specialized Criminal Court in Sanaa sentenced the four to death in April after a show trial involving politically motivated charges

of treason and spying.

The revelation comes amid growing criticism of Houthi mistreatment of journalists and whistleblowers.

Houthi authorities arrested the four journalists – Abdul Khaleq Amran, Akram Al-Walidi, Hareth Humaid and Tawfiq Al-Mansouri – during a 2015 raid on a hotel room in Sanaa, family members told HRW.

During their time in detention, they have faced restricted family visits, lack of access to legal assistance and dismal medical care.

“Houthi authorities are using compromised courts to punish journalists for doing their job, adding to the armed group’s bleak record of abuses,” said HRW Yemen researcher Afrah Nasser.

“These journalists should never have been arrested in the first place, much less face the death penalty.”

The UN Group of Eminent Experts for Yemen warned that Houthis have used the Specialized Criminal Court in Sanaa “as an instrument to suppress dissent, intimidate political opponents and develop political capital to be used in negotiations.”

Before the 2015 raid, the journalists worked for local media outlets and reported on Houthi human rights abuses.

None of the families know where the four are held. Family members have expressed serious concerns that Houthi authorities will soon move forward with executions.



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Houthis condemned for failing to protect journalists
Prominent Afghan journalist dies in Kabul blast

[Govt-controlled areas in Yemen report zero virus cases](#)

Author:

Sat, 2020-11-07 21:23

AL-MUKALLA: Yemen's national coronavirus committee announced on Friday night recording zero coronavirus cases in the government-controlled provinces, even as the country braced for the second wave of the virus.

The national committee, a government body that documents coronavirus in the government-controlled provinces, said in a statement that it recorded two recoveries in the southern province of Laj and zero confirmed cases or

deaths.

The total number of confirmed cases since April 10 when the first case was detected is 2,066, including 601 deaths and 1,377 recoveries. The Houthis, who control densely populated provinces, refuse to disclose the number of coronavirus cases. Their ministry of health had reported only four cases, including one death.

During the past couple of weeks, health facilities and PCR testing labs in the interim capital of Yemen, Aden, and the other liberated provinces have reported fewer infections, Dr. Ishraq Al-Subaee, a spokesman for the committee, told Arab News on Saturday. "It seems that the first wave of the virus is coming to an end," Dr. Ishraq said.

In October, health authorities in the southeastern province of Hadramout closed a major quarantine center in the port city of Al-Mukalla, the province's capital that treated dozens of cases due to the sharp decline in coronavirus cases.

But despite recording zero cases on Friday, the committee ordered health facilities across Yemen to prepare for a second wave of the virus as a severe winter is affecting parts of the country.

Headed by Prime Minister Maeen Abdulmalik Saeed, the committee on Thursday approved fresh measures to stem a potential outbreak of the virus, including boosting capacity of health facilities, raising public awareness about health guidelines, enhancing cooperation between the committee and local authorities for a unified response and approving an emergency fund. The official news agency SABA reported that the prime minister stressed learning lessons from the first wave of the coronavirus.

Yemen has been hit hard by the virus since April. Hundreds of people, including dozens of health care workers, have died as cases overwhelmed local hospitals. Local health officials told Arab News that the virus and other diseases killed 1,800 people in May in Aden alone. In Sanaa, several graveyards in Sanaa and other provinces in northern Yemen were closed due to the influx of the dead. Local and international health workers believe that the number of virus fatalities is much higher than official reports say.

As daily coronavirus infections reached zero, experts warned that sporadic new cases in different cities last week could be a sign of a second wave. Abdulla bin Ghouth, a professor of community medicine and epidemiology at Hadramout University's College of Medicine and an adviser to the health minister, told Arab News that official reports about the decreasing cases showed the coronavirus curve was going down.

However, "the few confirmed cases in Marib and Aden are a warning of the second wave," bin Ghouth said. He added that the war-torn country was not ready for a second wave and was repeating the mistakes of the first wave of the pandemic. "Hospitals and quarantines are not ready. There is still not enough PCR testing labs and preventive measures are very poor," he said.

Normal Life

Yemenis across the country have largely abandoned health coronavirus guidelines, even before the country reported few cases. People attend large gatherings such as weddings and mass prayers and almost no one wears a mask. In Al-Mukalla on Friday, thousands of worshippers without masks thronged Omar mosque for Friday prayers. Among the worshippers were health workers, teachers and journalists – who have long preached to people about adhering to social distancing and other health guidelines.

Even the elderly and people with chronic diseases who used to wear masks during prayers now hug and shake hands without masks. In his weekly sermon, the imam warned worshippers against the “evils” of globalization and its calls for women’s liberation, ignoring government calls to prepare for a second wave of the virus.

People said that they did not wear masks as they had developed herd immunity. “I do not wear masks because I was infected with the virus in Ramadan. Also, the prices of the masks are high compared to my salary. Finally, my city did not report any new case for the past ten days,” Mohammed Ahmed Bayazid, a worshipper, told Arab News.



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Arab coalition seizes huge drugs shipment in Yemen heading to Houthis
Houthis blamed for resurgence of infant polio in Yemen

Hundreds in Baghdad demand ouster of US troops from Iraq

Author:

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1604763048042611800

Sat, 2020-11-07 14:56

BAGHDAD: Several hundred protesters gathered in the Iraqi capital on Saturday afternoon to demand US troops leave the country in accordance with a parliament vote earlier this year.

"We will choose resistance if parliament's vote is not ratified!" read one of the banners at the demonstration, which took place near an entrance to the high-security Green Zone, where the US embassy and other foreign missions are located.

Others carried signs bearing the logo of Hashed Al-Shaabi, a state-sponsored network of armed groups including many supported by Iraq's powerful neighbor Iran.

Following a US strike on Baghdad in January that killed top Iranian general Qasem Soleimani and the Hashed's deputy head, outraged Iraqi parliamentarians voted to oust all foreign forces deployed in the country.

The US has sent thousands of troops to Iraq since 2014 to lead an international coalition helping Baghdad fight Daesh.

Washington has drawn down those forces in recent months to around 3,000, and other coalition countries have also shrunk their footprint.

Starting in October 2019, rockets regularly targeted those troops as well as diplomats at the US embassy.

Over the summer, there was a marked increase in attacks against coalition logistics convoys using roadside bombs.

Enraged by the ongoing attacks, the US in late September threatened to close its Baghdad embassy and carry out bombing raids against hard-line elements of the Hashed.

Pro-Iran factions announced a temporary truce in October that put an end to the attacks, with no rockets targeting the embassy or foreign troops since. Iraq has long been caught in the struggle for influence between its two main allies, the US and Iran, with the tug-of-war intensifying under US President Donald Trump.

Baghdad has been closely monitoring the results of the US presidential elections, seeing a change in the White House as a sign that tensions between Washington and Tehran could decrease.



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Protester killed in southern Iraq as tensions flare again Iraq ratifies new election law, paving way for early vote