

Egypt closes Rafah crossing after monitoring violations by Hamas

Wed, 2020-11-04 20:58

CAIRO: Egyptian authorities have closed the Rafah Border Crossing with the Gaza Strip after monitoring violations by Hamas.

The border was shut to goods and vehicles, and those stranded will continue to be deported until Thursday morning.

The move came two days after the Palestinian Embassy in Egypt announced that the Egyptian authorities had informed it to resume work at the Rafah crossing in both directions for the travel and return of citizens for the four days from Monday to Thursday, provided that travelers carried a certificate proving that they had tested negative for the coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

“On Tuesday morning, several buses carrying passengers from the Gaza Strip left through the Rafah land crossing, on the first day of opening it exceptionally in both directions, while the returnees’ buses arrived,” a statement from the Egyptian Ministry of Interior said.

Groups that had fulfilled the rules and conditions of departure would be allowed to do so, most prominently patients who needed treatment in Egypt and abroad, university students, and holders of residency in foreign countries.

The border closure also comes just days after a Hamas delegation left Cairo, where it had held a series of meetings with Egyptian officials about Palestinian reconciliation, ways to end the division and achieve national partnership, the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, and efforts to alleviate the suffering of its residents.



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Egypt opens Rafah to let Palestinians return to GazaRafah crossing remains closed

[UAE opens consulate in Morocco-controlled Western Sahara](#)

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Wed, 2020-11-04 17:04

LAAYOUNE: The United Arab Emirates on Wednesday became the first Arab country to open a diplomatic mission in the Moroccan-controlled area of the disputed Western Sahara.

The inauguration of the consulate general in the northern coastal city of

Laayoune brings to 16 the number of missions opened in the region since late last year.

The UAE move “reinforces a dynamic of recognition of the ‘Moroccan identity’” of Western Sahara, with “increasing support from the international community,” Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita told AFP on Wednesday after the opening.

Western Sahara, a vast swathe of desert on Africa’s Atlantic coast, is a disputed former Spanish colony.

Rabat controls 80 percent of the territory, including its phosphate deposits and its fishing waters.

The Algerian-backed Polisario Front, which fought a war for independence from 1975 to 1991, demands a referendum on self-determination.

Morocco, which maintains that Western Sahara is an integral part of the kingdom, has offered autonomy but insists it will retain sovereignty.

Since late 2019, 15 African countries have opened diplomatic missions in the former colonial capital Laayoune and in the fishing port of Dakhla, further south.

“It’s not an insignificant act, it’s an act that has political, legal and diplomatic meaning,” Bourita said of the UAE move.

Negotiations involving Morocco, the Polisario, Algeria and Mauritania have been suspended for several months.







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Morocco says seized almost 5 tons of cannabis resin UAE announces 1,008 new cases of COVID-19 and six more deaths

[Egypt to suspend education in event of COVID-19 second wave](#)

Author:

Wed, 2020-11-04 02:33

CAIRO: Egypt's education minister has warned that an expected second wave of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) could see a suspension of education in the country.

But Tarek Shawky gave reassurances that should such measures be necessary alternative arrangements would be made to complete the school year.

He said: "The ministry is fully prepared for the second wave of the coronavirus if it occurs in the coming months.

"All educational directorates in various governorates have instructions from the ministry to tighten precautionary measures inside educational facilities and schools, to limit the spread of the virus.

"Protecting students in various classrooms is one of our most important priorities, and we are always working to provide distinguished, high-quality education to the masses of students," he added.

Shawky pointed out that canceling the new academic year 2020-2021 due to the pandemic was not an option and that all transfer and certification examinations would be held on their scheduled dates.

The minister said school attendance rates were high, coinciding with the third week of the new academic year, and that remedial groups were running in a disciplined manner with no problems detected.

"The situation in all schools nationwide is excellent and is proceeding as planned. There is constant follow-up in schools, to ensure the regularity of the school day and the absence of any obstacles affecting the progress of the educational process," he added.

Teachers and students in Egypt have been following strict precautionary measures including the wearing of face masks throughout the school day.

An official source in the Egyptian Ministry of Education said that the number of COVID-19 deaths in educational facilities was three per million, with only 75 cases reported among 25 million students, teachers, administrators, and other individuals working in the country's education system.

The source added that precautionary measures were constantly being monitored and reviewed in coordination with the Ministry of Health.



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Egyptian NHS doctor fears deportation after COVID-19 trauma

[Houthis condemned for failing to protect journalists](#)

Author:

Wed, 2020-11-04 02:27

AL-MUKALLA: Yemen's Journalists Syndicate has condemned a death threat made against a veteran journalist based in Houthi-held Sanaa, calling upon the Iran-backed group to protect him and to find those behind the threat.

The syndicate said the threat against Abdul Bari Taher must be investigated.

"The Houthi group, the de facto authority in Sanaa, holds full responsibility for these actions, and should protect him, investigate this crime and punish the perpetrators." Taher was targeted because of his "brave stands and opinions," the syndicate added.

Taher, who was born in the western province of Hodeidah in 1941, was a founding member of the syndicate in the 1970s and has been in charge of several government and private newspapers during the last five decades.

He is currently a columnist for local and regional newspapers. In Oct. 2018, the Houthis briefly held him along with 19 other journalists for participating in an “unauthorized” event in Sanaa.

Yemeni politicians and activists demanded the Houthis quickly identify the people who threatened to kill Taher and also those who have killed several popular politicians in Sanaa in the last five years.

“Whoever threatens Abdul Bari Taher is in fact threatening every free Yemeni who does not belong to the Houthi group,” Mustapha Noman, a former minister and diplomat, tweeted.

Hundreds of Yemeni journalists, activists and opposition figures have been forced to flee to government-controlled areas or seek exile due to the group’s harsh crackdown in the last six years.

The group has put them on trial in absentia, confiscated their houses and froze their bank accounts even after they had left.

Outspoken journalists and writers who remain in Sanaa are harassed by the Houthis.

In April the Houthis abducted Khaled Al-Ruwaishan, a former Yemeni culture minister and an outspoken writer, who criticized the group’s handling of flash floods that hit Sanaa and other areas in northern Yemen.

That same month a Houthi-run court sentenced four journalists to death after convicting them of contacting the group’s enemies. The four journalists were among a group of 10 journalists who were abducted from a hotel in Sanaa in 2015.

In a report issued on the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists – Nov. 2 – the syndicate said that 44 Yemeni journalists had been killed and hundreds of others had been detained since 2010.

Yemen’s Information Minister Muammar Al-Aryani urged international rights groups to pressure the Houthis to cease their harassment of journalists and free those being held in their prisons.

“We remember with deep pain our fellow journalists in Houthi prisons, who were sentenced to death for their political opinions. The Houthis refused to release in (the latest) prisoner swap deal (so) as to exploit their and their families’ suffering for political pressure and blackmail,” the minister tweeted on Tuesday.



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[Lebanon decides not to charge Ghosn over Israel trip](#)

Author:

Wed, 2020-11-04 02:23

BEIRUT: Lebanon's prosecutor general decided Tuesday not to charge fugitive ex-auto tycoon Carlos Ghosn for visiting Israel in 2008 because the statute of limitations has expired, a judicial source said.

Three lawyers filed a motion in January calling for the 66-year-old businessman to be prosecuted over his trip to the Jewish state as Renault-Nissan chairman.

Lebanon is technically still at war with Israel and forbids its citizens from traveling there.

“Prosecutor general Ghassan Oueidat decided ... not to prosecute Ghosn for the crimes attributed to him of entering the enemy country and dealing with it economically,” the source told AFP.

“A statute of limitations of ten years had passed since the alleged crime,” the source added.

Ghosn on Jan. 8 apologized to the Lebanese people for having visited Israel to sign a deal to produce electric vehicles, saying he traveled on business for Renault on a French passport.

He also holds Lebanese and Brazilian nationalities.

The ex-Nissan chief was arrested in Japan in November 2018 on financial misconduct charges and spent 130 days in detention, before he jumped bail and smuggled himself out of the country late last year.

Ghosn appeared at a press conference in Lebanon on Jan. 8, denying all charges and claiming he was a victim of a plot by Nissan and Japanese officials.

Japan has called on Ghosn to return to the Asian country to be tried, while Lebanon has asked Japan to hand over his file on financial misconduct charges.

He and his wife Carole are to take part in a documentary and mini-series about his life, the first of which started shooting in Beirut in September.

Separately, the US Justice Department on Friday urged a federal judge to swiftly reject a last-minute bid by two Massachusetts men to avoid being extradited to Japan to face charges that they helped Ghosn flee the country.

The lawyers for the two men have said they will ask the State Department and White House to reconsider their extradition.



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