[Why Lebanese-Armenians feel the pull of the Nagorno-Karabakh war](#)

Wed, 2020-11-04 01:53

BEIRUT: Kevork Hadjian was a much loved opera singer, famous for his mesmerizing voice and the allure he lent to patriotic Armenian anthems. Born and raised in southern Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, the ethnic Armenian lived for a time in Kuwait before moving to Yerevan, Armenia's capital, with his family in 2004.

An ardent patriot, Hadjian held a special place in his heart for Artsakh, the ancient Armenian name for Nagorno-Karabakh. He fought there briefly in 2016 in what became known as the Four-Day War.

So when Azerbaijan targeted the breakaway region's capital Stepanakert on Sept. 27, the singer again volunteered to fight for its independence. Just over a week later, on Oct. 6, he was killed on the front line. He was 49.

Hadjian is among the more recognizable casualties of the recent fighting. Their deaths have become something of a rallying cry for young Armenian-Lebanese tempted to follow in their footsteps.

Lebanon is home to a significant Armenian diaspora, descendants of the 1.5 million ethnic Armenians who escaped the genocide 100 years ago — a crime that Turkey to this day refuses to acknowledge.

But the passage of time has failed to quiet Armenian nationalist fervor, stoked anew by the war in the South Caucasus. "Armenians have already seen genocide," Ishkhan Y, a Lebanon-born Armenian, told Arab News in Beirut. "This is history repeating itself in Artsakh. As Armenians of the diaspora, we are very concerned and upset by what is going on in Artsakh."

Lebanon is home to a significant Armenian diaspora. (AFP)

Whispers around Beirut and social-media chatter tell of ethnic Armenians who have left Lebanon to join the war, like many others in the wider diaspora. In Bourj Hammoud, the Armenian district of Beirut, many walls are graffitied with slogans criticizing both Turkey and Azerbaijan.

The same is happening in Hadjian's birthplace in the Bekaa Valley, where villagers say young men are leaving for Nagorno-Karabakh. "There were no calls from the Armenian government or from a political party for them to go," one villager, who did not want to be named, told Arab News. "They left because they felt it was their duty to go and fight."

Fighting erupted in late September between Azerbaijan and ethnic Armenians in the contested territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, reigniting the decades-old dispute. Turkey is widely accused of encouraging Azerbaijan to launch the latest offensive, and has sent weapons and funding to support Baku's war effort.

Nagorno-Karabakh, a mountainous region with a population of around 150,000, is internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan, but is claimed and governed by the ethnic Armenians who live there. A diplomatic solution to end the dispute has evaded the warring parties since the 1994 ceasefire.

As the former Soviet republics accuse one another of launching unprovoked attacks, towns and villages have since been indiscriminately shelled, some with banned cluster munitions, according to the rights watchdog Amnesty International. Entire buildings have been reduced to rubble, forcing

thousands of civilians from their homes.

Two ceasefire deals have failed to hold — the first brokered by Russia on Oct. 10 and another by the US on Oct. 18. Mike Pompeo, the US secretary of state, held separate meetings with the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan in Washington on Oct. 22, taking over from Moscow's earlier attempts at establishing a dialogue.

According to a statement from the Armenian Ministry of Defense on Oct. 27, Azerbaijani forces shelled Armenian border guards near the country's southeast frontier with Iran, expanding the conflict into Armenia proper.

THE CONFLICT IN NAGORNO-KARABAKH

■ Moscow

RUSSIA

Nagorno-Karabakh

Black Sea

Caspian Sea

ARMENIA

■ Ankara

Yerevan ■

■ Baku

TURKEY

AZERBAIJAN

Mediterranean Sea

■ Tehran

Beirut ■

LEBANON

IRAN

Red Sea

Gulf

Presenting Baku's side of the conflict in an oped in Arab News on Oct.2, Ramil Imranov, an Azerbaijani diplomat, wrote: "Armenia keeps trying to legalize the consequences of the war and raise the international prestige of the separatist regime established by Armenia in the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh

region of Azerbaijan. By constantly violating the cease-fire achieved in 1994, Armenia tries to consolidate the existing status-quo."

A member of the Armenian diaspora, who asked to remain anonymous, said: "Like all Armenians, we as Lebanese-Armenians believe the only solution in the end is a peaceful solution." But for many Armenians, the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh is about more than the territory itself: It is part of a wider assault on the essence of Armenian identity.

"Whether it is Turkey or Azerbaijan, both states have a tradition of historical revisionism towards Armenians," he said. "Turkey does so with the Armenian genocide and Azerbaijan has done so regarding the history of Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh.

"Since the 1960s, Azerbaijani authorities have relayed a revisionist history of the Armenian people, claiming that everything related to Armenian history on Azerbaijani land is actually related to the Caucasian Albanians," he said.

"The same historical revisionism extends to the Azeris' idea of Armenia and its territories, all of which they believe belong to Azerbaijan. Azeris deny our rightful place in history."

Many Armenians claim Ankara has a neo-Ottoman agenda and is working hand in glove with Azerbaijan to exterminate them, pointing to the televised remarks in July by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan: "We will continue to fulfill the mission our grandfathers have carried out for centuries in the Caucasus."

Armenian-Lebanese artist Manuella Guiragossian, whose grandmother survived the genocide, believes Turkish government policies are infused with anti-Armenian sentiments.

"If you can imagine what they did to my grandparents during the genocide, you can also imagine what they will do to an entire Armenian population today," she said. "Turkey's objective is to do what they did during the Ottoman Empire and take more land and unite Azerbaijan and Turkey and totally remove Armenia from the map."

Ankara and Baku have both denied accusations that mercenaries from Turkish-controlled parts of Syria and Libya are involved in the conflict, but reports of Syrian casualties of the Nagorno-Karabakh war are trickling in from multiple sources.

Some members of the Armenians diaspora want the international community to take the Nagorno-Karabakh situation far more seriously. American socialite Kim Kardashian West, who is of Armenian descent, has donated $1 million to the California-based Armenia Fund to support the humanitarian effort.

"Even if the whole planet does not support the Armenians, you have a massive number of Armenians rising up all over the world right now, from Los Angeles to Boston and London and Paris," said Guiragossian.

For Armenian-Lebanese like Ishkhan, the only way to stop the fighting is through international pressure. "Peace and safety can only be guaranteed through the recognition of a free, independent Artsakh by the international community," he said.

"Armenians have to be able to live freely, safely and securely. Children must be able to go to school, mothers should not cry over their lost sons and husbands because of an insane war, supported by Turkey's ambitions, financial means and military technology and fueled by their allies."

Until then, many young Lebanon-born Armenians rightly or wrongly are convinced their best option is to follow the example of volunteers like Hadjian.

"We have no choice but to fight for our land and our country," said Ishkhan. "We must win this war."

Twitter: @rebeccaaproctor

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Renewed fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh threatens US-backed trucePutin tells Erdogan of concern about Mid-East fighters in Nagorno-Karabakh

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[UAE announces 1,008 new cases of COVID-19 and six more deaths](#)

Author:
Wed, 2020-11-04 00:49

DUBAI: Private schools in Abu Dhabi will reopen to students in January, authorities in the emirate announced on Tuesday. It came as the UAE confirmed 1,008 new cases of COVID-19 and six deaths related to the disease.
The Ministry of Health and Prevention said the total number of cases has reached 136,149, and the death toll stands at 503. A further 1,466 people recovered during the previous 24 hours, bringing the total number of recoveries to 133,490.
Dr. Omar Al-Hammadi, the official spokesman for the government, said that the number of daily confirmed coronavirus cases fell by 15 percent between Oct. 28 and Nov. 3. The rate of recovery has fallen by nine percent, he added, and 21 people died during the past week.

> It is possible to be reinfected by the same virus after recovery or after vaccination, the body develops antibodies whose validity varies from disease to disease, some of which last for life and some last for a specified period after vaccination or infection.#CommitToWin
>
> — NCEMA UAE (@NCEMAUAE) November 3, 2020

Al-Hammadi also said that it is possible to be reinfected by the same virus even after a patient has recovered or after they have received their vaccination, depending on the individual.
In a message posted on Twitter, the National Emergency Crisis and Disaster Management Authority said: "This week's mortality rate is 0.4%, the lowest globally compared to the EU (at) 2.6% and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) at 2.4% and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development countries (OECD) at 3.0%."

> 805,579 tests were conducted nationwide from October 28 to November 3, the number of tests increased by 3% compared to last week and confirmed cases decreased to 15% for the same period.#CommitToWin
>
> — NCEMA UAE (@NCEMAUAE) November 3, 2020

The announcement that private schools in Abu Dhabi will reopen was made by the Abu Dhabi Emergency Crisis and Disasters Committee for the COVID-19 Pandemic, and the Department of Education and Knowledge.
"The Department of Education will coordinate with private schools and support them in implementing the necessary preventive and precautionary measures to maintain the health and safety of students and staff," officials said.

> The Abu Dhabi Emergency Crisis and Disasters Committee for Covid-19 Pandemic and the Department of Education and Knowledge (@ADEK_tweet) have agreed that private schools in #AbuDhabi will welcome all students back to classrooms from January. pic.twitter.com/X4gwHoRQnD
>
> — مكتب أبوظبي الإعلامي (@admediaoffice) November 3, 2020

In Sharjah, the government has approved a second stimulus package of incentives, worth 512 million dirhams ($140 million), to support public and private-sector businesses and the self-employed, help boost the business sector and mitigate the economic effects of the pandemic.
Kuwait announced 787 new cases of COVID-19, bringing the total to 128,080. The death toll in the country has reached 789, after three new fatalities were confirmed.

تعلن #وزارة_الصحة عن تأكيد إصابة 787 حالة جديدة، وتسجيل 694 حالة شفاء، و 3 حالات وفاة جديدة بــ #فيروس_كورونا_المستجدّ COVID-19 ، ليصبح إجمالي عدد الحالات 128,080 حالة pic.twitter.com/aGxrVjyb1p

— وزارة الصحة – الكويت (@KUWAIT_MOH) November 3, 2020

Oman's Health Ministry reported 376 new cases and eight deaths, bringing the totals to 116,528 and 1,264 respectively.

#Statement No. 218
November 3, 2020 pic.twitter.com/aALSvd2AST

— وزارة الصحة – عُمان (@OmaniMOH) November 3, 2020

In Bahrain, two deaths was reported, bringing the death toll to 324, while 230 new infected cases were confirmed.

Out of 10036 COVID-19 tests carried out on 3 November 2020, 230 new cases have been detected among 64 expatriate workers, 158 new cases are contacts of active cases, and 8 are travel related. There were 362 recoveries from #COVID19, increasing total recoveries to 79680 pic.twitter.com/6jTEjcRExE

— مملكة البحرين | وزارة الصحة (@MOH_Bahrain) November 3, 2020

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[Hadi: Implementing Riyadh accord key to defeating Houthis](#)

Author:
Tue, 2020-11-03 01:10

AL-MUKALLA: Implementing the Riyadh Agreement was the key to overthrowing the Houthis, foiling Iran's designs in Yemen, and building an efficient federal system in the country, the Yemeni president said on the anniversary of the

historic accord.

Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi was speaking during a meeting with his advisers where he updated them about ongoing discussions between different parties over the formation of a new government.

"Our meeting today comes on the eve of the first anniversary of the signing of the Riyadh Agreement, which we continue to perceive as a way for restoring the state, uniting efforts, and ending the Houthi coup," he said.

Signed in November last year, the Riyadh Agreement was designed to defuse hostilities between the internationally recognized government and the Southern Transitional Council (STC) in the liberated southern provinces and refocus efforts on fighting the Houthis and reviving state institutions.

The deal called for both sides to pull their forces out of Aden and Abyan and redeploy them to reinforce military fighting the Houthis.

Despite naming a new governor and security chief for Aden, the formation of a new government that would include the STC has been slow as some parties have opposed the distribution of ministries.

In Riyadh, Hadi on Sunday repeated his support for Maeen Abdulmalik Saeed, Yemen's prime minister-designate, in his effort to announce a new government.

Official media said that Hadi told Saeed that his government should live up to the aspirations of Yemenis and work on addressing the worsening humanitarian crisis caused by Houthi military activities throughout the country.

Several government and STC sources last week told Arab News that the prime minister was close to finalizing his government, but on Monday sources in Riyadh revealed that an announcement had been delayed due to some parties, mainly the General People's Congress and Islah party, that were unhappy with their portfolio of ministries, refusing to name their ministers.

The congress and Islah, two major parties that have dominated the political establishment in Yemen for ages, are demanding better representation in the new Cabinet.

Meanwhile, the commander of the Arab coalition forces in the central province of Marib, Maj. Gen. Yusef Al-Shahrani, on Sunday pledged continued military support to Yemeni army forces and allied tribesmen battling against the Iran-backed Houthis.

During a field trip with Yemeni army chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Sagheer bin Aziz, Al-Shahrani said the coalition would carry on backing the armed forces of Yemen until the Houthis had been defeated and the entire country had been brought back under state control.

Bin Aziz said Yemen's forces appreciated the coalition's support, and he vowed to push ahead with military operations until the Houthis had been driven out of areas under their control.

In the densely populated city of Taiz, residents said on Monday that sporadic shelling by the Houthis wounded several civilians, forced students to flee schools, and damaged properties in the eastern part of the city.

For five years, the Houthis, who control the outskirts of Taiz, have imposed a siege on the city and have heavily shelled downtown residential areas in a bid to force government forces to surrender.

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[Syrian refugee's joy at Georgetown admission goes viral](#)

Mon, 2020-11-02 23:36

LONDON: A Syrian refugee tortured at the hands of the Assad regime is going viral after sharing a video of his elated reaction to being accepted into a prestigious US university.

Omar Alshogre's 9-second video on Twitter has been viewed roughly 140,000 times. "I made it into Georgetown!" he exclaims in disbelief.

The 25-year-old refugee's acceptance is an uplifting end to a long and tragic journey that began in the early days of the Syrian uprising.

When pro-democracy protests swept through the country in 2011, Alshogre was arrested multiple times for taking part in them, and when Syria descended

into civil war, he spent three years in a regime prison.

There, he said, he was subjected to daily torture and starvation, which killed his two cousins arrested alongside him. While inside, he lost his father and brother to a regime massacre in his home village.

> We deserve a moment of happiness. I'm officially admitted to Georgetown University. @Georgetown pic.twitter.com/M1BVsaY8dS
>
> — Omar Alshogre (@omarAlshogre) November 1, 2020

While imprisoned, Alshogre was forced to remove the bodies of dead prisoners and mark their foreheads.

He was among the roughly 128,000 Syrians who disappeared after their arrest by the regime, 14,000 of whom were tortured to death, according to the Syrian Network for Human Rights.

Alshogre was released after his mother saved up enough money to bribe officials for his release. He then fled to Sweden.

He quickly progressed through the school system after learning English and Swedish, and aimed to fulfil his father's dream of continuing his education.

"I grew up in a family where my father was really serious about education. He wanted me to go to the best school and have the top school in everything," Alshogre said.

"I had to choose between fulfilling my father's dream of finishing my education and going to the US."

He chose to travel to Washington, where he testified to German lawyers and European war crimes investigators building cases against the Assad regime.

He also became a public speaker, human rights activist, and director for detainee affairs at the Syrian Emergency Task Force. But he worried he was not fulfilling his late father's expectations.

"Every time I went home and saw my father's picture it told me I had to study, and I felt guilty," Alshogre said.

With his acceptance to Georgetown's Business Administration and Entrepreneurship course, he hopes to one day return to Syria and help rebuild his homeland.

"I am one of few survivors who is really enjoying his life and benefiting from everything I went through," he said.

"Now I got into one of the best universities. At every step I am taking, I am showing the Syrian regime that they could not break me. And that's an honor

for me and the (other) survivors."

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Syrian refugee in UK uses catering business to highlight Assad atrocitiesA Syrian refugee whose fridge was stolen from his home in Homs finds it in Beirut

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[UAE confirms 1,234 new COVID-19 cases, 1 death](#)

Mon, 2020-11-02 21:00

DUBAI: The UAE on Monday recorded 1,234 new COVID-19 cases and one death. The Ministry of Health and Prevention said the total number of cases since the pandemic began has reached 135,141, with the death toll at 497.
The ministry added that 1,516 people recovered over the previous 24 hours, bringing the total number of recoveries to 132,024.
Dubai's economic authority said for the second consecutive day, no establishments were closed and no fines or warnings issued regarding adherence to anti-COVID-19 measures.
Meanwhile, the Mohammed bin Rashid Medical Research Institute of the Al-

Jalila Foundation awarded 2.5 million dirhams ($680,652) in financial grants to five Emirati medical researchers in support of COVID-19 research and to help enhance the UAE's capacity to address this and other viral diseases.

> .@sheikhmansoor: Exploring new possibilities and breakthrough discoveries in healthcare and medical sectors is key to the #UAE's and #Dubai's efforts to create future-ready economic and social systems that are geared to meet the evolving needs of a post-COVID world. pic.twitter.com/S3HO9CeAUG
>
> — Dubai Media Office (@DXBMediaOffice) November 2, 2020

The grants in the fields of genetics, therapies and diagnostics are the first of their kind to be offered through the foundation, a member of the Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum Global Initiatives, a charitable institution dedicated to improving the lives of individuals through education and research in the medical field.
"At a time when the world is racing against time to find solutions for eradicating the virus, well-funded research efforts are critical to mitigate current and future health and economic challenges," said Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al-Maktoum, chairman of the board of trustees of the Al-Jalila Foundation.
In the emirate of Ajman, the Crisis, Disaster and Emergency Team announced that it is relaxing a ban on weddings and other social events in hotels, halls and houses from Nov. 1.

> فريق إدارة الطوارئ والأزمات والكوارث يسمح باستئناف إقامة الأعراس والمناسبات في عجمان pic.twitter.com/YAdBumKErD
>
> — ‬ajmanpoliceghq (@ajmanpoliceghq) November 1, 2020

It is permitting up to 200 people in hotels and halls, and a maximum of 50 people in homes, but social distancing measures and other preventive guidelines must be implemented.
Elsewhere, Kuwait recorded 759 new COVID-19 cases, bringing the total to 127,293. The death toll reached 786 after four new fatalities were registered.

> تعلن #وزارة_الصحة عن تأكيد إصابة 759 حالة جديدة، وتسجيل 828 حالة شفاء، و 4 حالات وفاة جديدة بـ #فيروس_كورونا_المستجدّ COVID-19 ، ليصبح إجمالي عدد الحالات 127,293 حالة pic.twitter.com/q17JwTLrCM
>
> — الكويت – وزارة الصحة (@KUWAIT_MOH) November 2, 2020

Oman's Health Ministry said the total number of cases had reached 116,152,

with the death toll at 1,256.

> #Statement No. 217
> November 2, 2020 pic.twitter.com/VlY4pn1qNp
>
> وزارة الصحة – عُمان (@OmaniMOH) November 2, 2020 —

In Bahrain, one death was reported, bringing the death toll to 322, while 210 new infected cases were confirmed.

> Out of 10699 COVID-19 tests carried out on 2 November 2020, 210 new cases have been detected among 41 expatriate workers, 162 new cases are contacts of active cases, and 7 are travel related. There were 321 recoveries from #COVID19, increasing total recoveries to 79318 pic.twitter.com/aARR0jqlbP
>
> وزارة الصحة | مملكة البحرين (@MOH_Bahrain) November 2, 2020 —

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Saudi health ministry records 381 new coronavirus casesUAE reports 1,278 new COVID-19 cases