

[Abu Dhabi permits people with negative COVID-19 test to enter emirate](#)

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DUBAI: Abu Dhabi will allow people to enter the emirate if they have tested negative for COVID-19 in the previous 48 hours, the local government media office said on Monday.

Abu Dhabi, the largest and wealthiest member of the United Arab Emirates federation, has had a ban on people entering since June 2. It eased some restrictions a week ago to allow movement between its cities for residents. Meanwhile, the United Arab Emirates will partially reopen mosques across the country starting July 1, with a reduced capacity of 30%, the spokesperson of the National Emergency Crisis and Disaster Management Authority said on Monday.

Saif Al Dhaheri said that mosques will remain closed for Friday prayers, but some will be open at other times while those located in industrial areas, shopping malls and public parks will stay closed for now.



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UAE announces suspension of all flights from Pakistan

Israeli annexation plan an 'existential threat' to Palestinian people: PM Shtayyeh

Mon, 2020-06-29 22:09

LONDON: Palestine's prime minister on Monday branded Israel's annexation plan an "existential threat" to the Palestinian people and urged European countries to take the lead in multilateral peace negotiations.

In an online briefing premier Mohammad Shtayyeh said: "Annexation of the West Bank is part of the systematic destruction of a future Palestinian state, but not only that. It is an existential threat to Palestinians as a people."

Israel's parliament will on Wednesday vote on whether to initiate the highly controversial plan of annexing up to 30 percent of the West Bank.

Shtayyeh warned that if the move went ahead it could be the beginning of a far more expansive Israeli expansion, threatening almost all Palestinian land.

"This annexation is a creeping annexation – a gradual annexation – that will only end by Israel swallowing all of the West Bank. This would leave Palestinians only with Gaza," he added.

Israel's plans, which have been rejected outright by all Palestinian groups, were developed and approved by the US without consultation with the Palestinians.

Shtayyeh said this showed that America was not an "honest broker" in the negotiations and that it could not be trusted, adding that the US should no longer take the lead in the peace process.

Instead, the PM urged a "paradigm shift from bilateralism to multilateralism," and pushed for European countries and the EU to take the lead in negotiating a fair settlement.

He proposed an international conference to start a multilateral process and said: "We are ready for serious negotiations based on international law." He added that British and European recognition of Palestinian statehood would be a justified and significant step in supporting the Palestinian people.

In a late development on the issue Monday, Benny Gantz, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition partner, suggested that the annexation vote may not take place on Wednesday at all, saying that Israel should instead focus on fighting the country's coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak.

Netanyahu, however, told members of his Likud party that the issue was “not up to” Gantz.

Israeli plans for annexation have been met with widespread international condemnation, including from the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and the EU.

Human rights experts from the UN have likened it to “21st-century apartheid,” and British Middle East minister, James Cleverly, told the UN Security Council last week that the UK “strongly opposes” annexation as a breach of international law. “Annexation could not go unanswered, and we implore Israel to reconsider,” he said.

However, it remains unclear what concrete steps the British government, EU and many other objecting countries will take should Israel follow through with the annexation.



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Israeli defense chief says West Bank annexation ‘will wait’ Israel’s Gantz says date for West Bank annexation talks ‘not sacred’

Israeli defense chief says West Bank annexation 'will wait'

Author:

Mon, 2020-06-29 20:00

JERUSALEM: Israel's defense minister says Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's plan to begin annexing West Bank territory will have to wait due to the country's coronavirus crisis.

Benny Gantz, who also holds the title of alternative prime minister, told his Blue and White Party on Monday that his top priority is helping the country navigate the health and economic crisis stemming from the coronavirus.

"Anything unrelated to the battle against the coronavirus will wait," he said.

Netanyahu has said he wants to begin annexing occupied land as soon as this week.

The UN's human rights chief on Monday said that Israel's planned annexation of parts of the occupied West Bank would have "disastrous" consequences for the region, as US and Israeli officials were meeting in Jerusalem to try and finalize the move.

The warning by Michelle Bachelet, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, added to the growing chorus of international voices urging Israel not to annex territory in line with President Donald Trump's Middle East plan.

The UN secretary-general, the European Union and key Arab countries have all spoken out against annexation, saying it would violate international law and all but destroy any remaining hopes of establishing a viable Palestinian state alongside Israel.

"The precise consequences of annexation cannot be predicted," Bachelet said in a statement issued by her office in Geneva. "But they are likely to be disastrous for the Palestinians, for Israel itself, and for the wider region."

Israel's Foreign Ministry accused Bachelet of politicizing her office and noted that it froze ties with her office early this year due to what it called her "one-sided" attitude.

"It is not surprising that she decided today to join the Palestinian campaign against the American peace plan, and to publish declarations before any decision has been made," the ministry said in a statement.

The Trump plan, unveiled in January, envisions leaving some 30% of the West Bank under permanent Israeli control, while granting the Palestinians autonomy in the remainder of the area.

The Palestinians claim all of the West Bank, along with east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, for a fully independent state. Israel captured all three areas in the 1967 Mideast war, though it withdrew from Gaza in 2005, clearing the way for Hamas militants to seize control two years later.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a strong supporter of Trump, has been unswayed by the international criticism. He says the supportive Trump presidency has provided a rare opportunity to redraw the Mideast map and

annex Israel's scores of settlements, as well as the strategic Jordan Valley. He has pledged to move forward as soon as July 1, seeking to take action well before the US presidential election in November.

In a speech to evangelical Christian supporters of Israel late Sunday, Netanyahu said Trump's plan "finally puts to rest the two-state illusion" and would "advance peace."

"President Trump's plan doesn't really change the reality on the ground. It recognizes the reality on the ground," he said.

Netanyahu's coalition partner, Defense Minister and Alternate Prime Minister Benny Gantz, however, has appeared to be more cautious. Both Netanyahu and Gantz were meeting with White House envoy Avi Berkowitz and the US Ambassador to Israel David Friedman to work on a final map outlining which areas will be annexed. The talks were continuing after a series of meetings in Washington last week ended inconclusively.

Gantz was quoted by Israeli media as saying that Netanyahu's target date of this Wednesday is not "sacred." The plan has also come under surprising criticism from West Bank settler leaders, who believe it does not go far enough and say that any plan that envisions even a watered-down Palestinian state must be opposed.

Israeli media have reported that Netanyahu is considering scaling back his plans and is expected to annex just a small number of settlements in a largely symbolic move.

But in her statement, Bachelet warned that even a small annexation would create a "highly combustible mix."

She said deepening Israel's control of West Bank land would likely harm Palestinian freedom of movement, turn Palestinian population centers into "enclaves" and clear the way for Israel to "illegally" expropriate Palestinian land.

"The shockwaves of annexation will last for decades, and will be extremely damaging to Israel, as well as to the Palestinians," Bachelet warned.

"However there is still time to reverse this decision."

Dozens of Jewish legal scholars, meanwhile, sent a letter to the Israeli government urging Israel to drop the annexation plan.

The letter, sponsored by the Global Jewish Coalition, an umbrella group of liberal pro-Israel Jewish groups, said annexation would "fundamentally breach" international law and expose Israel to "new and grave dangers."



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Israel's Gantz says date for West Bank annexation talks 'not sacred' Tough choices for Hamas over Israeli annexation plans

[Iran reports record 162 COVID-19 single-day death toll](#)

Author:

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Mon, 2020-06-29 11:57

TEHRAN: Iran reported on Monday 162 more deaths from the novel coronavirus, the highest single-day toll since the country's outbreak began in February. "This increase in numbers is in fact a reflection of our overall performance,

both in terms of reopening and in compliance with health protocols,” health ministry spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari said at a news conference.

The previous record daily toll of 158 deaths was reported by health authorities in early April.

Official figures have shown an upward trajectory in new confirmed cases since early May, when Iran hit a near two-month low in daily recorded infections.

Iran reported its first COVID-19 cases on February 19 and it has since struggled to contain the outbreak, the deadliest in the Middle East.

Lari announced an additional 2,536 new cases on Monday, bringing the total to 225,205. The overall official death toll is now at 10,670

Iranian authorities have refrained from enforcing full lockdowns to stop the pandemic’s spread and the use of masks and protective equipment has been optional in most areas.

Iran closed schools, cancelled public events and banned movement between its 31 provinces in March, but the government progressively lifted restrictions from April to try to reopen its sanctions-hit economy.

Iran’s supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Saturday that “momentum and effort has waned among some of the people and authorities” to combat the virus, warning the country’s economic problems would worsen if the disease spreads unchecked.

Authorities launched a campaign over the weekend to encourage people to wear masks and decreed mandatory mask-wearing “in covered spaces where there are gatherings” from Saturday, the beginning of the week in Iran.

The increasing virus caseload has seen some previously unscathed provinces classified as “red” – the highest level on Iran’s colour-coded risk scale – with authorities allowing them to reimpose restrictive measures if required.

According to Lari, the provinces of Khuzestan, Hormozgan, Kurdistan, Kermanshah, Boushehr, West and East Azerbaijan and Khorasan Razavi are classified as “red”.

The provinces of Ilam, Lorestan and Golestan are on alert, she added.



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Iran issues arrest warrant for Trump over killing of top general

[Iran issues arrest warrant for Trump over killing of top general](#)

Author:

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Mon, 2020-06-29 11:55

Iran has issued an arrest warrant for US President Donald Trump and 35 others over the killing of top general Qassem Soleimani and has asked Interpol for help, Tehran prosecutor Ali Alqasimehr said on Monday, according to the Fars news agency.

On Jan. 3, a US drone strike in Iraq killed Soleimani, leader of the Revolutionary Guards' Quds Force. Washington blamed Soleimani for

masterminding attacks by Iran-aligned militias on US forces in the region.



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