

# Deaths in Aden drop by 43 percent, officials say

Fri, 2020-06-19 23:04

AL-MUKALLA: Deaths from the coronavirus and other diseases in Yemen's southern port city of Aden have dropped by 43 percent in the first 16 days of this month, local government officials and medics said on Friday.

The UN said that the fatality rate was still "alarming" high.

Official figures showed that dengue fever, chikungunya, ebola, malaria, pneumonic plague and other illnesses killed 1,823 people in May.

Abdulla bin Ghouth, a professor of epidemiology at Hadramout University's College of Medicine, said that the total number of deaths over the first 16 days of June was 484 compared to 861 during the same period in May, based on burial permits from the government's civil authority office in Aden.

"The logical explanation is that this is the beginning of the ebb of the epidemic in Aden," Bin Ghouth told Arab News. "We do not want to generalize this conclusion as we need to follow the epidemiological curve of cases for another three weeks in addition to bed occupancy of isolation centers in Aden."

The internationally recognized government of Yemen in May declared Aden an "infested" city due to the rapid spread of the coronavirus, as heavy rains and flash floods battered the city's infrastructures.

Local health workers say that they have detected a decrease in the number of patients and deaths in Aden since the beginning of this month. Mukhtar Saeed Nasser, a physician at Al-Jumhuriya Hospital in Aden, told Arab News that daily deaths at the hospital were now at three compared to 15 to 20 in late April and early May.

"There is a great decrease in the number of deaths compared to the early days of Ramadan. Most of today's deaths are older people," Nasser said. He attributed the drop to better health services, more medical staff, effective awareness campaigns and medical and logistical support from international organizations such as Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF).

On Thursday, the national coronavirus committee reported seven new cases and four deaths in Hadramout, Lahj and Taiz, bringing the total number of cases to 909, including 248 deaths and 273.

## **Medical assistance**

An air-borne shipment of 43 tons of laboratory supplies, ventilators, test kits, PCR machines and PPE arrived in Yemen on Friday to help the country's fragile health system stem the spread of coronavirus, the International

Initiative on COVID-19 in Yemen (IICY) said in a statement seen by Arab News.

Auke Lootsma, acting Humanitarian Coordinator in Yemen, was quoted as saying: "This donation comes at a critical time. It will have a massive and immediate impact on the ground helping to fill the gaps in Yemen's hospitals and laboratories countrywide."

The shipment is a donation to the World Health Organization (WHO) facilitated by the Hayel Saeed Anam Foundation on behalf of the International Initiative on COVID-19 in Yemen (IICY), a collaborative partnership of multinational companies and the UN.

Labs across Yemen have recently complained about a severe shortage of coronavirus testing kits, which has hampered the government's efforts to fight the spread of the disease.



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Coronavirus medical aid arrives in Yemen  
Yemeni tribes in Al-Bayda province  
revolt against Houthis

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# Morocco records biggest single-day rise in COVID-19 cases

Author:

Reuters

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RABAT: Morocco's Health Ministry reported 539 new coronavirus cases on Friday, the biggest daily rise so far, most of them in a cluster north of Rabat.

There are now 9,613 confirmed cases in Morocco, with a mortality rate of 2.2% and a recovery rate of 84.5%, according to official figures.

The government this month eased some lockdown measures in regions with low infection rates, but kept in place a ban on people leaving their homes without permits in areas with more cases, including some big cities.

The area around the cluster, some 150 km north of the capital, is covered by the permits but lockdowns are harder to enforce in rural and semi-rural areas.

Most businesses are working again, but restaurants, cafes, cinemas and other enterprises in the vital services sector remain shut along with airports.

Businesses have been asked to test all their employees, as the country increased its daily testing capacity to over 17,500.





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Morocco prisoners make masks for fellow inmates

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## [Algeria cracks down on activists in bid to break protest movement](#)

Author:

Amal Belalloufi, with Philippe Agret in Tunis | AFP

ID:

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Fri, 2020-06-19 14:37

ALGIERS: Algeria has intensified a crackdown on an anti-government protest movement, targeting social media users in a bid to stop demonstrations

resuming once coronavirus restrictions end.

Weekly protests rocked the North African country for more than a year and only stopped in March due to the novel coronavirus outbreak.

The "Hirak" protest movement caused the downfall of former president Abdelaziz Bouteflika in April 2019 after 20 years in power. It has continued demanding an overhaul of Algeria's governance system, in place since independence from France in 1962.

Authorities have made about 200 arrests linked to the protests since the country's coronavirus restrictions came into effect three months ago, according to Said Salhi, vice president of the Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights.

"The authorities have taken advantage of the lull to arrest the maximum number of activists," he said.

Protesters are being pursued for "crimes of opinion and expression connected to posts on social media, particularly Facebook," he said, with some of their homes searched and mobile phones confiscated.

Most of the authorities' actions are based on changes to the penal code that were passed in April amid the health crisis and have been denounced by human rights activists.

Salhi called the moves "an irresponsible attack, verging on provocation, against fundamental human rights."

On Thursday, more than 20 opposition activists were summoned to appear in seven separate hearings, mostly in trials that had been delayed due to the pandemic.

Those accused include figures in the protest movement, political activists, journalists and people accused of mocking the regime online.

"The government doesn't believe in change, it refuses to listen to the people," lawyer Mustapha Bouchachi was quoted as saying this week in French-language daily Liberte.

"In my opinion, it is making these arrests to break the Hirak," he added.

According to detainees' rights association CNLD, 60 prisoners of conscience are currently jailed.

In a sign the government might be nervous about the public mood, several academics rushed to its defense in official media this week, accusing a "neo-Hirak" of being "in the service of a foreign plan."

But press freedom group Reporters Without Borders (RSF) has called on the Algerian authorities to "stop using the justice system to muzzle the media."

"The increase in legal proceedings against Algerian journalists is extremely worrying and indicates a blatant deterioration of press freedom in Algeria," RSF director for North Africa, Souhaieb Khayati, said in a statement.

Four Algerian journalists were prosecuted or sentenced to prison this week. The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists has also urged Algerian authorities to "stop using the COVID-19 pandemic as an excuse to clamp down on press freedom."

Some of Algeria's coronavirus lockdown measures have been gradually lifted since June 7.

But gatherings, including the weekly Hirak marches, are still strictly forbidden.

Algeria has officially reported 11,385 cases and 811 deaths from the COVID-19 illness.

Provincial areas have seen sporadic mobilizations in support of detainees in

recent weeks, particularly in the northeastern Kabylie region, while streets in Algiers and Oran have remained quiet. Protesters in Kabylie's two main towns Bejaia and Tizi Ouzou on Friday called for the government to step down, videos shared online showed. The CNLD reported about 10 arrests were made in Bejaia and several more in Tizi Ouzou. An anti-government coalition within the Pact for the Democratic Alternative has urged Algerians to "stay mobilized but vigilant in order to engage forcefully in the resumption of peaceful protests" when the health situation allows. And although there were calls on social media to restart weekly protests on Friday, activists, lawyers, student associations and political parties warned of the health risks. But instead of crushing the unprecedented, leaderless protest movement, the crackdown could have the opposite effect. "There is a general feeling of 'hogra'" prevailing among the population, said Salhi, using an Algerian term that refers to injustice and abuse of power. "Some are already planning to go back to the streets" despite the coronavirus risk, he said.



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Algeria to ease coronavirus restrictions on Sunday  
Algeria to release 2 protest leaders, says opposition politician

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## [Iran urges social distancing as coronavirus cases top 200,000](#)

Author:

Reuters

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Fri, 2020-06-19 14:19

DUBAI: Iran's tally of confirmed coronavirus cases topped 200,000 on Friday, as state media continued to warn about a lack of proper social distancing despite a new surge of infections.

Daily deaths have exceeded 100 most of this week, for the first time in two months. The Health Ministry announced 120 deaths in the previous 24 hours, taking the total to 9,392, and 2,615 new cases for a total of 200,262.

State television showed several families picnicking without masks or social distancing. Reminded about the fact that one person was dying every 12 to 15 minutes, an unidentified family father said: "My daughter was getting depressed. We really had to get out of the house."

The parliamentary research center issued a report in April suggesting that the actual number of coronavirus deaths might be almost twice the official figure.

State television quoted Hossein Erfani, head of the Health Ministry's contagious disease care department, as saying provinces will be allowed to decide locally to impose or suspend restrictions in the fight against the virus.

"Depending on whether it is high-, medium- or low-risk, each province and county will decide on imposing necessary restrictions or suspending them," Erfani said.

Six of Iran's 31 provinces are currently high-risk coronavirus areas, state said.



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## [Turkey ready for fast reconstruction in conflict-torn Libya, official says](#)

Author:

Reuters

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ANKARA: Turkey is ready to rapidly start rebuilding conflict-torn Libya, a senior Turkish official said on Friday, after President Tayyip Erdogan's senior deputies visited Tripoli this week to discuss cooperation on energy, construction and banking.

Turkish support has helped the internationally-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) reverse a 14-month assault on Tripoli by Khalifa



Haftar's eastern-based Libyan National Army (LNA) that is backed by Russia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt.

A Turkish delegation including the foreign and finance ministers met GNA officials on Wednesday for talks Ankara said aimed to bring about an end to fighting.

They also discussed payments owed to Turkish companies for past energy and construction work in Libya, the official told Reuters, requesting anonymity. The Turkish and GNA officials discussed how Turkey could help in energy exploration and operations, including cooperation "on every imaginable project" to help resources reach global markets, the senior official said. "Many parts of the country are in debris, there is a serious need for infrastructure and superstructure. Turkish companies ... are in a position to rapidly begin such work," the official said.

Before Turkey officially threw its support behind the GNA in November last year, Turkish builders had worked on projects in Libya. The backlog of Turkish contract work in Libya amounts to \$16 billion, including \$400-500 million for projects which have not yet begun, a sector official said in January.

Turkish energy firm Karadeniz Power could use its ships to remotely alleviate Libya's energy shortages amid the fighting, the official added.

Another Turkish source said Ankara and the GNA also discussed sending Turkish advisers to Tripoli to help rebuild its banking system.

On Thursday, Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said on broadcaster CNN Turk that part of the talks were about Turkish firms returning to Libya after the conflict. He said Turkey may also expand the scope of its military cooperation with the GNA.

Turkey and Russia, which back opposing sides in Syria too, have been collaborating for a cease-fire in Libya. Turkish entry into the conflict has also stoked tensions with other actors, as Ankara seeks a foothold in the oil-rich North African country.

The GNA and LNA have resumed United Nations-brokered cease-fire talks.



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Arab League plans urgent meeting on LibyaGreece urges EU not to be 'weak' on Libya after naval tension