

Top Iran body denies negligence in teenage girl's killing

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Sat, 2020-05-30 15:31

TEHRAN: Iran's Guardian Council denied Saturday that the killing of a teenage girl by her father was the result of "negligence" due to a delay in its approval of a new child protection law.

Last week's apparent "honor" killing of Romina Ashrafi, 14, sparked outrage across Iran, with media denouncing "institutionalized violence" in the "patriarchal" Islamic republic.

After her death, Vice President for Women and Family Affairs Masoumeh Ebtekar deplored a delay in the validation by the 12-member Guardian Council of a bill on the protection of children and teenagers.

Ebtekar said the bill was in the "final phase" of approval by the council and urged the top body, which is tasked with ensuring legislation complies with the constitution and Islamic sharia law, to pass it quickly.

The council has previously called three times for changes to the draft law after it was passed by lawmakers, the reformist Ebtekar newspaper wrote on Wednesday.

The daily said it was concerned that another delay would spell the bill's demise, particularly since Iran's new parliament is dominated by conservatives and hard-liners.

"There has been no negligence on the part of the council... concerning the approval of a draft law on the rights of children," Guardian Council spokesman Abbas Ali Kadkhodaei said Saturday.

"And I don't see any link between this bill and the fact that this abominable crime took place," he told a news conference.

According to Iranian media, Romina Ashrafi was killed in her sleep on May 21 by her father, who decapitated her in the family home in Talesh in northern Gilan province.

The reports said she ran away after her father refused her permission to marry a man 15 years older, but was detained and taken home.

The legal age to marry in Iran is 13 for women.

Kadkhodaei said the council had indicated to parliament that it had some "objections" concerning the text of the bill and that lawmakers could have met in an emergency session to further discuss the draft law.

But he added: "One law alone cannot resolve such problems (apparent 'honor' crimes) which have a cultural, social and even economic dimension."

Iranian media reported that after authorities detained the teenager, she told a judge she feared for her life if she was sent home.

But what most outraged public opinion was that the girl's father was likely to face a lenient punishment of just three to 10 years in prison, which could be further reduced, according to the Ebtekar newspaper.



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Iran reports most new cases in nearly two months

[Dubai reopens four beaches, major parks](#)

Thu, 2020-05-28 23:23

DUBAI: Dubai will reopen four major beaches and some parks on Friday as Covid-19 restrictions in the emirate are eased.

The beaches at Jumeriah Beach Residence (JBR), Al-Mamzar, Jumeirah and Umm Suqeim will all be open, Dubai Municipality said. on Twitter.

Major parks and the Dubai Frame, an architectural landmark, will also open to the public from Friday.

Precautionary measures imposed by the municipality are to be strictly followed, it said.

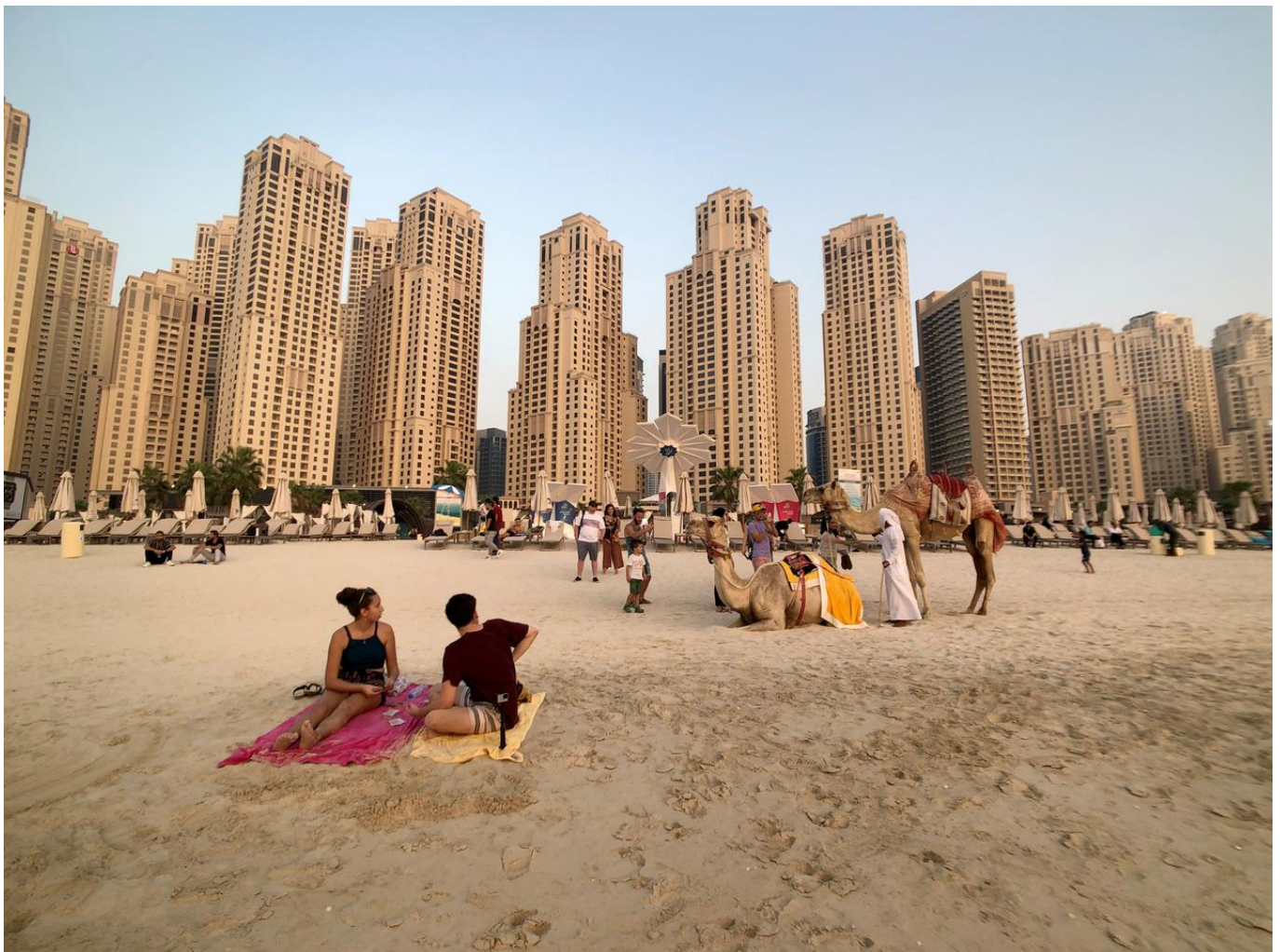
[.@DMunicipality](#) announces the reopening of JBR beach, Al Mamzar, Jumeirah and Umm Suqeim beaches from tomorrow, Friday May 29, and asks all to adhere to the public safety measures and guidelines to

ensure the health & safety of all. [#We_Are_All_Responsible](#)
pic.twitter.com/bgKRHResmf

– Dubai Media Office (@DXBMediaOffice) [May 28, 2020](#)

[.@DMunicipality](#) announces the reopening of major parks and the Dubai Frame to the general public from tomorrow, Friday May 29, and asks all to strictly follow the precautionary measures imposed by the Municipality at these locations for your safety.
pic.twitter.com/pNyzZ0g2dp

– Dubai Media Office (@DXBMediaOffice) [May 28, 2020](#)



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Dubai Airports confirm readiness to resume scheduled, transit flights
Dubai Municipality reassures residents after swarms of locust spotted, 'situation under control'
Dubai government employees to start returning to work on Sunday

[UN officials appeal for Yemen funding amid pandemic](#)

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Thu, 2020-05-28 19:59

UNITED NATIONS, United States: Top officials from several UN agencies appealed Thursday for urgent international financial support in Yemen with coronavirus spreading in the war-torn country.

"We are increasingly alarmed about the situation in Yemen," officials from the UN Humanitarian Affairs Department, UNICEF, the World Food Programme and the World Health Organization said in a joint statement.

"We are running out of time," they said.

The United Nations says COVID-19 has likely already spread throughout most of Yemen, which was already immersed in the world's worst humanitarian crisis because of a war that shows no sign of abating.

The UN officials said they currently have enough "skills, staff and capacity."

"What we don't have is the money. We ask donors to pledge generously and pay pledges promptly," they said, noting that a donors conference has been organized for June 2 by Saudi Arabia and the United Nations.

Mark Lowcock, the under secretary-general for humanitarian affairs, said \$2.4 billion needed to be raised by the end of the year for Yemen, including \$180 million to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Yemen is in desperate need of assistance," Muhannad Hadi of the World Food Programme said, while UNICEF's director, Henriette Fore, warned of a "major disaster."

More than 12 million children in Yemen are in need of humanitarian aid, she said.

Before the pandemic, two million children lacked schools. Another five million have since been forced to quit school, she said.

Officially, 50 people have died from the new coronavirus in Yemen and infections have been reported in 10 of country's 22 governorates.

"But testing and reporting remain limited and it is likely that most areas of the country are already impacted, if not all," the United Nations reports.

Yemen has been engulfed in war since 2014 between Iranian-backed Houthi rebels, who control several regions including the capital Sanaa, and the government backed by an Arab coalition.



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Houthis' 'Iranian-style management' of coronavirus pandemic endangers millions: Yemen minister Yemenis ignore health warnings during Eid

[A sewing workshop churns out life-saving suits in coronavirus-stricken Lebanon](#)

Thu, 2020-05-28 22:39

BEIRUT: In the time of the coronavirus when most people were asked not to leave their houses and to work from home, some women in Lebanon's Saida region chose to make protective suits at Machghal El Oum.

The workshop was established in 1994 to manufacture fashion items, embroidery and linen, but today Machghal El Oum is dedicated to the production of

protective suits to counter the coronavirus threat.

The women who work there are doing a public service by helping the factory to cope with the surging demand for face masks in Lebanon.



Some women in Lebanon's Saida region chose to make protective suits at Machghal El Oum. (Supplied)

"The idea was born with the spread of the coronavirus disease in Lebanon and the dire lack of supplies in the markets," said Wafa Wehbe, manager of Machghal El Oum.

"We felt the need to help Lebanese society, especially after the closure of borders and airports and, consequently, the cessation of import of protective suits," she said.

Research and many experiments have been conducted by Machghal El Oum in cooperation with engineers and specialists to discover the best type of fabric to prevent liquids and any kind of spray from reaching the wearer's skin.

The fabric – such as titanium TNT, which blocks external elements – must also be available in the Lebanese market.

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READ MORE: [A Tunisian apparel-retail entrepreneur rides the e-commerce wave](#)

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That is how about 20 women started working at Machghal El Oum, producing 400 protective suits a day, each requiring 15 to 20 minutes to sew.

There is an increasing demand for the suits, according to Wehbe, who adds that Machghal El Oum is currently cooperating with the Lebanese Red Cross and the World Health Organization.

Ghassan Hanqir, the director of public relations at the Islamic Welfare Association (which established the workshop), said that hospitals, pharmacists, relief agencies and restaurants placed orders for hundreds of suits daily.

He said that the price of a suit was symbolic and not for profit, but enough to purchase the required materials and pay the workers' salaries.

The women at the workshop are from the marginalized and economically disadvantaged sections of Lebanese society.



Some women in Lebanon's Saida region chose to make protective suits at Machghal El Oum. (Supplied)

When the workshop was founded 25 years ago, an applicant's socio-economic

status was used as the main criterion for hiring, Wehbe said.

“We provide work for women in need, who are divorced, widowed or refugees. Each year, we offer them six-month sewing courses, at the end of which we provide them with sewing machines.

“The highly qualified women are offered jobs in our workshop.”

FASTFACT

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Number of women who started working at Machghal El Oum, producing 400 protective suits per day.

These women, in spite of their difficult circumstances, or perhaps because of them, did not seek to opt out during the coronavirus crisis.

They decided to put in hard work to meet the increasing demand for protective suits and items such as plastic masks and shoes, according to Wehbe.

She said that the management of Machghal El Oum took the safety of the women employees very seriously.

We felt the need to help Lebanese society, especially after the closure of borders and airports and, consequently, the cessation of import of protective suits.

Wafa Wehbe, manager of Machghal El Oum

There are currently 20 women working at a time, rotating based on a two-hour shift.

“We do not know whether or not we will increase the number,” she said. “We are working in a daily state of emergency that may change at any time.”

Wehbe said that the workshop was continuously sterilized; masks and gloves are provided; and temperature checks are carried out when the women arrive at the premises for work.

The seating arrangement is set up so the women are able to maintain a safe social distance.



Some women in Lebanon’s Saida region chose to make protective suits at Machghal El Oum. (Supplied)

Dr. Kamel Kuzbar, the Saida Municipality member responsible for tackling the coronavirus situation, praised and encouraged the women working at Machghal

El Oum.

He said that the initiative aimed to address the problem of the lack of protective gear in the country.

Kuzbar said that the municipality cooperated fully with the workshop and other active institutions in its endeavor to take precautions and reduce the impact of the pandemic.



Some women in Lebanon's Saida region chose to make protective suits at Machghal El Oum. (Supplied)

As well as cooperating with Machghal El Oum, he said, Saida Municipality was working to provide guidance, instructions and sterilization to the community.

It was also imposing home quarantine and distributing sterilization materials, food and medicine in areas of need.

In making these protective suits, the women of Machghal El Oum are doing their part to serve their country and its people.

- *This report is being published by Arab News as a partner of the Middle East Exchange, which was launched by the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives to reflect the vision of the UAE prime minister and ruler of Dubai to explore the possibility of changing the status of the Arab region.*



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A Tunisian apparel-retail entrepreneur rides the e-commerce waveDubai's luxury fashion designers to make PPE

[Yemen begins repatriation of thousands of stranded citizens](#)

Author:

Thu, 2020-05-28 21:37

AL-MUKALLA: Yemen began repatriation flights on Thursday for thousands of Yemenis stranded abroad due to coronavirus lockdown. However, there were fears that those repatriated might push up coronavirus cases in the war-ravaged Yemen.

In March, Yemen's internationally recognized government canceled flights to and from the country's airports to prevent the spread of coronavirus. Thousands of Yemenis stranded abroad sent appeals to the government to arrange rescue flights as they had run out of money.

A plane operated by Yemenia, the national airline, touched down on Thursday at Seiyun Airport in the southeastern province of Hadramout carrying 152 Yemenis from Amman amid heavy safety procedures. These included preventing the passengers from having contact with the airport staff and disinfecting their luggage and the plane. A health worker wearing personal protective wear collected passports as other workers disinfecting the luggage.

"The travelers were not allowed to enter the terminal building. Buses carried them from the airport tarmac to their homes," a worker at the airport told Arab News, speaking on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to reporters.

A Yemenia plane might be carrying the same number of stranded people from Cairo airport to Seiyun airport next week, the airport worker said.

Yemeni government officials said that Thursday's flight from Amman is part of a larger plan to evacuate more than 10,000 Yemenis by air, land and sea in June.

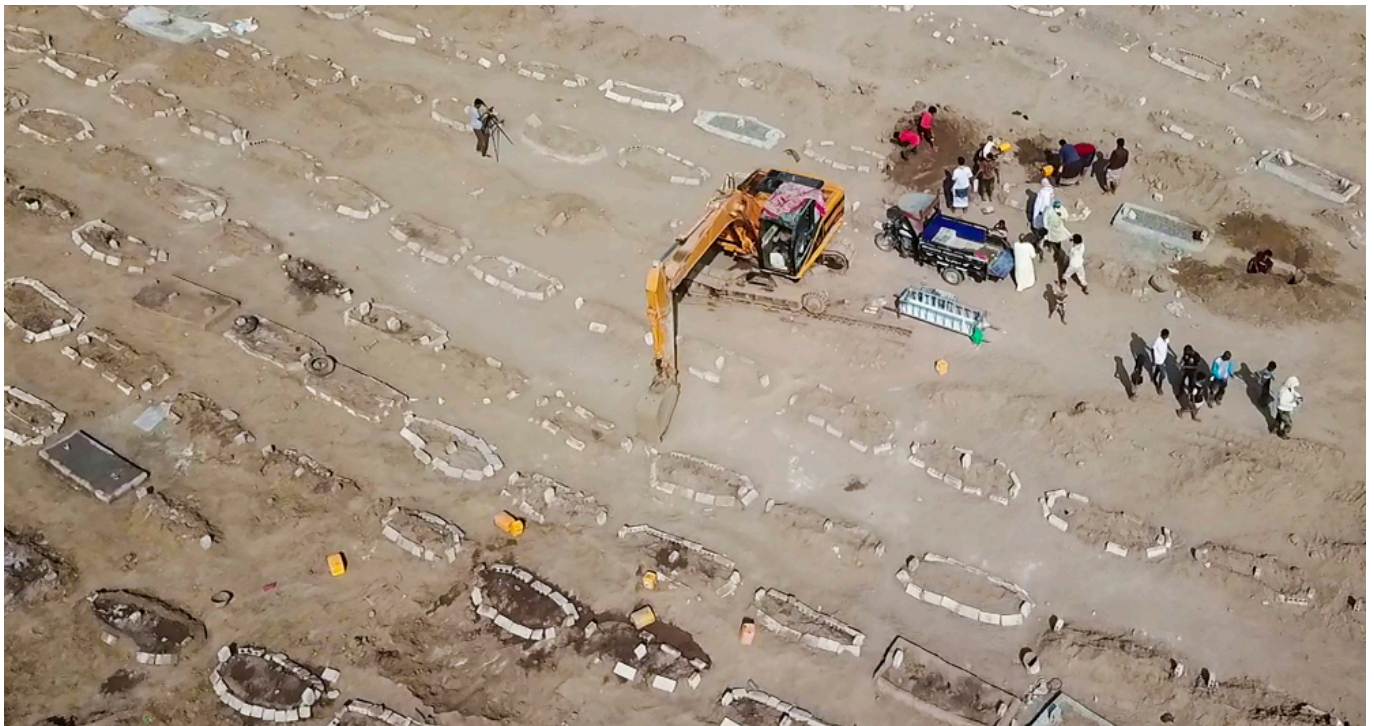
A local government official in Aden told Arab News that the Yemeni government would pay for plane fuel, empty seats and Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests for COVID-19 in some countries. "We have paid a big bill to bring them back home," he said. All stranded people would have to do PCR tests to make sure that they are free of the virus 48 hours before leaving their host countries.

“The biggest concentration of stranded Yemenis is in Egypt, where we signed contracts with local labs for coronavirus tests,” the government official said. More than 1200 stranded Yemenis in the UAE will be carried on UAE commercial flights to Riyan airport in the city of Al-Mukalla. The UAE will provide them with free of charge coronavirus tests. Stranded Yemenis in Oman and Saudi Arabia can go by land to Yemen provided they are carrying coronavirus test reports. Yemenis in Djibouti would have to sail to Yemeni seaports on the Red Sea, the government official said.

Regarding stranded Yemenis who live inside Houthi-controlled areas, the Yemeni government official said a Yemenia plane would touch down in Sana’a but not before receiving a formal assurance from the UN that the Houthis would allow planes to depart Sana’a airport. “We are worried that the Houthis might seize the planes,” the government official said.

Despite the announcement of the government repatriation process, stranded Yemeni arranged sit-ins in many countries, demanding immediate evacuation. On Thursday, dozens of Yemenis arranged a small sit-in in the Indian capital to demand their government to accelerate the repatriation process. “We heard about rescue flights from Amman. Our situation here in India is different. Those who are sick cannot not find money to buy food, let alone medicine. We want the government to arrange at least one flight a day to bring us back home,” a protester said in a video seen by Arab News.

The Aden-based national coronavirus committee said on Wednesday that seven new cases in Taiz, Shabwa and Dhale brought the total number in Yemen to 256, including 10 recoveries. It said there have been one new death, bringing the total number to 53 fatalities.



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