[Yemeni Army makes gains in Jouf, Al-Bayda provinces](#)

Author:
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AL-MUKALLA, Yemen: The Yemeni Army and allied tribesmen seized a military base in the northern province of Jouf, and a large swathe of land in the central province of Al-Bayda, following intense battles with Iran-backed Houthis, army commanders and government officials said on Wednesday.

Yemeni Information Minister Muammar Al-Iryani said government troops recaptured Labenat military base in Jouf and surrounding areas from the Houthis.

He added that Arab coalition warplanes and their military experts on the ground have played a key role in helping government troops take the upper hand on the battlefield.

Local military commanders say their next goal is consolidating their positions around the military base before launching another offensive on Jouf's capital Hazem, which fell to the Houthis last month.

Col. Rabia Al-Qurashi, the army's spokesman in Jouf, told Arab News on Wednesday that troops were stationed almost 10 km from Hazem as the Arab coalition targeted Houthi gatherings in the city to pave the way for the troops to storm it.

Al-Qurashi thanked the Arab coalition for its continued support, and said the Houthis suffered heavy blows in Jouf after failing to convince army officers and tribal leaders to switch sides.

In Al-Bayda, government forces seized a sprawling chain of mountains in Malajem and Natea after killing dozens of Houthi fighters on Tuesday.

State TV quoted Maj. Gen. Moufreh Al-Bouheh as saying government forces liberated Al-Ghader, Waled and Qaida mountains after a swift assault against the Houthis, at least 40 of whom were killed in the fighting.

The Arab coalition carried at least five air sorties, targeting Houthi military gatherings and reinforcements.

Backed by air support and military logistics from the coalition, Yemeni Army troops and allied tribesmen last week seized most of Helan, a chain of mountains from where the Houthis would shell residential areas in the densely populated city of Marib.

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Tags:
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[Lebanon may tighten health checks after returning expats test positive](#)

Wed, 2020-04-08 21:11

BEIRUT: Lebanon may tighten health checks on expats after 11 out of the 226 nationals who returned on Tuesday tested positive for coronavirus.

The expats had come back from Paris and Madrid, and there was an additional coronavirus case discovered on a private jet.

Those returning from abroad were placed in quarantine for 14 days, as were the employees who came into contact with them at hotels they spent their first night in upon arriving in Beirut.

Lebanon had 575 cases as of Wednesday and a death toll of 19, according to a Health Ministry report.

"We have not recorded cases among passengers returning from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Kinshasa because these countries are not considered infected with the virus," Dr. Abdul Rahman Bizri, an infectious disease specialist and member of the emergency coronavirus committee on coronavirus, told Arab News. "The problem was with citizens returning from Europe, as many of those countries have a high number of cases. In light of the test results of expatriates returning from Istanbul and Lagos, we will assess the matter and make decisions at a medical meeting Thursday, and we may be strict in testing people before they board the plane to Beirut."

Officials are also considering suspension of operations to repatriate Lebanese from Europe.

Lebanese President Michel Aoun said there was a need for tighter security measures and to maintain coordination between the military and security forces, while Prime Minister Hassan Diab said it was important to take precautions and "pre-emptive security (measures)" to ensure stability. The Supreme Council of Defense is due to discuss the possibility of extending the general mobilization period until the end of this month.

Bizri said that the spread of the virus in Bsharri town, where there have been 34 more cases, required Lebanese municipal authorities to enforce quarantines because returning expats hailed from different regions. Monitoring quarantine was the responsibility of the Interior Ministry, he added.

Health Minister Hamad Hassan said that the critical period between containing the epidemic in Lebanon and the continuation of its spread would extend until the end of this month.

He visited Bsharri to inspect the situation and the preventive measures put in place to check the spread of the disease.

Amaury Gregoire, who is head of the Medecins Sans Frontières (MSF) mission in Lebanon, expressed concern about the insufficient number of team members currently present in the Bekaa Valley in the event of an outbreak. This region includes Syrian and Palestinian refugee camps, although no cases have been reported in camps.

He said medical centers were making preparations "to better anticipate the flood of COVID-19 patients" and that non-emergency surgical services would be temporarily suspended.

Hospitals in Bekaa and south Lebanon, especially the central hospital of the Palestine Red Crescent Society in Lebanon, were being supported through the provision of hygiene supplies and breathing tubes for patients, in addition to training UN staff in infection prevention and control, and organizing intensive health awareness sessions on COVID-19 for fragile communities in Tripoli and Akkar.
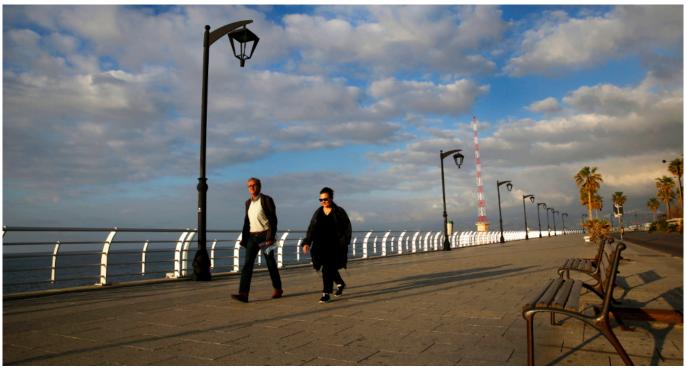
Lebanese Minister of Social Affairs Ramzi Musharrafieh launched a program within the social emergency plan to help families affected by the pandemic.

He emphasized in a press conference that none of the families that submitted their forms to the ministry will be excluded, and the Lebanese army will distribute aid.

Sheikh Abdul Latif Derian, the Grand Mufti of Lebanon, directed institutions affiliated with Dar Al-Fatwa in all governorates to work with philanthropists to help the needy and alleviate hunger and poverty.

Derian appealed to Arab states to support Lebanon and its people in facing the repercussions of the coronavirus pandemic.

The prime minister condemned price gouging as food prices rose by up to 70 percent. "The livelihood of Lebanese people is a red line, and it is forbidden for businessmen to touch food security," he said.

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UAE announces 300 new cases of coronavirusMillions in Lebanon risk food insecurity over coronavirus lockdown: Human Rights Watch

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[UAE announces 300 new cases of](#)

[coronavirus](#)

Author:
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DUBAI: The UAE announced 300 new cases of coronavirus bringing the total number of cases in the country to 2,659.
The official spokesperson for the UAE's health sector, Dr. Farida Al Hosani, said that the new cases recorded were of different nationalities and that they were all in a stable condition.
53 more patients have recovered from the virus, bringing the total number of recoveries to 239.

Main category:
[Middle-East](#)
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[Coronavirus](#)
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[Egypt to ban Ramadan gatherings to counter spread of coronavirus](#)

Author:
Tue, 2020-04-07 20:15

CAIRO: Egypt will ban any public religious gatherings during the holy Muslim fasting month Ramadan starting in around two weeks to counter the spread of the new coronavirus, a government statement said on Tuesday.
Muslims usually break the fast at sunset together with their families, go to the mosque to pray and spend maximum time with relatives.
But with health experts recommending social distancing measures during the global coronavirus crisis, Egypt will ban any gatherings and public iftars, or fast-breaking meals, as well as collective social activities, the ministry of Islamic endowments said in a statement.
Typically mass iftars are held for poor people.
The ban will also apply to the seclusion of Itikaf when Muslims spend the last 10 days of the month in mosques to pray and meditate, the ministry said.
Egypt has reported more than 1,300 confirmed cases of the coronavirus with more than 250 deaths, according to a Reuters tally.
Egypt is home to some 100 million people and also the seat of the Al-Azhar university, Egypt's highest religious authority and one of the world's most eminent seats of Sunni Muslim learning.
Ramadan will start around April 23 depending on the sighting of the moon marking the start of the month.
Egypt already last month ordered mosques and churches to shut their doors to worshippers. Prayer calls are broadcast via loudspeakers.

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Virus pandemic hits Egypt's Ramadan preparations, prayers Egypt Coptic church suspends Easter Holy Week services over virus

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[Israeli security agency says it arrested alleged Iran spy](#)

Author:
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1586274824684783700
Tue, 2020-04-07 15:49

JERUSALEM: Israel's domestic security agency said Tuesday it arrested an Israeli citizen alleged to have spied for Iran.

The Shin Bet alleged in a statement the man was in contact with Iranian agents abroad, where he was given money, guidance and encryption tools.
The Shin Bet said the man was expected to provide information on strategic Israeli sites, ways to promote division in Israeli society, carry out attacks against Israeli targets and enlist Arab citizens of Israel to assist Iran.
The man, whose identity was barred from publication by an Israeli court, was arrested last month and indicted Tuesday for "serious security-related offenses."
The Shin Bet said the arrest highlights Iranian efforts "to carry out spy and terror activity within Israel, this also at a time when the world is facing the coronavirus epidemic which has badly spread in Iran."
Iran is facing the worst virus outbreak in the Middle East. Iran's state TV said Tuesday the new coronavirus has killed another 133 people, pushing the country's death toll to 3,872 amid 62,589 confirmed cases.
Israel and Iran are bitter enemies who have long fought a shadow war that over the last year has increasingly spilled out into the open. And although both countries are occupied with fighting COVID-19, the illness caused by the new virus, hostilities between them remain.

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