

Ex-head of Libya's anti-Qaddafi revolt dies of coronavirus

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Sun, 2020-04-05 14:56

TRIPOLI: Mahmud Jibril, the former head of the rebel government that overthrew Libyan dictator Muammar Qaddafi in 2011, died Sunday of the coronavirus, his party said.

Jibril, 68, died in Cairo where he had been hospitalized for two weeks, said Khaled Al-Mrimi, secretary of the Alliance of National Forces party founded by Jibril in 2012.



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UN warns Libya vulnerable as country suffers first virus death
New coronavirus cases confirmed in Libya as fighting flares

Jerusalem's Palm Sunday march scaled back due to coronavirus

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By MOSHE EDRI | AP

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Sun, 2020-04-05 12:07

JERUSALEM: A small group of Franciscan monks and Roman Catholic faithful took to the streets of Jerusalem's Christian Quarter in the Old City Sunday to distribute olive branches after the traditional Palm Sunday procession was canceled due to restrictions imposed to contain the spread of coronavirus. The march took place as Israel deployed troops to help contain an outbreak in a hard-hit city. Iran, dealing with the worst outbreak in the Mideast, announced plans to allow some businesses to reopen later this month even as the death toll continued to climb. Lebanon, meanwhile, reopened its airport to allow citizens who had been stranded overseas to return home.

Palm Sunday celebrations start the Holy Week leading up to Easter. Worshipers traditionally carry palm fronds and olive branches and march from the top of the Mount of Olives into Jerusalem's Old City.

While thousands of pilgrims usually participate in the march, this year was limited to a handful of participants. Clerics and faithful went door to door often throwing the branches to Christians looking on from their balconies.

"This year because of the new situation we are trying to come to all the Christians in our Christian Quarter to bring these branches of olives, the sign of new hope," said the Rev. Sandro Tomasevic, a Catholic clergyman at the Latin Parish of Jerusalem.

Palm Sunday commemorates Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and is the start of the church's most solemn week, which includes the Good Friday re-enactment of Jesus' crucifixion and death and his resurrection on Easter.

In Israel, more than 8,000 people have contracted the coronavirus and 46 have died. In the West Bank, nearly 200 cases have been reported, including a large outbreak in the biblical town of Bethlehem.

The outbreak has forced church officials to close churches to the public and scale back religious observances throughout the week. Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the top Catholic clergyman in the Holy Land, held a small, closed service at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the site where Christians believe Jesus was crucified and resurrected.

The coronavirus causes mild to moderate symptoms in most patients, who recover within a few weeks. But it is highly contagious and can be spread by people showing no symptoms. It can cause serious illness and death in some patients, particularly the elderly and those with underlying health issues. Iran has been the hardest-hit nation across the region. Iran state TV reported that an additional 151 people had died, pushing the death toll to 3,603 with over 58,000 confirmed cases.

But the country's president, Hassan Rouhani, announced that low-risk

businesses will be allowed to resume their activities in Tehran on April 18. Businesses in other provinces will begin a week earlier, on April 11, he said during a meeting Saturday. He said government offices would also be able to boost staffing, from one-third to two-thirds of their work force, beginning April 11.

Rouhani said the decision would not contradict a stay-at-home policy and that businesses must still observe health restrictions ordered by the government. High-risk businesses, like pools, gyms and shopping malls will remain closed, he said.

In Lebanon, meanwhile, a jet carrying more than 70 Lebanese citizens who had been stuck in Saudi Arabia after Beirut's international airport closed nearly three weeks arrived in Lebanon. It marked the beginning of flights that aim to return thousands of Lebanese from around the world. Three more flights are scheduled to arrive later Sunday from the United Arab Emirates, Nigeria and Ivory Coast.

The tiny Mediterranean country has reported 520 cases of coronavirus and 20 deaths since the first case was reported in late February.

Prime Minister Hassan Diab said up to 21,000 people have registered to return home, and the process will take several weeks.

In Israel, the military began an operation in the hard-hit city of Bnei Brak, helping to distribute food and medicine. The government last week put Bnei Brak, home to a large population of ultra-Orthodox religious Jews, under a near closure after an outbreak ravaged the city. Israel's ultra-Orthodox population has been disproportionately infected after religious leaders played down or ignored warnings to maintain social distance early in the crisis. Meanwhile, a nursing home in the southern city of Beersheba reported its sixth death in recent days.



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Israel arrests Palestinian official in east Jerusalem
Jerusalem hospitals need \$7 million to deal with coronavirus emergency

[UAE factories to meet needs of the health sector amid coronavirus](#)

Author:

Sun, 2020-04-05 15:45

DUBAI: The UAE cabinet has ordered factories to meet the needs of the health sector, the Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum said in a tweet.

The cabinet held its second virtual meeting where it issued a set of decisions directing authorities to exempt people from residency fines until the end of the year; strengthening the state's strategic reserves and ordering factories to support the needs of the health sector.

عقدنا اليوم اجتماعنا الثاني لمجلس الوزراء عن بعد .. أقررنا خلاله مجموعة من القرارات والتسهيلات ... بالإضافة لتوجيه الجهات باعفاء أصحاب الإقامات من الغرامات حتى نهاية العام ... وتعزيز المخزون الاستراتيجي للدولة .. وتوجيه المصانع بدعم احتياجات القطاع الصحي في الدولة
pic.twitter.com/Flmnq0Grp9

– HH Sheikh Mohammed (@HSHkMohd) [April 5, 2020](#)

Sheikh Mohammed was also briefed on the new precautionary measures being taken by the government.

UAE's health ministry reported on Saturday 241 new coronavirus cases in the country, an increase that the ministry said was due to its proactive testing.

The ministry also confirmed one new death, bringing the total to 10 and the overall number of cases to 1,505.



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UAE records 241 new coronavirus cases, one new death
UAE officially asks to postpone Expo 2020 Dubai

[Tunisia government given special powers to handle coronavirus crisis](#)

Author:

Reuters

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Sat, 2020-04-04 17:19

TUNIS: Tunisia's parliament on Saturday ceded some powers to the North African country's government for two months to help it handle the coronavirus crisis and the expected economic fallout.

The decision, backed by all political parties, will allow Prime Minister Elyes Fakhfakh's government to issue decrees, strike purchasing agreements and seek finance without consulting parliament.

Tunisia has 495 confirmed cases of the coronavirus, including 18 deaths, and

has imposed a national lockdown until April 19 to slow its spread. Fakhfakh, who was confirmed as prime minister on Feb. 28 after months of wrangling between rival parties to form a government, said the move was a “necessary weapon” to allow fast decisions to tackle the crisis. His government has announced a financial package that includes aid for the poor as well as tax and loan repayment holidays. Fakhfakh has said the government may impose exceptional taxes on companies to cover this if the government cannot find the money elsewhere. Tunisia, which embraced democracy after a 2011 uprising to overthrow veteran autocrat Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, has struggled to develop its economy over the past decade. An International Monetary Fund loan program expires this month and Finance minister Nizar Yaich told Reuters in March the government had started negotiations with IMF on a new agreement.



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Tunisia offers free helpline as lockdown sees abuse spike
Tunisia releases 1,420 prisoners over coronavirus

Dubai announces two week lockdown to disinfect city around the clock

Sat, 2020-04-04 21:01

DUBAI: Dubai announced a two week lockdown on Saturday so that the emirate could be disinfected around the clock to fight the spread of coronavirus.

There will be “strict restrictions on movement across the city and legal action” will be taken against violators, Dubai Media Office said.

The measure is effective from 8:00p.m. on Saturday for a period of two weeks.

Dubai's Supreme Committee of Crisis and Disaster Management announcement

Dubai to conduct round-the-clock sterilisation and enforce strict restrictions on movement across the emirate & legal action to be taken against violators.



VITAL SECTORS

exempt from restrictions (24 hours a day)

- Healthcare services (hospitals, clinics and pharmacies).
 - Food supply outlets (Union Cooperative outlets, supermarkets, groceries).
 - Delivery services (food and medicine).
- Restaurants (operations limited to home deliveries only)
- Manufacturers of medicines and providers of healthcare and medical supplies.
 - Industrial sector (vital industries only).
- Water and electricity sector, petrol and gas stations and district cooling services.
 - Telecommunications sector.
 - Media sector .
- Airports, airlines, ports, shipping.
- Customs duty and border crossings.
- Public and private security services.
- Municipality services and public and private service providers involved in garbage collection, sewage management and general cleaning and sanitation.
- Private and government sector organisations involved in combating COVID-19.
 - Public transport (buses and taxis only; metro services suspended).
- Construction sector, subject to obtaining a permit from Dubai Municipality and the Permanent Committee for Labour Affairs.



Supermarkets and pharmacies will be allowed to operate normally and food and medicine deliveries will continue uninterrupted.

Extensive medical testing will be carried out in densely populated areas of the city to stop the spread of the virus and citizens and residents are urged to stay at home.

People can go out only to buy food, receive health care and get tested for coronavirus provided they wear a mask, gloves and maintain social distancing. Shopping should be done by one member of the family only.

Employees in vital sectors are permitted to leave the house at any time to go to work.

The metro and tram services in Dubai will be suspended but buses and taxis will continue to operate.

Bus transportation will be free during the lockdown and a 50% discount on taxi rides will be offered.

Meanwhile, Abu Dhabi on Saturday extended the temporary closure of commercial centres, shopping malls, cinemas, arcades and other places of entertainment in the emirate until further notice.



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UAE officially asks to postpone Expo 2020 DubaiDubai extends usage of expired health insurances amid coronavirus pandemic