# Dubai Expo 2020 organizers 'explore possibility' of moving event to 2021

Mon, 2020-03-30 17:08

DUBAI: The Steering Committee of the Expo 2020 Dubai are exploring the possibility of postponing the event until October 2021.

The expo was due to open in October this year, but with the ongoing outbreak of coronavirus, organizers have continued to review the situation.

The statement came after a second virtual meeting of the Steering Committee, with representatives of the countries taking part in the event.

The Bureau International des Expositions (BIE), which oversees the expo events, will now work with its Member States and Expo 2020 Dubai organisers to establish a change in dates before a final decision is made, organizers said in a statement.

"While they remain firmly committed to Expo 2020, many countries have been significantly impacted by COVID-19 and they have therefore expressed a need to postpone the opening of Expo 2020 Dubai by one year, to enable them to overcome this challenge," Reem Al-Hashimy, UAE Minister of State for International Cooperation and Director General, Expo 2020 Dubai, said. "The UAE and Expo 2020 Dubai have listened. And in the spirit of solidarity and unity, we supported the proposal to explore a one year postponement at today's Steering Committee meeting."



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Middle-East

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# [Turkey detains 11 over coronavirus house party](#)

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1585573480791442100
Mon, 2020-03-30 12:56

ISTANBUL: Turkish police have detained 11 people, including the organizers and a DJ, after a weekend coronavirus house party in Istanbul where some guests dressed up as doctors, local officials said.
The party, thrown at a villa in the Buyukcekmece district Saturday night, was shared live on social media but received criticism for ignoring social distancing pleas.
"These idiots have organized a home party somewhere in Istanbul" one Twitter user posted.
"How come we will stop the spread of the virus despite those idiots!!!"
Bars and nightclubs have been closed in Turkey by a circular issued by the interior ministry as part of efforts to contain the spread of the virus.
Police watched the social media broadcast then detained 11 people including the organizer, M.S. and M.E.C. and a DJ.
They were charged with "disobeying the regulations on infectious diseases," the Istanbul governor's office said in a statement late Sunday.
The authorities were working to identify other participants, it added.
In the video footage posted, some of those partying could be seen dressed up as emergency doctors with gloves and masks.
"I drank a lot of alcohol. Everyone was dancing with the music. I regret holding such a party at a time of coronavirus," M.S. told the police in his testimony, the private news agency DHA reported.
Elif K., who broadcast the party live on social media, said around 80 people attended the party. "They were drinking and dancing. I later called a taxi and left."
The DHA said police released seven people after questioning them, but the other four were sent to court.
Turkey has so far officially recorded 9,217 cases of the new coronavirus while 131 people have died.

Authorities have taken a series of measures to try to slow the spread of the virus, from suspending international flights to shutting schools.
President Recep Tayyip Erdogan called on Turks to stay at home and adapt themselves to "voluntary quarantine" conditions.



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Turkey imposes tighter restrictions in fight against coronavirusTurkey could impose stay-at-home order if coronavirus outbreak worsens

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# [Iran virus cases top 40,000](#)

Author:
AFP
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1585562212250538400
Mon, 2020-03-30 09:43

TEHRAN: The number of declared coronavirus infections in Iran topped 40,000 Monday, as the government warned the outbreak could run for several more

months and cost over 10,000 lives.

With the tally climbing, President Hassan Rouhani stood accused of failing to take prompt action by some of his political opponents.

The row came as a report by Iran's anti-coronavirus committee said the country may struggle with the outbreak until at least early summer.

Parviz Karami, who published the study on Instagram, said 11,000 people would die in case of "medium government intervention", including measures already taken by Iran.

Potential fatalities could drop to 7,700 with "maximum" intervention, such as banning movement inside cities and imposing quarantines, he said.

Health ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour said Monday another 117 people had died from the virus over the past 24 hours and 3,186 new cases had been confirmed, raising the total to more than 41,000.

The death toll had reached 2,757.

According to Jahanpour, 13,911 of those hospitalised have recovered, while 3,511 are in critical condition.

The Islamic republic is one of the countries worst hit by the pandemic.

Iran has been scrambling to contain COVID-19's spread since it reported its first cases on February 19.

After weeks of refraining from imposing a lockdown or quarantine measures, Tehran decided last Wednesday to ban all intercity travel until at least April 8.

There is no official lockdown in Iran's cities although the government has repeatedly urged Iranians to stay at home to contain the spread of the virus.

Rouhani's political opponents argued Monday that it was all too little, too late.

"Coronavirus could have been more quickly contained" if measures such as "social distancing and limitations had been considered sooner", judiciary chief Ebrahim Raisi said, quoted by ISNA news agency.

Raisi, an ultra-conservative who ran against Rouhani in the 2017 presidential election, said that "time is of the essence".

The Iranian people had started "cooperating" only after authorities appeared to take the threat seriously, the official said.

Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, a veteran conservative who also stood against Rouhani, charged the administration has mismanaged the crisis.

He accused the authorities of "ignoring reality" and "unjustified optimism".

Rouhani had "worsened the crisis, then asked for help and put the blame on others", Ghalibaf tweeted.

The criticism came as Rouhani called on opponents to assist the government's efforts.

"This is not a time for gathering followers. This is not a time for political war," the president said.

Government spokesman Ali Rabiei on Monday defended the measures adopted by the administration at a time that the country was under crippling US sanctions.

Washington withdrew from a landmark nuclear deal with Tehran and reimposed sanctions on Iran in 2018, targeting the crucial oil and banking sectors, among others.

The administration had taken the necessary steps "once notified" of the COVID-19 outbreak, Rabiei told a news conference.

Its approach had been to try to ensure "that both physical distance be kept

and people's everyday lives not be disturbed", he said.
"These two make sense together in an economy under sanctions."
According to Rabiei, the administration has endorsed a $6-billion rescue package to fend off the damage from the outbreak.
It included low-interest loans to businesses to prevent a spike in unemployment and cash handouts to impoverished Iranians.
Some of Iran's top hospitals are experimenting with stem cells to "balance immune system response" in infected patients and find a treatment, according to ISNA.
Iran also said Monday it has started mass production of "highly accurate" coronavirus testing kits that could produce results within 3 hours.



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[China Coronavirus](#)
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Prisoners riot in Iran, region's worst COVID-19 outbreakIran warns of lengthy 'new way of life' as virus deaths rise

# [Coronavirus fears impose calm on Gaza front with Israel](#)

Mon, 2020-03-30 00:38

GAZA CITY: The arrival of the coronavirus in the Palestinian territories and Israel has imposed calm between the two, despite tensions since the beginning of the year.
The High Commission for the Great March of Return announced the cancelation of activities that were scheduled for March 30 along the border between the Gaza Strip and Israel, fearing an outbreak of the virus among demonstrators and in compliance with instructions to prevent gatherings.
“In order to preserve the safety of the masses, it was decided to hold a number of activities on Land Day and the second anniversary of the launch of the March of Return that do not involve gatherings,” said Khaled Al-Batsh, a leader in the Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine and head of the commission.
Al-Batsh called on protesters to ring church bells and shout the Takbir from mosques and homes in all Palestinian cities after ther Maghrib prayer call on Monday.
Since the beginning of 2020, the Gaza Strip has witnessed repeated instances of military escalation between Palestinian factions and Israel.
The last and most dangerous of these was on Feb. 23, after the Israeli army killed an Islamic Jihad activist and dragged his body by a military bulldozer on the security fence in the town of Khuza'a, southeast of the Strip.
In response to this incident, the Al-Quds Brigades, the military arm of the Islamic Jihad, along with other factions, launched missiles at Israeli towns, which Israel met with raids targeting the Gaza Strip.
After the announcement from the High Commission canceling the activities of March 30, the Gaza Strip witnessed a notable return to incendiary balloons and rocket fire aimed at Israeli towns.
According to multiple Palestinian statements, the objective of launching balloons was to pressure Israel to ease the blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip about 14 years ago.
Israel did not take exceptional measures to ease the siege, however, and the use of balloons and missiles has disappeared since the last round of escalation.

**Fear of the spread of this virus has made Gaza more cautious**

**Mukhaimer Abu Sa'da**, Professor of political science

Mukhaimer Abu Sa'da, professor of political science at Al-Azhar University in Gaza, said that the pandemic was a major cause of the calm on the Gaza front with Israel.
“Fear of the spread of this virus has made Gaza more cautious,” Abu Sa'ada told Arab News.
According to the newspaper Haaretz, Israel understands that “Gaza is more sensitive to the spread of pandemics.”

The Gaza Strip recorded nine confirmed cases of COVID-19, which prompted the Hamas-led government to impose the closure of mosques, universities and schools, and place a ban on public gatherings.

The Palestinian Ministry of Health in Gaza has quarantined hundreds of returning Palestinians through the Rafah crossing between the Gaza Strip and Egypt, while calling on residents to stay in their homes and not go out except for necessity.

Political columnist Hani Habib told Arab News: "The outbreak of the virus has meant that it is in the interests of both parties to continue a cease-fire. The burdens that Israel will have to bear as an occupying power is an additional motivator to control the spread of the pandemic in the Gaza Strip."

It is not possible to estimate how Gaza will fare in light of the outbreak, especially as its economic effects could have severe negative repercussions on the already fragile territory.



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Tags:
[China Coronavirus](China Coronavirus)
[COVID-19](COVID-19)

Israel to use military to help enforce coronavirus lockdownPalestinian groups cancel mass Gaza rallies over coronavirus concerns

# [Lebanese applaud virus-battling health workers from balconies](#)

Author:
AFP
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1585514004736613500
Sun, 2020-03-29 19:32

BEIRUT: Cheering erupted from balconies and windows in Lebanon on Sunday evening, as the country's citizens celebrated their "heroic" medical workers battling the coronavirus pandemic.
The initiative spread online with the Arabic hashtag "a cheer for the heroes", shared by public figures including journalists, actors and the Arab pop star Ragheb Alama.
In one Beirut neighbourhood, a woman draped in a Lebanese flag sang the national anthem as her neighbours drummed on pots and pans, an AFP journalist said.

View this post on Instagram

@jihanalama زقفة_للابطال ربنا يحميكم جميعاً

[View this post on Instagram](#)

Goosebumps !! All the respect to our dedicated medical team Thank you again and again Your dedication given the scarce resources is above and beyond
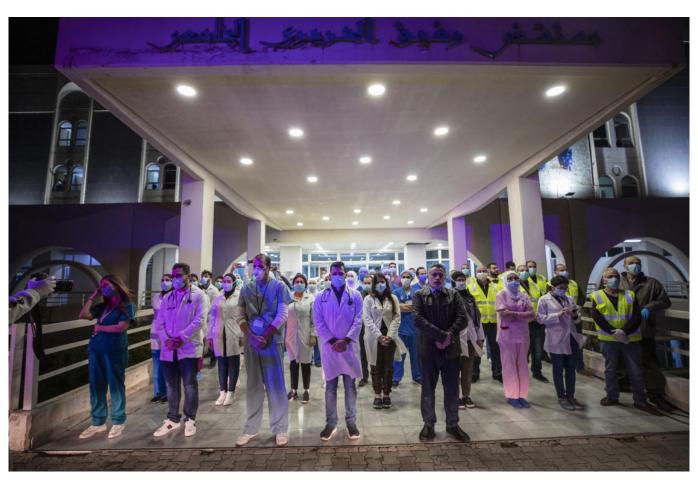
Elsewhere, Lebanese played drums and blew vuvuzelas, sharing videos of the street performances online.
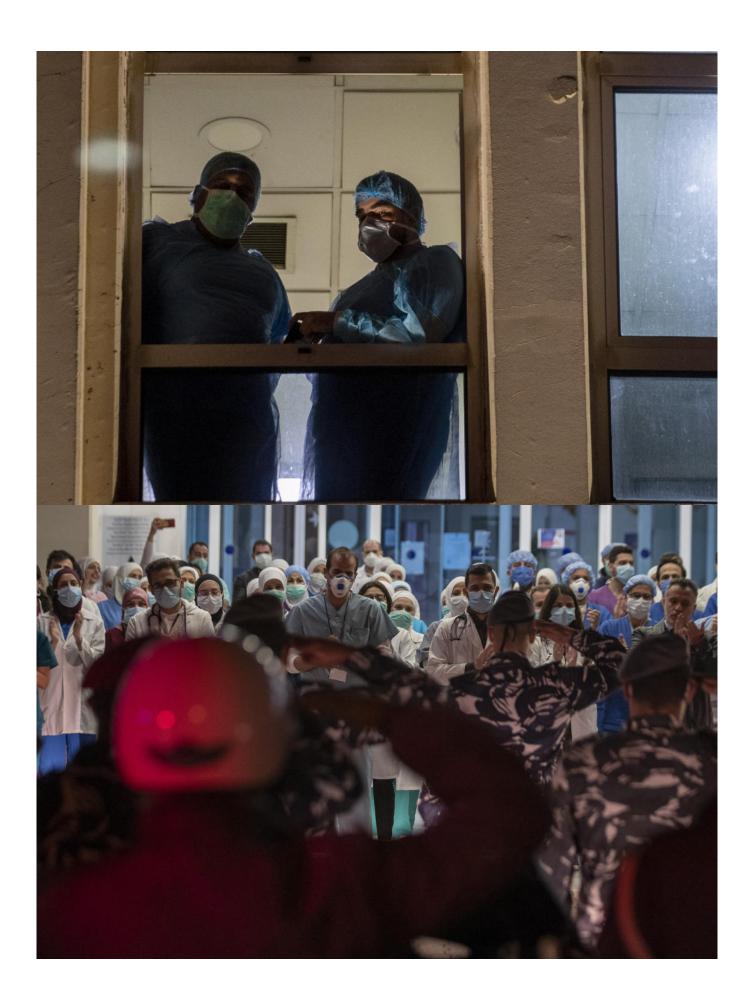Similar initiatives have gained attention from Italy to France but they have remained rare in the Arab world.
Lebanon has reported 438 COVID-19 cases to date, with 10 deaths.
To try to contain the spread of the virus, Lebanon has imposed isolation measures on its population until April 12, with a nighttime curfew in effect.
Schools, universities, restaurants and bars are closed.
Many fear the country's healthcare system could be overwhelmed by cases.

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Lebanon's police clear protest camps in Beirut as coronavirus curfew takes effect