

# Thousands of Lebanese protesters return to parliament after crackdown in Beirut

Author:

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Sun, 2019-12-15 17:47

BEIRUT: Thousands of Lebanese protesters defiantly returned Sunday to rally outside parliament in Beirut, hours after security forces chased them out, using tear gas and rubber bullets and injuring dozens.

Saturday night into Sunday saw one of the most violent crackdowns on protesters since nationwide anti-government demonstrations began two months ago, leading to the resignation of Prime Minister Saad Hariri on Oct. 29. Attackers in northern Lebanon also set fire to the offices of two major political parties, the state-run National News Agency said.

The protesters who showed up in Beirut on Sunday chanted against the security crackdown and called for an independent new head of government unaffiliated with established political parties.

The crowd, many raising Lebanese flags, said: "We won't leave, We won't leave. Just arrest all the protesters!"

Others raised posters saying the tear gas won't keep them away. "We are crying already," said one, in a jab at the deep economic crisis Lebanese are facing. The streets leading to parliament were filled with men, women and even children. Some huddled in smaller groups while others were lifted on shoulders chanting in megaphones.

The overnight confrontations in Beirut left more than 130 people injured, according to the Red Cross and the Lebanese Civil Defense. The Red Cross said none of the injured were in serious condition and most of them were treated on the spot.

The violence and Sunday's rally came just hours before the president was due to meet with representatives of parliamentary blocs to name a new prime minister. After weeks of bickering and despite calls from the protesters for a technocratic government, politicians seem set on bringing Hariri back to the post.

The demonstrators were clear they wouldn't accept his return. "Saad, Saad, Saad, don't dream of it anymore."

"I came back today to pressure the parliament to make the right choice tomorrow and choose a prime minister from outside the political parties. If they don't choose someone acceptable, we will be back to the streets again and again," said Chakib Abillamah, a protester and businessman who was demonstrating Saturday when violence broke out.

Caline Mouawad, a lawyer, said she watched as security forces violently broke up the protests and decided to join in solidarity. "What happened last night provoked me. I came down even it means getting beaten tonight."

Interior Minister Raya Al-Hassan on Sunday ordered an investigation into the

clashes, which she said injured both protesters and security forces. She said she watched the confrontations “with concern, sadness and shock.”

Al-Hassan blamed “infiltrators” for instigating violence and called on the demonstrators to be wary of those who want to exploit their protests for political reasons. She didn’t elaborate.

The head of the Internal Security Forces, Maj. Gen. Imad Osman, turned up at the protest rally Sunday. He told reporters on the scene that the right to protest was guaranteed by the law. “But calm down, no need for violence,” he said, appealing to protesters.

In the northern Akkar district, attackers broke the windows and set fire to the local office of Hariri’s political party in the town of Kharibet Al-Jundi. Photos circulated on social media of shattered glass and the aftermath of the fire, which torched the building.

In a separate attack in Akkar district, assailants stormed the local office of the largest party in parliament, affiliated with President Michel Aoun and headed by Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil. The party said the contents of the office in the town of Jedidat Al-Juma had also been smashed and burned.

The mayhem came just hours after the capital was rocked by violence. Lebanese security forces fired rubber bullets, tear gas and used water cannons throughout the night to disperse anti-government protesters from the city center – the epicenter of the protest movement in Beirut – and around parliament. The protests had largely been peacefully since they began on Oct. 17.



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54 injured as Lebanese security forces and Hezbollah supporters clash in central Beirut  
Beirut-based photographer discusses his viral image of Lebanon's ongoing protests

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## [Brazil opens Jerusalem trade center as step to embassy shift](#)

Sun, 2019-12-15 18:32

JERUSALEM: Brazil opened a trade office in Jerusalem Sunday, in a ceremony attended by President Jair Bolsonaro's son and Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Speaking at the ceremony, Eduardo Bolsonaro, a lawmaker, said his father intended to make good on a pledge he made early this year to move Brazil's embassy in Israel from the city of Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

"He told me that for sure – it's a commitment – he's going to move the embassy to Jerusalem, he's going to do that," the younger Bolsonaro said, in Netanyahu's presence.

President Bolsonaro in January pledged to follow US President Donald Trump's controversial step and relocate his country's embassy from Tel Aviv.

The Brazilian head of state visited Israel in March, when he announced his country's intention to open a trade office in the disputed city.

Virtually all countries maintain their embassies in the city of Tel Aviv, insisting Jerusalem's status be defined through Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations, as Palestinians view east Jerusalem as the capital of its own future state.

The United States broke with that decades-long consensus in May 2018 and relocated its Israeli embassy to Jerusalem, with only Guatemala following suit so far. Paraguay made the move but later backtracked.

Hungary has also opened a trade office in Jerusalem.

Fears have been raised that moving the embassy could endanger Brazil's valuable meat exports to Arab markets but Eduardo Bolsonaro said any delay was due to Brazil wanting to prepare the move in a thorough manner.

"We want to do a movement to Jerusalem not only for Brazil but to be an example for the rest of Latin America," the Brazilian lawmaker, who is also chairman of his parliament's foreign relations and national defense commission, said.

Speaking at the ceremony, Netanyahu noted "President Bolsonaro's commitment to open an embassy in Jerusalem next year."

Netanyahu thanked Brazil for its support of Israel in international forums and noted recent bilateral aid the Jewish state provided to cope with natural

disasters.

“Israel was there, and Israel will always be there for the people of Brazil and for our common friendship,” Netanyahu said.



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## [Home-cooked food in Iraqi square brings protesters together](#)

Author:

By NASSER NASSER | AP

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Sun, 2019-12-15 07:06

BAGHDAD: In Baghdad's Tahrir Square, there are the anti-government protesters demonstrating for a better future for Iraq, and there are the volunteers who feed them.

From stuffed lamb and fish, to the giant pots of soups and rice, to the plates of lentils and other beans, there is no shortage of food to go around. Volunteers from the capital and southern provinces cook traditional dishes that reflect the country's rich cuisine and bring protesters together.

Tahrir Square has been the focal point for the protests that have continued to roil Iraq since Oct. 1. The spontaneous, leaderless demonstrations were organized on social media over long-standing grievances including government corruption, unemployment and a lack of basic services. For many, the square in central Baghdad has become a miniature model for the kind of state they dream of, where factional and sectarian politics play no part and public services exist.

Services, including the near-constant supply of food, have been integral to keeping people in the square, but volunteers are eyeing a gradual drop in donations with concern.

Iraqis are used to communal meals and many volunteer food. Every year, during the annual Shiite religious commemoration known as Arbaeen, volunteers prepare food for pilgrims making their way to their sects' holy shrines in the city of Karbala. Shortly after the protests started Oct. 1, volunteers began setting up similar tents to cook and distribute traditional Iraqi dishes for the protesters in and around Tahrir Square.

"We make it for the hungry people, and people in need here in Tahrir Square," said a woman who gave her name as Um Ammar, which means "Ammar's mother." She is from the southern province of Missan and was cooking Seyah, a thick mixture of rice flour and water fried on a hot plate. Other popular dishes are lentils and beans; Tepsy, a traditional Iraqi casserole; Dolma, consisting of stuffed cabbage and grape leaves, onions and aubergines cooked in tomato sauce; and Makhlama, a mixture of potato, tomatoes, onion and egg all fried together and put in bread. It is a favorite breakfast for people in Baghdad.

"It is an old Baghdadi (dish). It is common in the morning. All the Iraqi people, but specifically the people of Baghdad, love this food," said Muhsin Salman, a cook from the capital who was making Makhlama.

Arouk bread – a tandoor bread made of dough mixed with celery and spices – is another favorite.

And there are the popular sweets: Hareesa is boiled whole wheat sweetened with sugar and cinnamon. Cherek is baked wheat flour bread stuffed with dates. And there's also the fried dough balls called Awamah.

On any given day, people can be seen lining up to fill plastic dishes with food. Protesters say the free food is important to help sustain the protest movement, especially for those who cannot afford to eat meat on a regular basis. But it's not the main attraction, they say.

Hashem Al-Jabouri said that after more than two months of protests, he's worried that support for the movement is dwindling. Speaking as he fried falafel in a huge pot, he said support was not as strong as it was in the



beginning. "There's a lot of pressure and threats targeting the volunteers," he said.

At least 400 people have been killed at the hands of security forces and unidentified assailants firing live ammunition and tear gas to disperse the demonstrations since the protests erupted in October. A string of targeted assassinations, forced disappearances and arrests of civil activists and journalists have also fostered fear among protesters.

Some said they will not be intimidated.

"I distribute food to my protester brothers. We will not retreat even if they kill or threaten us. We don't care," said Um Mohammed, who was cooking rice and beans on a recent day. Her husband was killed in Iraq's sectarian conflict in 2006.

"I am a martyr's wife, but it is OK," said the mother of four. "I am not retreating and will not leave the square. My house is here now, until they give me my rights."











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## [Ahlam Al-Nasr: Daesh poet of poison](#)

Sun, 2019-12-15 01:39

LONDON: "There is no life but through jihad and its honor ... jihad is our life and our victory It is what the soldiers of the enemy fear ... and it is what created happiness in our lives."

The above two stanzas are taken from a poem by the poet and writer Ahlam Al-Nasr encouraging women from around the world to join the terror group Daesh.

While little is known about Al-Nasr, her unconditional support for Daesh's extremist, expansionist aim of imposing strict Shariah law on the world is obvious – and clearly evident through her writing.

"Ahlam Al-Nasr's poetry was punchy and fresh, while still using mainly classical Arabic and the traditional monorhyme and focusing on the timeless tasks of praise, celebration, lament and lampoon," Dr. Elisabeth Kendall, senior research fellow in Arabic and Islamic Studies at Pembroke College, Oxford University, told Arab News.

"Al-Nasr's most powerful and enduring poems are simple clipped compositions that are ideal for conversion into nashids (anthems).

### **BIO**

- Nationality: Syrian
- Place of residence: Unknown
- Occupation: Poet,
- Daesh propagandist
- Medium: Poetry, book entitled 'The Blaze of Truth'

"Set to non-instrumental music and sometimes with violent video footage, their catchy sing-along rhythms can appeal to aspiring Daesh fighters in the West even if their Arabic is weak."

Al-Nasr, whose real name cannot be verified, is thought to have been originally named Shaima Haddad, a young girl from Damascus who fled after the

Syrian civil war erupted in 2011. A report by the New Yorker magazine claimed that firsthand experience of the Syrian regime's air raids had triggered her radicalization.

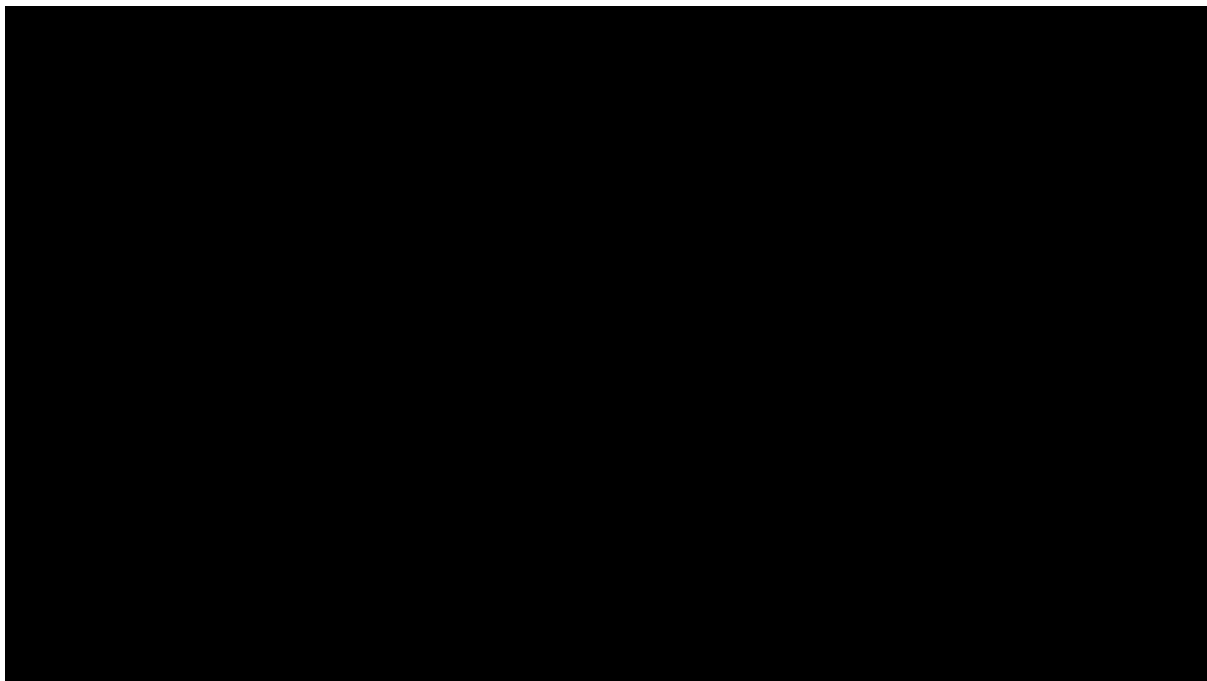
"Their bullets shattered our brains like an earthquake/Even strong bones cracked then broke. They drilled our throats and scattered/our limbs – it was like an anatomy lesson!/They hosed the streets as blood still/Ran/Like streams crashing down from the/Clouds," reads one of her earlier poems on the bloody conflict.

Al-Nasr's family fled to Kuwait shortly after fighting broke out, but the writer did not plan on staying in the small Gulf state for long.

She returned to Syria in June 2014 and, four months later, wed Vienna-born extremist Abu-Usama Al-Gharib in the terror group's de-facto capital Raqqa, which capitalized on her recruitment into Daesh's ranks.

Al-Nasr quickly rose to prominence among the extremists. Her poems covering death and destruction, of loyalty to the caliphate and the beheading of apostates, spread like wildfire among militants and commanders, spurring them even further through romanticized versions of their plight.

"Poetry is an incredibly powerful medium of communication in the Arab world, much loved among educated and illiterate alike," Kendall said. "The Arab version of 'Pop Idol' features aspiring poets and has over 70 million viewers.



"More importantly, poetry endures. Militant jihadi Twitter feeds, Facebook pages and chat forums can be closed down, but the poetry remains lodged in the collective memory."

Al-Nasr was a court poet in Raqqa and was used as an official propagandist for Daesh – an ironic move given the strict restrictions the terror group places on women.



Her book "The Blaze of Truth" is a collection of 107 poems praising the militants' goals and supporting their "journey," with the poetic, elegant prose designed to recruit even more extremists.

In one of her poems, she incites Muslims across the world to kill and burn the enemies of Islam, saying: "Our innocent children have been killed and our free women were horrified/Their only crime was being Muslim/They have no savior/Where are the heroes of Islam?/Kill them and burn them and do not worry about the consequences/follow your almighty sword, and you will make the best news."

## Opinion

This section contains relevant reference points, placed in (Opinion field)

Other poems include praise for Daesh's self-proclaimed caliph and Preacher of Hate Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, who committed suicide during a US raid in October, as well as a poem titled "Osama, You Have Left" in which she mourns Al-Qaeda founder Osama Bin Laden and refers to him as a "reformer."

Al-Nasr not only writes poems, but has also delivered a 30-page essay detailing her support for Daesh's decision to burn captured Jordanian pilot Muath Al- Kasasbeh.

Much is yet to be discovered about Al-Nasr and her place within Daesh as the organization crumbles in the face of international coalition raids, but one thing is certain – her poetry will continue to be sung by the militants.

"My own survey work in Yemen shows that 74 percent of the population consider poetry either 'important' or 'very important' in daily life," Kendall said.

"No surprise, then, that extremists use it to spread their message," she added.



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## [Turkey seeks more EU funds for refugees' upkeep](#)

Author:

Sun, 2019-12-15 00:48

ISTANBUL: The EU should spend more than the €6 billion (\$6.6 billion) already allotted to fund Syrian refugees in Turkey, and speed up the flow of that money, the Turkish Foreign Ministry's EU point person said on Saturday.

EU funds support the roughly 3.5 million Syrian refugees in Turkey, after Syria's more-than eight-year war killed hundreds of thousands and pushed millions from their homes. In turn, Turkey has agreed to halt further



immigration to Europe.

“The flow of funds should be sped up and the amount of funding should be increased,” said Faruk Kaymakci, a deputy Turkish minister of foreign affairs.

“As long as the crisis is there we have to work together. The €6 billion will not solve the problem when it is finally all spent,” Kaymakci told reporters in Istanbul.

The EU, which set up the funding in 2015, says more than €5.6 billion have been allocated, more than 3.5 billion contracted and more than 2.4 billion disbursed.

Kaymakci said hosting the refugees costs Turkey some \$40 billion in total.

Europe’s relations with Turkey are strained on several fronts including disagreement over a Turkish military incursion in October against a Kurdish militia in northeast Syria.

Turkey in late October threatened to “open the gates” to allow refugees into Europe unless Europeans back its plan to resettle them in northeast Syria.



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