

Lebanese students join Beirut protests

Author:

Fri, 2019-11-08 01:20

BEIRUT: The students of the Lebanese University known as “the university of the poor” joined public protests in their 22nd day.

It is a state university and most of its students are from the poor and middle classes. According to its administration, its students make up 35 percent of the total number of the country’s university students.

Students chanted as they headed to Riad Al-Solh Square to demand basic services at their university. They spoke of the ambiguity of their professional future in the light of the domination of favoritism over the employment process. Their colleagues in other faculties complained about them on social media as the administration and teachers prevented students from leaving lecture halls to join the movement.

Students from public and private universities and schools took to the streets across Lebanon chanting “revolution.” They included students from Saint Joseph University, Haigazian University, Antonine University and the Lebanese American University.

Some groups focused on public institutions and prevented employees from entering, while others gathered in front of Zouk Thermal Power Plant to protest pollutant emissions.

Chants were accompanied by banging on pots and metal ware. This practice started on Wednesday night when people went to their balconies in Beirut, Sidon and Tripoli and banged on pots as a sign of their support for the protests.

The people of Beirut last used this method in 1916 during the famine that hit Lebanon under Ottoman rule.

The protests have not yet caused any responses from the authorities except for the resignation of the government. The president has not yet set a date for the binding parliamentary consultations to appoint a new prime minister, pending behind-the-scenes consultations with his political allies and outgoing Prime Minister Saad Hariri.

There is a possibility of forming a technocratic political government with a mixture of political ministers and experts, while protesters insist on a fully technocratic government that works to hold early parliamentary elections.

In the context of reviewing corruption cases, the financial prosecutor, Judge Ali Ibrahim, listened to the testimony of former Prime Minister Fouad Siniora at the Palace of Justice. The hearing lasted about three hours and “focused on the case of the \$11 billion that was spent when Siniora was Prime Minister between 2006 and 2008,” according to the National News Agency.

Ibrahim also filed a lawsuit against the Director-General of Customs Badri Al-Daher for “wasting public funds.”

The Attorney General Judge Ghassan Oweidat referred a complaint presented by a number of lawyers against all ministers in successive governments since 1990 to attorney Ghassan Al-Khoury for “embezzling and wasting public funds for personal and material benefits, exploiting power and authority and seriously harming the Lebanese people,” in order to initiate investigations and take all necessary measures.



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Women and students are at the heart of Lebanon’s protestsWorld Bank ready to support Lebanon, urges quick formation of new cabinet

[International artists give colorful makeover to Egyptian fishing village](#)

Author:

Fri, 2019-11-08 01:17

CAIRO: An Egyptian fishing village has been given a colorful makeover by

local and international artists as part of a burgeoning annual festival.

Buildings and boats in the coastal community of Borg El-Borollos have been transformed into vibrant artworks with decorative drawings produced by 45 volunteers from 22 countries.

The annual symposium sees bland streets, walls and objects turned into elaborate and colorful displays in a project masterminded by local Abdel-Wahab Abdel-Mohsen, who said the event had put the “charming” village on the tourist map.

“The symposium also contributes in developing society, enhancing cultural and artistic sense and boosting the perception of beauty among residents, especially after many preparatory and high school students took part in the gathering,” he added.

Many of the paintings are inspired by the natural surroundings of the area, as well as depicting fishing boats with their crews and nets.

Abdel-Mohsen said dozens of art students from Alexandria, Mansoura, and Kafr El-Sheikh had taken part along with youth from centers in Kafr El-Sheikh governorate, and people with special needs from Al-Shams Group.

“This year we expanded the scope of participation due to the rising number of artists and volunteers from around the world,” he added. Painters came from countries including India, China, Saudi Arabia, Croatia, France, Greece, Rwanda, Yemen, and Sudan.

The initiative was launched in 2014 by the Abdel-Wahab Abdel-Mohsen Foundation for Culture, Arts and Development out of its founder’s desire to decorate the city.

Since then, artists from around the world have been making the annual trip to Borg El-Borollos to join the carnival of color. “The residents are certainly happy with the change,” Abdel-Mohsen added.

Last year, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) collaborated with the foundation for the event. Abdel-Mohsen, a prominent artist in his own right, said the UNFPA had development goals that it tried to achieve through platforms such as seminars and conferences to raise awareness on reproductive health issues.

However, the fund had adopted a different approach in recent years, using art as a way to promote its messages.

UNFPA representative in Egypt, Aleksandar Bodiroza, said the Borg El-Borollos symposium “paves the way for opening various discussions with the city’s residents, where ideas from countries meet.”

Bodiroza added that the event was not only a festival of color but a tool for developing society.

During last year’s collaboration the UNFPA chose to talk about youth in general, meeting with the artists before they started their work, however,

this year the theme was social-based gender discrimination.

“We thought that early marriage should be our message,” Bodiroza said.

Sayed Clip, a local resident, said every year more houses were painted. “The city’s residents are happy to see their homes painted in vibrant colors. So, they become part and parcel of the whole scene whenever they look out of their windows or lean on the walls.”

Adel Hameed, one of the painters participating in the symposium, told Arab News: “Each artist expresses his or her feelings about the Mediterranean city. Thus, the color blue takes over the walls to give the city’s residents the warmth and security they are constantly searching for.”



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The spectacular sculpture of 90 year-old Egyptian artist Adam HeneinPharaonic influences on display at Egypt art show

[MENA startups inject tech savvy into](#)

Saudi Arabia's entertainment scene

Fri, 2019-11-08 00:00

CAIRO: While the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has always been a popular destination for business and entertainment events, a host of startups are taking the industry to the next level through the power of technology.

Earlier this year, Saudi Arabia's General Entertainment Authority announced a new strategic plan to revamp the local entertainment sector. There are more than 5,000 events on the calendar for 2019, with investments projected to exceed \$64 billion over the next decade.

The plan is part of a broader push to diversify the Kingdom's economy away from oil by 2030.

Events and entertainment tourism are expected to play a key role in this ambitious economic reform.

However, this sector boom is nothing new to the region. The UAE has established itself as a leading destination for business events and entertainment tourism, while more of MENA's major economies are implementing economic plans that incorporate the thriving events industry in one way or another.

Startups in the region are capitalizing on the evolution of this space by developing a digital ecosystem which allows event organizers to deliver an experience living up to the expectations of their attendees.

Whether it is making ticket purchases easier, streamlining event check-in, or addressing a whole host of other challenges regional events organizers have historically faced, these startups are leveraging technology to raise the standards of event management.



A new generation of startups are leveraging technology and tourist entertainment. (Supplied)

“After all, it is not enough to have great performers when the rest of the experience that comes with attending events is below par,” says Farrukh Bandey, a user experience research manager at UXBERT Labs, the digital experience design company behind event planning and discovery app HalaYalla.

Launched in early 2014 by Bandey and Nadeem Bakhsh, the Saudi-based venture came to dominate the country’s entertainment scene after becoming the official ticketing app for the Jeddah Season series of events. HalaYalla provides a full suite of event-management features together with live event analytics and reporting for organizers. It also worked with local authorities to let international event attendees apply for a tourist visa while buying their tickets through the platform.

While gaining the trust of the government was a huge milestone for the company, it was also a challenge. The team’s abilities were first put to the

test when they handled the registration for Saudi Arabia's first-ever Baloot Championship, a card game popular in Gulf Cooperation Council countries.

Held in October 2018, the event saw more than 85,000 players register to compete.

Considered by many as one of the earliest disruptors in MENA's event space, Eventus was founded in 2012 by Egyptian duo Mai Medhat and Nihal Fares. The company was backed by multimillion-dollar investment rounds from prominent local and international venture capitals.

The market need Eventus excelled at addressing was providing event organizers with a customized event app. The execution was a great hit for forums such as the Startup Grind's Global Conference, an annual gathering for a community that supports 2 million entrepreneurs in more than 125 countries.

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A social entrepreneur seeks to reduce stigma of disabilities in Palestine
Saudi girls' school launches pioneering project to produce business entrepreneurs of future

[Pakistan PM: Yemen deal 'crucial step' toward peace](#)

Author:

Thu, 2019-11-07 01:41

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday hailed a new deal on Yemen as "a crucial and important step" toward bringing peace and security to the war-torn country.

In a Twitter post, the premier lauded an agreement signed in Riyadh between the internationally recognized Yemeni government and southern separatists to end a power struggle in the south of Yemen.

"Pakistan welcomes the conclusion of the landmark Riyadh agreement, as a result of the initiative taken by the Saudi leadership and support by the UAE government," Khan said. "We believe it is a crucial and important step forward toward a political solution and durable peace and security in Yemen."

Yemen's President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi and Southern Transitional Council (STC) leader Aidarous Al-Zoubeidi penned the power-sharing accord at a ceremony in the Saudi capital on Tuesday watched by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, the crown prince of Abu Dhabi.

Saudi Arabia's envoy to Yemen told journalists that the deal would allow separatists and other southerners to join a new Yemeni Cabinet and would place southern armed forces under the control of the Yemeni government.

Speaking during the televised signing ceremony, the Saudi crown prince said: "This agreement will open, God willing, broader talks between Yemeni parties to reach a political solution and end the war."

US President Donald Trump praised the treaty on Twitter and said: "A very good start! Please all work hard to get a final deal."

The deal calls for the formation of a new Cabinet of no more than 24 ministers within 30 days that would have equal representation for northerners and southerners. The STC would join any political talks to end Yemen's four-

year war.

Yemeni ambassador to Pakistan, Mohammed Motahar Alashabi, told Arab News on Wednesday that the people of Yemen hoped the Riyadh agreement would usher in a new phase of stability, security and development in the country.

“We would like to express our thanks and appreciation to efforts offered and made by the Saudi leadership to patronize this agreement and make it a reality,” Alashabi said. “The Yemeni leadership headed by President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi and his government were very keen to make our Saudi brothers’ efforts successful.”

The envoy added that the deal “empowers the role of state authorities and institutions, codifies equal rights for all Yemenis, renounces all types of discrimination and incorporates military groups outside the state into ministries of defense and interior.

“It (the agreement) will lead to unified and collective efforts to compel Iranian-backed Houthis to end the war, lay down their arms, withdraw their militias from Sanaa and cities they control.

“They (the Houthis) would re-engage in the comprehensive national dialogue toward a new federal Yemen for all Yemenis, including Houthis,” Alashabi said.

Javed Malik, a former Pakistani ambassador who served in the Gulf region, said that as part of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the people and government of Pakistan had always welcomed all efforts to bring peace in the Muslim world.

“Pakistan will continue to support every effort that brings all stakeholders toward reaching a peaceful settlement and prays that this critical landmark leads to a peaceful settlement of the disputes in Yemen and prevents further loss of life,” Malik added.

Former Pakistani diplomat and expert on Middle East affairs, Javed Hafeez, called the agreement a very important development for Pakistan. “Pakistan has always maintained that intra-Yemen reconciliation is a must for peace in that nation.”



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Power-sharing agreement: A new page in the history of Yemen
Yemeni expats thank Saudi Arabia for positive mediation

Dozens injured as Iraqi security forces clash with protesters in 'Battle of the Bridges'

Author:

Thu, 2019-11-07 00:53

BAGHDAD: Gunfire erupted again in central Baghdad on Wednesday as Iraqi security forces fought protesters in the "Battle of the Bridges" near Tahrir Square.

At least 27 people were injured in clashes at Al-Jumhuriyah, Al-Ahrar, Al-Shuhada, Al-Sinek and Bab Al-Muatham bridges across the Tigris River.

Protesters have confronted security forces for two weeks on Al-Jumhuriyah bridge, which leads to the fortified Green Zone of government offices and embassies. They also massed at Al-Sinek, which leads to the Iranian Embassy, and Al-Ahrar, which is near other government buildings. The demonstrators tried on Wednesday to cross Al-Shuhada, but were met with live ammunition from security forces.

"The riot police hit us with batons on our heads and we threw rocks at them," said Mahmoud, 20, a protester being treated for injuries after he tried to cross Al-Shuhada. "But then they started firing live rounds at people."

Security forces resumed firing live ammunition in Baghdad on Monday, after nearly two weeks of using only tear gas to repel protesters. Doctors and rights groups said the police now appeared to be firing the canisters directly at protesters, causing most of the injuries.

More than 260 Iraqis have been killed since the beginning of October in protests against corruption, unemployment and nonfunctioning public services. Protesters have been massing in Tahrir Square for weeks in the biggest wave of civil unrest since the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003.

Thousands have also been gathering in the impoverished provinces of the Shiite south. Protesters on Wednesday blocked the entrance to the Nassiriya oil refinery, halting fuel deliveries to retail outlets.

Thousands of demonstrators have also blocked roads leading to Umm Qasr, near Basra, Iraq's main Gulf port. Operations at the port, which receives most of Iraq's imports of grain, vegetable oils and sugar, have been at a standstill for a week. The blockade has already cost Iraq more than \$6 billion, a spokesman for Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi said. In a televised address, he said Iraq could not afford the economic cost of the unrest, and asked protesters to stop damaging property.

The internet monitor NetBlocks said the government's blocking of internet access had cost Iraq about \$1 billion in October. Access remained blocked on Wednesday after being shut down on Monday and restored for a few hours on Tuesday.

The US Embassy in Baghdad condemned the violence against unarmed protesters, and urged Iraq's leaders to engage urgently with them.





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Iraqi security forces use live fire to disperse protesters in Baghdad
Iraqi security forces conducting large-scale arrest campaigns in Baghdad: witnesses