

Egypt reveals details of 30 ancient coffins found in Luxor

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Sat, 2019-10-19 10:57

LUXOR: Egypt's antiquities authority has revealed the details of 30 ancient wooden coffins recently discovered in the southern city of Luxor.

Mostafa Waziri, secretary general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, told reporters Saturday that the coffins, with inscriptions and paintings, were found in the Asasif Necropolis on the River Nile's west bank near Luxor.

He says the coffins were for men, women and children from the 22nd dynasty (945 B.C. 715 B.C.), and had been collected and hidden by a priest for fear of being looted.

He says the coffins were in two layers, with the ones on top across those below.

Egypt has sought publicity for its archaeological discoveries in the hopes of reviving its tourism sector, which was badly hit by the turmoil following the 2011 uprising.



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Kemetic yoga breathes new life into Egyptian tourismEgypt to press ahead with sale of stakes in state companies – government adviser

[Millions march in Iraq in annual Arbaeen Shiite pilgrimage](#)

Author:

AP

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Sat, 2019-10-19 09:36

KARBALA: Millions of pilgrims are making their way on foot to the Iraqi city of Karbala for the annual Shiite pilgrimage of Arbaeen.

Saturday's commemoration includes more than 2 million Iranians and other Shiites from abroad. Militias patrolled roads leading into the city and escorted Iranian pilgrims from the border, hiking up security for processions that have previously been targeted by Sunni militant groups with bloody bombings.

This year's Arbaeen ceremonies take place amid widespread anger in Iraq's

Shiite south over the government's heavy crackdown on protests that erupted earlier this month against unemployment, corruption and government mismanagement.

Arbaeen is regarded as the largest annual public gathering in the world and draws more pilgrims than the Hajj in Saudi Arabia, a pilgrimage required once in a lifetime of every able Muslim.



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Iran cleric says US, Israel behind Iraq unrest to disrupt Shiite pilgrimage there
31 killed after walkway collapse triggers stampede at Iraqi Shiite shrine

[Tens of thousands gather across](#)

Lebanon for third day of protests

Author:

Reuters

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Sat, 2019-10-19 09:13

BEIRUT: Tens of thousands of Lebanese people took to the streets Saturday for a third day of protests against tax increases and alleged official corruption despite several arrests by security forces.

They streamed into the streets around the country's parliament in Beirut, as well as elsewhere across the country, AFP journalists said, despite calls for calm from politicians and dozens of arrests on Friday.

The number of protesters grew steadily throughout the day, with major demonstrations in second city Tripoli, in the north, and other locations. Many waved billowing Lebanese flags and insisted the protests should remain peaceful and non-sectarian.

The demonstrators are demanding a sweeping overhaul of Lebanon's political system, citing grievances ranging from austerity measures to poor infrastructure.

They have crippled main roads and threatened to topple the country's fragile coalition government.

Most Lebanese politicians have uncharacteristically admitted the demonstrations are spontaneous, rather than blaming outside influence.

In Tripoli demonstrator Hoda Sayyur was unimpressed by the contrition some leaders displayed on television and echoed a widely-held hope that the entire political class be replaced.

"They took all our fundamental rights... We are dying at hospital gates," the woman in her fifties said.

"I will stay in the street... Since I was born, we've been spectators to their quarrels and corruption," she said.

The army on Saturday called on protesters to "express themselves peacefully without harming public and private property".

POLL: Will the 72-hour period announced by Prime Minister Saad Hariri be enough to solve the crisis in Lebanon?<https://t.co/XTDAMirEio>

– Arab News (@arabnews) [October 19, 2019](#)

Saturday evening thousands were again packed into the Riyadh al-Solh Square in central Beirut, despite security forces using tear gas and water cannons to disperse similar crowds a day before.

The Internal Security Forces said 70 arrests were made Friday on accusations of theft and arson.

But all of those held at the main police barracks were released Saturday, the National News Agency (NNA) said.

It said that the father of one man detained tried to set himself on fire in front of a police station.

The demonstrations first erupted on Thursday, sparked by a proposed 20 cent tax on calls via messaging apps such as WhatsApp.

Such calls are the main method of communication for many Lebanese and, despite the government's swift abandonment of the tax, the demonstrations quickly swelled into the largest in years.

Prime Minister Saad Hariri has given his deeply divided coalition until Monday evening to give their backing to a reform package aimed at shoring up the government's finances and securing the disbursement of desperately needed economic assistance from donors.

He held a series of meetings Saturday regarding the situation, NNA said. Hariri's political rival, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, gave his first response on Saturday, telling protesters their "message was heard loudly" and calling for political action.

In a thinly veiled criticism of Hariri, Nasrallah condemned those who had renounced their "responsibilities and were blaming others."

But he warned against demanding resignation of the government, saying it could take a long time to form a new one and solve the crisis.

The current unity government has the backing of most Lebanese political parties, including Hezbollah.

Karim el-Mufti, a Lebanese political scientist, said Hezbollah, which is fighting in neighbouring Syria alongside the government of Bashar al-Assad, wanted to avoid potential chaos at home.



In the southern port city of Tyre, supporters of Shia politician and speaker of parliament Nabih Berri attacked protesters Saturday, a witness said, a day after demonstrators had accused him of corruption.

His Amal political party condemned the attack and called for an investigation.

More than a quarter of the Lebanese population lives below the poverty line, according to the World Bank.

Many of the country's senior politicians came to prominence during the country's 15-year civil war, which ended in 1990.

A protester in the southern city of Nabatiyeh, a Hezbollah stronghold, said protesters are demanding their "rights". protesting.

"They are trying to portray us as a mob, but we are demanding our rights," he told a local television channel. "We are used to repression."

Lebanon has one of the highest public debt burdens in the world and the government is trying to reach agreement on a package of belt-tightening measures to cap the deficit in next year's budget.

The promised austerity moves are essential if Lebanon is to unlock \$11 billion in economic assistance pledged by international donors last year.

Growth has plummeted in recent years, with political deadlock compounded by the impact of eight years of war in neighbouring Syria.

Lebanon's public debt stands at around \$86 billion – more than 150 percent of gross domestic product – according to the finance ministry.

Lebanon agrees final budget with no taxes

Lebanon's finance minister said on Saturday following a meeting with Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri that they had agreed on a final budget that did not include any additional taxes or fees in a bid to appease nationwide protests. Lebanon President Michel Aoun said in a tweet that there would be a "reassuring solution" to the economic crisis.

(With Reuters)









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[Nabih Berri](#)

[Gebran Bassil](#)

Saudi Arabia, other Middle East countries warn citizens after protests erupt in Lebanon
Protests sweep Lebanon for a second day

[Israeli forces shoot dead Palestinian at West Bank checkpoint](#)

Author:

Reuters

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Fri, 2019-10-18 18:38

JERUSALEM: Israeli forces shot a Palestinian who ran toward them with a knife near a military checkpoint in the occupied West Bank on Friday, Israel's

defense ministry said, and Palestinian officials said he died of his injury. Israel's defense ministry said a Palestinian man ran toward a checkpoint between Israel and the central West Bank city of Tulkarem "with a knife in hand, with the apparent intention of attacking security personnel." The ministry said in a statement that one of the forces called on the attacker to stop, "and upon his failure to do so ... fired toward and neutralized" him.

The Palestinian health ministry identified the individual as a Palestinian national and said he had died of his injuries. Palestinian officials did not immediately provide further details.

Israel's defense ministry circulated a photo of what it said was the scene of the incident. A black plastic sheet, which ministry spokeswoman Betty Ilovici said was laid over the Palestinian's body, could be seen against the roadside with the checkpoint meters away in the background.

The West Bank has seen simmering violence since US-sponsored peace talks with Israel broke down in 2014.

Israel captured the West Bank in the 1967 Middle East war. Palestinians seek to establish a state there and in the Gaza Strip, with East Jerusalem as its capital.



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Palestinian in car ramming shot by Israel forces
Palestinian killed by Israeli fire in border clashes: Gaza ministry

[Iraqi blogger returns day after kidnapping](#)

Author:

AFP

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1571423256298002900

Fri, 2019-10-18 18:24

BAGHDAD: A prominent Iraqi blogger resurfaced Friday a day after he was seized by masked gunmen, his father said, as Amnesty International denounced a “climate of fear” in the country after protests and deadly violence. Shujaa Al-Khafaji’s family said armed men had snatched him from his home on Thursday without identifying themselves or showing an arrest warrant. Khafaji’s Facebook page, Al-Khowa Al-Nadifa (Arabic for “Those Who Have Clean Hands”), carries posts on political and social issues and has some 2.5 million followers.

“Around 15 men wearing masks and black uniforms” took Khafaji from his home, the blogger’s father, Fares Al-Khafaji, told AFP.

He said they seized his son’s phones and computers, but were not violent. Twenty-four hours later, Khafaji was “abandoned in a street with \$20 to pay for a taxi home,” his father added.

The report of Khafaji’s seizure sparked an outcry from activists and influential political leaders.

Rights watchdog Amnesty International denounced a “relentless campaign of intimidation and assault against activists in Iraq” by authorities.

“The Iraqi authorities must immediately rein in the security forces and dismantle the climate of fear they have deliberately created to stop Iraqis from peacefully exercising their rights to freedoms of expression and assembly,” said Lynn Maalouf, the group’s Middle East research director.

The group said other activists, including a doctor and a lawyer, were “forcibly disappeared more than 10 days ago,” and called on Iraqi authorities to reveal their whereabouts.

Firebrand Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr wrote on Twitter that “any act of aggression (against journalists or activists)... by the state constitutes an attack on freedom of speech.”

Former prime minister Haider Al-Abadi’s parliamentary bloc called on the government “to stop abuses of free media.”

Iraq was gripped by anti-government protests between October 1 and 6, during which 110 people, mainly demonstrators, were killed in clashes with security forces.

During the protests, unidentified armed men in uniforms raided several local television stations in Baghdad, destroying their equipment and intimidating their staff.

Journalists and activists also reported receiving threats, mostly by phone, from unidentified callers accusing them of having sided with the protesters. Khafaji faced online harassment last month after a string of attacks on bases

of the Hashed Al-Shaabi, a paramilitary force dominated by pro-Iran groups. The group on Thursday denied any involvement in the disappearance of activists, threatening legal action against anyone making such accusations. But according to Amnesty, the Hashed was involved in at least one abduction – that of lawyer Ali Hattab, who represented protesters and was seized on October 8 in the southern city of Amara.

He was snatched by “suspected members of a faction of the Popular Mobilization Units (Hashed),” Amnesty said quoting Hattab’s relatives. It happened two days after “two armed men from the PMU came to (his) home to warn him to stop being vocal about the killing of protesters on Facebook, otherwise they would kill him,” Amnesty added.



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[Shujaa Al-Khafaji](#)

Iraqi blogger outspoken about country’s corruption detained Australian travel-bloggers freed in Iranian prisoner swap