

Patients unable to pay for hospitalization as Lebanon's exchange rate crisis worsens

Fri, 2022-05-27 22:50

BEIRUT: Lebanon's dollar exchange rate crisis is leaving patients unable to pay for hospitalization, as black market rates hit LBP37,000 on Friday.

Doctors, patients, and hospital owners, who protested in the vicinity of government ministries and the central bank in Hamra Street on Thursday, called for the dollar accounts of hospitals and doctors to be liberalized and warned that things were going to get worse.

Red Cross secretary-general, Georges Kettaneh, said it was important to "think more about securing the medications for difficult and chronic diseases because the situation has become very serious."

He added that Red Cross volunteers sometimes noticed that patients being transported to hospital were in poor condition because they were unable to find the medication they needed.

BACKGROUND

The health coverage available through social security and other insurance institutions now secures a fraction of medical expenses.

The health coverage available through social security and other insurance institutions now secures a fraction of medical expenses. It previously covered between 75 and 100 percent of the cost.

Mohammed Karaki, director-general of the National Social Security Fund, said: "Private hospitals insinuating that they might ask patients to pay for the entire hospital bill and collect the amount by themselves later from insurance companies is an inappropriate intimidation."

Hospitals are protesting their inability to collect funds from banks and, therefore, their inability to provide medical services to insured patients.

"Insurance tariffs and all the other insurance parties can no longer cope with the reality in the current circumstances," said Karaki. "However, a range of ideas is being contemplated, including the possibility to halt medication provision to focus on hospitalization to secure the real prices so that hospitals don't charge patients with any difference except as provided by law."

The ongoing economic crisis is also changing the scene of neighborhoods in

Beirut and its suburbs.

Many shops preferred to be in darkness rather than have a generator subscription because they could not cover its cost from declining sales, said one person.

People are having to buy water from private tankers due to outages. But tank owners are charging their customers in dollars due to the cost of gas.

On Thursday and Friday, there were strikes and protests from people in the medical and healthcare sector, patients, public drivers, owners of bakeries and ovens, and security and military contractors, who were protesting about the monetary policy that had brought Lebanon to breaking point.

Hospitals continued their strikes on Friday and suspended all services except for admitting urgent conditions.

Taxi drivers set up roadblocks on the Ring Bridge in the heart of Beirut, blocking intersections between the east and west of the capital, to protest against surging petrol and diesel prices.

These prices exceed the capacity of the general public, leading to additional power outages in households relying on diesel generator subscriptions to ensure minimal lighting.

The monthly bill is now being charged in dollars and is at least \$40.

Bakery owners protested in front of the Economy Ministry to demand that wheat be secured for mills and the price for a bread bundle commensurate with the exchange rate.

A middle-sized bread bundle was LBP15,000 on Friday.

"The pricing of the bread bundle was subjected to the high exchange rate of the dollar," said Antoine Saif, head of the Bakery Owners' Syndicate in Mount Lebanon.

Gas stations were closed on Friday and the owners' syndicate called for a protest to demand a radical solution to the current situation because it could no longer afford the heavy losses.

Georges Brax, a spokesperson for the Gas Station Owners' Syndicate, said that banks kept delaying the payment of the oil-importing companies' dollar dues, which represented the price of petrol imported according to the Sayrafa platform.

Brax claimed that banks also kept delaying the advance authorizations from the Central Bank, which would result in the continued rationing of gas delivery to the local market by these companies and a decrease in the availability of gas to the consumer at stations, despite the presence of scarce amounts in Lebanese warehouses.

"This will thus prompt the return of the crisis, which is something that no

one wants,” he warned.

Talks are being held at the Economic and Social Council’s headquarters to study how to improve the incomes of people in the private sector.

Economic entities and the General Labor Union were discussing the erosion of purchasing capacity and living burdens due to the high exchange rate of the dollar, said Mohammed Choucair, head of the Economic Bodies.

He added: “We are heading toward strengthening these incomes.”

The US credit rating agency Fitch has warned that Lebanon’s exit from debt default was still difficult after inconclusive parliamentary elections.

In a report, the agency said the current reality further complicated the country’s ability to implement financial and economic reforms.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Lebanon](#)

UN Security Council calls for swift formation of new government in Lebanon
Street protests feared in Lebanon due to price rise, depreciation of currency, unemployment

Palestinians say teen killed by Israeli fire in West Bank

Author:

Associated Press

ID:

1653678653149745100

Fri, 2022-05-27 22:13

JERUSALEM: The Palestinian Health Ministry said Israeli forces shot and killed a teenager during an operation in a town near Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank.

The ministry identified the slain teen Zaid Ghunaim, 15. It said he was wounded by Israeli gunfire in the neck and back and doctors failed to save his life.

The death raises to five the number of Palestinian teenagers killed during Israeli military operations in the West Bank in a month. Israeli-Palestinian violence has intensified in recent weeks with near-daily arrest raids in Palestinian-administered areas of the West Bank and tensions around a Jerusalem holy site sacred to both Muslims and Jews.

The official Palestinian news agency, Wafa, cited witnesses as saying Ghunaim came upon the soldiers in Al-Khader and tried to run away but the troops fired at him. Online videos purportedly of the aftermath of the shooting show bloodstains near a white car parked in a passageway.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military, which has stepped up its operations in the West Bank in response to a series of deadly attacks inside Israel.

Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh said Israeli forces "deliberately" shot at Ghunaim with the intention to kill him.

On Sunday, Israeli ultranationalists plan to march through the main Muslim thoroughfare of the Old City of Jerusalem. The compound houses Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third holiest site in Islam. The hilltop site is also the holiest for Jews, who refer to it as the Temple Mount.

The march is meant to celebrate Israel's capture of east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war. Israel subsequently annexed the area in a step that is not internationally recognized. The Palestinians claim east Jerusalem as the capital of a future state.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Palestine](#)

[West Bank](#)

[Israel](#)

Palestinians commemorate 74th anniversary of Nakba amid outcry over funeral attack

[**Blast in Yemen fish market kills at least 4 people, wounds over 30**](#)

Author:

Reuters

ID:

1653597961521090100

Thu, 2022-05-26 23:51

ADEN: At least four people were killed and more than 30 injured at a Yemen fish market when an explosive device planted in a trash can detonated, police in the port city of Aden said on Thursday.

Medical charity Doctors Without Borders said on Twitter that its trauma hospital in Aden received 50 wounded patients, five of whom had died while six were seriously injured.

The police statement said that several suspects had been detained for questioning, but gave no further details.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Yemen](#)

[Aden](#)

[Blast](#)

Yemen government, Houthis begin Amman talks on ending Taiz siege Talks begin between Yemeni government and Houthis over reopening of Taiz road

[Iraq makes it illegal to attempt](#)

normalizing ties with Israel

Author:

Reuters

ID:

1653597643751067700

Thu, 2022-05-26 23:42

BAGHDAD: Iraq's parliament approved a law on Thursday that will ban normalizing relations with Israel, at a time when several Arab countries have established formal ties.

The Iraqi parliament has been unable to convene on any other issue including electing a new president and forming its own government, prolonging a political standoff.

Iraq has never recognized the state of Israel since its establishment in 1948 and Iraqi citizens and companies cannot visit Israel, but the new law goes further, specifically criminalizing any attempts to normalize relations with Israel.

The law was proposed by influential Shiite cleric Moqtada Al-Sadr whose party, which opposes close ties with the United States and Israel, won more seats in parliament in elections last October.

"Approving the law is not only a victory for the Iraqi people but to the heroes in Palestine and Hezbollah in Lebanon," said Iraqi Shi'ite lawmaker Hassan Salim who represents Iranian-backed militia Asaib Ahl Al-Haq.

Lawmakers from Sadr's party said they proposed the law to curb any claims by Iranian-backed rival parties that Sadr is making coalitions with Sunni and Kurds who may have secret ties with Israel.

Some Gulf states, including the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, are forging ties with Israel against a backdrop of shared concerns about the threat that Iran may pose to the region.

Saudi Arabia, a close US ally, has made it a condition of any eventual normalization with Israel that Palestinians' quest for statehood on territory captured by Israel in the 1967 Middle East war must be addressed.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Iraq](#)

[Israel](#)

[Law](#)

[Muqtada Al-Sadr](#)

[normalizing](#)

Iraqi migrants shot amid people-smuggling gang fight in France
Iraqi boy eludes security to board Iran-bound plane

[UN Security Council in renewed call for Abu Akleh's killers to be brought to justice](#)

Thu, 2022-05-26 22:41

NEW YORK: The killing of Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh in Jenin in the West Bank and the subsequent excessive use of force by Israeli police against mourners at her funeral were again a key focus of a UN Security Council meeting held on Thursday to discuss the latest report on the

situation in the Palestinian territories.

Council members condemned Abu Akleh's killing, and reiterated their calls for an independent and transparent investigation into her death, while Tor Wennesland, the UN special coordinator for the Middle East peace process, said that "those responsible must be held accountable."

US permanent representative to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield described Abu Akleh's "heart-wrenching killing" as a "tragic loss and an affront to press freedoms everywhere."

She strongly condemned the killing, and called for "an immediate, thorough, transparent and impartial investigation," adding: "And upon the conclusion of an investigation, we expect full accountability for those found responsible."

Thomas-Greenfield said that Abu Akleh's death was compounded by the violence at her funeral procession.

"We have directly shared our concern with Israel regarding the troubling footage of Israeli police intruding on the procession," she said.

The US envoy called on all parties to honor Abu Akleh by "redoubling" peace efforts.

Former and current European members of the Security Council also reiterated their call for an investigation into Abu Akleh's killing and expressed shock at "the violence exercised by the Israeli police toward mourners at her funeral."

In a joint statement issued after the Security Council meeting, EU members France, Ireland and Estonia, joined by Albania, deplored the decision by the Israeli Higher Planning Council on May 12 to advance plans for the construction of more than 4,000 housing units in the occupied West Bank.

The statement urged Israel to rescind that decision, as well as abandon planned demolitions and evictions, especially in Masafer Yatta area, which alone could result in the forced transfer of 1,200 people.

Condemning all attacks against journalists, Wennesland said that Abu Akleh's death "brought Palestinians and countless others around the world together in grief and anger, while serving as another reminder of the devastating human cost of this conflict."

The special coordinator also lamented "the familiar pattern of daily violence, including armed clashes, settlement expansion, evictions, demolitions and seizures of Palestinian structures, as well as a deadly terrorist attack in Israel."

The daily violence has left 10 Palestinians, including a woman and three children, dead and 346 Palestinians, including 24 children, injured.

Those deaths and injuries at the hands of Israeli security forces occurred during demonstrations, clashes, and search-and-arrest operations, said

Wennesland.

He said that Israeli settlers and other civilians have carried out 57 attacks against Palestinians, resulting in one Palestinian child being killed, 24 injuries and damage to Palestinian property.

Meanwhile, four Israeli civilians and one Israeli security personnel were killed and 22 civilians and 20 security personnel injured by Palestinians in shooting and stabbing attacks or clashes involving the throwing of stones or homemade incendiary devices.

Wennesland also called for urgent attention to the Palestinian Authority's "dire" financial situation, "compounded by the constraints of the occupation, the absence of serious Palestinian reforms and unclear prospects for donor support."

He said: "Without meaningful policy steps on the part of Israel, bold reforms on the part of the PA and increased donor support, these economic challenges will continue."



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Shireen Abu Akleh](#)

[United Nations Security Council \(UNSC\)](#)

[Palestinians](#)

UN condemns killing of Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh

Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh shot dead in West Bank, channel blames Israeli troops