

Turkish 'foreigners quota' adds to fears of migrant backlash

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ANKARA: A plan by Turkey to limit the number of foreigners living in individual neighborhoods has sparked fears of a rise in anti-immigrant sentiment in a society where anger toward refugees is already high amid growing economic woes.

Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu last week said that Turkey will enforce a 25 percent foreign quota in every district. In areas where Syrians make up one-quarter of the population, no new foreigners will be allowed in.

"If the number of foreigners in a neighborhood exceeds 25 percent, we will send them to other neighborhoods," Soylu said.

Students, broken families and people needing healthcare will be exempt from the new rule.

So far, more than 4,500 Syrians are facing relocation out of the Altindag neighborhood in Ankara where they have faced attacks and harassment by angry mobs following the killing of a local teenager by a Syrian refugee last August.

No official clarification has been provided on where the migrants will be resettled.

The resettlement of Syrians from Altindag will serve as a "pilot project" for Turkish authorities planning to extend the quota system to other districts.

Soylu's statement came on the same day the Interior Ministry announced that more than 193,000 Syrians, including 84,000 children, had become Turkish citizens by the end of 2021. The number of Syrians registered under temporary protection stands at about 3.7 million.

Sinem Adar, an associate at the Center for Applied Turkey Studies of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, a Berlin-based think tank, said the new regulation comes against the background of growing anti-immigrant attitudes coupled with increasing anger at the ruling AKP over the country's economic crisis and governance deadlock.

"Since the municipal elections in 2019, we have been observing a shift away from the AKP's earlier hospitable policies toward refugees," she told Arab News.

According to Adar, Syrian refugees have become a focal point in Turkey's long-running identity struggles, leading to a contentious anti-immigration debate.

"The mounting anti-immigrant sentiments have partly unleashed themselves in

the shape of violent attacks on refugees, as was the case in Ankara last August and in Istanbul in January this year," she said.

Police arrested Turkish and Afghan suspects over the killing of a young Syrian refugee, Nail Al-Naif, in Istanbul. The victim was stabbed while he was asleep in his apartment.

Experts also say that migration management has been systematically used in order to gain support ahead of parliamentary and presidential elections due by 2023.

In an interview with Reuters on Monday, Turkey's main opposition leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu said: "Turkey will send home the millions of Syrian refugees it hosts and re-establish diplomatic ties with President Bashar Assad if the opposition alliance wins the elections."

He added: "Migration has become one of the main drivers of political competition. The mainstream opposition parties, such as the Republican People's Party and the Good Party, have recently reoriented their focus to governmental policy, and they strongly push against Turkey's hosting of a growing number of refugees and irregular migrants."

According to Adar, in the face of fierce criticism by the opposition, the government has also acknowledged the public's burden by leveling up its criticism of the EU for showing insufficient support, ramping up the discussion on repatriating Syrian refugees to northern Syria, and objecting to taking in any Afghan refugees.

"The recent quota regulation is another attempt by the AKP government to contain growing popular discontent against the backdrop of an increasing political competition," she said.

Adar said that in the face of Turkey's growing economic crisis, public support for the AKP and its primary supporter, the Nationalist Movement Party, is in steep decline. Approval ratings for President Recep Tayyip Erdogan are also falling.

Metin Corabatir, president of the Research Center on Asylum and Migration in Ankara, said that Syrians are concentrated in some neighborhoods because it is close to places where they work.

"They are living in the Altindag district of Ankara because it is close to the furniture manufacturing center of the capital where they are working informally," he told Arab News.

Corabatir said that political parties should not use the "refugee card" in such a way as to consolidate their voter base.

"If they want to include the migration management problems in their election campaign, they should concentrate on ways to further integrate these people into society. But so far no one has suggested any solution for local integration," he said.

“These people, both foreigners and refugees, are expected to remain in Turkey even after the elections. The best policy is to suggest new ways of employment, health and education rather than pledging to send them back or giving them only 48 hours to vacate their houses and find a new one in a new district,” he added.



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‘Fake news’ fuels attacks on Syrians in Ankara
The return of Syrian refugees key topic in Cavusoglu’s talks in Lebanon

[**UN expert in Sudan to verify rights**](#)

violations after coup

Author:

Tue, 2022-02-22 00:27

CAIRO: A UN human rights expert was in Sudan on Monday to verify allegations of human rights violations after an October military coup plunged the country into turmoil and triggered nearly daily street protests.

Adama Dieng, the UN's expert on human rights in Sudan, arrived in the capital of Khartoum on Sunday, a month after Sudan's authorities asked for the postponement of his visit, according to the UN Human Rights Council.

Dieng was a UN special adviser on the prevention of genocide and served as an investigator for the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

He was appointed in November to monitor the human rights situation in Sudan after the Oct. 25 military coup.

Dieng met Monday with acting Justice Minister Mohamed Saeed Al-Hilu.

He will also meet with other government officials, activists and civil society groups.

Dieng's mission is to verify allegations of human rights abuses during protests that have been taking place since the takeover, said Gomaa Al-Wakil, head of the human rights department at the Justice Ministry.

The takeover has upended Sudan's transition to democratic rule after three decades of repression and international isolation under former President Omar Bashir.

The African nation has been on a fragile path to democracy since a popular uprising forced the military to remove Bashir and his government in April 2019.

Sudan has been politically paralyzed since the coup, with near-daily street protests. Authorities launched a major crackdown on protesters.

Sudanese security forces have also been accused of using sexual violence against women taking part in the demonstrations. The UN called for an investigation.

Hundreds of activists and protest leaders were also detained complicating UN-led international efforts to find a way out of the stalemate.



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Sudan's fate in the balance as democratic transition hits a road bump
Sudanese man killed in crackdown on anti-coup protests as UN expert arrives

[Iran hails nuclear talk 'progress' but Raisi insists US sanctions end](#)

Author:

Tue, 2022-02-22 00:22

DOHA: Iran has signaled "significant progress" in talks on reviving a stalled accord on its nuclear program but President Ebrahim Raisi, on his first visit to a Gulf state, again insisted that the US must lift its crippling sanctions.

Iran's president, a personal target of the US sanctions, spoke out ahead of a summit of natural gas exporting nations in Qatar.

The summit will take place against the backdrop of mounting tensions in Ukraine and reported advances in resuming a deal limiting Iran's nuclear program.

The US under former President Donald Trump withdrew from the 2015 accord in 2018, saying it was not tough enough in curtailing Iran's weapons ambitions. Tehran has always denied seeking an atomic bomb.

But months of negotiations in Vienna have brought the two sides closer to a new deal.

Iran's Foreign Ministry said on Monday that "significant progress" has been made and the number of outstanding obstacles had been "considerably reduced."

"But the problems that remain are most difficult, the most difficult and most serious to be resolved," it added.

Talks on reviving the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action have been held in the Austrian capital since November, involving Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia directly and the US indirectly.

After arriving in Doha and meeting Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Raisi again took aim at the US sanctions that have ravaged his country's economy.

"The United States must show their desire to lift the main sanctions," he said.



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Saudi FM: Returning to Iran nuclear deal should be starting point for

addressing regional issues Iranian fighter jet crashes into school, three killed

Jordanian Royal Court rejects 'inaccurate' claims surrounding King Abdullah's accounts

Author:

Mon, 2022-02-21 23:29

AMMAN: The Jordanian Royal Court on Monday rejected as "inaccurate" and "misleading" news reports about foreign bank accounts reportedly belonging to King Abdullah.

In a statement, the Royal Court said the reports included "inaccuracies, and outdated and misleading information that were employed with the aim of defaming Jordan and His Majesty, as well as distorting the truth."

The statement, seen by Arab News, came after the emergence of a series of reports in the international press based on leaked data from Credit Suisse, a leading Swiss bank.

The reports claimed King Abdullah had six accounts with Credit Suisse, one worth around \$224 million.

The Royal Court said the total balance mentioned in a number of reports is "inaccurate and exaggerated, as a result of significant duplicative counting."

The data, leaked to Germany's Sueddeutsche Zeitung, contains details of 18,000 bank accounts for prominent global figures, which were held from the 1940s to the 2010s, including by the sons of former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Alaa and Gamal, who allegedly held a total of six accounts at various points, including one in 2003 worth \$196 million.

"The majority of the sums listed in the accounts (of King Abdullah) relate to the sale of a large Airbus 340 airplane for \$212 million, and replacing it with a smaller, less costly Gulfstream aircraft. His Majesty had inherited two planes from His Majesty the late King Hussein, which were sold, with the resulting sum used to replace them more than once over the past 20 years, including the sale of the Airbus 340 and the purchase of the Gulfstream aircraft currently used by His Majesty," the statement said.

The closed accounts, the Royal Court added, include an account with deposits inherited by King Abdullah from King Hussein.

Regarding an account belonging to Queen Rania of Jordan, the Royal Court said that it was established as a trust fund for the king's children. The funds came from the king's private wealth, and the account was entrusted to the children's mother, as they were minors at the time, the statement said.

In response to reports, linking the monarch's wealth to foreign aid, the Royal Court said the king's "private assets have always been independent of the Treasury and public funds."

The Royal Court reaffirmed that all international assistance coming to Jordan is "subject to professional audits, and their allocations are fully accounted for by the government and donor entities, in accordance with cooperation agreements subject to the highest standards of governance and oversight.

"Any allegations that link the funds in these accounts to public funds or foreign assistance are defamatory, baseless, and deliberate attempts to distort facts and systematically target Jordan's reputation, as well as His Majesty's credibility, especially coming after similar reports published last year that were based on leaks from previous years."



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Jordan's prime minister contracts COVID-19 – state media
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Two years after pandemic, Lebanon succeeds in coping with COVID-19

Mon, 2022-02-21 23:05

BEIRUT: Lebanon has been able to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic well despite its "critical and difficult circumstances," a top health official told Arab News on Monday.

Lebanon "has overcome the waves of the pandemic with an acceptable rate of losses despite the collapse of official institutions," said Dr. Abdul Rahman Bizri, an infectious disease specialist and head of the National Committee for the Administration of coronavirus vaccine.

"The real partnership between the public and private sectors, especially in the voluntary field, coordination in a scientific manner, and matching the measures taken globally with the Lebanese reality led to this success," Bizri said.

Like the rest of the world, Lebanon learning to live with the virus, although the gradual abolition of precautionary measures has not yet been approved.

Restaurants and cafes are crowded on weekends, especially those that allocate outdoor seating areas.

Two years have passed since the first coronavirus infection was reported in Lebanon, and the total to date is 1,043,028 cases. The total number of deaths reached 9,970 on Sunday.

The daily number of new cases has fallen during the past two months from a peak of 10,000 to less than 4,000.

"I believe that we will coexist with the virus and it will become like any common cold," said Aida Nouri, nursing supervisor of the hospital department at Al-Makassed Charitable Hospital in Beirut.

Nouri said that 95 percent of the deaths from the coronavirus variants registered in the hospital are among the unvaccinated.

The vaccinated suffer from simple symptoms, which have recently become very mild and do not require hospitalization, said Nouri.

In a report a week ago, the Lebanese Ministry of Health noted "the decrease in the percentage of positive tests and local incidence."

The report indicated the beginning of the countdown phase to the end of the wave of the omicron variant in the next two months.

According to the ministry's daily medical reports, the largest percentage of

those who are currently infected with the virus are unvaccinated – 77 percent.

The number of people registered to receive the vaccine has risen to more than 3,700,000 people. This means that the number of people who will receive or have received the vaccine through registration on the platform of the Ministry of Health has exceeded 68.3 percent of the population.

According to Bizri, “Lebanon relies on RNA-based vaccines for its vaccination campaign because they are more desirable around the world. Lebanon receives European and American donations of these vaccines.”

Bizri said they were preparing “a new phase for vaccinating children between the ages of 6 and 12 years, subject to the arrival of a batch of vaccines soon.”

He said the coronavirus “has begun to turn from a pandemic to an endemic, which means that the virus that transmitted from animals to humans is adapting to live among humans, but in new forms.

“It is behaving like a human virus to continue life, and this is logical in virology, as it enhances its ability to spread and evade the immune system, causing the least disease symptoms so as not to eliminate its carrier, and this is what we witnessed with omicron.”

Bizri also talked about the chaos, violations and corruption that marred the vaccination process.

Some fraud cases were reported in the results of PCR tests and vaccination certificates.

He said: “It is related to the deterioration of the security situation in a country where there is no social security number for every citizen.

“Moreover, the electronic firewalls are not robust, and the most dangerous thing is that perpetrators are not held accountable or punished.

“However, despite the limited capabilities, Lebanon has realized a healthy and notable achievement.”



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