

# Algerian minister calls for vaccination amid virus surge

Wed, 2022-01-26 23:53

ALGIERS: Algeria's health minister on Tuesday urged people to get vaccinated and save hospitals from collapse as the North African nation faces a surge of COVID-19 infections.

Algeria is battling infections from both the delta variant and the highly contagious omicron variant, which now accounts for 60 percent of COVID-19 infections.

On Monday, health officials reported a daily record of 2,215 cases and 13 deaths.

"I urge you to get vaccinated and break the chain of infections which risk bringing our health institutions to their knees," Health Minister Abderahmane Benbouzid said at a media conference in the capital, Algiers. "For now, the hospitals' staff are managing. The question is, how long can they hold on?"

Omicron is less likely to cause severe illness than the previous delta variant, according to studies. Omicron spreads even more easily than other coronavirus strains, and has already become dominant in many countries. It also more easily infects those who have been vaccinated or had previously been infected by prior versions of the virus.

The inoculation rate in Algeria remains low. Less than a quarter of the population has had even one vaccine dose despite the government's robust vaccination campaign in state media and on social networks that includes pro-vaccine posts from famous Algerian actors, singers, athletes and influencers.

Algeria has a stock of vaccines that can largely ensure coverage of vaccination needs for two years, the minister said. Overall, only 13 percent of Algeria's 45 million inhabitants, have been inoculated, the minister said. Of eligible adults, only 29 percent have received two vaccine doses, he said.

In December, Algeria started requiring a vaccine passport to enter many public venues, seeking to overcome vaccine hesitancy that has left millions of vaccines unused.

The pass is also required for anyone entering or leaving Algeria, as well as for entering sports facilities, cinemas, theaters, museums, town halls and other sites like hammams – bath houses that are popular across the region.

Official figures show Algeria has seen 6,508 COVID-19-related deaths since the pandemic began, but even members of the government's scientific committee admit the real figure is much higher. Out of fears of being blamed for getting the virus, some Algerians keep their infections secret, which then puts others at risk.



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## [Vaccinated tourists need no boosters to enter Abu Dhabi: Authorities](#)

Wed, 2022-01-26 23:41

DUBAI: Authorities in the UAE have published new information about the capital's entry requirements, saying that unlike residents and citizens, vaccinated tourists do not need to show proof of a booster shot to cross into Abu Dhabi.

The tourism-specific change comes as confusion swirls around entry rules for Abu Dhabi, which has taken a more stringent approach to containing the coronavirus than its freewheeling neighbor, Dubai.

The pandemic has prompted Abu Dhabi to erect a hard border with Dubai, forcing all drivers to come to a halt for vaccination and virus checks on what once had been a wide, empty highway before the pandemic struck.

The emirate has clarified that all citizens and residents seeking entry must now show proof of a booster shot to be considered fully vaccinated and maintain a “green status” on the government health app.



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UAE records marks 2,369 new coronavirus cases over past 24 hours

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## [Iraq's top court upholds reelection of parliament speaker](#)

Author:

Wed, 2022-01-26 23:33

BAGHDAD: Iraq's top court has confirmed the reelection of Mohammed Al-Halbussi as parliament speaker, following appeals against its conduct, paving the way toward the formation of a new government.

Hours later, rockets fell some 500 meters from Al-Halbussi's home in the Gurma district of Anbar province, in what a security source told AFP was an attack that sought to target him.

Two lawmakers had appealed Al-Halbussi's reelection as speaker, a position historically reserved for Iraq's Sunni Arab minority, during parliament's opening session earlier in January which was overshadowed by disputes between rival blocs from the Shiite majority.

"The Federal Supreme Court rejected the appeal of two MPs who demanded the annulment of the inaugural session of parliament on Jan. 9," in which Al-Halbussi was reelected, said presiding judge Jassim Mohammed Aboud.

The ruling will allow the resumption of parliament sessions, and along with them deliberations over the selection of a new president, who will in turn choose the next prime minister, to be approved by the legislature.

Lawmakers have until Feb. 8 to elect a president – a post historically allocated to a Kurd.

But negotiations between parties and coalitions seeking to form a parliamentary majority have been marked by tensions, particularly between key Shiite currents seeking to exert their influence.

Both the Coordination Framework and another bloc formed by firebrand Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr claim to have the majority needed to elect a president.

The legislature opened earlier this month to furious arguments between the rival factions.

Amid the debate, Mahmud Al-Mashhadani – the oldest member of parliament who was therefore chairing the opening session – was taken ill and rushed to hospital.

When the session resumed an hour later, lawmakers reelected Al-Halbussi of the Sunni Taqadom party as speaker.

Appeals against the speaker's reelection were filed by Mashhadani and another MP, Bassem Khachan.

After Wednesday's rocket attack, two wounded children were "taken to hospital in Gurma," Iraqi police said in a statement.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack.

Several grenade attacks have in recent days targeted political figures from parties that could team up with Shiite leader Moqtada Sadr to form a parliamentary coalition in the wake of Iraq's October legislative elections.

Sadr, whose bloc took the largest share of seats, is seeking to build a coalition bringing together Taqadom – Al-Halbussi's party – a second Sunni party and a Kurdish grouping.





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Iraqi parliament holds first session, elects speaker  
Iraq's Shiite divide makes forging government tough task

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## [Qatar emir to meet with Biden in Washington Jan 31: White House](#)

Author:

Wed, 2022-01-26 01:30

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden will receive Qatar's emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad at the White House on Jan. 31, his spokeswoman said Tuesday. Biden and the Gulf state leader will discuss security in the Middle East and "ensuring the stability of global energy supplies," Press Secretary Jen Psaki said in a statement.

The meeting comes as Washington and its European allies are seeking to shore up energy contingency plans should Russia squeeze supplies due to tensions with the West over Ukraine.

The US and its EU allies accuse Russia of seeking to upend European stability by threatening invasion of neighboring Ukraine, a former Soviet republic striving to join NATO and other Western institutions.

The European Union sources about 40 percent of its supply from Russia, and

Washington and its European allies have been scouring global markets for alternative energy sources.

Qatar, a close US ally, has huge gas reserves and is the world's biggest exporter of liquefied natural gas.

Psaki said Biden will also thank the emir for Qatar's support to the United States in safely transporting US citizens, permanent residents and Afghan partners out of Afghanistan in the wake of the US withdrawal last year.

Qatar has played a significant role both in diplomacy and evacuations at the end of nearly 20 years of war in Afghanistan.



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Turkey, Qatar reached preliminary deal on Kabul airport security – Turkish sources

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# UN Security Council condemns Iraq terror attack, urges all nations to help seek justice

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Tue, 2022-01-25 22:55

NEW YORK: The UN Security Council has unanimously condemned “in the strongest terms” a recent terrorist attack in Iraq’s Diyala Province, and called for all “perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of these reprehensible acts of terrorism” to be brought to justice.

At dawn on Friday, Jan. 21, at least 11 Iraqi soldiers were shot dead in their sleep during an attack on their barracks by suspected Daesh gunmen, according to reports citing Iraqi security officials. It happened in the Al-Azim district, a mountainous area more than 70 miles north of the capital, Baghdad.

The Security Council urged all states to actively cooperate with the Iraqi Government in seeking to hold the perpetrators to account, in line with their obligations under international law and the council’s resolutions. It reiterated that terrorism is one of the most serious threats to international peace and security.

In a joint statement, council members reaffirmed that “any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivation, wherever, whenever and by whomsoever committed.”

They highlighted the need for all states “to combat by all means, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and other obligations under international law, including international human rights law, international refugee law and international humanitarian law, threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts.”

Council members also shared “their deepest sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims and to the government of Iraq, and they wished a speedy and full recovery to those who were injured.”





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