

# General Labor Union president warns against 'certain catastrophe' in Lebanon amid economic crises

Author:

Fri, 2022-01-07 22:40

BEIRUT: General Labor Union President Bechara Al-Asmar has warned against “a certain catastrophe, since hospitalization is now accessible to the wealthy only.”

At a press conference on Friday, he commented on the multitude of crises facing the Lebanese, including “the ongoing madness in the dollar exchange rate, insane increases in fuel prices, electricity bill, the removal of medicine subsidies and the loss of the depositors’ savings as a result of bank circulations – viewed as organized robbery.”

He warned that “the draft budget included a provision for raising the customs dollar, which would raise the prices of goods by 30 percent, and raise all taxes and duties.”

He added: “This is unacceptable because it entails the removal of subsidies on everything in exchange for nothing, which is surrendering to the IMF conditions without any supervision.”

The fresh warning came as the ruling elite attempted to resolve its many conflicts that are blocking political and administrative progress.

President Michel Aoun has signed a decree calling on parliament to hold an extraordinary session starting from Monday and ending on March 21.

This will restore the parliamentary immunity of the ministers charged for the crime of the Beirut port blast, including current MPs, one of whom had an arrest warrant issued for him in absentia and that has not yet been executed.

The parliamentary session sets the stage for the transfer of power from a judicial investigator to a parliamentary body for the prosecution of ministers and deputies allegedly to blame for the explosion.

Lawyer and activist Hassan Bazzi said that “the key parties to the settlements are Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, Prime Minister Najib Mikati and President Michel Aoun.”

This follows the intense political discord between Aoun and Berri that reached its peak last week.

Bazzi said the settlement moved Aoun to sign a decree calling on parliament for a special session.

He also said that the parliamentary session’s agenda includes amending the

law under review before the constitutional council – approving only six seats for expatriates' voting instead of letting them participate in nationwide elections.

Bazzi also indicated that parliament was likely to approve the amendment to the code of criminal procedure, setting up a judicial parliamentary panel to look into appealing the decisions of Judge Tarek Bitar who has issued arrest warrants for several ministers.

While Cabinet is called to convene under this basis, Bazzi said the appointments for the panel would be made on a quota basis, where “the diaspora loses the opportunity for change and the political system regains control.”

Berri and Aoun tried to hide the parameters of this settlement by sparking a new debate concerning the special parliamentary session.

Although the main title of the urgent session is the discussion and approval of the two draft budgets, the presidential decree – bearing the signature of Prime Minister Najib Mikati – has on its agenda “the ratified laws that the president may request to be reconsidered and drafts or proposals of urgent and necessary laws related to the parliamentary elections.”

Berri indicated in a statement on Friday that “parliament is independent and is not restricted to any description of projects or proposals that the bureau of the parliament decides to put forward and the president has the right to respond after they are issued by the General Authority.”

The statement added: “This is the constitution’s provision and jurisprudence.”

The president’s team replied indirectly through unidentified sources that “they do not want to get into a debate with Berri.”

They added that article 33 of the constitution “stipulates that the parliament may be convened to extraordinary sessions by a decree setting their opening, end and agenda.”

Parliamentary sources replied to Aoun’s party that “the procedural authority may certainly set for the parliament the agenda it wants to look into in this extraordinary session, provided that parliament’s work is not limited to this agenda only.”

The settlement meant to be followed requires the re-convening of the Cabinet.

However, Hezbollah’s bloc of MPs ignored the issues of governance and only supported the opening of an extraordinary parliamentary session extending until the date of the ordinary session, in view of the urgent need to adopt laws relating to “rescue, accountability and state regularity.”

Questions remain over whether this settlement will allow the Cabinet to convene.

Political observers indicated that the settlement between Aoun and Berri – which was fostered by Hezbollah – might require the absence of Hezbollah and Amal movement’s ministers from the next Cabinet session, except for the minister of finance, because the Cabinet was expected to discuss the general budget.

They added: “This is to further tie the ongoing conflict to the resumption of the Cabinet’s work and to the withdrawal of the port’s file from Judge Bitar.”



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Lebanon](#)

UN peacekeepers attacked in south Lebanon near Israel border  
Exhibition in Lebanon forges dialogue between antiquity and modernity

---

[Iran displays missiles amid nuclear](#)

# talks with world powers

Author:

AP

ID:

1641557236667456400

Fri, 2022-01-07 12:04

DUBAI: Iran put three ballistic missiles on display at an outdoor prayer esplanade in central Tehran on Friday, as talks in Vienna aimed at reviving Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers flounder.

The missiles, known as Dezful, Qiam and Zolfaghar and with official ranges of up to 1,000 kilometers, were already-known models, the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard said.

Diplomats from countries that remain in the 2015 nuclear deal – Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China – are working with Tehran to revive the accord, which had sought to limit Iran's nuclear ambitions in exchange for trade.

American diplomats are present in Vienna but they are not in direct talks with Iranians. The accord collapsed in 2018 when then-President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the US and re-imposed sanctions on Iran.

A report by state TV said the missiles on display were the same types as those used to strike US bases in Iraq.

The display came on the second anniversary of ballistic missile attacks on American bases in Iraq in retaliation for the US drone strike that killed top Iranian general Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad in 2020.

The Iranian military mistakenly shot down Ukraine International Airlines Flight PS752 with two surface-to-air missiles after the attacks, killing all 176 people on board. After days of denial, the Guard publicly apologized, blaming air defense operator who authorities said mistook the Boeing 737-800 for an American cruise missile.

An Iranian military court in November held a hearing for 10 people suspected of having role in downing the Ukrainian airliner.

State TV said a commemoration ceremony for the victims was held in Tehran's main cemetery with the presence of their families as well as officials.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Iran](#)

Iran's Guard fires cruise missiles in military exerciseUK condemns Iran's launch of ballistic missiles in war games

## [Kuwait asks citizens in Kazakhstan to leave the country](#)

Author:

Reuters

ID:

1641546821156734900

Fri, 2022-01-07 09:04

CAIRO: The Kuwaiti embassy in Kazakhstan asked Kuwaitis in the Central Asian country to leave "for their safety," state news agency (KUNA) reported on Friday.

It also urged Kuwaitis who wanted to travel to Kazakhstan to postpone their plans "because of the emergency status" continuing in the country.

Demonstrations that began recently in Kazakhstan came as a response to a fuel

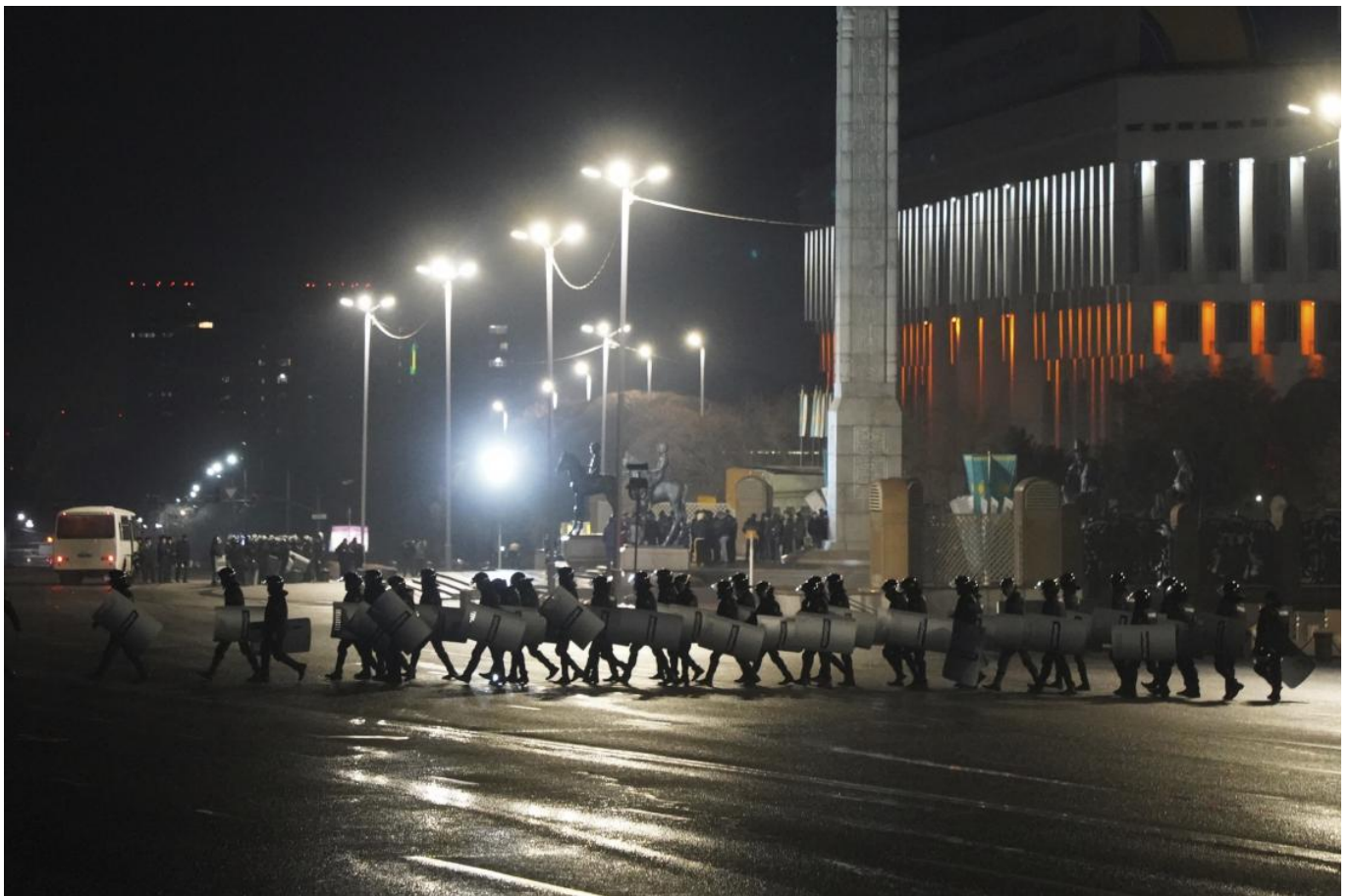
price hike have swelled into a broad movement against the government and ex-leader Nursultan Nazarbayev, 81, the longest-serving ruler of any former Soviet state.



# The forgotten Arabs of Iran

A century ago, the autonomous sheikhdom of Arabistan was absorbed by force into the Persian state. Today the Arabs of Ahwaz are Iran's most persecuted minority

**Enter**



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

---

# [UAE keen to work with UN, Abu Dhabi crown prince tells Guterres](#)

Author:

Fri, 2022-01-07 02:10

LONDON: Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed said the UAE supports the UN and is looking forward to working with the global body in various fields, state news agency WAM reported on Jan. 6.

He said the UAE worked for peace and stability, and supported everything that achieved regional and international development and prosperity.

Sheikh Mohammed was speaking during a phone call with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres a day after the UAE announced its commitments as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for the 2022-23 term.

Guterres congratulated Sheikh Mohammed on the UAE being elected to the world body and wished it success in serving the international community through the position.

The UN chief also praised Emirati humanitarian and development initiatives to support international stability and development.

The crown prince congratulated Guterres on his re-election for a second term as head of the UN, which began on Jan. 3.

He also thanked the UN and its secretary-general for the important role they play in the service of global peace and security.

"This role is becoming increasingly important in light of the challenges and dangers that threaten humanity, foremost of which is the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and the need to strengthen international collective action in the face of these threats," he said.

During the call, the two men discussed various aspects of cooperation between the UAE and the UN and exchanged views on international and regional issues of common concern, including the situation in the Middle East.

"They stressed the importance of settling crises in the region through dialogue, peaceful methods and joint international action," the report said.

The UAE was elected as a non-permanent member of the 15-member Security Council for the second time in its history in June and held its first meeting on Jan. 4. During its term, the country will chair the council twice, in March of this year and in June 2023.





Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[UAE](#)

[United Nations](#)

[UN Security Council \(UNSC\)](#)

[Antonio Guterres](#)

[Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan](#)

UAE announces 2022-2023 commitments on first day at UN Security Council  
UN says 'following with concern' Houthi seizure of UAE-flagged ship, urges restraint

---

## [Israeli MP faces heat for remarks on settlers](#)

Author:

Thu, 2022-01-06 23:38

TEL AVIV: An Israeli deputy minister was under fire on Thursday for calling residents of an unauthorized West Bank settlement outpost "subhuman," sparking an outcry that underscored the fragility of Israel's ideologically diverse coalition.

Yair Golan, a former deputy military chief and a member of the dovish Meretz party, has previously prompted a backlash for comments appearing to liken the atmosphere in Israel to that of Nazi-era Germany.

“These are not people, these are subhumans. Despicable people and the corruption of the Jewish people. They must not be given any backing,” Golan told the Knesset Channel. “This radical nationalist rampage will bring a catastrophe upon us.”

Golan, who serves as deputy economy minister, was referring to settlers from an illegal outpost in the West Bank, which was evacuated as part of Israel’s 2005 withdrawal from the Gaza Strip but where settlers have repeatedly rebuilt structures.

The settlers and their supporters have also clashed with Palestinians from nearby villages. Golan said he was referring to settlers suspected of having defaced a nearby Muslim cemetery, which he likened to a “pogrom.”

Separately, Israeli forces shot and killed a Palestinian who had opened fire on them during an arrest raid in the occupied West Bank city of Nablus early on Thursday, the Israeli military said.

The military said it was carrying out an operation to arrest a suspect when armed men began firing on the troops. It said forces killed one of the gunmen. No soldiers were wounded and the suspect was arrested, the military said.

The official Palestinian news agency, Wafa, identified the man as Bakir Muhammad Musa Hashash, 21, saying he was critically wounded and later died.

Last month, a Palestinian opened fire on a car filled with Jewish seminary students next to a West Bank settlement outpost. At the same time, settler violence against Palestinians has risen, particularly in the northern West Bank.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Israel](#)

[Israeli settlements](#)

[West Bank settlement](#)

Palestinian killed in confrontation in West Bank settlement  
Israeli woman found dead near West Bank settlement