

More blackouts ahead as Lebanon generators starved of fuel

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Wed, 2021-06-23 18:59

BEIRUT: The owners of private generators that provide a vital backup to Lebanon's decrepit power grid warned Wednesday of their own cuts due to lack of fuel as the country's economic crisis deepens.

The national network run by Electricité du Liban is prone to blackouts and in some areas only manages to provide power for two hours a day.

That forces many Lebanese to pay a separate bill for a backup from neighborhood generators run by private firms.

With the Lebanese economy facing its worst crisis in a generation and the currency in freefall, private suppliers have warned they are struggling to secure enough fuel to keep running.

The crisis is so acute that on Wednesday the lights went out in a building belonging to the foreign ministry, forcing employees to stop work, Lebanese media reported.

"Generator owners in several regions started telling customers on Wednesday that they would not be able to provide electricity for lack of mazout," a widely used petrol derivative, said Abdu Saadeh, head of a syndicate for generator owners.

"We had warned late last week that the stocks would start running dry... and so far we haven't found a solution."

Lebanon has been roiled since autumn 2019 by an economic crisis the World Bank says is likely to rank among the world's worst financial crises since the mid-19th century.

The collapse has sparked outrage at Lebanon's political class, seen as woefully corrupt and unable to tackle the country's many difficulties.

Officials have blamed the current fuel shortages on stockpiling by traders and a surge of fuel smuggling into Syria.

Several people have been arrested on suspicion of smuggling in recent weeks, according to the police.

The central bank has set up a mechanism to subsidise fuels by up to 85 percent, but fuel importers have accused it of failing to implement the program.

The head of public Internet provider Ogero has warned that electricity cuts could also threaten Lebanon's access to the web.



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Mother and four daughters killed as they looked for fuel amid Lebanon's petrol shortage
Protests erupt after Lebanon bids to curb fuel smuggling

[Egypt stresses need for negotiated settlement on Renaissance Dam](#)

Wed, 2021-06-23 18:07

CAIRO: Egypt is keen to complete negotiations on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) issue, a government minister said, as Sudan on Wednesday asked the UN Security Council to meet and discuss the dam dispute.

Ethiopia is pinning its hopes of economic development and power generation on the GERD, but Egypt fears it will threaten its water supply from the Nile. Sudan is concerned about the dam's safety and its own water flow.

Mohamed Abdel-Ati, who is Egypt's minister of water resources and irrigation, emphasized his country's persistence in preserving its water rights and achieving the benefit for all parties in any GERD agreement that was reached.

On his visit to South Sudan, where he met the First Vice President Riek Machar and Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation Manawa Peter, he stressed the pursuit of a just and binding legal agreement that met the aspirations of all countries in development.

He also highlighted Egypt's flexibility in negotiations during the past few years which, he added, had been met with the "intransigence of the Ethiopian side."

Abdel-Ati arrived in Juba on Monday along with an official delegation for a five-day visit to hold talks on promoting bilateral cooperation, including in the field of water management.

They discussed the latest developments on the Nile water issue and their countries' current positions on the GERD.

Abdel-Ati said Egypt was implementing projects in all Nile Basin countries and African countries, and that the projects implemented in South Sudan aimed to serve its people and achieve stability for them by solving drinking water problems and protecting against the dangers of floods.

He added that projects were currently being implemented in seven countries and that the number was expected to increase to 10 soon.

His remarks came as Sudan asked the UN Security Council to meet and discuss the dam dispute.

Foreign Minister Mariam Sadiq Al-Mahdi called on the council to hold a session as soon as possible to discuss the GERD and "its impact on the safety and security of millions of people," Reuters reported, quoting a government statement.

She called on the council's leader to urge Ethiopia to stop the "unilateral" filling of the dam "which exacerbates the dispute and poses a threat to regional and international peace and security."

The Arab League's envoy to the UN, Maged Abdel Fattah, said on Tuesday that Sudan and Egypt were working on a draft resolution to the council on the GERD if Ethiopia did not reach a deal.

Arab states would lobby for the draft resolution to be approved, he told Egyptian TV, adding that he did not expect world powers to block it.



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[Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam \(GERD\)](#)

Battle for the Nile: How Egypt will be impacted by Ethiopia's filling of GERD reservoir
Egypt steps up response to second filling of GERD

[World powers in new push for Libya peace](#)

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Wed, 2021-06-23 10:49

BERLIN: Germany and the United Nations are bringing together representatives of Libya with powers that have interests in the country at a conference

Wednesday which aims for progress toward securing elections in the North African nation and the removal of foreign fighters.

The meeting at the foreign ministry in Berlin, with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken among participants, follows up on a January 2020 conference where leaders agreed to respect an arms embargo and to push the country's warring parties to reach a full cease-fire. Germany has tried to act as an intermediary.

Countries that have been involved in the process include the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, along with Italy, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates.

Ahead of the conference, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas noted that much has been achieved in the past two years. An October cease-fire agreement that included a demand that all foreign fighters and mercenaries leave Libya within 90 days led to a deal on elections, due to be held on Dec. 24, and a transitional government that took office in February.

But "many challenges still lie ahead of us," said Maas. "For the further stabilization of the country, it is crucial that elections take place as planned and that foreign fighters and mercenaries really do leave Libya." He added that Wednesday's conference launches a new phase "in which we no longer only talk about Libya, but in which we are now speaking with Libyan men and women about the future of their country."

Blinken said that "we share the goal of a sovereign, stable, unified, secure Libya free from foreign interference – it's what the people of Libya deserve, it's critical to regional security as well."

"For that to happen, national elections need to go forward in December and that means urgent agreement is needed on constitutional and legal issues that would undergird those elections," he said at a news conference with Maas. "And the Oct. 23 cease-fire agreement has to be fully implemented, including by withdrawing all foreign forces from Libya."

The US special envoy for Libya, Richard Norland, said it was important to start bringing all armed groups in the country under a joint military command. "When foreign forces leave, they're going to need to be replaced by a viable united Libyan national military and police structure," he said. Meanwhile, aid group Doctors Without Borders said this week it was suspending its activities in two detention centers in Tripoli after "repeated incidents of violence toward refugees and migrants held there." It said staff had witnessed guards beating detainees at one center and received reports of people being shot at in another.

Libya has been a key transit country for migrants from Africa trying to reach Europe, especially after the collapse of order when a NATO-backed uprising toppled and later killed longtime dictator Muammar Qaddafi in 2011. The oil-rich country was long divided between a UN-supported government in the capital, Tripoli, and rival authorities based in the country's east, each backed by armed groups and foreign governments.

In April 2019, eastern-based commander Khalifa Haftar and his forces, backed by Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, launched an offensive to try to capture Tripoli. Haftar's 14-month campaign collapsed after Turkey stepped up its military support of the UN-backed government with hundreds of troops and thousands of Syrian mercenaries.

Little progress has been made so far on getting foreign forces out of Libya. Jalel Harchaoui, a senior fellow at the Geneva-based Global Initiative

Against Transnational Organized Crime who follows Libya closely, said that it is the presence of foreign mercenaries, acting as a sort of deterrent, that has led to the current, if uneasy, peace.

“That’s what it comes down to, and of course it’s not politically correct to say,” he said. He cautioned that elections could deepen polarization if conducted too hastily.



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[Mother and four daughters killed as they looked for fuel amid Lebanon’s petrol shortage](#)

Author:

Tue, 2021-06-22 22:37

BEIRUT: A Lebanese mother and her four daughters were killed when their car was hit by a military vehicle as they searched for fuel amid Lebanon’s petrol shortage.

The family were preparing to travel from southern Lebanon to Beirut airport

this week to pick up the daughters' father, who was expected to fly home from working abroad.

Fatima Koubeissi, her twins Tia and Lia, 4, and her two other daughters Aya, 13, and Zahra, 17, were killed when the military vehicle hit their car from behind on Monday night. Another relative, Hussein Zein, 22, who was driving their car, died on Tuesday from his injuries.

The sisters had not seen their father, Imad Hawile, since he went looking for a job in Liberia five months ago, their uncle Qassim Hawile told Arab News.

Amid a worsening economic crisis, Lebanon is suffering massive fuel shortages with long queues outside petrol stations leading to traffic jams on nearby roads.

Lebanon's Internal Security Forces [ISF] traffic control section reported a number of recent accidents caused by petrol queues.

The family from Al-Sharqeyye village went searching for petrol on Monday afternoon to prepare for the journey to the airport on Wednesday.

"We have not been able to find petrol across the south," Qassim said.

ISF's traffic control said the accident involved five cars and took place on the Jeyye-Saida highway.

A cousin of Fatima told Arab News that the accident happened because of a "vehicle that came in the opposite direction of the road wanting to bypass a queue outside a petrol station.

"They (the mother and four daughters) died on the spot," he said.

Qassim said his brother contracted malaria during his first month in Liberia and then a second time "so he decided to return for better medication."

"We did not want my brother to know that his family died in the crash but he saw the news and images on Facebook," said Qassim.

He said the funeral was expected to take place on Thursday.

The accident happened when their driver saw two BMWs rammed into each other so he stopped but the military vehicle came and hit them from the back, sending it into a pick-up truck, Qassim said.

Civil Defense and Red Cross teams attended the scene and moved the injured and the dead to nearby hospitals.

Petrol stations have been constantly low on subsidized petrol for weeks, but shortages worsened in June as people's fears of rationing and shortages intensified, leading to a large number of petrol stations closing down.

A number of fistfights, heated arguments and shootings have taken place between irritated drivers.

Last week, three people were injured in an accident outside a petrol station where cars were queueing on the highway connecting Beirut to southern.



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Lebanon again raises price of bread amid crippling crisis
Protests erupt after Lebanon bids to curb fuel smuggling

[Sudan asks UN Security Council to meet over Ethiopia's Blue Nile dam – statement](#)

Tue, 2021-06-22 22:17

KHARTOUM: Sudan asked the UN Security Council on Tuesday to meet and discuss the dispute over the giant dam that is being built by Ethiopian on the Blue Nile, a government statement said.

Sudan's foreign minister sent a message to the council head calling him to urge Ethiopia to stop the "unilateral" filling of the dam "which exacerbates the dispute and poses a threat to regional and international peace and security," the statement added.



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Arab League backs calls for UN Security Council intervention in dam dispute
Sudan says it is open to conditional interim deal on Ethiopia dam