

Jordan ramps up refugee vaccination drive

Author:

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AMMAN: Almost a third of the refugees eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine in Jordan have received their first dose, according to the UN refugee agency.

The UNHCR said that 13,455 of the 47,000 people living in Jordan's camps who were eligible for the jabs had now received at least one dose.

UNHCR Jordan said in a statement to Arab News that, by excluding children under 18 and pregnant women from the inoculation campaign, 47,000 out of the 120,000 living in the Zaatari, Azraq and Emirati-Jordanian camps were eligible to register and receive the jabs.

It said 1,558 refugees were vaccinated on May 25 in the sprawling Zaatari camp on Jordan's border with Syria. Two vaccination centers operate in the camp, which is home to around 80,000 Syrian refugees.



UNHCR said that 13,455 of the 47,000 people living in Jordan's camps who were eligible for the jabs had now received at least one dose. (Raed Omari)

It added that another vaccination center was operating at the Azraq refugee camp, which is home to around 37,000 Syrian refugees.

Located some 100 kilometers east of Amman, Azraq was set up in 2014 as the Zaatari camp started to run out of space.

According to the UNHCR, more than 20,000 refugees are currently registered on the government platform and are awaiting their vaccination appointment.

"UNHCR Jordan and partners are currently focusing on raising awareness among the remaining population about the benefits of taking the vaccine and encouraging them to register," the agency said.

The vaccination of Syrian refugees in the two UNHCR-operated camps is part of a wider inoculation drive for refugees that began a few days after the start of Jordan's nationwide campaign on Jan. 13.

Mohammad Hawari, the UNHCR spokesman in Jordan, told Arab News in early February that Jordan was the first country in the world to include refugees in its nationwide COVID-19 vaccination drive. "The vaccination center in Zaatari is also the first in the world at a UN-administered refugee camp," he added.



UNHCR said that 13,455 of the 47,000 people living in Jordan's camps who were eligible for the jabs had now received at least one dose. (Raed Omari)

The agency said that refugees living outside of camps in urban areas and cities in Jordan had been receiving their shots independent of the UNHCR by approaching their local vaccination centers when they received an appointment.

Hawari said on Saturday that all vaccines were administered through the Ministry of Health, which provided the agency with “fair and equal” access to the vaccines that the government brought into the country. He added that the jabs given to refugees were Pfizer-BioNTech, Oxford-AstraZeneca and Sinopharm vaccines.

“The success of the vaccination campaign is very much connected to the government’s decision to include all persons on Jordanian territory, nationals and refugees,” said UNHCR Jordan representative Dominik Bartsch. “But we cannot stop here. We need to carry forward the momentum generated thus far to ensure that all eligible refugees are vaccinated. Our aim is to leave no one behind – nobody is safe until everyone is safe.”

The government has said that everyone living on Jordanian soil, including refugees and asylum seekers, are entitled to receive the vaccine for free. It plans to immunize 20 percent of its 10 million population by the end of 2021.

“The inclusion of refugees within the national COVID-19 response plan and vaccination campaign has once again emphasized the generosity that Jordan has shown in hosting large numbers of refugees,” the agency said. “The UNHCR Jordan continues to work closely with the ministry of health to ensure that refugees receive the vaccine on par with the local population.”

Around 10 percent of Jordan’s population are refugees, according to the UNHCR.

Among them are 655,000 Syrians, 67,000 Iraqis, 15,000 Yemenis, 6,000 Sudanese and 2,500 refugees from 52 other nations. More than 80 percent of them live outside refugee camps, in cities and towns.

This year, UNHCR Jordan is appealing for \$370 million to help refugees to cope with the additional challenges posed by the pandemic.

The government has previously announced that more COVID-19 vaccines are to arrive in the country under deals struck with manufacturers and the global COVAX initiative.

In its latest update on May 27, Jordan’s National Center for Security and Crisis Management said that 1.39 million people had received their first dose while 490,562 people had received their second.

The total number of people registered on the government platform to be vaccinated is 2,305,248.



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Tears, relief, and gratitude as Jordan vaccinates Syrian refugees
Jordan starts 'world first' COVID vaccinations in refugee camp

[UN envoy in Sanaa in last-ditch bid to salvage peace plan](#)

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Sun, 2021-05-30 20:13

AL-MUKALLA: The UN special envoy to Yemen, Martin Griffiths, traveled to Houthi-held Sanaa on Sunday in a last-ditch bid to convince the Iran-backed rebels to accept a UN-brokered peace plan and stop their assault on Marib.

In his first visit to the city in a year, Griffiths will meet Houthi officials to discuss proposals including a nationwide cease-fire, the lifting of restrictions on Hodeidah ports and the reopening of Sanaa airport. On Friday, the UN envoy called on the Yemeni government and the Houthis to make bold concessions to end months of political deadlock and reach a peace agreement.

In the past, the Houthis snubbed Griffiths and the US special envoy to Yemen, Timothy Lenderking, and rejected international calls to halt their deadly offensive on the central province of Marib, demanding that the Arab coalition end airstrikes on their forces and arrange unregulated and unchecked flights from and to Sanaa airport as part of the peace initiatives.

The Yemeni government rejected the Houthi demands, saying that heavy aerial bombardments by Arab coalition warplanes have largely foiled Houthi assaults on Marib and that ending the airstrikes would enable the Houthis to advance quickly toward the strategic city.

On Sunday, Yemen's Foreign Minister, Ahmed Awad bin Mubarak, said that the internationally recognized government of Yemen welcomes all initiatives to end the conflict.

He added that the Yemeni government seeks a "sustainable and comprehensive" peace that will bring back stability to the country and end the Houthi coup, according to the official SABA news agency.

Meanwhile, on the ground, dozens of combatants were killed on Sunday in heavy fighting between the Houthis and the Yemeni army backed by allied tribesmen in mountainous areas west of Marib city.

Local military officers said that at least 30 Houthis died when Yemeni government forces pushed back their offensive in Marib's Al-Kasara.

Loyalists shared videos showing thick smoke billowing from contested areas in Marib after Arab coalition warplanes targeted Houthi locations and military reinforcements.

Thousands of government troops and Houthi fighters have been killed since February when the rebels renewed an offensive on Marib, the Yemen government's last northern stronghold.

Accusations

The Yemeni government has accused the Houthis of violating the Stockholm Agreement by turning the Red Sea ports under their control into factories for making and launching booby-trapped boats.

Yemen's Information Minister, Moammar Al-Eryani, said that the latest Houthi attack in the Red Sea foiled by the Arab coalition shows that the rebels are still threatening international maritime traffic and breaching existing agreements.

"Houthis using Hodeidah, Salif and Ras Issa ports as bases for launching terrorist attacks and for booby-trapped boats, confirming their disavowal of Sweden Agreement and exploitation to implement Iranian agenda to spread chaos and terrorism in region and threaten international interests," the Yemeni minister said in a twitter post.

Under the peace deal between the Yemeni government and the Houthis in late 2018, known as the Stockholm Agreement, the Yemeni government agreed to stop a military offensive on the city of Hodeidah in return for the Houthis handing over ports in Hodeidah to neutral forces and depositing revenues into the central bank in the city.



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Yemeni riyal in free fall again amid political deadlock
Yemen FM says Iran's support for Houthis is prolonging war

[Iran's cabinet dismisses central bank chief Hemmati](#)

Sun, 2021-05-30 17:58

TEHRAN: Iran's Cabinet dismissed the governor of the central bank on Sunday after he decided to run for the June 18 presidential election, state TV reported.

The report said the decision was taken after Abdonasser Hemmati decided to run in presidential elections and "it prevents him from having a sufficient presence in the central bank and carrying out the serious duties and responsibilities of the CBI chief in the sensitive areas of money and currency."

The report also said Deputy Governor Akbar Komijani would be taking over all

responsibilities from Hemmati, who had held the position since 2018. Hemmati in an Instagram post thanked Rouhani, and said the president has the power to dismiss him. "I thank the president for his trust, especially in the first year of my service."

On Wednesday, Iran's Guardian Council – clerics and jurists who approve presidential candidates – approved only seven out of some 590 applicants. The Council on Tuesday barred former parliament speaker Ali Larijani, a conservative allied with Rouhani, as well as former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad from running.



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Yemeni riyal in free fall again amid political deadlock

Sat, 2021-05-29 21:33

AL-MUKALLA: Yemen's riyal hit a new record low on the weekend amid deadlocked diplomatic efforts to end the war and rising tensions between the Yemeni government and southern separatists in Aden.

The riyal traded at 930 to the dollar on Saturday in the government-controlled areas, plunging from 900 riyals a couple of weeks ago.

The riyal was 215 to the dollar when the Houthis placed the Yemeni President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi under house arrest in early 2019, sparking the current conflict.

When the new unity government, formed under the Riyadh Agreement in December, returned to Aden as troops withdrew from Abyan, the Yemeni riyal surged to 720 against the US dollar, recovering almost 20 percent of its value.

Experts link the current fall of the riyal to the outcome of UN-brokered peace efforts, renewed hostilities between the Yemeni government and the separatist Southern Transitional Council (STC), and the government's failure to resume oil exports and collecting revenues from state bodies.

"The fall of the riyal is due to the economic and political instability in Yemen," Mustafa Nasr, director of the Economic Media Center, told Arab News on Saturday.

Politically, the UN Yemen envoy Martin Griffiths' latest diplomatic shuttle between Riyadh and Muscat yielded no fruit as warring factions rejected his peace initiative, known as the Joint Declaration, that proposes putting into place a nationwide truce.

The Houthis are still pressing ahead with their deadly offensive on the central city of Marib despite international condemnations and appeals.

In Aden, the interim capital of Yemen, the internationally recognized government has not returned to the city for more than two months amid reports about renewed tension with the STC.

The STC on Saturday appointed Gen. Shalal Ali-Shayae as the commander of counterterrorism forces in Aden, fueling tension with the government whose supporters accused the separatists of violating the Riyadh Agreement.

Shayae, former security chief of Aden and a senior separatist figure, was appointed in December as a military attache at the Yemen Embassy in the UAE.

"The implantation of the Riyadh Agreement (in December) sent positive signals about new economic policies and support to the economy," Nasr said, adding that the Yemeni riyal plunged again after the government did not remain in

Aden or apply reforms to boost revenues and exports.

“Many negative things have happened recently. The crisis in Aden returned. The government neither improved revenues that generate hard currencies nor created a mechanism for covering exports of goods and fuel. To pay public servants, the government printed millions of riyals without coverage,” he said.

During previous rounds of devaluation of the national currency, the Yemeni government replaced the central bank governors, shut down exchange firms to put an end to currency speculation, and provided local fuel and goods traders with the dollar.

The government also floated the riyal to bridge the gap between the official rate and that of the black market and relocated the central bank office from Sanaa to Aden.

The Yemeni government blamed the Houthis for banning the use of new banknotes printed by the Yemeni government in Aden and refusing to deposit revenues from Hodeidah seaports and tax into the central bank in Aden.

Economists argue that the Yemeni riyal would keep falling against the dollar as long as the Yemeni government remains outside the country.

The depreciation of the riyal has led to an expected surge in the price of foods and fuel and sparked protests in several Yemeni cities.

Hundreds of people took to the streets of Aden and Taiz to voice rage over the collapse of the Yemeni currency and the subsequent increase in the price of food and goods.

“My salary has lost more than 20 percent of its value due to the devaluation of the riyal. My relatives in Saudi Arabia donate to me to keep me afloat since my salary can’t cover my expenses,” Abu Abdullah, a government employee, told Arab News.



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Yemeni riyal on rebound as people voice optimism over new government
Yemeni riyal surges amid govt. troop withdrawal

[Egypt's foreign minister to meet Israeli counterpart on Sunday](#)

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Sat, 2021-05-29 16:37

CAIRO: Egypt's foreign minister Sameh Shoukry is due to meet his Israeli counterpart Gabi Ashkenazi on Sunday for talks, Egypt's foreign ministry said on Saturday.

Egypt is working with the United States and other regional partners towards

reinforcing a ceasefire it brokered between Israel and Palestinian militants, facilitated in part due to its longstanding relations with both sides. The ministry's statement had no further details. Separately, Israeli news website Walla reported that the head of the Egyptian general intelligence Abbas Kamel was due to travel to Israel and the Palestinian territories on Sunday to meet Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Hamas officials. Neither Israeli nor Palestinian officials immediately responded to requests for comment.



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