

Lebanese women mourn on Mother's Day amid currency crisis and political stalemate

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BEIRUT: Women took to the streets on Saturday afternoon on the eve of Mother's Day, despite warnings from doctors about the risk of the coronavirus spreading.

Mothers' anger at the current situation, which has prompted a generation of young people to migrate, pushed dozens to protest.

A group of mothers gathered in the Bechara Al Khoury area in Beirut and went to downtown Beirut and to the port, site of the port blast seven months ago. They wore face masks and waved Lebanese flags and banners.

The mothers cried and shouted slogans, demanding that the politicians leave. The protests took place as dozens of flowerpots, wrapped in glossy colorful paper, were spread out in front of flower shops in Beirut and its suburbs on Saturday. Among their leaves were signs showing their price of 40,000 Lebanese pounds (\$26).

The front of bakeries and patisserie shops were filled with cakes, whose prices ranged from 50,000-150,000 Lebanese pounds.

Mother's Day on Sunday in Lebanon coincides with the beginning of spring. The Lebanese traditionally spend lavishly on gifts for their mothers or wives. But celebrating the occasion this year is different. Compared to the situation in previous years, there are hardly any customers in the clothing and perfume stores in the main shopping centers.

The prices, as Mrs. Samar said, "are extremely high for those who get their salary in Lebanese pounds. They can barely buy food and baby milk, if they can find them at all, so how can I buy a jacket for my mother whose price is twice my salary? Or how can buy her a bottle of perfume whose price is more than 1.5 million Lebanese pounds?"

The dollar continued its decline on Saturday, trading at between 10,100-11,000 Lebanese pounds.

The country is waiting for the outcome of the meeting between President Michel Aoun and Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri on Monday, but expectations are not high.

After meeting President Michel Aoun on Saturday, Lebanese Progressive Socialist Party Leader Walid Jumblatt, said: "We have reached absolute stalemate amid the economic collapse. Hunger is knocking on people's doors, and reconciliation has become necessary. God bears witness that I have told people (the reality of the situation)."

Legal money changers are also cautious.

Bilal Ghandour, an owner of a jewelry store in Beirut, said: "On Saturday, money changers refrained from selling dollars. They only bought dollars,

fearing that the exchange rate of the dollar would rise on Monday after the meeting at the Republican Palace.”

Ghandour described sales in his shop as “very light.”

He said: “The price of a gram of 18-carat gold is \$42, which means 462,000 Lebanese pounds, as per the exchange rate on Saturday, and a small piece of gold must be more than five grams. The situation is very difficult.”

“Those who have dollars can buy, but they only buy pieces whose prices do not exceed \$200-\$300.”

In a statement, the Syndicate of Money Changers in Lebanon praised the decision of the Banque du Liban to launch its electronic platform and allow banks to trade in currencies similar to legitimate money changers.

The decline in the dollar’s exchange rate did not lead to a decrease in the price of the commodities on the market.

“Everyone wants to compensate for their future losses,” said Antoine, a shopkeeper in Furn El Chebbak.

Mohammed, who sells flowers and plants at Tayouneh Roundabout, said: “The price of the tulip plant this year is 30,000 Lebanese pounds, compared to its price last year of 7,000 Lebanese pounds.

“The price of the cyclamen plant last year did not exceed 10,000 Lebanese pounds, and now it is 50,000 Lebanese pounds,” he said.

“We are not the ones raising the prices. People are tired. Their priorities have changed, and flowers have become a luxury.”

However, demand for cakes had not been affected, according to Ali, the manager of one of the patisserie stores in the Chiyah area, Ain el-Remmaneh.

He said: “Although the prices of sweets intended for Mother’s Day have increased relatively, jumping from 50,000 to 95,000 Lebanese pounds, people are still buying. Perhaps because they are cheaper than clothes, perfumes, and gold, of course.”







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Author:

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Sat, 2021-03-20 22:47

LONDON: The Houthis do not want a political solution to the crisis in Yemen and respond to international efforts to reach one with obstinacy, the

government's spokesman said on Saturday. Diplomacy has not yielded any results because of the militia's rejection, Rajih Badi told Al Arabiya. Badi also said that the Iran-backed militia sees the call to de-escalate as the "language of weakness." He continued by saying that the Yemeni people will not accept Iranian interference in their country. Badi made the comments as the Arab coalition makes advances against the Houthis in the Marib province.



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[Egyptian coronavirus vaccine to](#)

undergo clinical trials

Author:

Sat, 2021-03-20 22:35

CAIRO: The Egyptian Drug Authority (EDA) has approved the manufacture of the first doses of an Egyptian coronavirus vaccine, Covi Vax, according to local media.

The Egyptian channel DMC show "Egypt Can" showed the first pictures of the Covi Vax packages amid plans to begin clinical trials on the vaccine.

"Egypt is moving at a steady pace and is participating in producing a coronavirus vaccine," the show's host, Ahmed Fayek, said.

"The Egyptian Drug Authority granted a factory a license to produce the first experimental samples (of the vaccine)," he added.

Fayek said that Egypt will be the first country in the Middle East to manufacture a coronavirus vaccine with solely Egyptian efforts.

"The study and research of the Egyptian coronavirus vaccine have been published in a specialized international scientific journal, as it has proven its effectiveness in laboratory experiments and experiments on animals," he added.

Fayek said that the EDA had given approval to produce the first experimental batch.

After obtaining approval for clinical trials, the vaccine will pass through three stages.

The first will include a small number of people to ensure the safety of the vaccine on humans. The second will include 100 to 500 volunteers, while the third will be tested on up to 50,000 volunteers from different countries in order to achieve genetic diversity.

FASTFACT

The study and research of the Egyptian coronavirus vaccine have been published in a specialized international scientific journal, as it has proven its effectiveness in laboratory experiments and experiments on animals.

He said the Egyptian vaccine was produced by the National Research Center in Egypt, which is affiliated with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

"The National Research Center produced many vaccines against the bird flu," he said.

Fayek said that the EDA has granted a license to an Egyptian factory that will undertake the production of the experimental sample of the Egyptian vaccine to be used in clinical trials.

"The National Research Center has worked on the virus strain present in Egypt, and has conducted laboratory experiments on four types of animals and is now awaiting the permission to test the vaccine clinically," he said.

"All of this has been published in scientific research in one of the major medical periodicals around the world, judged by senior international

professors and scientists, who also reviewed the Egyptian COVID-19 vaccine and said it produces antibodies.”



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Egypt receives new 300k shipment of China's Sinopharm vaccine
Marwa Elselehdar: Egypt's first female sea captain is riding waves of success

[Marwa Elselehdar: Egypt's first female sea captain is riding waves of success](#)

Sat, 2021-03-20 22:21

CAIRO: She enrolled in the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport in Egypt and joined the International Transport and Logistics Department, but she was more drawn to the curriculum that was being taught to her brother in the Department of Maritime Transport and Technology.

The department was limited to men, but she still submitted an application to join and was eventually accepted, becoming the first Egyptian woman to study in this department.

Elselehdar's brother and mother supported her dream of becoming the first

female captain in Egypt. Her father, while more apprehensive because of the difficulties in the field, did not object to her studies. She thus began the formalities to join the department, and her unique request was submitted to the president of the academy for consideration.

The president called for research in maritime law to verify the possibility of issuing a captain's license to her, since it was the first case of its kind. After making sure that the law did not pose restrictions, examinations began.

Elselehdar passed the physical and medical tests, as well as personal interviews, proving her ability to be in control and manage diverse situations, and she joined the department like any other student.

I faced difficulties in adapting, especially during the first year, but the encouragement from those around me – and my own ability to believe in my dream – helped me overcome these challenges.

Marwa Elselehdar

“I started my journey in the department as the only woman among 1,200 students. I faced difficulties in adapting, especially during the first year, but the encouragement from those around me – and my own ability to believe in my dream – helped me overcome these challenges, and I graduated in 2013,” she said.



After her graduation, Elselehdar joined the crew of the AIDA IV ship, with the rank of the second officer.

At the time of the opening ceremony of the new Suez Canal, she applied to register as part of the crew that would lead the AIDA IV in the celebrations.

Her request was accepted, and she prepared with her colleagues for the ceremony.

On the day of the ceremony, she led the AIDA IV – the first ship to cross the new shipping route – as the youngest and first Egyptian female captain to cross the Suez Canal.

Elselehdar has been working in the field for 10 years. She explained that the percentage of women in similar maritime positions does not exceed 2 percent worldwide, adding that being the first Egyptian woman in this regard was a great honor for her and noting that many girls followed her example and entered the field after her.

In 2017, Elselehdar was honored on Women's Day by President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi.

She expressed her pride in this honor, seeing it not only as a form of appreciation from the state for what she has done but also as a demonstration of the state's interest in empowering Egyptian women and placing them in leadership positions. Recently, Egyptian women have started participating in many occupations that were traditionally male-dominated.

The Encyclopedia of Arab-African Economic Integration chose Elselehdar among the top 20 Arab women in terms of achievement.

Elselehdar said that the boat she is now working on is owned by the Egyptian Authority for Maritime Safety, affiliated with the Egyptian government and managed by the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport.

"Unlike fast flights, cruises can be long and arduous and can take up to a month or more. Of course, on these trips, I am the only woman among my fellow men.

"In the beginning, it was somewhat difficult, but we later became one team, and we split tasks equally. And because of the length of these trips, we all become like siblings," she added.

Now almost 30 years old, Elselehdar dreams of obtaining a master's degree and a Ph.D. She also hopes that marriage and having a family will not hinder her career.





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Egypt receives new 300k shipment of China's Sinopharm vaccine Turkey orders Muslim Brotherhood TV channels to stop criticizing Egypt: reports

[Libyan women reach high office but activists say long road ahead](#)

Author:

Sat, 2021-03-20 01:30

TRIPOLI: Libya's new government includes five women, with two in key portfolios – a first for the country nonetheless criticized by activists as insufficient and as not living up to a UN commitment.

The country descended into conflict after Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi was toppled and killed in a NATO-backed uprising in 2011, with an array of forces battling to fill the void.

The transitional Government of National Unity (GNU), which took office this week, faces daunting challenges, including unifying the country's institutions, ending a decade of fighting marked by international interference and preparing for December elections.

The Cabinet comprises 26 ministers and six ministers of state, with women assigned to five posts, including the key foreign affairs and justice portfolios.

The US ambassador to Libya, Richard Norland, has called it a "historic time for Libyan women," while UN Women hailed the appointments as "a major step for advancing women's rights."

Some Libyans on social media have welcomed the announcements as "a big step," a "leap for society" and a "promising start."

But activists are less enthusiastic, arguing that the new executive had the opportunity to do more.

In a statement to the UN Human Rights Council this week, Britain urged the GNU to "work toward the full, equal and meaningful participation of women, including in conflict resolution and decision-making."

"Women remain under-represented in all governance institutions and processes in Libya," it warned.

The five women in Cabinet hail from across the country.

Activist and lawyer Najla Al-Mangoush, from the main eastern city of Benghazi, is the country's first female foreign minister.

BACKGROUND

- **Britain urged Libya's transitional Government of National Unity to 'work toward the full, equal and meaningful participation of women, including in conflict resolution and decision-making.'**

- **Najla Al-Mangoush, Libya's first female foreign minister, rose to prominence in 2011 as part of the National Transitional Council.**

Mangoush rose to prominence in 2011 as part of the National Transitional Council, the political arm of the rebellion that brought an end to Qaddafi's 42-year rule.

She will be working alongside jurist Halima Ibrahim Abderrahmane, from the western town of Gharyan, who takes the justice portfolio, and Mabrouka Touki, an academic from the southern Fezzan region, who has a degree in nuclear physics and will head the culture ministry.

Wafaa Al-Kilani is in charge of social affairs and Houria Al-Tormal the women's ministry.

Interim Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah, sworn in on Monday, was selected last month alongside a three-member presidency council as part of a UN-sponsored process launched in November.

Activists point to his pledge when a candidate in the UN process to allocate 30 percent of ministerial positions to women.

Under the current lineup, women account for just half that amount.

"We are proud to see Libyan women named to key posts, but also unhappy that the prime minister failed to keep his commitment," said Ghalia Sassi, president of the women's association Maaha (With Her).

She vowed activists would keep up pressure on the government to adjust its course, but said there was "a long road ahead."

Activist Laila Ben Khalifa, who began the push for the 30 percent quota, echoed her disappointment over the shortfall.

She alleged that ministries had been distributed according to "region rather than competence."

Although Libyan women played a key role during the 2011 uprising, they have had a limited presence in previous transitional bodies and in the current parliament.

The GNU's predecessor, the Government of National Accord, headquartered in western Libya and established in 2016, had just two women from some 30 portfolios.

A parallel eastern administration, not recognized by the international community, had just one.

And while a decade of insecurity and conflict has had a profound impact on daily life in Libya, a worrying development has been violence against rights activists, including women.

In November, unidentified armed men gunned down lawyer and women's activist Hanan Al-Barassi in broad daylight in Benghazi.

Human Rights Watch urged authorities to investigate the "apparent politically motivated killing," while the UN mission to Libya said Barassi's death showed "the threats faced by Libyan women as they dare to speak out."

Her killing came after the disappearance of lawmaker Siham Sergewa, who was taken from her home in Benghazi in July 2019.

Her abduction came shortly after the airing of a television broadcast in which she criticized eastern strongman Khalifa Haftar's offensive on Tripoli, launched months earlier. Sergewa's whereabouts are still unknown. At the UN Rights Council this week, Britain also expressed concern over violence against women in Libya. "Libyan authorities must address the silencing of women journalists and activists, and tackle sexual and gender-based violence," it said.



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