

Jordan confronts tribal shooting tradition

Sat, 2020-11-14 21:34

AMMAN: The Kingdom of Jordan is looking for ways to eliminate the celebratory tribal practice of shooting firearms in the air following several high-profile incidents.

The national debate on the issue came to a head on Wednesday after groups of people celebrated the victory of local leaders in the country's 19th parliamentary elections.

Celebrations kicked off as the country faced the first day of a total lockdown, which was issued after a spike in coronavirus cases, hospitalizations and deaths.

The celebrations, which were filmed and distributed on social media, were met with widespread condemnation by the public, many of which who endured the lockdown at home.

King Abdullah, using his official Twitter account, labeled the actions a "clear violation of the law and an act against the health and safety of society." He added that the "law should be applied to all without exception."

The royal comment produced quick results, with the country's Minister of Interior resigning and Jordanian security forces completing a massive campaign to collect unlicensed weapons.

Police chief Hussein Hawatmeh told Jordan's Al-Mamlaka TV that 18 parliamentary candidates and 324 citizens were arrested with weapons. He said 29 weapons were confiscated and 478 vehicles were being searched for.

Jordan's police say that no records are kept of victims who die from stray bullets in mass celebrations. Al-Mamlaka TV estimated that from 2013 to 2018, between 1,500 and 1,869 people died in such incidents, while the injury rate was far higher.

Bashir Daaja, former Jordanian police spokesman and security expert, told Arab News that the act of celebratory shooting is part of a tribal tradition.

"This act has been inherited from previous generations and was started when communities had to personally protect themselves and therefore owned weapons. On happy occasions they would shoot in the air, allowing tribal leaders to exhibit their firepower."

HIGHLIGHT

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condemnation by the public, many of which who endured the lockdown at home.

Daaja said there is no longer a need for local communities to protect themselves in the presence of a strong government.

Mamoun Abu Nowar, a retired Jordanian Air Force general, told Arab News that there is no need for the “exaggerated situation” where “so many people own all kinds of weapons and use them in this way.”

Abu Nowar called for the country to make a decisive choice between tribal and civil society. “We can’t have a civil country and tribalism at the same time.”

Social scientist Hussein Al-Khazalleh told Arab News that celebratory gunfire is a cultural issue, but that issue stems from deeper tribal concerns.

“People had come from desert life and they needed to protect themselves from outsiders,” he said. Weapons were handed down and became part of societal pride, Al-Khazalleh added.

“The weapons are now used to remind the central government of their political presence and their importance. They are saying ‘we are here and you must remember us.’”

Al-Khazalleh said the rise in unemployment and the absence of economic development has led young people back to tribal life. “They feel that the tribe can provide a safety net more than the government can.”

Marwan Muasher, former Jordanian deputy prime minister, told Arab News that he does not believe the issue stems from a tribal problem.

“We make a mistake by saying that this is a case of tribal society. After 100 years since the establishment of Jordan, the citizens have a right to demand the rule of law without discrimination.”

Jordanian government sources have said that more than 1 million unlicensed weapons are kept by people mostly outside Jordan’s major cities.

One of the problems facing regulators are the country’s lax weapon laws.

Bashir Daaja, a former police spokesman, said the the possession of an unlicensed weapon is only a misdemeanor. “That means the punishment is the confiscation of the weapon and a 25 Jordanian dinar (\$35) fine.”

Daaja said regulators should make the possession of unlicensed firearms a felony, which is subject to three years’ imprisonment.



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Jordan stresses importance of stabilizing Nagorno-Karabakh ceasefire
Jordan's interior minister resigns after outcry over breaches in COVID-19 lockdown

[Boat carrying 1,000 kg of drugs seized by Yemeni Coast Guard](#)

Author:

Sat, 2020-11-14 21:22

AL-MUKALLA: The Yemeni Coast Guard in the eastern province of Mahra on Friday intercepted a boat carrying almost 1,000 kilograms of drugs and arrested six Iranian and Pakistani sailors.

The government-run Mahra Media Centre said that local coastguards, backed by Arab coalition forces in the province, seized the boat off the coast of Mahra, arresting six sailors on board.

In the province's Nishtoun port, where the seized boat was forced to dock, security forces found 730 kilograms of cannabis resin and 216 kilograms of crystal methamphetamine, tightly bound in plastic bags.

The seized drugs are worth \$6,600,000, and investigators are currently questioning the sailors to determine where the drugs came from and their final destination.

The center quoted Ahmed Ali Rafet, a local security officer, as saying that security forces in the province have been put on heightened alert to foil any other attempt to smuggle drugs into Yemen through the province's coast, urging locals to alert them about similar shipments of drugs or arms.

The latest announcement about the seized drugs comes as the Arab coalition works to revive the Yemeni coastal authority, which had crumbled when the Houthis seized control of Sanaa and later expanded militarily across Yemen six years ago.

The coalition has trained and armed hundreds of guards and provided them with fast boats. The forces have been deployed along the country's long coastline.

Yemeni military and security officials say that the Houthis receive their smuggled shipments of arms through many coastal points on the Red Sea and the Arab Sea, including some informal ports in the province of Mahra.

In September, members of a detained arms ring that had smuggled Iranian weapons to the Houthis for years confessed that they had disguised themselves as fishermen in Mahra, where they transported many shipments of arms from Iran to the Houthis through different locations in the province.

Dozens of Houthis and government forces have been killed in the continuing fighting in the provinces of Marib, Juf and Sanaa since Thursday, local army commanders and media reports said.

Yemen's Defense Ministry said on Friday that at least three dozen Houthis had been killed in heavy fighting in the mountainous Nehim district, in the province of Sanaa.

State media broadcast footage showing what appeared to be government forces trading heavy machine guns with the Houthis as smoke billowed from the battlefield.

Warplanes from the Arab coalition reportedly supported government troops by hitting Houthi gatherings and military equipment.

The ministry said the Houthis lost several armored vehicles and heavy military equipment in the fighting in Nehim.

In the neighboring Marib province, the commander of the 7th Military Region has vowed to keep fighting until the Houthis are defeated, denying media reports that the Houthis had recaptured a military base in the province.

Maj. Gen. Ahmed Hassan Jibran said that the Houthis suffered major defeats on the battlefield in Marib, adding that the strategic Mas military base was still under the control of government forces.

Last week, Houthi media outlets said their forces seized control of the Mas military base, northwest of Marib, publishing images of their fighters chanting their slogans inside a military base.

Gen. Jibran said the Houthis fabricated the images to “compensate” for their losses on the battlefields. State media did not elaborate on the deaths of government forces during the fighting.

For several months, the Houthis have been relentlessly attacking army troops and allied tribesmen in Marib in an attempt to break defense lines before invading major oil and gas facilities in the province.

The current bloody conflict in Yemen began in late 2014 when the Houthis seized control of the capital, Sanaa, forcing Yemeni President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi into decamping to Aden and later fleeing the country after Houthi militias bombed the presidential palace in the city.

A massive aerial bombardment by the Arab coalition shored up government forces, enabling them to reverse Houthi gains across the country.



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Arab coalition hands Hadramout role to Yemen coast guard
Yemeni coast guards block ports in protest

Egypt launches 'revolutionary' e-invoice system

Sat, 2020-11-14 21:17

CAIRO: Egypt is set to launch a groundbreaking electronic invoice (e-invoice) system on Sunday.

Minister of Finance Mohamed Maaait announced the launch of the first phase of the electronic billing system, which will be the first in the country's history.

The minister said several companies will join the system in succession until the end of June 2021, adding that the program is an important step in digital transformation as part of Egypt Vision 2030.

It is also a major step in developing the tax system and raising the efficiency of tax examination, which contributes to reclaiming the rights of the state's public treasury in a way that helps achieve financial and economic goals. It will also enable Egypt to complete its development path and improve citizens' standard of living.

Maaait said the e-invoice system will "revolutionize" integration between the tax system and the commercial community, in order to "transform the informal economy into the formal economy."

He added that Egypt is one of the countries leading the way in the Arab world in implementing an e-invoice system as part of a digital transformation project. The minister said the system has been closely followed and supported by the country's political leadership.

SPEEDREAD

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Maaait said the Ministry of Finance and the Tax Authority will provide support to companies for compulsory entry into the e-invoice system. He warned that legal measures will be taken against companies that refuse entry, including prosecution in accordance with the provisions of the new unified tax procedures law.

The minister said the new system will allow the instant exchange of data for invoices in digital form.

He said the e-invoicing will help the digital transformation of commercial

transactions and will use cutting-edge technology that will formally validate the data of sources, recipients and invoice contents.

The new system is also set to bring further benefits, including increased limitations on Egypt's black market and informal economy, Maaait added.

According to the latest economic census by Egypt's Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, the size of the informal economy included 53 percent of the country's businesses, which employ about 4 million, or 29.3 percent of the workforce.

The volume of money invested in the sector amounted to 69.3 billion Egyptian pounds (\$4.4 billion), representing about 5.1 percent of the paid-up capital of Egypt's total economic activity.

Egyptian economists and finance experts estimate the size of the informal economy in Egypt at \$395 billion – about 50 percent of the country's economy.

The informal economy, represented by mostly small, medium and micro-sized enterprises, is not subject to quality or tax supervision.

Informal or black market businesses are spread across Egypt in the form of street vendors, markets, food carts, restaurants, factories and unlicensed real estate.



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400,000 tourists visit Egypt with zero virus cases, says CairoEgypt finds

treasure trove of over 100 sarcophagi

Lebanese hospitals struggle with tide of COVID-19 patients

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BEIRUT: As Lebanon entered into complete lockdown for two weeks from Saturday its hospitals are struggling to cope with the number of new COVID-19 patients, which is now around 2000 every day.

One 91-year-old, Zuhair Salem Al-Husseini, spent 10 days on a trolley in the section designated for COVID-19 patients at Makassed Islamic Charitable Society Hospital in Beirut because all the beds there were occupied, his daughter Heba told Arab News.

Al-Husseini spent two days in the emergency department, to complete his treatment at home because there were no isolation rooms. But his children took him back to the hospital as his condition deteriorated and he was treated with remdesivir.

He said that he did not know where he caught the infection because he rarely leaves home. "About 20 days ago, I felt I needed to vomit and I had a very high temperature. From that moment, my journey with fighting the coronavirus began."

His daughter Heba said that after her father was discharged from hospital he did not receive any special treatment to follow at home.

Al-Husseini said: "I have never been to a doctor all my life, and I do not suffer from any disease. I am a smoker and I used to smoke two or three cigarettes with a cup of coffee before I caught the disease. When I learned about my infection, I was not afraid. I accepted it calmly and said I want to survive and encouraged myself."

His 80-year-old wife did not contract the virus even though she accompanied the patient during his illness.

There are more than 44,000 COVID-19 patients in Lebanon, 307 of whom are in critical condition, according to Ministry of Health statistics. The total number of cases since last February has exceeded 100,000 cases.

The Minister of Health in the caretaker government, Hamad Hassan, promised that "the two-week-lockdown will witness an intensification of testing campaigns for early detection of those infected with the virus because this diagnosis leads to the immediate isolation of cases at home to relieve the pressure on hospitals."

Dr. Firas Al-Abyad, director of the Hariri Governmental University Hospital, announced that "the hospital's beds are full and the hospital can no longer receive any new cases."

He said that "6 cases arrived on Saturday morning at the hospital emergency room, including 4 in critical condition, and they were kept in the emergency department because there were no vacant beds in the treatment department." Al-Abyad said that "the recording of 21 deaths on Friday raised the total number of corona deaths in the past five days to 73." He anticipated that "Lebanon will record the highest weekly death rate resulting from Corona since the beginning of the pandemic."





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Lebanon begins 2-week lockdown as COVID-19 cases surge
France urges speedy government formation in Lebanon

Cyprus condemns 'provocation' of Erdogan ghost town picnic

Author:

Sat, 2020-11-14 20:59

NICOSIA: Cyprus Saturday condemned as a "provocation without precedent" Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's planned picnic in a long-abandoned beach resort to mark the anniversary of the divided island's breakaway northern state.

The visit on Sunday to the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) and to Varosha for the picnic constitute a "provocation without precedent," President Nicos Anastasiades said.

"They simultaneously undermine the efforts of the UN secretary-general to call an informal five-party meeting" between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, Athens, Ankara and former colonial power London, he said.

Anastasiades, in a statement, said that such actions also "do not contribute to the creation of a favourable, positive climate for the resumption of talks for the solution of the Cyprus problem."

The visit, just weeks after Erdogan helped a nationalist ally win election as Turkish Cypriot leader, is painful for the island's Greek Cypriot majority, who have never given up their demand for the displaced to be allowed to return to their former homes in Varosha.

"These acts cause the outrage of all the people of Cyprus," the island's internationally-recognised president, who is also the Greek Cypriot leader, said in a statement.

A vacation spot that was dubbed a "Jewel of the Mediterranean", Varosha had been fenced off ever since Turkey's 1974 invasion of northern Cyprus.

The invasion, launched in response to an Athens-engineered coup in Nicosia, was followed on November 15, 1983, by the declaration of the TRNC, which is recognised only by Ankara.

Turkish troops partially reopened the seafront of Varosha on October 8, stirring international criticism.

Greek and Turkish Cypriot organisations have signed a joint petition calling for Varosha's "unilateral" reopening to halt, and for Erdogan to stay out.

"The festive nature of the reopening, built on the memories and suffering of its past inhabitants, hurts our conscience," the petition reads.

"No interference! Freedom for all!" hundreds of Turkish Cypriot protesters chanted in northern Nicosia on Tuesday to denounce Erdogan's visit.



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Pompeo seeks reversal of 'provocative' North Cyprus move to reopen
VaroshaNorthern Cyprus set to reopen Cypriot ghost town on cease-fire lines