

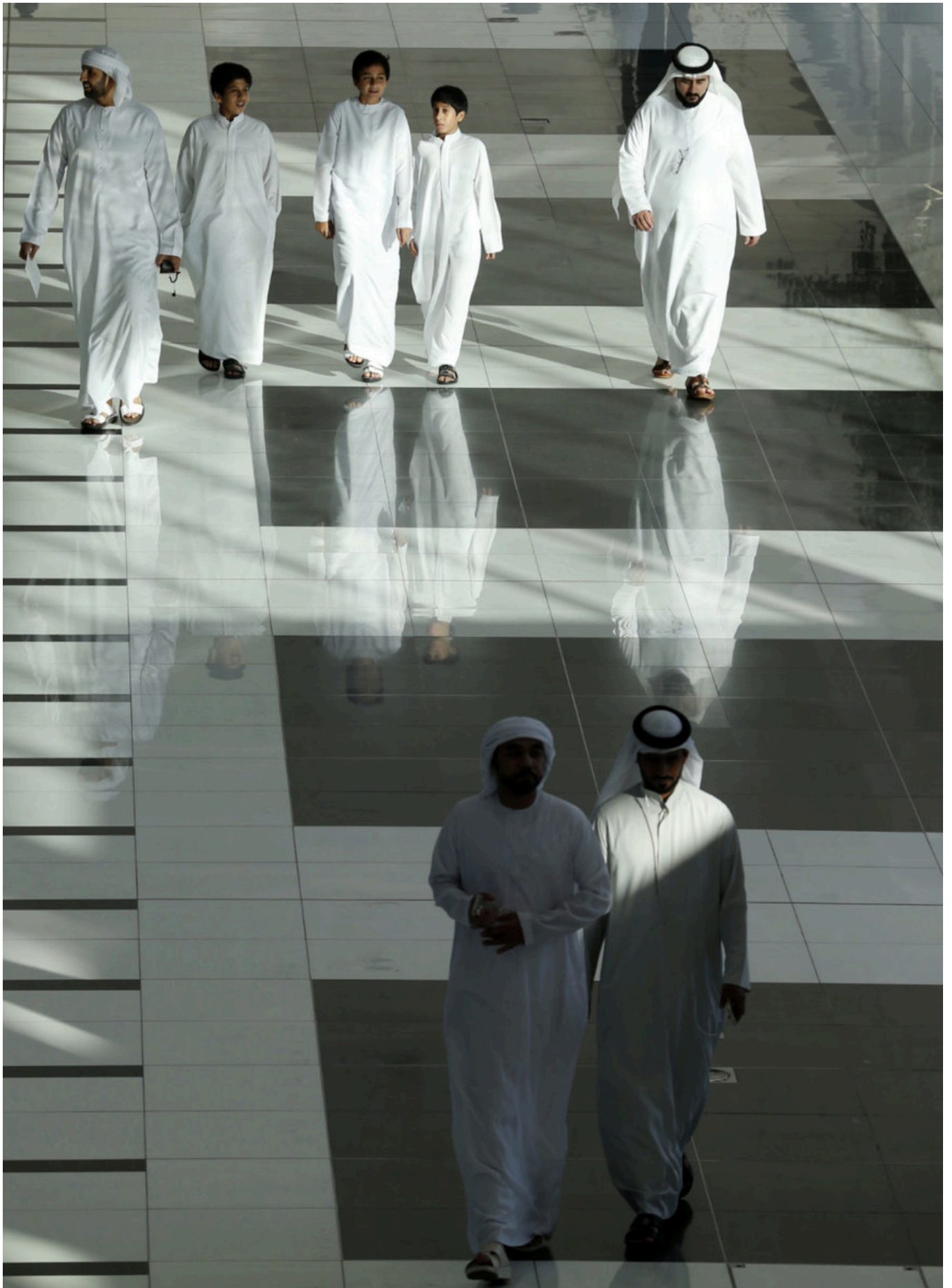
Survey sheds light on hopes, expectations of Arab region's college students

Tue, 2020-11-24 23:31

DUBAI: Conflict and turmoil may be the defining features of the past decade in the Middle East and North Africa, yet polling data suggests that those among the Arab region's largest demographic – the youth – who are getting a college education are optimistic about the future.

Such a conclusion can be drawn from a research project entitled “What about youth?” that surveyed the opinions of students in Arab countries where people under the age of 25 account for more than 35 percent of the population.

The study, conducted by Dubai International Academic City, KPMG and The Talent Enterprise, was carried out over a period of 24 months, concluding in March 2020 at the onset of the coronavirus pandemic. The findings represent the views of more than 153,000 students from countries such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE, with Emiratis accounting for more than half of all regional nationals surveyed.



Arab governments could share more locally relevant labor market intelligence about future jobs, says Radhika Punshi. (AFP)

The findings show that almost eight out of 10 students are excited about what the future holds, while 88 percent believe the best is yet to come. A follow-up study is underway to examine whether the COVID-19 crisis, which has devastated the job market and wage growth across the Arab region, has dampened the optimism reflected in the survey.

Those who took part in the survey are keenly aware of the challenges they face when they enter the global job market. The majority of students (72 percent) are confident the skills they are learning at university, together with their personal attributes, will enable them to get a job anywhere in the world.

Their main concern, however, is that universities do not provide sufficient career guidance and professional support.

Marketa Simkova, director of KPMG's People and Change practice, said that although students are more aware of what kinds of careers are open to them in the age of information, they still want personal guidance.

"A missing piece is an awareness of their personal aptitude and preferences, and an understanding of which careers will be most meaningful and gratifying for them," Simkova told Arab News.



Radhika Punshi, an organizational psychologist, human capital expert and managing director of Dubai-based The Talent Enterprise

Radhika Punshi, an organizational psychologist, human capital expert and managing director of Dubai-based The Talent Enterprise, said the survey shows students feel “personally confident about their own capabilities and skills,” but lack formal and informed guidance.

“This is evident from the finding that only 48 percent of students would study the same course again, and only 49 percent would study in the same university again, if given a choice,” she said.

Putting this trend into even sharper relief, a majority of students in the survey (over 60 percent) said they depend on family and friends for career advice, while just 3 percent said they rely on a career-guidance counsellor.

“Even with the best intentions, family or friends are not going to be fully

aware of all the various career possibilities and future jobs that exist,” Punshi said. “There is also familial pressure, where kids of doctors are expected to be doctors, kids of engineers expected to be engineers and so on.”

In her line of work, Punshi often meets students who are scared to have “courageous career conversations” with their families.

“One thing that would help is for youth to have an objective assessment of their strengths, skills and interests, both towards the end of their school years, and mid-way through university to steer their future career decisions,” she said.

Only then will students feel prepared to have career-focused discussions at home.

Simkova said one way to remedy this is for universities to partner up with employers to immerse students in their preferred career paths through access to internships and alumni mentorship programs.



A majority of students in the survey (over 60 percent) said they depend on family and friends for career advice. (AFP)

“This will help provide them with a comprehensive view of the kinds of careers they can craft for themselves,” she said.

Additionally, universities could hire career counselors and employer engagement teams with extensive networks of potential employers, Simkova

suggested. Through these channels, students could be given access to corporate presentations that allow employers to explain what they have to offer and what they are looking for in future hires.

Not only could this facilitate the hiring process – it could also provide job seekers with reliable options that offer career assessments based on their personality, skills and preferences, she said.

For her part, Punshi said the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and other Arab governments could share more locally relevant labor market intelligence about future jobs and skill demands to help to better align talent supply and demand.

“There is a huge need for a regionally relevant career guidance qualification program to train career guidance counsellors through a curriculum that addresses local socio-cultural issues and the labor-market landscape,” she said.



Universities could hire career counselors and employer engagement teams with extensive networks of potential employers, says Marketa Simkova. (AFP)

At the same time, employers must be incentivized to engage more with education and to offer internships and work study programs.

Another interesting finding in the survey was that women (14 percent) are more likely than men (12 percent) to hold out for their dream job.

“The data indicates that women tend to be more selective in their choice of a dream job and are willing to wait longer to shape a career that fits their

aspirations,” Simkova said.

While more data is needed to explore the reason for this gap, she felt this could be bridged by building a gender-inclusive culture and allowing a conversation about diversity to influence how organizations recruit and develop their staff.

Separate research indicates women and girls in the Arab region on average tend to underestimate their abilities and performance.

“There is a significant confidence gap,” said Punshi. “For example, women are more likely to apply for a promotion only if they believe they meet 100 percent of the criteria, where men will apply even if they meet 50 percent of the requirements.”

Research conducted by Carnegie Mellon University found that men initiate salary negotiations four times as often as women, and that when women do negotiate, they ask for just 30 percent of the money that men request.

The “What about youth?” survey echoes these findings – that girls are more likely to compromise on salary than boys.

“There are many reasons for this – societal, socio-cultural, familial – with deep-rooted beliefs and stereotypes all over the world, and a lot more needs to be done, right from the early years, into higher education, into employment, to really shift the game around gender inclusion,” said Punshi.

Like many experts in her field, she believes that although the region continues to make significant strides in gender equality in the workplace, especially with growing labor force participation among women in Saudi Arabia and equal pay regulations in UAE, “we can always do more.”

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Youth hold key to global future, experts tell Riyadh G20 summitY20 summit gives platform for voice of global youth

[Judge files charges against 2 over Lebanon port blast](#)

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Tue, 2020-11-24 19:44

BEIRUT: A Lebanese prosecutor filed charges Tuesday against current and former customs officials over the massive blast at Beirut's port in August, including a former customs chief who was reportedly the point man for the militant Hezbollah group at the facility.

State prosecutor Ghassan Khoury charged senior customs official Hani Hajj Shehadeh and former customs chief in Beirut, Moussa Hazimeh, on Tuesday, according to state-run National News Agency. The report didn't reveal the charges or give additional details.

Hazimeh was reportedly the point man for Hezbollah at the Port of Beirut when nearly 3,000 tons of highly explosive fertilizer were stored there more than six years ago.

The 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate blew up Aug. 4, killing more than 200 people, injuring thousands and causing damage worth billions of dollars, mostly in nearby neighborhoods.

Beirut's port is considered one of the most corrupt institutions in the country, where ruling political factions including Hezbollah have divvied up positions and created fiefdoms.

National News Agency said that in charging Shehadeh and Hazimeh, the number of those now charged in connection with the explosion reached 33, of whom 25 are under arrest. None of the charges have been made public and the process has been highly secretive.

Riad Kobaissi, an investigative reporter with Al Jadeed TV, has followed corruption at the port and within the customs authorities since 2012. He said all the political factions in the country benefited from using the port as patronage, and most overlooked dubious dealings. He said many people knew of the initial warning about the danger of the stored ammonium nitrate in 2014 by a customs official. He said that includes Hazimeh, who Kobaissi described as Hezbollah's former point man at the port.

NNA said the new cases were referred to Judge Fadi Sawwan, who is probing the blast. It said Sawwan had questioned the two earlier as witnesses but they will be questioned again as suspects.

The report comes amid complaints the investigation is moving too slowly. Families of the victims are desperate to know what triggered the blast, one of the largest non-nuclear explosions in history.



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Lebanon on borrowed time not addressing Hezbollah's weapons
Megan Fox champions Lebanese designer at 2020 AMAs

[German defense minister rejects Turkey complaint over Libya weapons ship search](#)

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By GEIR MOULSON | AP

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Tue, 2020-11-24 13:40

BERLIN: Germany's defense minister on Tuesday rejected Turkey's complaints over the search of a Turkish freighter in the Mediterranean Sea by a German frigate participating in a European mission, insisting that German sailors acted correctly.

Sunday's incident prompted Turkey to summon diplomats representing the European Union, Germany and Italy and assert that the Libya-bound freighter Rosaline-A was subjected to an "illegal" search by personnel from the German frigate Hamburg. The German ship is part of the European Union's Irini naval mission, which is enforcing an arms embargo against Libya.

German officials say that the order to board the ship came from Irini's headquarters in Rome and that Turkey protested while the team was on board. The search was then ended.

Turkey says the search was "unauthorized and conducted by force."

German Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer backed the German crew's actions.

"It is important to me to make really clear that the Bundeswehr soldiers behaved completely correctly," she said during an appearance in Berlin. "They did what is asked of them in the framework of the European Irini mandate."

"That there is this debate with the Turkish side points to one of the fundamental problems of this European mission," Kramp-Karrenbauer added, without elaborating. "But it is very important to me to say clearly here that there are no grounds for these accusations that are now being made against the soldiers."

This was the second incident between Turkey and naval forces from a NATO ally enforcing an arms blockade against Libya.

In June, NATO launched an investigation over an incident between Turkish warships and a French naval vessel in the Mediterranean, after France said one of its frigates was "lit up" three times by Turkish naval targeting radar when it tried to approach a Turkish civilian ship suspected of involvement in

arms trafficking.

Turkey supports a UN-backed government in Tripoli against rival forces based in the country's east. It has complained that the EU naval operation focuses its efforts too much on the Tripoli administration and turns a blind eye to weapons sent to the eastern-based forces.

In Ankara, Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar said that Irini was "flawed from the onset."

"It is not based on firm international legal foundations," Akar said. He renewed Turkey's criticism of the German ship's actions.

"The incident was against international laws and practices. It was wrong," he said.

Kramp-Karrenbauer stressed that "Turkey is still an important partner for us in NATO." Turkey being outside the military alliance would make the situation even more difficult, she argued, and Turkish soldiers are "absolutely reliable partners" in NATO missions.

But she conceded that Turkey poses "a big challenge" because of how its domestic politics have developed and because it has its "own agenda, which is difficult to reconcile with European questions in particular."



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Turkey blasts 'unauthorized' German search of Libya-bound ship
Moscow stops UN blacklisting of Libyan militia

Sudan govt says 'not aware' of Israeli delegation visit

Author:

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Tue, 2020-11-24 11:10

KHARTOUM: Sudan's government on Tuesday denied having information about the visit of an Israeli delegation to Khartoum announced the day before by an official from Tel Aviv.

"The cabinet is not aware of an Israeli delegation and we have no confirmation that this visit took place," government spokesman Faisal Mohammed Saleh told AFP.

"We also have no information on a Sudanese delegation visiting Israel."

On Monday, a senior Israeli official said the state had sent a delegation to Sudan – the first such visit since last month's announcement of an agreement to normalize relations between the two countries.

Israeli army radio also reported Monday that a trip was underway.

The Israel-Sudan pact has yet to be formally signed.

"We have a pre-existing deal that normalization with Israel should be approved by the transitional parliament," said Saleh.

Prior to that, "there should not be any form of communication with Israel," he added.

Sudan has yet to form a parliament since the April 2019 ouster of former president Omar Al-Bashir following mass protests against his rule.

The country has embarked on a rocky transitional period that saw the post-Bashir government seeking to turn the page on its status as an international pariah.

Sudan was the third Arab country this year to announce a normalization deal with Israel, after the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.



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Israel sends first delegation to Sudan since normalization
Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu says he will visit Bahrain soon

[Lebanon on borrowed time not addressing Hezbollah's weapons](#)

Author:

Tue, 2020-11-24 01:18

BEIRUT: A Lebanese academic has warned politicians that the country is at risk from the group Hezbollah, despite various factions coming together to try to launch a rescue initiative, as it struggles to resolve a myriad of crises currently affecting the eastern Mediterranean state.

There has been no progress yet on the formation of a new government since the collapse of the previous administration in August, and consequently, no negotiations with the International Monetary Fund over a bailout.

American economist Steve Hanke said in a tweet on Monday: "While Venezuela

continues to hold the top spot in my world inflation table, Lebanon has finally passed Zimbabwe for 2nd place. It's rather shocking to watch Lebanon's politicians fiddle, while Beirut burns."

The inflation rate in Lebanon has now reached around 365 percent.

In light of this stalemate, during a press conference at the Palace of Justice in Beirut on Monday, trade unions, universities, economic organizations, labor bodies and civil society forces launched a national rescue initiative under the slogan "Recovering the State," while joint parliamentary committees will meet on Wednesday to discuss a new electoral law.

The head of the Beirut Bar Association, Melhem Khalaf, said in the press conference: "We want to restore the state by reconfiguring the authority to rebuild the country."

Khalaf added: "The initiative is easy to implement and relates to the size of people's pain, and is open to constructive discussion in a way that reassures all concerns."

The head of the North Bar Association, Mohammed Al-Murad, explained the details of the rescue initiative.

He said that the initiative "includes the necessity to form an effective, purposeful, fair and reliable government of independent specialists with specific and limited legislative powers within a specific time frame."

He added: "Government priorities should an endorsement approving the start of implementing a financial, economic and social rescue plan, achieving full justice for the explosion at the Beirut Port and the implementation of a national plan to combat the coronavirus disease pandemic and limit its spread."

Murad said that the initiative was based on "launching the path of immediate reforms to combat all forms of corruption, auditing all independent institutions and state administrations," as well as the creation of a Senate and adopting a new electoral law to move the country away from sectarianism.

Parliament, meanwhile, is expected to hold a session of the joint parliamentary committees to discuss a controversial electoral bill.

Speaker Nabih Berri's bloc is pressing for the approval of a bill it presented, based on proportional representation, and which treats Lebanon as one constituency.

This issue raised concerns from Christian MPs, especially those affiliated with the Free Patriotic Movement and the Lebanese Forces.

Edy Maalouf, an MP from the Lebanese Forces bloc, said: "Today, the country does not need such a controversial suggestion."

He spoke of coordination between the Lebanese Forces and the Free Patriotic

Movement to “reject the proportional representation bill and treating Lebanon as one constituency.”

Mario Aoun, a Free Patriotic Movement MP, stressed his refusal “to make Lebanon one electoral constituency, although we are in favor of amending the loopholes in the current electoral law based on which the last elections were held and proved its usefulness.”

Lebanon’s Deputy Parliament Speaker Elie Ferzli, who will chair the joint committee session, said: “The committees have several electoral bills, and the debate is not limited to one formula. It is better to have a law agreed upon early so that we do not reach the due date without a law.”

However, Dr. Mona Fayad, member of the Lebanese Association of Women Researchers, said that the rescue initiative “does not address the issue of illegal weapons outside the constitution, that is, Hezbollah’s weapons.”

Fayad told Arab News: “We are a country with its own borders and army. Since 2006, Hezbollah has not fired a single bullet from the south at Israel. Are we supposed to keep its shop open so that it can use it to fight here and there and not close it? Then Hezbollah comes to rule us in the name of the resistance, how can that be possible?”

Dr. Fayad added: “How could the rescue initiative ask Parliament to implement the constitution by electing a Senate? Isn’t the current Parliament inherently against the constitution and illegal? And how can elections be held under (the threat of) weapons?”

“I fear that what is happening now is a mutual collusion process between Parliament and these civilian forces.”



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In Lebanon, army courts target anti-government protesters