

Palestinians may limit Christmas celebrations in Bethlehem

Author:

Sun, 2020-11-22 23:55

RAMALLAH: The Palestinian Health Ministry has recommended strict limits on Christmas celebrations in Bethlehem this year due to the coronavirus outbreak.

Celebrations in the biblical town revered by Christians as Jesus' birthplace are usually attended by thousands of people from around the world.

But this year, the ministry has recommended the upcoming Christmas tree lighting ceremony in Manger Square be limited to 50 people, with the lights of the tree and area restaurants closed at 9 p.m. throughout the Christmas season. In its recommendations Saturday, it said religious services on Christmas Eve should also have limited attendance.

Bethlehem's economy, filled with hotels, gift shops and restaurants, relies heavily on the Christmas season. The cancelation or scaling back of the celebrations will deal another blow to an economy that already has been hit hard by the coronavirus crisis this year.

Palestinian officials are expected to make a final decision on Christmas celebrations in the coming days. Israel's international airport – the main entry point for foreign travelers – has been closed to tourists for months, limiting the potential numbers of pilgrims in any case.

The West Bank is in the midst of a spike in coronavirus cases, while Israel is only slowly emerging from a lockdown imposed in September to control a raging outbreak. The northern Israeli town of Nazareth, revered by Christians as the place of Jesus' childhood, has been designated a "restricted" zone by authorities, limiting movement in and out of the area for at least the next few days.



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[Egypt sets shop opening hours as second wave approaches](#)

Author:

Mon, 2020-11-23 00:20

CAIRO: In preparation for the expected second wave of the coronavirus (COVID-19), the Egyptian government has announced new opening hours for shops, restaurants, cafes, and workshops and handicrafts shops. The changes will come into effect from Dec. 1.

The government said that the new times were part of its continued efforts to achieve stability, prevent chaos, maintain the state's infrastructure, preserve the people's health and safety and reduce the spread of the coronavirus.

Minister of Local Development General Mahmoud Shaarawy spoke of the many benefits of this ruling, which was approved by the Supreme Committee for Public Shop Licensing, including saving energy, regulating working hours, allowing local authorities to remove garbage and keep Egyptian streets clean across the country.

General Shaarawy said that shops and malls, excluding restaurants, cafes, and bazaars, will open at 7:00 a.m. and close at 11:00 p.m. daily during the summer, and at 10:00 p.m. in winter. He said that they will close at midnight in summer and 11:00 p.m. in winter on Thursdays and Fridays, as well as on official holidays.

Restaurants, cafes, and bazaars, including those in shopping malls, will open at 5:00 a.m. and close at 1:00 a.m. in summer and midnight in winter. He added that during winter times will be extended on Thursdays and Fridays, as well as on official holidays, so these establishments will close at 1:00 a.m. He said that home delivery services of cafes and restaurants will be available 24 hours all year round.

The minister said that the opening hours for workshops and handicrafts shops in populated areas will be daily from 8:00 a.m. till 7:00 p.m. in summer, and from 6:00 a.m. in winter. He underlined that these hours exclude service establishments such as gas stations, which will be covered by a regulation to be issued by the chairman of the Supreme Committee for Public Shop Licensing. The opening hours for workshops and handicrafts shops inside populated areas may be amended if needed.

Coronavirus cases have surged again in Egypt following a decline during the summer.



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UAE reports 1,205 new COVID-19 cases, 4 deathsPompeo: Other Arab countries will normalize relations with Israel

[UAE reports 1,205 new COVID-19 cases, 4 deaths](#)

Author:

Sun, 2020-11-22 23:11

DUBAI: The UAE on Sunday recorded 1,205 new coronavirus cases and four deaths.

The Ministry of Health and Prevention said the total number of cases in the country since the pandemic began has reached 158,990, with the death toll now at 552.

The ministry added that 791 people recovered over the previous 24 hours, bringing the total number of recoveries to 148,871.

The emergency, crisis and disaster management committee in the emirate of Fujairah announced that it will ban all types of camping, including caravans, as part of coronavirus precautionary measures.

The decision, announced by Maj. Gen. Mohamed Ahmad bin Ghanem Al-Kaabi, commander in chief of Fujairah Police, comes as the emirate begins its camping season and as the hot summer weather begins to cool down.

As part of daily inspection tours, Dubai Economy shut down a gaming center located on Sheikh Zayed Road for violating anti-COVID-19 measures on Saturday.

Elsewhere, Kuwait recorded 322 new COVID-19 cases, bringing the total to 140,056. The death toll reached 866 after three new fatalities were registered.

Oman's Health Ministry said the country's total number of cases had reached 122,081 and the death toll was 1,380.



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Saudi Arabia announces 19 more COVID-19 deaths UAE confirms 1,269 new COVID-19 cases, 3 deaths

[COVID-19 cases soar to record levels in Turkey](#)

Author:

By Associated Press

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1606075743304150000

Sun, 2020-11-22 17:26

ANKARA: Turkey saw a record number of people diagnosed with COVID-19 for the second day running on Sunday as 6,017 new symptomatic patients were documented, the health ministry said.

The number of new daily cases has surpassed the outbreak's previous peak in April.

Evening lockdowns were introduced over the weekend for the first time since June, with businesses such as restaurants and bars ordered to close.

The ministry said 446,882 patients with symptoms have been identified since the country's first recorded case in March. Turkey does not publicly report confirmed coronavirus cases in people without COVID-19 symptoms, a policy that has been criticized for masking the true scope of the national outbreak. Turkey recorded 139 COVID-19 deaths over the previous 24 hours, taking the country's total to 12,358, the health ministry reported.



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Turkey's daily COVID-19 deaths hit a record high of 141
Pompeo in Turkey for fraught visit with no official talks

[Ethiopia pushes toward Tigray capital,](#)

rebuffs African mediation

Sat, 2020-11-21 23:50

ADDIS ABABA: The Ethiopian government said on Saturday its forces had seized another town in their advance on the rebel-held capital of northern Tigray region, and rebuffed an African diplomatic push to mediate.

More than two weeks into Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's offensive, his government said Tigrayan forces were digging in and using bulldozers to plow up roads around the regional capital Mekelle, home to about half-a-million people.

Hundreds, possibly thousands, have died and more than 30,000 refugees have fled to Sudan. The conflict has spread beyond Tigray, whose forces have fired rockets at the neighboring Amhara region and the nation of Eritrea, spurring concern of a wider war and the splintering of multi-ethnic Ethiopia.

Abiy's government has said it will soon reach Mekelle after taking various surrounding towns. On Saturday, it said Adigrat had also fallen, about 116 km north of Mekelle.

The Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) rebels said nine civilians had died in artillery hits on Adigrat where it accused Eritrea of backing the Ethiopian army.

The army of Abiy and Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki "inflicted heavy casualties on innocent civilians in Adigrat," the TPLF's communications bureau said in a statement on Facebook.

The government and military could not immediately be reached for comment, but have previously repeatedly denied targeting civilians, saying they strike only TPLF targets.

Assertions on all sides are hard to verify because phone lines and internet have been down since the beginning of the conflict on Nov. 4 and media are largely barred.

FASTFACT

The conflict has spread beyond Tigray, whose forces have fired rockets at the neighboring Amhara region and the nation of Eritrea, spurring concern of a wider war and the splintering of multi-ethnic Ethiopia.

Eritrea denies TPLF allegations of sending soldiers over the border to back Abiy's offensive against the Tigrayan forces, who are also an old foe of Eritrea's.

Refugees and rights group Amnesty International have also recounted civilian deaths, though Reuters has been unable to verify those reports.

The African Union bloc has appointed former presidents Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia and Kgalema Motlanthe of South Africa as special envoys to seek a cease-fire and mediation talks.

Abiy, who won the Nobel Peace Prize last year for a peace pact with Eritrea, has said he wants to remove the TPLF leaders before talking.

“News circulating that the envoys will be traveling to Ethiopia to mediate between the Federal Government and TPLF’s criminal element is fake,” the government tweeted on Saturday.

Abiy accuses the Tigrayan leaders of revolting against central authority and attacking federal troops in the town of Dansha. The rebel leaders say Abiy’s government has marginalized and persecuted Tigrayans since taking office two years ago.

Abiy denies that, saying he is seeking only to restore law and order and preserve the unity of Ethiopia and its 115 million people.

The UN and other aid agencies have said the conflict is creating a humanitarian crisis in Tigray, where many among the more than 5 million population were already displaced and relying on food aid even before the conflict.

Satellite images given to Reuters by US-based space company Maxar Technologies showed destroyed buildings lining the main road near the airport in Dansha, where the conflict broke out.

The TPLF is popular in its home region and dominated national politics from 1991 until Abiy took office. Abiy’s parents are from the larger Oromo and Amhara ethnic groups.

“We will do all that is necessary to ensure stability prevails in the Tigray region and that our citizens are free from harm and want,” the prime minister tweeted on Saturday.



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Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam talks resume as political tensions mount