

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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VaroshaNorthern Cyprus set to reopen Cypriot ghost town on cease-fire lines

Two Libya shipwrecks in a day cost almost 100 lives

Sat, 2020-11-14 00:26

TRIPOLI: Twenty migrants have died in a shipwreck off the Libyan coast, Doctors Without Borders (MSF) said, raising to almost 100 the death toll from two such Mediterranean tragedies the same day.

MSF teams in the northwestern city of Sorman "assisted three women as the lone survivors of another shipwreck (Thursday) where 20 people drowned," the group said on Twitter.

"Rescued by local fishermen, they were in shock and terrified; they saw loved ones disappear beneath the waves, dying in front of their eyes," MSF said. Earlier, the UN's International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported "a devastating shipwreck which claimed the lives of at least 74 migrants today off the coast of Khoms," a port city 120 km east of the Libyan capital Tripoli.

It said 47 survivors had been brought back to shore and 31 bodies retrieved, adding that the boat was reported to be carrying more than 120 people.

Bodies from that shipwreck were lined up grimly along the beach on Thursday, some still wearing life jackets.

Traumatized survivors sat in shock on the shore, while others huddled under blankets as aid workers distributed food parcels.

The US Embassy in Tripoli said the shipwrecks amounted to "another horrific migrant tragedy – another reminder of the need for a settlement to the #Libya conflict now in order to focus on the prevention of tragedies like this."

SPEEDREAD

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European Ambassador Jose Sabadell said: "We need to work together to prevent these horrific events from happening again."

The IOM said on Friday that "many women and children" were aboard the two boats, adding that the body of a toddler was among those retrieved.

"Staff in the region reported that more bodies continued to wash ashore overnight," IOM added.

So far this year, more than 900 people have drowned in the Mediterranean trying to reach European shores, it said.

More than 11,000 others have been returned to Libya, it added, "putting them at risk of facing human rights violations."

Human traffickers have taken advantage of persistent violence in Libya since the 2011 overthrow of Muammar Qaddafi, turning the country into a key corridor for migrants fleeing war and poverty in desperate bids to reach Europe.

While many have drowned at sea, thousands have been intercepted by the Libyan coast guard, which has been backed by Italy and the EU, and returned to Libya.

They mostly end up in detention, often in horrific conditions.

The IOM called for "a change of approach to Libya and the most dangerous maritime route on earth that ends the return of migrants to the country" and establishes "predictable safe disembarkation mechanisms."



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Libyan corruption case as witness drops claim

A Kuwaiti NGO fights food waste while feeding needy households

Sat, 2020-11-14 00:05

KUWAIT: Even to the most undiscerning of minds, Kuwait's culture of hyper-consumption and food waste is obvious – almost the norm in fact. Restaurant tables with food left barely touched and garbage bins piled high with unopened packaging are seen all too often.

While the problem of waste disposal has long been an issue in Kuwait, the fact that almost 50 percent of this waste is solid food is especially harmful for the environment.

In 2014, when Maryam Aleisa returned from completing her studies in Barcelona, raring to start a social venture on her own, Kuwait's food-waste problem grabbed her attention.

"We do not have a practice of segregating or composting food waste – it is simply dumped into massive landfills, releasing methane gases into the environment, which is significantly more dangerous than carbon dioxide emissions for climate change," she said.



Maryam Aleisa returned from completing her studies in Barcelona in 2014 and decided to tackle Kuwait's problem of food-waste. (Supplied)

"The leachate, liquid caused by food waste and other factors in landfills, is

equally dangerous as it seeps into the groundwater and causes contamination and pollution. I realized that the whole food-wastage problem was so unbelievable and unnecessary.”

Meanwhile, underprivileged families struggle to afford basic necessities.

Having been raised in a home environment where her mother would often donate food to the needy, Aleisa decided to put her experience to good use. And so, ReFood was born.

REFOODINNUMBERS

*** 2014 Launch year of Kuwaiti social enterprise.**

*** \$4.2 million Value of food saved from being thrown away.**

Launched in 2014, the non-profit aims to eliminate food waste through a process of re-channelling to help achieve a sustainable ecosystem. This means obtaining food products nearing their expiration date from suppliers and distributing it to those in need.

“To begin with, I looked at different food bank models to understand how they worked. We looked at the North African models, the ones operating in South Korea and we actually visited the Saudi Food Bank where we saw how cooked food waste was salvaged,” Aleisa said.

Although massive amounts of food waste is generated by hotels, limited resources and logistical issues meant Aleisa instead turned to the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry, which supplies food to retail outlets.

“I started speaking to these companies and realized that food products which were taken off the shelves before their expiration dates were simply thrown away,” she said. The companies, in turn, were eager to support the concept of re-channelling the food instead of throwing it away and began supplying a small number of dry food products.



Launched in 2014, the non-profit aims to eliminate food waste through a process of re-channelling to help achieve a sustainable ecosystem. (Supplied)

As the scheme grew, they soon offered their full range. "Once we gained the trust of some of the larger food companies, the others joined in and we signed contracts with them to salvage the food before it gets categorized as waste and supply it to Refood instead," Aleisa said.

Another key challenge was finding a location for storage and distribution – a problem solved when friends pitched in and permission was obtained to work from the warehouse of a government supermarket.

Initially, Aleisa, her mother and a few friends personally delivered the food donations to families in need. But thanks to their website and social media accounts, volunteers have poured in and the team has set up a registration system for helpers and beneficiaries.

In 2019, some 2,080 families were registered with Refood, more than 498 tons of food redistributed and 1,000 packages distributed every month. This meant that more than 1,292,640 KWD (\$4.2 million) worth of food was saved from being dumped into landfills.

COVID-19 has forced Refood to change its program, owing to a shortage of sponsors and many of its beneficiaries leaving the country. But Aleisa is confident the team will continue, as food waste remains a huge problem in Kuwait. And what is her ideal scenario? "To live in a world where Refood wouldn't need to exist," she said.

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[Libya talks set December 2021 date for elections](#)

Fri, 2020-11-13 22:19

TUNIS: Libyans at UN-led talks agreed to hold elections in December next year, the United Nations said Friday.

Participants at the talks in Tunisia "agreed that national elections should

take place on 24 December 2021,” acting UN envoy Stephanie Williams told journalists in a virtual press conference.

The world body is convening talks near Tunis to hash out a deal for a new transitional government for the country, torn apart by conflict since the 2011 uprising that toppled dictator Moamer Kadhafi.

The administration would be charged with providing services and preparing for national polls, as well as tackling an economic crisis and a coronavirus outbreak that has killed over 900 people.

The political track of talks in Tunisia comes in parallel with military talks to fill in the details of a ceasefire deal in October, that formally ended over a year of fighting between eastern and western Libyan forces.

The 75 delegates at the Tunisia talks were selected by the UN to represent existing institutions and the diversity of Libyan society, but some Libyans have questioned their credibility and criticised the way they were selected. Analysts also fear a government resulting from the talks could struggle to gain legitimacy and face pushback from members of existing institutions. But Williams said the momentum was against “status quo” actors “trying to maintain their current privileges”.

“The international community has tools at its disposal to prevent spoilers, including through the use of sanctions,” she said.

The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, which is helping to facilitate the talks, said the new government would not need a vote of confidence from Libya’s House of Representatives.

The HoR, elected in 2014, is based in Libya’s east and allied with military commander Khalifa Haftar, who launched an offensive in April 2019 to seize the capital Tripoli from a UN-recognised unity government.

Pro-unity government forces ended a bloody months-long stalemate in June by pushing Haftar’s forces back eastwards.

The two sides signed a landmark ceasefire deal in October, setting the scene for renewed diplomatic efforts for a political settlement to the long-running conflict.



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