

# Govt-controlled areas in Yemen report zero virus cases

Author:

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AL-MUKALLA: Yemen's national coronavirus committee announced on Friday night recording zero coronavirus cases in the government-controlled provinces, even as the country braced for the second wave of the virus.

The national committee, a government body that documents coronavirus in the government-controlled provinces, said in a statement that it recorded two recoveries in the southern province of Laj and zero confirmed cases or deaths.

The total number of confirmed cases since April 10 when the first case was detected is 2,066, including 601 deaths and 1,377 recoveries. The Houthis, who control densely populated provinces, refuse to disclose the number of coronavirus cases. Their ministry of health had reported only four cases, including one death.

During the past couple of weeks, health facilities and PCR testing labs in the interim capital of Yemen, Aden, and the other liberated provinces have reported fewer infections, Dr. Ishraq Al-Subaee, a spokesman for the committee, told Arab News on Saturday. "It seems that the first wave of the virus is coming to an end," Dr. Ishraq said.

In October, health authorities in the southeastern province of Hadramout closed a major quarantine center in the port city of Al-Mukalla, the province's capital that treated dozens of cases due to the sharp decline in coronavirus cases.

But despite recording zero cases on Friday, the committee ordered health facilities across Yemen to prepare for a second wave of the virus as a severe winter is affecting parts of the country.

Headed by Prime Minister Maeen Abdulmalik Saeed, the committee on Thursday approved fresh measures to stem a potential outbreak of the virus, including boosting capacity of health facilities, raising public awareness about health guidelines, enhancing cooperation between the committee and local authorities for a unified response and approving an emergency fund. The official news agency SABA reported that the prime minister stressed learning lessons from the first wave of the coronavirus.

Yemen has been hit hard by the virus since April. Hundreds of people, including dozens of health care workers, have died as cases overwhelmed local hospitals. Local health officials told Arab News that the virus and other diseases killed 1,800 people in May in Aden alone. In Sanaa, several graveyards in Sanaa and other provinces in northern Yemen were closed due to the influx of the dead. Local and international health workers believe that

the number of virus fatalities is much higher than official reports say.

As daily coronavirus infections reached zero, experts warned that sporadic new cases in different cities last week could be a sign of a second wave. Abdulla bin Ghouth, a professor of community medicine and epidemiology at Hadramout University's College of Medicine and an adviser to the health minister, told Arab News that official reports about the decreasing cases showed the coronavirus curve was going down.

However, "the few confirmed cases in Marib and Aden are a warning of the second wave," bin Ghouth said. He added that the war-torn country was not ready for a second wave and was repeating the mistakes of the first wave of the pandemic. "Hospitals and quarantines are not ready. There is still not enough PCR testing labs and preventive measures are very poor," he said.

### **Normal life**

Yemenis across the country have largely abandoned health coronavirus guidelines, even before the country reported few cases. People attend large gatherings such as weddings and mass prayers and almost no one wears a mask. In Al-Mukalla on Friday, thousands of worshippers without masks thronged Omar mosque for Friday prayers. Among the worshippers were health workers, teachers and journalists – who have long preached to people about adhering to social distancing and other health guidelines.

Even the elderly and people with chronic diseases who used to wear masks during prayers now hug and shake hands without masks. In his weekly sermon, the imam warned worshippers against the "evils" of globalization and its calls for women's liberation, ignoring government calls to prepare for a second wave of the virus.

People said that they did not wear masks as they had developed herd impunity. "I do not wear masks because I was infected with the virus in Ramadan. Also, the prices of the masks are high compared to my salary. Finally, my city did not report any new case for the past ten days," Mohammed Ahmed Bayazid, a worshipper, told Arab News.



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## [Hundreds in Baghdad demand ouster of US troops from Iraq](#)

Author:

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Sat, 2020-11-07 14:56

BAGHDAD: Several hundred protesters gathered in the Iraqi capital on Saturday afternoon to demand US troops leave the country in accordance with a parliament vote earlier this year.

“We will choose resistance if parliament’s vote is not ratified!” read one of the banners at the demonstration, which took place near an entrance to the high-security Green Zone, where the US embassy and other foreign missions are located.

Others carried signs bearing the logo of Hashed Al-Shaabi, a state-sponsored

network of armed groups including many supported by Iraq's powerful neighbor Iran.

Following a US strike on Baghdad in January that killed top Iranian general Qasem Soleimani and the Hashed's deputy head, outraged Iraqi parliamentarians voted to oust all foreign forces deployed in the country.

The US has sent thousands of troops to Iraq since 2014 to lead an international coalition helping Baghdad fight Daesh.

Washington has drawn down those forces in recent months to around 3,000, and other coalition countries have also shrunk their footprint.

Starting in October 2019, rockets regularly targeted those troops as well as diplomats at the US embassy.

Over the summer, there was a marked increase in attacks against coalition logistics convoys using roadside bombs.

Enraged by the ongoing attacks, the US in late September threatened to close its Baghdad embassy and carry out bombing raids against hard-line elements of the Hashed.

Pro-Iran factions announced a temporary truce in October that put an end to the attacks, with no rockets targeting the embassy or foreign troops since. Iraq has long been caught in the struggle for influence between its two main allies, the US and Iran, with the tug-of-war intensifying under US President Donald Trump.

Baghdad has been closely monitoring the results of the US presidential elections, seeing a change in the White House as a sign that tensions between Washington and Tehran could decrease.





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## [UK, EU warn Israel over West Bank evictions, demolitions](#)

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LONDON: The UK and EU have warned Israel over its campaign to turn a West Bank region into a “firing zone for training exercises.”

Israel has faced increasing scrutiny in recent weeks after it pushed forward with evictions and demolitions across the West Bank.

Masafer Yatta is one of the poorest areas in the occupied Palestinian

territory. Traditional shepherd villages and caves that make up the region rely on an NGO-funded water supply and solar panels.

Palestinian shepherds rejected Israel's proposal of "part-time" living arrangements for residents.

Muhammad Moussa Abu Aram, a Masafer Yatta resident, said he dreaded being forced to leave his home, adding that "every aspect of life is difficult here" due to Israeli military activity.

Both the UK and EU have condemned Israel's demolition campaign. Sven Kuhn von Burgsdorff, EU representative to Palestine, said during a recent visit to the region: "We call on Israel not to carry out demolitions in the communities, which are highly vulnerable."

He added: "Displacing the communities would be in contravention with Israel's obligations as an occupying power under international humanitarian law."

A British consulate spokesman in Jerusalem said: "Demolitions and evictions cause unnecessary suffering to Palestinians and damage the prospects of a two-state solution."

Brussels and London have sent envoys to inspect recent Israeli actions in the area. Meanwhile, the UN announced on Thursday: "So far in 2020, 689 structures have been demolished across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem."

West Bank resident Yasser Abu Al-Kbash told America's National Public Radio that the recent demolitions were deliberately timed.

"I am 99 percent certain this was taking advantage of the US elections. There were no journalists around," he said.



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Palestinian fires on Israel troops in West Bank, shot dead: army

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## [UAE amends laws on personal status, civil transactions and criminal procedures](#)

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DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates (UAE) announced on Saturday amendments to its personal status, civil transaction and penal and criminal procedure laws.

The amendments come as part of the UAE's efforts to develop its legislative and investment environment and to foster tolerance, Emirates News Agency (WAM) reported.

The new laws, which were approved by President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, include:

- Allowing non-citizens to choose the laws that would apply to them regarding inheritance in the personal status law
- Decriminalizing acts in the penal code that do not cause harm to others
- Allowing the federal public prosecutor the right to determine misdemeanors and irregularities that are subject to the penal code
- Abolishing the article that provides mitigating excuses for committers of so-called 'honor crimes' and subjecting them to provisions that apply to murder crimes in the penal code

The amendments to personal status and civil transaction codes aim to ensure the stability of the financial interests of foreign investors in UAE, according to WAM, while amendments to the penal code and criminal procedure law aim to protect "personal liberties and societal security."

A number of amendments to the penal code decriminalize acts that do not cause harm to others and lift ambiguity from texts that considered these acts as punishable by law.

The amendments also expand the scope of the application of the criminal order so that the federal public prosecutor, in agreement with public prosecutors in local judicial authorities, has the right to determine misdemeanors that

are subject to provisions of the penal code.

They aim to facilitate procedures and alleviate pressure on the judiciary system, especially in cases of minor crimes.

The laws are effective immediately and, according to WAM, reflect the progressive measures to improve living standards for people from around the world living in the UAE.

With the UAE home to more than 190 nationalities, amendments to existing laws and the introduction of the new laws seek to allow non-Emirati residents to have their personal affairs dealt with according to the law of their home country and ensuring the UAE is accommodating to their needs, WAM reported.



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# French minister holds Tunisia talks on return of extremists

Author:

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TUNIS: Tunisia said Friday it would take back from France its citizens suspected of being extremists, after last week's deadly attack in Nice allegedly carried out by a Tunisian terrorist.

But Interior Minister Taoufik Charfeddine, following talks with his visiting French counterpart Gerald Darmanin, said their return would be conditional. The former French colony is "prepared to receive any Tunisian," Charfeddine said.

"But this must be done in line with conditions and regulations" under international laws and in "preserving the dignity of the Tunisian" being returned, Charfeddine told reporters.

Sources close to Darmanin said ahead of the talks that he would submit to authorities a list of some 20 Tunisians who France wants to expel, on the basis that they had been convicted on terrorism charges or were suspected of extremist inclinations.

The French interior minister is due to visit Algeria on Sunday on a similar mission.

Public opinion in Tunisia is hostile toward the return of suspected militants, and authorities have refused the return of their citizens from France on the basis of travel restrictions linked to the coronavirus pandemic.

Tunisian nationals have constituted a significant proportion of foreign terrorists in Syria, Iraq and Libya over the past decade.

In 2015, the United Nations said that some 5,000 Tunisians had flocked mainly to Syria and Libya to join Daesh, while authorities in Tunis gave a lower figure of 3,000.

Their return has been a cause of concern in Tunisia, which has been under a state of emergency following a string of Daesh-claimed attacks in 2015 and 2016.

Darmanin's visit to Tunis was scheduled some time ago but it took on new urgency following the October 29 killing of three people at a church in the southern French city of Nice.

The alleged perpetrator of that attack, 21-year-old Brahim Aouissaoui, who arrived illegally in Europe in late September, is not the first Tunisian suspected of carrying out a deadly extremist attack in Europe.

In 2016, 31-year-old Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel plowed a truck into a Bastille Day crowd on the Nice seafront, killing 86 people.

Later that year fellow Tunisian citizen Anis Amri, 24, carried out a similar attack at a Berlin Christmas market, killing 12 people.

Daesh claimed both men as its followers.

Darmanin also met Tunisian President Kais Saied who stressed that his country

would seek to find a “solution to obstacles that may arise” in the face of expulsions from France.

Several non-governmental organizations released a petition charging that European governments were “pressuring” Tunisia to take back its citizens. The groups, including the Tunisian League of Human Rights, said European countries are “taking advantage of the fear sparked by the crimes committed by terrorists to get rid of illegal migrants.”

Darmanin is expected to discuss illegal migration in Algeria and also in a later visit to Malta.

Illegal sea crossings to Europe from Tunisia have been on the rise, largely driven by economic woes after a 2011 popular revolution that many hoped would bring change.

Sources close to Darmanin said the expulsions from France will also target common law criminals and would take into account “hygiene protocols” due to the coronavirus pandemic.

According to the sources, 70 percent of over 230 foreigners illegally in France and suspected of radicalism are from the Maghreb region, which includes Tunisia and Algeria, and from Russia.





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