

# [Israel, UAE to sign agreement for 28 weekly flights](#)

Sun, 2020-10-18 18:02

JERUSALEM: Israel and the United Arab Emirates will sign a deal on Tuesday to allow 28 weekly commercial flights between Israel's Ben Gurion airport, Dubai and Abu Dhabi, Israel's Transportation Ministry said on Sunday. The agreement, which also allows unlimited charter flights to a smaller airport in southern Israel and 10 weekly cargo flights, comes after Israel and UAE agreed to normalize relations. The aviation deal will be signed at Ben Gurion airport and flights are expected to begin within weeks, the ministry said.



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Israeli parliament backs UAE, Bahrain normalization deals  
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# Open season on weapons sales to Iran as UN embargo expires

Sun, 2020-10-18 17:42

CHICAGO: The end on Sunday of a UN embargo on selling conventional weapons to Iran is "a critical threat to regional and international stability," analysts told Arab News.

The arms ban expired under the terms of the UN resolution that confirmed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the 2015 agreement between Tehran and world powers to curb Iran's nuclear program in exchange for an easing of sanctions.

Iran can now buy weapons from Russia, China and elsewhere, and Tehran claims the expiry of the embargo is a diplomatic victory over the US.

Nevertheless, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo insisted on Sunday that arms sales to Iran would still breach UN resolutions and result in sanctions. "The US is prepared to use its domestic authorities to sanction any individual or entity that materially contributes to the supply, sale, or transfer of conventional arms to or from Iran," Pompeo said.

"Every nation that seeks peace and stability in the Middle East and supports the fight against terrorism should refrain from any arms transactions with Iran.

"For the past 10 years, countries have refrained from selling weapons to Iran under various UN measures. Any country that now challenges this prohibition will be very clearly choosing to fuel conflict and tension over promoting peace and security."

## **Opinion**

This section contains relevant reference points, placed in (Opinion field)

The Iranian-American Harvard scholar Dr. Majid Rafizadeh told Arab News: "The lifting of Iran's arms embargo is a critical threat to regional and international stability. Allowing the world's worst state sponsor of terrorism to have an unlimited supply chain of conventional weapons may sadly go down in history as one of the most dangerous acts against world peace.

"The beneficiaries are the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, its proxies and militia groups across the region. Sophisticated weapons could fall into the hand of the Syrian dictator Bashar Assad and Iran's terror and militia groups such as the Houthis, Hezbollah, Hamas, and Iran-backed armed factions in Iraq."

Security analyst Dr. Theodore Karasik said Iran primarily sought technical

data from other countries in order to build up its domestic arms manufacturing capacity.

“Tehran’s culture of weapons engineering and reverse engineering means possible purchases of small weapons such as the Kornet anti-tank missile from Russia, and components such as Chinese optical jammers against drone attacks,” said Karasik, senior adviser to Gulf State Analytics in Washington, D.C.

“Iran also seeks off-the-shelf systems such as the Russian S-400 air defense and the Bastion coastal defense system. China will benefit too. It is thought that Iran will purchase C-802 anti-ship cruise missiles and possibly Chinese naval patrol craft.”



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Iran: UN arms embargo on Tehran has been lifted  
Iran’s coronavirus death toll passes 30,000

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# Palestinian official Saeb Erekat taken to Israeli hospital after COVID-19 condition worsens

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Sun, 2020-10-18 12:43

AMMAN: Chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat was rushed by ambulance to a hospital in West Jerusalem on Sunday after his COVID-19 infection suddenly worsened.

Erekat, 65, secretary of the PLO's executive committee, is being treated in the coronavirus intensive care unit at Hadassah Ein Kerem hospital, where his condition was described as serious but stable.

"He arrived in serious condition and needed support and high doses of oxygen," the hospital said.

Earlier, Erekat had been carried to the Israeli ambulance on a stretcher from his home in the Khadiwey neighborhood of Jericho in the occupied West Bank. He was accompanied to the hospital by his son Ali and daughters Dalal and Salam, who is a doctor.

"Thank God, my father's health is stable. He needs special medical care for lung transplanted patients, thank you for your prayers, may God protect us all," Dalal said later on Twitter.

Erekat had a lung transplant in a US hospital in 2017. Family and friends were worried about his low-level immunity because of the surgery. He tested positive for the coronavirus 10 days ago.

Arsen Ostrovsky, a lawyer and political analyst in Israel, accused Erekat of hypocrisy for being treated in an Israeli hospital while the Palestinian Authority prevented ordinary Palestinians from doing so.

Palestinian officials dismissed the criticism as offensive and unjustified. "International law including the Hague and Geneva conventions requires an occupying power to provide medical support to the population under its control," one said.

Erekat has been one of the most high-profile faces of the Palestinian leadership for decades, especially to international audiences. He is one of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas's most senior advisers, and also held top positions under Yasser Arafat.



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## [Lebanese take to the streets to mark protest anniversary](#)

Sun, 2020-10-18 01:54

BEIRUT: Thousands of Lebanese protesters marked the one-year anniversary of nationwide demonstrations on Saturday by marching from Martyrs' Square in the heart of Beirut to the central bank and government offices where they renewed calls for an end to Lebanon's sectarian political system.

Activist groups from the southern cities of Sidon and Tyre, as well as

Baalbeck, Bekaa and Tripoli in the north, joined the protest, which brought Martyrs' Square back to life after weeks of inactivity. Wearing masks, the protesters waved Lebanese flags and demanded the overthrow of the "criminal" ruling class.

The march continued to Beirut port, where protesters lit a "torch of the Oct. 17 revolution" to commemorate victims of the explosion that devastated large areas of the capital on Aug. 4.

Almost 180 people were killed and more than 6,500 injured in the blast, which left Lebanon reeling after a year of financial scandals and political stalemate.

In that time, the country has plunged into bankruptcy, the Lebanese lira has collapsed and the dollar exchange rate has skyrocketed on the black market. Tens of thousands of people have lost their jobs, and more than 20 percent of companies and institutions have closed their doors. Meanwhile, the poverty rate has soared from 28 percent to 55 percent, with some indicators predicting it will reach 75 percent.

The central bank's reserves have dropped from \$30 billion to \$17 billion and the gross domestic product from \$55 billion to \$31 billion. Inflation has reached 100 percent.

Amid mounting popular anger at the country's political class, Saad Hariri's government resigned, Hassan Diab's government quit after the Beirut blast and Mustafa Adib stepped down after failing to form a government in line with a French rescue initiative led by President Emmanuel Macron.

Hariri recently offered himself as a "natural candidate" to head the new government, but President Michel Aoun postponed parliamentary consultations after the Free Patriotic Movement objected to the appointment.

Amid these dramatic developments, protesters say they have no intention of backing down.

"Our positions have not changed," activist Mahmoud Faqih told Arab News.

"The recent developments have made it even clearer that the ruling class has lost legitimacy and must be removed from power. We have proven that we are the alternative power to heal the wounds of the people."

## **SPEEDREAD**

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Faqih said the coronavirus pandemic has slowed the revolution's momentum, which has also been affected by "many active protesters deciding to leave Lebanon."

However, "during the past year, initiatives have taken place between revolutionary groups to increase coordination and establish an opposition front," he said.

Another activist, Ziad Abdel Samad, said: "This year has shown that our rulers are criminals who commit crimes against their own people. The ruling class has lost all legitimacy in their people's eyes."

He said that "frustration and desperation" had forced many activists to leave

the country.

“Nothing has changed. The ruling class is still fighting over the quota system, even in light of the French initiative.”

However, Abdel Samad said that the creation of opposing political blocs in the wake of the protests might lead to the “emergence of new alternative officials.”

“The revolution has created a new equation on the political scene. On its one-year anniversary, the revolution is still getting foreign support.”

Meanwhile, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo tweeted: “One year ago today, the Lebanese people began taking to the streets demanding reforms, better governance and an end to the endemic corruption that has stifled Lebanon’s tremendous potential. Their message remains clear and undeniable – business as usual is unacceptable.”

The UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon, Jan Kubis, said that he “stood beside Lebanon and its people, and the necessary reforms that should be carried out by an effective government.”

Kubis said that “the massive wave of protests brought to the streets hundreds of thousands, and even millions, of Lebanese across all the Lebanese regions and across political and sectarian divides to express their profound disappointment in the ruling class and the sectarian political and administrative system that has promoted corruption and nepotism in the country.”



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Lebanon’s biggest Christian party says won’t back Hariri for PM

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## [Several charged for ‘revenge’ mutilation of Jordan boy](#)

Sun, 2020-10-18 01:18

AMMAN: Jordan’s public prosecutor has charged several people after a 16-year-old boy had his eyes gouged and hands partly sliced off in an apparent revenge act that has shocked the Arab kingdom.

The mutilation was carried out Tuesday in Zarqa, a center of Islamic conservatism northeast of the capital Amman, after a group kidnapped the boy, allegedly in retribution against the boy’s father, who is in custody accused of murder. Judicial authorities have warned social media users against sharing a video of the assault. Outraged Jordanians have called for those responsible to face the death penalty, after security forces said this week they had arrested the main perpetrator along with five other suspects.

## HIGHLIGHTS

**Queen Rania termed the attack ‘an unspeakable atrocity in every respect’. Outraged Jordanians have called for those responsible to face the death penalty.**

Official news agency Petra reported Friday that the prosecutor has charged an unspecified number of defendants with kidnapping and attempted murder. King Abdullah II ordered the boy’s transfer to Amman’s King Hussein Medical Center, where he has reportedly undergone eye surgery and treatment to fit prosthetics, and called for the strongest legal measures against those responsible. Queen Rania termed the attack “an unspeakable atrocity in every respect.”



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Jordanian boy suffers horrific injuries in revenge attack Jordan imposes 48-hour lockdown, but with exceptions