

# Jordanians celebrate country's 74th Independence Day in confident mood

Author:

Mon, 2020-05-25 22:30

AMMAN: Jordanians on Monday took to the streets to celebrate their country's 74th Independence Day amid the ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis.

The festivities followed a three-day lockdown aimed at slowing the spread of the killer virus in the country, which has so far recorded 708 cases and nine deaths.

Jordan's population of almost 10 million people, the majority of them in their youth and belonging to different backgrounds and ethnicities which pride themselves on peaceful coexistence, woke up to national flags fluttering throughout the nation as well as on the Google search home page.

The COVID-19 pandemic has instilled a sense of nationalism and unity as well as confidence in the country's leadership that has not been felt in years.

Minister of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship Mothanna Gharaibeh told Arab News that the virus outbreak had helped to boost Jordan's digital resilience. "During the crisis, internet traffic grew by 70 percent overnight and yet our resilient internet network was able to take it without any reduction on YouTube or Netflix quality."

Gharaibeh, the youngest minister in Prime Minister Omar Razzaz's government, said that the private and public sectors had been working together during the COVID-19 emergency to overcome many challenges.

"From security to food delivery and online learning, thousands of Jordanians who were serving global customers continued to deliver quality services from their homes," he added.

The minister, who was an activist during the short-lived Jordanian spring in 2011, pointed out that despite the economic difficulties caused by the lockdown there had been some positives to emerge from the situation.

"We grew by 700-plus jobs in the last two months by top companies like Cisco, Webhelp, BIGO/IMO, and others relying on the Jordanian solid infrastructure, skills, and work ethics," he said.

Mahmoud Zawahreh, a young political activist from the city of Zarqa, told Arab News that Jordan was battling on two fronts. "The struggle is against different challenges in dealing with the coronavirus as well as the external political challenges.

"Jordan is being forced to escalate its response due to the dangers from the Israeli intentions to annex Palestinian territories while at the same time it has to deal with the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic," he said.

Maamoun Abu Nawwar, a retired two-star air force general, said the people and leaders of Jordan had succeeded in finding a common ground as a nation. "There is a successful trilateral cooperation between the leadership, the army and the people.

"There is a close-knit atmosphere that has been recently articulated with many Jordanians returning from abroad because of the pandemic and realizing how great their country is and that it takes care of its people."

He added that Jordan faced a difficult future and that some of its challenges were "existential" and required a holistic approach. "Jordan needs to be more inclusive to all regional neighbors to seek their help and protection from Israel."

He believes that some of its neighbors have not risen to the challenges facing the country. "There is bitterness in Jordan regarding how much it can count on regional powers to stand with it. At times Jordan feels like it has to stand alone because it refuses to take sides in regional disputes," Abu Nawwar said.

Tareq Khoury, the former head of the Wehdat Football Club and now a member of parliament representing Zarqa, told Arab News that independence required hard decisions including the cancellation of the Wadi Araba Treaty (Jordan-Israel peace accord).

"Independence requires fighting with the occupying enemy who is targeting our holy places and the Jordan Valley," he said.

Khoury, a businessman who trades with regional countries, said that a much more robust economic relationship was needed.

Samar Nassar, the first female secretary-general of the Jordanian Football Association, said Jordan had been a sports pioneer in the region, championing women empowerment, and using sports for social change.

"We hosted the FIFA under-17 Women's World Cup, which was the first international tournament of its scale in the Arab world and we hosted the 2018 women's Asian Cup final."



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Jordan](#)

[Amman](#)

[COVID-19](#)

Jordan launches platform for third repatriation phase  
Amman to close all its borders: Jordan army

---

## [Kuwait will not extend 24-hour curfew beyond May 30](#)

Author:

Reuters

ID:

1590434268353548700

Mon, 2020-05-25 18:44

CAIRO: Kuwait will not extend its 24-hour curfew beyond May 30, the interior minister said at a press conference on Monday.

The minister added that the cabinet will announce on Thursday the details of a partial curfew and a plan for public life to return to normal gradually. Kuwait had imposed a full-time curfew from May 10 to May 30 to help to curb the spread of the new coronavirus.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Kuwait](#)

[Coronavirus](#)

Kuwait develops PCR solution for coronavirus testing Scores of shops closed in Kuwait for violating coronavirus precautionary measures

---

## [Israeli leader vows to push ahead with annexing West Bank](#)

Author:

By JOSEF FEDERMAN | AP

ID:

1590428299853246600

Mon, 2020-05-25 17:27

JERUSALEM: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday pledged to annex parts of the occupied West Bank in the coming months, vowing to move ahead with the explosive plan despite a growing chorus of condemnations by

key allies.

The Palestinians, with wide international backing, seek the entire West Bank as the heartland of a future independent state. Annexing large chunks of this territory would all but destroy the faint remaining hopes of a two-state solution.

In an apparent reference to the friendly administration of President Donald Trump, Netanyahu said Israel had a “historic opportunity” to redraw the Mideast map that could not be missed. Israeli media quoted him as saying he would act in July.

“This is an opportunity that we will not let pass,” he told members of his conservative Likud party. He added that the “historic opportunity” to annex the West Bank had never before occurred since Israel’s founding in 1948. The comments threatened to push Israel closer to a confrontation with Arab and European partners, and could deepen what is becoming a growing partisan divide over Israel in Washington.

Israel captured the West Bank in the 1967 Mideast war. It has settled nearly 500,000 Jewish settlers in the territory, but never formally claimed it as an Israeli territory due to stiff international opposition.

But the Trump administration has taken a much softer line toward Israeli settlements than its predecessors. Trump’s Mideast team is dominated by advisers with close ties to the settlements, and his Mideast plan, unveiled in January, envisions leaving some 30% of the territory under permanent Israeli control while giving the Palestinians expanded autonomy in the rest of the area. The Palestinians have rejected the plan, saying it is unfairly biased toward Israel.

With Trump’s re-election prospects uncertain this November, Israeli hard-liners have urged Netanyahu to move ahead with annexation quickly. The Israeli leader’s new coalition deal includes an official clause allowing him to present his annexation plan to the government in July.

Israeli media quoted him as telling Likud members that “we have a target date for July and we don’t intend to change it.” The quote could not immediately be confirmed.

The plan has already exposed a partisan divide in Washington. Joe Biden, the presumptive Democratic nominee in the US presidential elections, recently said that annexation would “choke off” hopes for a two-state solution. 18 Democratic senators warned in a letter this week that annexation could harm US-Israeli ties.

The EU’s foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, has said annexation would violate international law and vowed to use “all our diplomatic capacities” to stop it.

Closer to home, the Palestinians last week cut off security ties – a valuable tool in a shared struggle against Islamic militants – with Israel to protest the annexation plan.

Saudi Arabia, an influential Arab country that maintains behind-the-scenes relations with Israel, announced its “rejection of the Israeli measures and plans to annex Palestinian lands.”

The Arab League has condemned it as a “war crime,” and both Jordan and Egypt – the only two Arab countries at peace with Israel – have harshly criticized it.

Netanyahu spoke a day after beginning his trial on corruption charges.

The prime minister launched a blistering tirade against the country’s legal

system when he arrived at court, accusing police, prosecutors and media of conspiring to oust him. As he spoke, hundreds of supporters cheered outside. Speaking to Likud on Monday, Netanyahu said he was “very moved” by the support.

Critics have said his attacks on the justice system risk undermining the country’s democratic foundations.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Israel](#)

[annexation](#)

[West Bank](#)

Attacker attempts to stab Israeli officer, shot: police

---

## [Egyptian police chase man who tried to lead Eid prayers](#)

Author:

Sun, 2020-05-24 21:33

CAIRO: A video of a man wearing Al-Azhar University’s uniform being chased by

police was posted by social media users in Egypt on Sunday.

The man had been reportedly leading Eid congregational prayers in violation of anti-coronavirus measures that prevent gatherings. The video also shows a person laughing and saying: "Run sheikh."

The man had agreed to lead prayers in the open yard of a mosque in the city of Nabaroh, north of Cairo, according to a resident.

He said people had gathered and started praying but, as soon as they heard police sirens, the man leading the prayer and the congregation started to disperse fearing arrest.

Sheikh Taha Zeyada, secretary of the Egyptian Ministry of Endowments, told Arab News that the security directorate had not received any report about the incident.

He said the directorate had not told any mosque to hold Eid congregational prayers, complying with measures taken to stem the spread of the coronavirus disease. The investigation into the incident was the responsibility of the executive and security bodies, he added, and all the mosques in the governorate had adhered to the Cabinet's decision about Eid prayers.

Security officials confirmed that the prayer leader was not arrested as he ran away.

A source in the ministry said that the congregation was not in a mosque and that the man in the Al-Azhar uniform had been identified as Mahmoud, an Al-Azhar high school student.

The ministry had already canceled Eid Al-Fitr prayers in mosque grounds. It also decided to broadcast the prayer from Al-Sayeda Nafisa mosque. It named 20 people to attend the prayer and the sermon was delivered by Sheikh Yousry Azzam, one of the ministry's imams.

The ministry also issued rules and regulation regarding Eid Al-Fitr and operating microphones or loudspeakers in mosques.

According to the rules, prayer leaders were to be present in mosques from dawn until the end of the Eid prayer broadcast.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Egypt](#)

[Eid Al Fitr](#)

[COVID-19](#)

Doctor loses sight fighting coronavirus in CairoEgypt to offer coronavirus testing in all general hospitals

---

## [Modest Eid celebrations take place in Lebanon amid coronavirus restrictions](#)

Author:

Zaynab Khojji

ID:

1590344113477871900

Sun, 2020-05-24 21:31

BEIRUT: Eid prayers were held in Lebanon's mosques, as people celebrated the end of Ramadan amid measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus. Movement in Beirut was limited to family visits, with parks and other entertainment facilities remaining closed. Most people refrained from visiting restaurants because of the ongoing economic crunch. Families with properties in the mountains preferred to spend their Eid holidays there in order to protect themselves against the virus.

Eid prayers were held in mosques, and the number of worshippers varied region-wise. Mosques abided by the decision of the Islamic Dar Al-Fatwa to maintain distance between worshippers, ensure that everyone wore masks, have worshippers bring their own prayer mats, and prevent handshakes and hugging. Doctors expressed fears that social mixing during the holidays might boost the number of infections. On Sunday the Health Ministry confirmed 17 new COVID-19 cases, raising the total number to 1,114.

But economic concerns overshadowed other worries during Eid, and shopkeepers complained of a significant drop in purchasing activity.

"Business activities in markets before Eid remained minimum due to a decline in people's purchasing power and the pandemic," Tony Eid, head of the Beirut Traders Association, told Arab News. "Reopening markets gradually is better than continuous closure. We are facing several issues such as banks not issuing US dollars, and forex dealers are still on a strike forcing us to resort to devious ways to buy dollars. If we don't do that the commercial sector will suffocate."

The third phase of the repatriation of Lebanese expatriates ended on Sunday. Citizens arrived on Sunday at Rafik Hariri International Airport from Riyadh, Frankfurt, Paris, Brussels, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and London. On Saturday night, flights from Moscow, London, Abidjan, and Mozambique arrived. The government is currently not planning to start the fourth phase of the operations. The next phase will be based on the pandemic situation.

According to the Ministry of Health, the total number of COVID-19 cases among those coming from abroad is 193, while 6,393 people are in quarantine centers.

Prime Minister Hassan Diab offered Eid prayers at the Al-Amin Mosque in central Beirut. Former prime ministers, who oppose the current government, were absent from the scene.

Former Prime Minister Saad Hariri participated in Eid prayers at Imam Ali Mosque in Beirut's Jdeideh Road district, which is loyal to the Future Movement. Many of the district's people came out to greet Hariri and expressed their support for him.

In his Eid sermon Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdul Latif Derian criticized "the destruction and sabotage of public institutions" and called on the government to stop the country's financial, banking, and economic collapse.

"Where have the billions (of liras) gone?" he said. "These should have been spent on safeguarding the interests of citizens, supplying them with power and water, on addressing the waste crisis, improving communications, and promoting agriculture, industry, and services. Why has the country accumulated public debt of \$90 billion, \$50 billion of which were wasted on electric power that is always out? Who is responsible for holding the depositors' money? The ones who drained this money inform us every day that it has been lost forever."

He said Lebanon should reach out to its Arab brothers, who were keen on the country's safety, stability, and prosperity. "We will not abandon our Arab nationalism," he added.

Sheikh Hassan Merheb, assistant general inspector at Dar Al-Fatwa, criticized those attempting to undo the policies of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. He said Beirut would remain faithful to him and to those following in his footsteps.

Grand Jaafari Mufti Sheikh Ahmad Kabalan said that the Lebanese formula,

which was established on a “sectarian and tyrannical basis to serve the colonial and monopoliztic project,” had ended.

He also said that what the post-independence president, Bechara El-Khoury, and former Prime Minister Riyad Al-Solh did was no longer suitable for a state of citizenship because the country had collapsed due to the “corrupt constitution.”

He said that Lebanon must not listen to “the lying international community” and that “the International Monetary Fund is neither a charity nor independent from politics.”

The Lebanese head of the Maronite Catholic Church, Patriarch Bechara Al-Rahi, used his Sunday sermon to condemn attempts to involve Lebanon in the region’s wars. He said these destroyed Lebanon’s sovereignty and independence, or turned it into a battlefield.

He declared his refusal for “changing the face and heart of Lebanon and its pluralistic characteristic in order to preserve our identity.”





Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Lebanon](#)

[Eid Al-Fitr](#)

## [Coronavirus](#)

Easing of restrictions intensifies COVID-19 cases in Lebanon  
Lebanon's dollar crisis hits migrants workers