

Thousands demonstrate against Israeli coalition deal

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Sat, 2020-04-25 18:35

TEL AVIV, Israel: Several thousand Israelis on Saturday demonstrated against a unity government deal reached last week that leaves Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in power as he prepares to go on trial for corruption charges.

The protesters oppose having Netanyahu as prime minister as long as he is a criminal suspect. The protesters say the unity government agreement, which gives Netanyahu influence over the appointment of judges and legal officials, "crushes democracy" and is meant to rescue Netanyahu from his legal troubles. Netanyahu is scheduled to face trial next month on charges of fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes. He denies the charges.

The protest filled central Tel Aviv's Rabin Square, although demonstrators maintained distance from each other in line with health regulations in place for weeks meant to halt the spread of the coronavirus. Protesters, wearing face masks, waved Israeli flags and signs calling out Netanyahu for corruption.

Netanyahu and former military chief Benny Gantz, leader of the Blue and White party, signed the power-sharing agreement after weeks of negotiations for what they termed a "national emergency" government meant to steer the country through the coronavirus outbreak.

The agreement delivered Netanyahu a significant boost as he fought to hold on to power while fending off the corruption charges. His party will gain influence over judicial appointments, which could help Netanyahu if his case reaches the Supreme Court.

The deal requires the approval of both parties on key appointments, including the attorney general and the state prosecutor, granting Netanyahu veto power over the officials who hold sway over his legal fate.



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[Lebanese must wear face masks despite coronavirus lockdown transition period](#)

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Sat, 2020-04-25 21:53

BEIRUT: Lebanese people must wear face masks despite the country entering the transitional phase of its anti-coronavirus measures, Health Minister Hamad Hassan said.

A further eight cases were recorded in Lebanon on Saturday, raising the total number of cases to 704. Two further deaths have raised the death toll to 24. The Matn region is still recording the highest number of infections, with the number of cases in this area rising to 141. It is followed by Beirut, where the number of cases stands at 115.

The Ministry of Health is carrying out random laboratory PCR tests in various regions and the government is scheduled to ease its coronavirus measures, despite an extension of the general mobilization for another two weeks. Hassan said during his tour to the southern suburbs of Beirut and the Bekaa

that the transitional phase had started. "It is still necessary for the Lebanese to use face masks. They should continue to take precautions." There were a further two deaths, raising the death toll to 24. One of them was a male in his sixties being treated at the Center Hospitalier Universitaire Notre Dame des Secours. He was from the town of Tula in Batroun District.

Lebanon's Grand Mufti opened the doors of Dar Al-Fatwa, which is Lebanon's religious authority for the Sunni community, on the second day of Ramadan due to the increase of people in need and public figures made donations at the headquarters.

The charity drive also provided an occasion for former heads of government to respond to a speech from Prime Minister Hassan Diab in which he slammed the governor of the Central Bank of Lebanon and his political opponents.

Former Prime Minister Fouad Siniora stressed the need for restoring the status of the constitution, the Taif Agreement which ended the civil war in Lebanon, "efficiency and merit" in bearing responsibility, and to subject everyone to accountability under constitutional frameworks.

He added: "How can the confidence of people be restored if we have not solved the file of judicial formations, and how can we win the trust of the Lebanese people if we have not implemented the electricity law that has been in place for 18 years?"

He said that the International Monetary Fund was the only way for countries to restore credibility.

Another former prime minister, Tammam Salam, said there needed to be awareness among officials who should avoid confrontation that only led to political uncertainty and speculation.

Former Prime Minister Saad Hariri, who blames Diab for the economic crisis, said what was going on was "floundering in the abyss of experimental ideas and searching for victims in politics, economy and administration."

The collapse occurred as a result of the delay in defining the paths of rescue since the first government of the present administration, he added, with the collapse continuing throughout the past few months.

"In the decision-making rooms, it is proposed to change the identity of Lebanon at all levels, and the most dangerous thing in this scheme is the use of popular anger as fuel to burn the democratic, economic and social identity of Lebanon," he warned.



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Lebanese dance group lightens mood with Dabke video amid coronavirus lockdown
Lebanon PM says bank deposits plunge \$5.7 bln

[Rouhani says Iran should assume worst-case coronavirus scenario](#)

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Sat, 2020-04-25 13:52

DUBAI: Iran should draw up economic plans based on a worst-case scenario of nearly a year of disruptions due to the coronavirus, President Hassan Rouhani said on Saturday, as the death toll from the disease rose by 76 to 5,650. "Our first request is that we should plan production long-term based on a

pessimistic view that we might face this virus ... for months,” Rouhani said in a meeting with heads of Iranian private companies carried live on state TV. “Maybe (we will face this) till the end of the year, we do not know,” Rouhani added, referring to the Iranian calendar year which ends in March 2021. Earlier, a Health Ministry spokesman said the total number of people diagnosed with the virus had reached 89,328, of whom 3,096 were in a critical condition.

Deputy Health Minister Iraj Harirchi said the country’s daily death toll had fallen by about 70% from its peak, while the number of coronavirus patients in hospital had fallen by about half.

Iran is one of the Middle Eastern countries worst affected by the COVID-19 respiratory disease and has one of the world’s highest death tolls.



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Iran space program front for nuclear ambitions: PompeoRouhani urges Iran military to remain vigilant against ‘provocations’

Turkey repatriates over 3,000 of its nationals before Ramadan

Author:

Sat, 2020-04-25 15:44

The Turkish government repatriated more than 3,000 nationals from cities around the world, state news agency repatriation reported on Friday.

Returning nationals were placed in quarantine upon arrival, shortly after going through routine health checks coordinated by the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority.

Turkish nationals returned from 59 countries that include, Russia, Germany and Saudi Arabia.

All the returning citizens will be placed in quarantine for a period of 14 days.

Turkey has repatriated nearly 25,000 citizens in total ahead of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan.



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Turkey postpones S-400 missile activation date

Egyptians criticized for ignoring social distancing measures during mass Ramadan celebration

Sat, 2020-04-25 13:51

DUBAI: Organizers of a march in Alexandria were arrested on Friday after a video of people carrying a Kaaba model in the streets – on the first night of Ramadan – went viral amid the coronavirus outbreak, local daily [Egypt Today](#) reported.

A group of people reportedly in Alexandria touring the streets with a scale model of Kaaba, singing: “there’s no corona” [#egypt pic.twitter.com/AQw0PU4WLP](#)

– Deena Hassan (@deenahsn) [April 24, 2020](#)

People were celebrating the start of holy Islamic month of Ramadan before the night-time curfew hours. Crowd in the circulated video triggered social media users who used the #Alexandria hashtag on twitter to express their anger.

A twitter user said: “Although I don’t understand the purpose of this march, how is the Kaaba model linked to the celebration? people are partying and underestimating the seriousness of the coronavirus.”

لا حول ولا قوة الا بالله مع اني مفهمتش المغزا من جروهم للشارع ليه وايه
علاقه الكعبه بالموضوع طالما هناك زفه وطبول ورقص واستهزاء بالبواب
والحزر.. عموما فوضنا امرنا لله واليه المشتكي

– alarby62 (@CGFmqbLiNRxP2oC) [April 24, 2020](#)

Another twitter user said: “Unfortunately, this is the current situation in Muharram Bey, people carrying a model for the honorable Kaaba and somebody told them to circulate it before hanging it as a Ramadan lantern.”

دي للأسف حاليا وفي محرم بك نموذج للكعبة الشريفة وفي حد قالهم يطوفوا
بيها قبل ما يعلقوا كفا نوس رمضان ... لله الأمر من قبل ومن بعد ولا حول
ولا قوة إلا بالله العلي العظيم

– yousef soliman (@youssef_soliman) [April 24, 2020](#)

The night-time curfew hours in Egypt during the month of Ramadan were set to start from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m., Egyptian Prime Minister Mustafa Madbouli announced.

A twitter user also said: "I woke up just like you all and saw people performing Umra in Alexandria."

انا صحيت زيي زيكم بالطيط لقيت الناس بتعمل عمره في [#اسكندريه](https://twitter.com/eteG52Yp08)
pic.twitter.com/eteG52Yp08

– حسام الشريف (@Fouly44) [April 24, 2020](https://twitter.com/Fouly44/status/1253123456789)

Earlier in March, people in Alexandria took to the streets to protest against the coronavirus pandemic that hit the country in February, neglecting the fact that the virus spreads faster in crowds.

A video of the protest had also been circulated over social media and caused anger and panic among social media users.

Wrong on so many levels

– Ari (@shithousingfcs) [March 24, 2020](https://twitter.com/shithousingfcs/status/1253123456789)

The total number of coronavirus patients in Egypt has reached 4,092, while the number of fatalities has risen to 294. Egypt has also recorded a total of 1,75 recoveries.



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Pope Francis greets Egypt's Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayeb on Ramadan Tributes flow for 'hospital hero' after Egyptian-British doctor dies from coronavirus