

## [US imposes sanctions on Iranian foreign minister Zarif](#)

Author:

Wed, 2019-07-31 23:20

US Treasury department imposes sanctions on Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.



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[Middle-East](#)

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## [Lebanon launches major campaign to slash alarming rise in obesity](#)

Author:

Wed, 2019-07-31 23:03

BEIRUT: Lebanon on Wednesday launched a major campaign aimed at cutting rising levels of obesity in the country.

The health risks associated with being overweight will be highlighted as part of the awareness drive announced by Lebanese Health Minister Jamil Jabak.

The initiative comes in the wake of a World Health Organization (WHO) report which ranked Lebanon sixth among nine Middle Eastern and North African countries on a list of the world's most overweight countries. Lebanon was preceded by Kuwait, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Libya.

Children and young people will be among the groups specifically targeted in the campaign running under the title, "Your health cannot bear it; lose some weight."

Lebanese officials aim to shed light on the health dangers associated with obesity and how to prevent them, focusing on chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease and cancer.

Campaign coordinator, Dr. Akram Shatti, from the Lebanese Society of Endocrinology, Diabetes and Lipids, told Arab News that obesity in Lebanon had worsened due a growth in the number of fast-food restaurants, and increased consumption of fatty and processed foods.

Lifestyle changes were also a factor, he said, with many Lebanese spending long hours sat watching television or playing video games. He pointed out that the rate of obesity in people aged 20 and above ranged between 20 and 28

percent.

“Endocrinologists in Lebanon are beginning to notice a rise in diabetes rates in young people, and this is caused by obesity. It is true that there are hormonal and genetic causes, but we have also seen a change in the daily lifestyle in the Middle East and GCC countries resulting specifically from a lack of activity,” Shatti added.

“Lebanon does not have accurate statistics on the impact of previous awareness campaigns, but we have begun to witness a greater awareness of obesity, and patients now visit doctors on their own to seek help in fear of complications caused by obesity.”

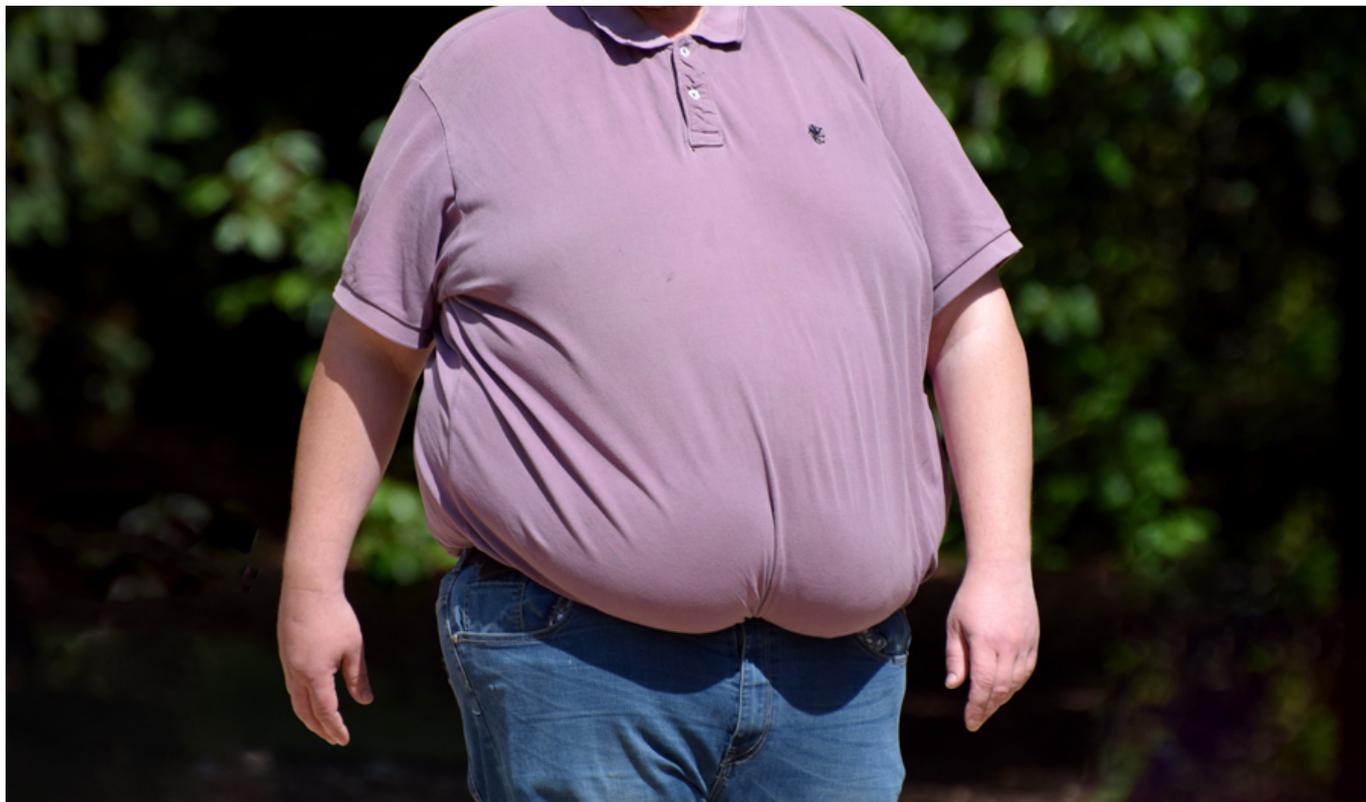
Jabak said parents and carers were partly to blame for the country’s obesity problems. “Three percent of the children in Lebanon suffer from obesity, which may be mostly caused by genetics, but all other children are born with a normal weight that gradually changes due to a lifestyle that leads them to gain weight and become obese when they grow up.

“It is sad that raising children depends on rewarding them with candies and fast foods, which are filled with fat and grease. This leads to the development of habits they cannot break when they are older because they grow to prefer unhealthy food to home-cooked food, and this puts them on the road to obesity,” added Jabak.

The minister stressed that working out was the primary mechanism for fighting obesity and boosting immunity and he urged parents to encourage their children to do more exercise instead of spending hours on electronic devices.

Last year, the Lebanese Ministry of Health organized a national day to combat obesity in children after the country’s former health minister, Ghassan Hasbani, revealed figures showing obesity rates among Lebanon’s youngsters rose to 13 percent between 1990 and 2014, one of the highest levels in the Middle East.

The 2018 campaign gave children 10 tips to apply on a daily basis, including sleeping for at least 10 hours, laughing heartily nine times, hugging lovingly, drinking seven glasses of water, eating fruit, grains and protein, working out for one hour, and spending no more than 60 minutes playing video games and watching television.



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## [Onslaught in Syria may spark humanitarian disaster: UN](#)

Author:

Wed, 2019-07-31 22:46

NEW YORK: The UN humanitarian chief urged the Security Council on Tuesday to take action to end the "bloody onslaught" in Syria's last opposition-held stronghold, warning that continued violence could create the worst humanitarian disaster of the 21st century.

An exasperated Mark Lowcock told council members they have ignored previous pleas to stop the bombing and shelling in Idlib province by Syrian and Russian warplanes and "done nothing for 90 days as the carnage continues in front of your eyes."

“Are you again going to shrug your shoulders ... or are you going to listen to the children of Idlib, and do something about it?” he asked.

The Security Council has been deeply divided over the Syrian conflict since it began in 2011, with Russia backing the government and Western nations supporting the opposition. That has kept the UN’s most powerful body from taking any significant action.

Britain’s UN Ambassador Karen Pierce told the council that responsibility for its failure to act lies with Russia, Syria and Iran.

What’s happening in Idlib “makes a mockery” of the responsibility of the five permanent veto-wielding council members – Russia, China, the US, Britain and France – to ensure international peace and security, she said.

Idlib was supposed to be a de-escalation zone under an agreement reached between Russia and Turkey, which backs the opposition. But that deal has all but collapsed since the government launched an offensive on April 30, saying it wanted to get rid of “terrorists” that took refuge there.

Russia’s UN Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia responded to what he called “invectives” against Syria and Russia from Britain and others, saying their goal “is to maintain a terrorist presence in Idlib, and in the future to use this presence for the purpose of combatting the legitimate Syrian authorities.”

Nebenzia said the same “emotionally charged” attacks happen “every time when the end of another terrorist enclave in Syria was close.” He cited eastern Aleppo and eastern Ghouta, saying “now the propaganda machine is firing full artillery around the situation in Idlib.”

Britain, France, the US and other council nations have been especially angered at the increasing number of attacks on health facilities and schools, and the growing number of civilian casualties in Idlib.

A petition from 10 Security Council members delivered to Secretary-General Antonio Guterres Tuesday asks the UN chief about the possibility of launching an investigation into attacks on medical facilities and the so-called “de-confliction mechanism” under which the locations and coordinates of health facilities are reported to the warring parties.

The petition was signed by Britain, France, the US, Kuwait, Peru, Poland, Belgium, Dominican Republic, Germany and Indonesia. Russia, China, South Africa, Ivory Coast and Equatorial Guinea did not sign it.

Humanitarian chief Lowcock said it was an “extremely important question” whether information provided through the de-confliction system was being used to protect civilian facilities or target them.

He said parties to the conflict have been notified of six different attacks in northwest Syria this year, and that “in the current environment de-confliction is not proving effective in helping to protect those who utilize the system.”

Lowcock said his team will meet with humanitarian organizations "to update them on the current situation and determine again whether we should continue to provide information to the parties on new sites or humanitarian movements."

On July 26, the UN human rights office reported that at least 450 civilians have been killed since late April, including more than a hundred in the previous two weeks.

"There is no refuge for the people of Idlib," Lowcock stressed. "Hundreds of them have been killed, hundreds more injured, 440,000 of them displaced, but there is nowhere else for them to go."

"There's been a bloody onslaught in full swing now for more than three months on the people of Idlib, and if it doesn't stop ... it has the potential to create the worst humanitarian disaster the world has seen so far this century," he warned.

Susannah Sirkin, policy director at Physicians for Human Rights, told the council that since Syria launched its offensive the organization had received reports of 46 attacks on health care facilities. So far, she said, it has verified 16 of them.

Sirkin said many health facilities in Idlib have been forced out of service and accused Syria and Russia of continuing to target them.

Russia's Nebenzia said it was a "lie" that Russia was deliberately conducting airstrikes targeting hospitals and schools.

He said Lowcock and others should contact the Center for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides, which deals with de-confliction and operates around the clock, instead of spreading information based on "dubious sources."



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Russian-backed regime forces recover area in northwestern Syria  
Deported from Turkey, Syrians return to unfamiliar country

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## [Hundreds protest in Sudan city against killings of students](#)

Author:

Wed, 2019-07-31 21:50

AL-OBEID/SUDAN: Hundreds of protesters marched through the streets of a central Sudanese city on Wednesday, denouncing the killing of six demonstrators there including schoolchildren at a rally this week.

“Blood for blood, we don’t want compensation,” chanted men and women as they marched in Al-Obeid where the killings took place on Monday.

Many carried Sudanese flags and some held photographs of those killed as they gathered in the downtown area, after marching through several parts of the city, an AFP correspondent reported.

"It is unacceptable that young people are being killed," said protester Fatima Mohamed as behind her crowds chanted revolutionary slogans that have rocked the country for months.

"These schoolchildren were chanting only slogans. Why were they shot with bullets?"

"Those who committed these crimes must be brought to justice," she said.

Tragedy struck the city on Monday when six people, including five secondary school pupils, were shot dead at a rally against a growing shortage of bread and fuel in the city. It was a sudden tripling of the price of bread in December that sparked the mushrooming protests that led to the toppling of longtime president Omar Al-Bashir by the army in April.

Al-Obeid, the capital of North Kordofan state some 350 km southwest of Khartoum, remained largely quiet during the long months of demonstrations.

For much of his three decades in power, Bashir was able to look to Al-Obeid for support but the city drew scant reward in terms of investment. Many of its roads remain unpaved and heavy rains this week left huge pools of water for want of drainage.

In the downtown area, many houses are built of cement. In poorer neighborhoods, mudbrick is still widespread.

"There has been no electricity in our house since this morning," said Babikir Awad, sitting on a chair in front of his single-story home in the city center.

"We have been suffering for months, but the situation has escalated in the past two weeks."

Frequent power cuts are the biggest complaint.

"The main problem is that there is no steady supply of electricity," said bakery owner Mohamed Al-Hassan.

"Having your own generator means increasing your costs and in turn exposing yourself to losses."

Residents are angry that the authorities have failed to resolve the bread shortage.

"The city has witnessed a complete deterioration in services," said Shadiya Othman.

"This has led to anger."



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[protests against rising bread prices](#)

Sudanese hit by bread shortages as currency crunch escalates  
Sudan opposition leader says 22 killed in bread protests

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## [‘Growing concern’ for Stena Impero tanker crew captured by Iran](#)

Tue, 2019-07-30 23:00

LONDON: The owner of the British tanker seized by Iranian forces in the Strait of Hormuz said Tuesday they are increasingly concerned about the crew’s welfare.

The Stena Impero was captured on July 19 with 23 people on board as it passed through the waterway under the watch of a British warship.

The ship was impounded at the southern port of Bandar Abbas for allegedly breaking “international maritime rules.” Other Iranian officials said the seizure was in retaliation for British forces capturing an Iranian tanker

accused of carrying oil to Syria.

The Stena Impero's owners, Stena Bulk and Northern Marine Management, said it has growing concern for the welfare of the crew confined to the vessel.

"With little progress being made since the vessel was seized on 19 July, we urge governments involved to find a swift resolution so our 23 valued seafarers can return to their families and move on from this ordeal," Stena Bulk's president and chief executive Erik Hanell.

"We reiterate that there is no evidence of a collision involving the Stena Impero, and at the time of the seizure the vessel was well within the inbound traffic separation scheme and out-with Iranian territorial waters."

The company said all required navigational equipment was fully functioning and in compliance with maritime regulations.

The crew members are Indian, Russian, Latvian and Filipino. Stena Bulk said last week that they were all safe.

The seizure of the ship came after months of tensions in the Gulf between the US and its allies, and Iran. Washington ramped up sanctions against Tehran after Donald Trump withdrew last year from an international deal to restrict Iran's nuclear program.

Iran is accused of carrying out a series of attacks on ships near the Strait of Hormuz as a calculated response to its oil exports being reduced to a trickle by the tough sanctions.

On Monday, the UK ruled out swapping the two oil tankers, and accused Iran of breaking international law.

A second British warship arrived in the Gulf to help secure passage for ships transiting the strait.



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New audio shows Iran threatening British warship during Stena Impero seizure  
Stena Impero operator says tanker's crew safe and well