

[Blinken stresses importance of concluding Israeli probe into reporter's killing](#)

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WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke on Friday to Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid and stressed the importance of concluding the probes into the killing of Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, the State Department said.

"Secretary Blinken underscored the importance of concluding the investigations into the death of Palestinian-American Shireen Abu Akleh," the State Department said in a statement.

The Palestinian Authority said on Thursday its investigation showed that Abu Akleh was shot by an Israeli soldier in a "deliberate murder." Israel denied the accusation and said it was continuing its own investigations.



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Tags:

[Shireen Abu Akleh](#)

[Jenin](#)
[Israelis](#)
[US Secretary of State Antony Blinken](#)

UN Security Council in renewed call for Abu Akleh's killers to be brought to justice
Palestinians: Israel deliberately killed Al Jazeera reporter

[Lebanon central bank move shocks black market traders](#)

Author:

Fri, 2022-05-27 22:57

BEIRUT: The dollar exchange rate on Lebanon's black market was expected to continue its fall in the wake of measures announced by central bank Gov. Riad Salameh on Friday, a senior banker told Arab News.

The banker expects the exchange rate to drop further until it is almost equal to the exchange rate on the central bank's Sayrafa platform, which on Friday recorded a price of 24,600 pounds against the dollar.

The banker's comment came as the governor issued a surprise statement late on Friday asking banks to keep their branches and funds open until 6 p.m. for three consecutive days from next Monday in order to meet citizens' requests to buy dollars at the Sayrafa price.

He also issued instructions to pay the salaries of public sector employees in dollars at the Sayrafa rate.

The depreciation of the local currency has created a ripple effect, creating even more economic difficulty for the country, and the central bank had previously asked banks to give part of their dues in dollars at the Sayrafa exchange rate.

However, banks began to limit the amount of dollars given to people, leading to a black market revival in the past week.

The governor's statement on Friday shook the black market, which brought the dollar exchange rate on Friday to 38,000 pounds.

Confusion mounted in the exchange shops immediately after the governor's statement, as people rushed to exchange the US currency, with the dollar's exchange rate dramatically slipping within a few minutes from 37,700 pounds to 29,000 pounds.

Black-market money changers, who are spread out in the main streets of Beirut, especially in the gold markets and near money exchange shops, were

stunned and started making calls.

Banking expert Louis Hobeika told Arab News: “What is happening is the result of people’s fear. The problem in Lebanon is not monetary, but rather economic and political.”

He added: “Within a week, the dollar exchange rate rose about 11,000 pounds, but the dramatic drop in the price in less than an hour is certainly for political reasons.”

Hobeika said that the central bank appears to have been subjected to political pressure to force it to do something to reduce the rate, amid fears of social upheaval.

The bank governor resorted to the latest statement, he said. “But it’s like treating a cancer patient with Panadol.”



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Patients unable to pay for hospitalization as Lebanon’s exchange rate crisis worsens
UN Security Council calls for swift formation of new government in Lebanon

Patients unable to pay for hospitalization as Lebanon's exchange rate crisis worsens

Fri, 2022-05-27 22:50

BEIRUT: Lebanon's dollar exchange rate crisis is leaving patients unable to pay for hospitalization, as black market rates hit LBP37,000 on Friday.

Doctors, patients, and hospital owners, who protested in the vicinity of government ministries and the central bank in Hamra Street on Thursday, called for the dollar accounts of hospitals and doctors to be liberalized and warned that things were going to get worse.

Red Cross secretary-general, Georges Kettaneh, said it was important to "think more about securing the medications for difficult and chronic diseases because the situation has become very serious."

He added that Red Cross volunteers sometimes noticed that patients being transported to hospital were in poor condition because they were unable to find the medication they needed.

BACKGROUND

The health coverage available through social security and other insurance institutions now secures a fraction of medical expenses.

The health coverage available through social security and other insurance institutions now secures a fraction of medical expenses. It previously covered between 75 and 100 percent of the cost.

Mohammed Karaki, director-general of the National Social Security Fund, said: "Private hospitals insinuating that they might ask patients to pay for the entire hospital bill and collect the amount by themselves later from insurance companies is an inappropriate intimidation."

Hospitals are protesting their inability to collect funds from banks and, therefore, their inability to provide medical services to insured patients.

"Insurance tariffs and all the other insurance parties can no longer cope with the reality in the current circumstances," said Karaki. "However, a range of ideas is being contemplated, including the possibility to halt medication provision to focus on hospitalization to secure the real prices so that hospitals don't charge patients with any difference except as provided by law."

The ongoing economic crisis is also changing the scene of neighborhoods in Beirut and its suburbs.

Many shops preferred to be in darkness rather than have a generator subscription because they could not cover its cost from declining sales, said one person.

People are having to buy water from private tankers due to outages. But tank owners are charging their customers in dollars due to the cost of gas.

On Thursday and Friday, there were strikes and protests from people in the medical and healthcare sector, patients, public drivers, owners of bakeries and ovens, and security and military contractors, who were protesting about the monetary policy that had brought Lebanon to breaking point.

Hospitals continued their strikes on Friday and suspended all services except for admitting urgent conditions.

Taxi drivers set up roadblocks on the Ring Bridge in the heart of Beirut, blocking intersections between the east and west of the capital, to protest against surging petrol and diesel prices.

These prices exceed the capacity of the general public, leading to additional power outages in households relying on diesel generator subscriptions to ensure minimal lighting.

The monthly bill is now being charged in dollars and is at least \$40.

Bakery owners protested in front of the Economy Ministry to demand that wheat be secured for mills and the price for a bread bundle commensurate with the exchange rate.

A middle-sized bread bundle was LBP15,000 on Friday.

"The pricing of the bread bundle was subjected to the high exchange rate of the dollar," said Antoine Saif, head of the Bakery Owners' Syndicate in Mount Lebanon.

Gas stations were closed on Friday and the owners' syndicate called for a protest to demand a radical solution to the current situation because it could no longer afford the heavy losses.

Georges Brax, a spokesperson for the Gas Station Owners' Syndicate, said that banks kept delaying the payment of the oil-importing companies' dollar dues, which represented the price of petrol imported according to the Sayrafa platform.

Brax claimed that banks also kept delaying the advance authorizations from the Central Bank, which would result in the continued rationing of gas delivery to the local market by these companies and a decrease in the availability of gas to the consumer at stations, despite the presence of scarce amounts in Lebanese warehouses.

“This will thus prompt the return of the crisis, which is something that no one wants,” he warned.

Talks are being held at the Economic and Social Council’s headquarters to study how to improve the incomes of people in the private sector.

Economic entities and the General Labor Union were discussing the erosion of purchasing capacity and living burdens due to the high exchange rate of the dollar, said Mohammed Choucair, head of the Economic Bodies.

He added: “We are heading toward strengthening these incomes.”

The US credit rating agency Fitch has warned that Lebanon’s exit from debt default was still difficult after inconclusive parliamentary elections.

In a report, the agency said the current reality further complicated the country’s ability to implement financial and economic reforms.



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UN Security Council calls for swift formation of new government in Lebanon
Street protests feared in Lebanon due to price rise, depreciation of currency, unemployment

Palestinians say teen killed by Israeli fire in West Bank

Author:

Associated Press

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JERUSALEM: The Palestinian Health Ministry said Israeli forces shot and killed a teenager during an operation in a town near Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank.

The ministry identified the slain teen Zaid Ghunaim, 15. It said he was wounded by Israeli gunfire in the neck and back and doctors failed to save his life.

The death raises to five the number of Palestinian teenagers killed during Israeli military operations in the West Bank in a month. Israeli-Palestinian violence has intensified in recent weeks with near-daily arrest raids in Palestinian-administered areas of the West Bank and tensions around a Jerusalem holy site sacred to both Muslims and Jews.

The official Palestinian news agency, Wafa, cited witnesses as saying Ghunaim came upon the soldiers in Al-Khader and tried to run away but the troops fired at him. Online videos purportedly of the aftermath of the shooting show bloodstains near a white car parked in a passageway.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military, which has stepped up its operations in the West Bank in response to a series of deadly attacks inside Israel.

Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh said Israeli forces "deliberately" shot at Ghunaim with the intention to kill him.

On Sunday, Israeli ultranationalists plan to march through the main Muslim thoroughfare of the Old City of Jerusalem. The compound houses Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third holiest site in Islam. The hilltop site is also the holiest for Jews, who refer to it as the Temple Mount.

The march is meant to celebrate Israel's capture of east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war. Israel subsequently annexed the area in a step that is not internationally recognized. The Palestinians claim east Jerusalem as the capital of a future state.



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Palestinians commemorate 74th anniversary of Nakba amid outcry over funeral attack

[**Blast in Yemen fish market kills at least 4 people, wounds over 30**](#)

Author:

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ADEN: At least four people were killed and more than 30 injured at a Yemen fish market when an explosive device planted in a trash can detonated, police in the port city of Aden said on Thursday.

Medical charity Doctors Without Borders said on Twitter that its trauma hospital in Aden received 50 wounded patients, five of whom had died while six were seriously injured.

The police statement said that several suspects had been detained for questioning, but gave no further details.



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Yemen government, Houthis begin Amman talks on ending Taiz siege Talks begin between Yemeni government and Houthis over reopening of Taiz road