

Israeli strike near Syrian capital causes material damage

Author:

Associated Press

ID:

1650013417091309500

Fri, 2022-04-15 08:35

DAMASCUS: Israel has fired several missiles toward Syrian military positions near Damascus, causing material damage, Syria's military said Friday. State media quoted an unnamed military official as saying that the attack occurred shortly before midnight Thursday, adding that some of the Israeli missiles were shot down by Syrian air defenses.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitor, said the missiles struck positions of Iran-backed fighters southwest of the capital, near the suburb of Qatana.

There was no comment from the Israeli military.

Israel has staged hundreds of strikes on targets inside government-controlled Syria over the years but rarely acknowledges or discusses such operations.

It has acknowledged, however, that it targets the bases of Iran-allied militias, such as Lebanon's Hezbollah group that has fighters deployed in Syria. It says it attacks arms shipments believed to be bound for the militias.

Israel justifies its strikes on facilities and weapons inside Syria by saying that an Iranian presence on its northern frontier is a red line.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Syria](#)

[Israel](#)

[Strikes](#)

Easing of Israeli-Palestinian tensions is vital as Ramadan, Easter and Passover coincide, US officials say2 Palestinians killed in Israeli raid on West Bank: ministry

[158 worshippers injured as Israeli forces raid Al-Aqsa](#)

Author:

AP

ID:

1649997452270608300

Fri, 2022-04-15 04:26

JERUSALEM: Clashes between Israeli police and Palestinians at Al-Aqsa Mosque, a major holy site in Jerusalem, on Friday left 158 Palestinians injured, six seriously.

Three paramedics, three journalists, and 400 other people were arrested during a dawn raid on the mosque to evict 2,000 worshippers in which police officers used gas bombs and rubber bullets and were seen in videos pushing and beating individuals.

Palestinian sources said the Israeli police closed all the mosque doors, prevented Red Crescent crews from entering, and impeded the arrival of ambulances to transport the injured from inside the mosque compound to hospitals.

It was also alleged that police targeted Al-Aqsa guards, press, medical staff, and Red Crescent medics with rubber bullets and deliberately hit them with batons.

And they were accused of seizing ambulance keys and surrounding the Al-Aqsa clinic where first aid was being administered to dozens of wounded people. Witnesses said worshippers were hit by gas bombs and made to lie down before being savagely beaten.

As a result of the raid, violent confrontations broke out between Israeli police and hundreds of young men in the compound.

[#WATCH](#): Following clashes with [#Palestinian](#) worshippers, which wounded more than 150, there was a heavy presence of [#Israeli](#) security forces at [#AlAqsa](#) [#Israel](#) [#Palestine](#) [#Jerusalem](#)
<https://t.co/7b9J3ZtLN1> pic.twitter.com/X0TMUt53cn

– Arab News (@arabnews) [April 15, 2022](#)

A massive rally was organized after dawn prayers in support of Al-Aqsa and as a warning against settlers' incursions into the mosque during the Jewish Passover, which began on Friday evening. At the same time, Palestinian youths threw stones and firecrackers at Israeli police.

On Thursday, Al-Aqsa guards thwarted an attempt by three settlers in hoods disguised as Arabs to enter the courtyards of the mosque.

The doors of Al-Aqsa were reopened to worshippers shortly before the Friday prayer after Israeli forces arrested and evicted hundreds of young men from Al-Aqsa courtyards.

The morning violence caused panic and fear among those who had gone to Jerusalem to perform the second Friday prayer of Ramadan at Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Sheikh Omar Al-Kiswani, the director of Al-Aqsa Mosque, told Arab News: "The invasion of the mosque by the Israeli occupation police and the violent suppression of the worshippers at dawn on Friday led to a decline in the number of worshippers. There were 60,000 worshippers while we expected the number to reach 170,000."

And he accused Israel of consistently violating Al-Aqsa Mosque and provoking Muslims.

Al-Kiswani said: "Al-Aqsa Mosque is a sacred place for Muslims alone and does

not accept partnership or its division with Jews. Israeli provocations, whether by police forces or extremist Jews, are sponsored by the right-wing Israeli government.

"The (Israeli) occupation allows the invasion of Al-Aqsa on every Jewish occasion and feast, whether it coincides with Ramadan or not.

"Jewish extremists and the Israeli occupation have nothing to do with Al-Aqsa, which is a pure right of Muslims alone, but the Israelis want to turn the conflict into a religious conflict and impose a new reality on the mosque," he added.

He pointed out that successive Israeli governments for 16 years had been far-right governments, claiming that each one had tried to be more extremist than the last and win elections by escalating its policy against Al-Aqsa Mosque and controlling it.

"Ramadan days are for worship, but the occupation forces turn them into farewells to martyrs and commit repeated violations of the sanctity of Al-Aqsa Mosque," Al-Kiswani said.

A statement issued by the Israeli police blamed worshippers for rioting and disturbing public order.

In the Gaza Strip, thousands of Palestinians participated in mass rallies after Friday prayers, condemning Israeli police brutality at Al-Aqsa.

Khaled Al-Batsh, a prominent leader of the Islamic jihad, said: "The hand of (Palestinian) resistance is long in Gaza, Jenin, and Nablus, and we will not stand idly by in the face of these provocations."

Tor Wennesland, the UN special coordinator for the Middle East peace process, expressed deep concern over "the deteriorating security situations in Jerusalem during these holy days," and said, "the provocation on the Holy Esplanade must stop now."

He called for an immediate halt to the provocations at Al-Aqsa, noted that the UN was in close contact with key regional partners and the parties to calm the situation, and urged authorities on both sides to immediately de-escalate the situation.

Egypt's Al-Azhar University, a center of Islamic learning, strongly condemned what it described as Israel's "repeated violations and aggressions against defenseless Palestinians, allowing members of its forces to invade Al-Aqsa Mosque and violate its sanctity.

"The Israeli occupation's killing of innocent Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Palestinian cities during the blessed month of Ramadan is a disgrace to the international community and humanity."

In a Facebook post, prominent Palestinian leader, Mohammed Dahlan, said: "The occupation's attempt to escape its internal crises by escalating violence against our Palestinian people and to use Jewish holidays to implement its

Judaization plans will only lead to a further deterioration of the situation.

"Israel alone bears responsibility for its consequences and should be aware that it will not enjoy security and stability unless our Palestinian people enjoy it."

Jordan condemned the Israeli police action and warned against the consequences of the dangerous escalation. It held the Israeli authorities responsible for the safety of Al-Aqsa Mosque and worshippers.





Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Jerusalem](#)

[Israel](#)

Uproar over Israeli FM's 'provocative' visit to Damascus Gate in East Jerusalem
Palestinian stabs Israeli in Jerusalem, shot by police

[Lebanese Cabinet to review draft legislation on bank secrecy](#)

Author:

Thu, 2022-04-14 21:08

BEIRUT: The Lebanese Cabinet decided on Thursday to review a draft amendment to the bank secrecy law during its next session before referring it for parliamentary approval.

The decision comes after such a requirement was stated in a staff-level agreement between the International Monetary Fund and the Lebanese negotiating team on April 7.

It required: "Parliament approval of a reformed bank secrecy law to bring it in line with international standards to fight corruption and remove impediments to effective banking sector restructuring and supervision, tax administration, as well as detection and investigation of financial crimes, and asset recovery."

Lebanon must meet all of the conditions set by the IMF before a final agreement can be reached, though the requirements have hampered progress in the negotiations over recent months.

According to the agreement: "Lebanon is facing an unprecedented crisis, which has led to a dramatic economic contraction and a large increase in poverty, unemployment, and emigration. This crisis is a manifestation of deep and persistent vulnerabilities generated by many years of unsustainable macroeconomic policies fueling large twin deficits (fiscal and external), support for an overvalued exchange rate and an oversized financial sector, combined with severe accountability and transparency problems and lack of structural reforms."

Following the Cabinet session, Information Minister Ziad Makari said: "We reviewed the agreement with the IMF and the ministers were asked to submit their suggestions to be reviewed in a later session."

The Cabinet agreed to create a headquarters for the National Anti-Corruption Commission in Beirut to enable it to carry out its duties.

Makari added: "We tasked the Council for Development and Reconstruction with supervising the demolition process of the wheat silos," the bulk of which were destroyed and the rest severely damaged in the Beirut port explosion on Aug. 4, 2020.

"Subsidies on wheat used for Arabic bread will not be lifted. They might be, however, lifted on wheat and flour used for other products such as sweets and pastries," he said.

Over the past few days, Lebanon had experienced a flour crisis against the backdrop of the central bank's failure to open credits for the purchase of imported wheat. The stampede to buy bread from bakeries in the southern suburb of Beirut led to shootings.

As a temporary solution, the Cabinet agreed on Thursday to use the \$15 million worth of IMF special drawing rights to subsidize wheat, \$13 million to subsidize medicine and \$60 million to subsidize electricity.

Meanwhile, the United Nations on Thursday launched the Strategic Framework for UN Action in Lebanon for the 2022-25 period.

Najat Rochdi, UN resident and humanitarian coordinator for Lebanon, said the world body would provide support in cooperation with the relevant ministries and the government, and in consultation with the private sector, governorates, civil society and local communities.

She identified corruption as the main issue to be tackled, as well as energy

and electricity, education, unemployment and health, insecurity, environmental protection and poverty.

"Poverty rates have doubled, and this is a significant deterioration compared to cases of poverty in other countries," Rochdi said. "We are witnessing a severe deterioration in the provision of social and basic services at the level of health, education, water and energy."

She added that there was a "structural defect in the economic model, which must be redesigned and restructured, taking into account the current economic context, the collapse of the exchange rate, the capital control, the lifting of subsidies, and inappropriate policies in terms of supporting infrastructure and the brain drain."

She called for "thinking outside the box in terms of production," and noted a deliberate delay in implementing the required reforms.

Rochdi also stressed the need to implement reforms, control corruption, and protect the judiciary and the rule of law.

"We are working on a three-year emergency development plan to curb the economic collapse in Lebanon. We consulted with civil society, the private sector and embassies. We wanted to discuss the possibility of returning refugees who have no work here and we have consulted all parties in Lebanon in this regard," she said.

"I hope we will reach an agreement on the priorities of cooperation and sign this strategic framework soon, to start actual work for the next three years," she added.

"We need a high coordination structure and we need to define various priorities. Based on joint programs, we will mobilize resources for the plan and we have actually started contacts in this framework. We must act quickly for the good of the people of Lebanon."



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Lebanon](#)

[Ziad Makari](#)

[Najat Rochdi](#)

[Lebanese banks](#)

Lebanese Cabinet urges judiciary not to fall for populism as banks plan strike
Investors pay high price as judges target Lebanese banks

[How adoption of sustainable fashion in the Middle East can reduce waste, cut carbon emissions](#)

Thu, 2022-04-14 20:44

DUBAI: Of all the retail-industry business models held responsible for the growth of unsustainable consumer habits, few come close to matching the bad reputation acquired by fast fashion – the design, manufacturing and marketing methods behind the production of mass-produced clothing.

The environmental costs keep rising as fast-fashion brands release as many as 52 micro-collections each year, which constantly show up on roadside billboards, online banner ads and social media sites teasing the best deals in trendy clothing.

On the bright side, ethical fashion, quality second-hand clothing and other more environmentally friendly alternatives are increasingly available to consumers, who have a big role to play in countering the harmful effects of fast fashion.

Still, experts say businesses must take responsibility for their actions and governments must develop regulations to encourage eco-conscious shopping habits and promote sustainable fashion.



Employees working on a production line of clothes for export at a factory in Xiayi county, in Shangqiu in China's central Henan province. (AFP/File Photo)

The challenge is, to put it mildly, daunting. As brands devote big budgets to digital marketing and subliminal advertising in response to a seismic shift away from in-store sales, consumers who spend hours browsing websites for the best deals seldom connect their purchasing decisions to environmental (or socioeconomic) issues.

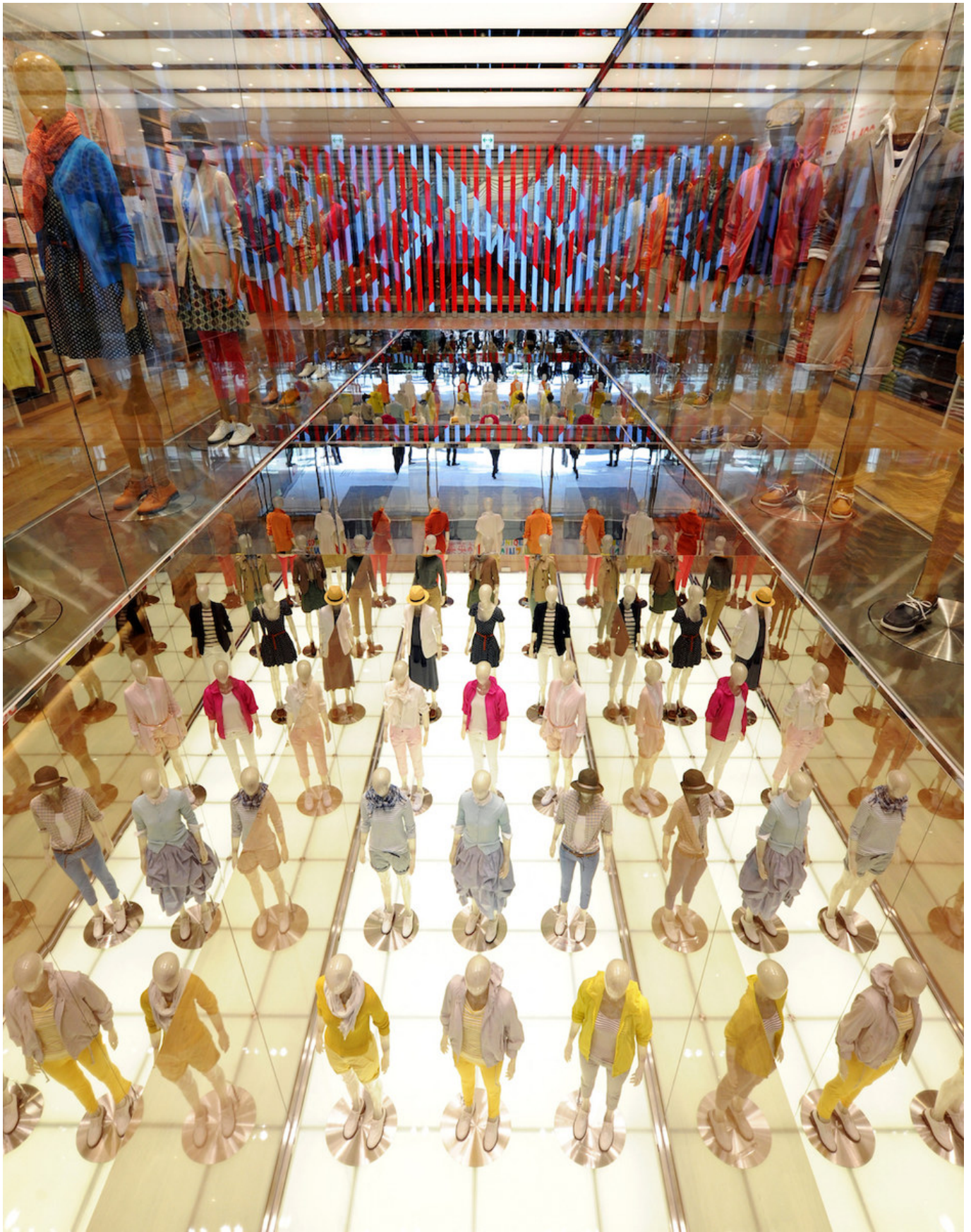
For example, a pair of jeans might seem like a fairly harmless purchase. In fact, the production process behind this wardrobe staple requires about 2,000 gallons of water – equivalent to the amount the average person will drink in seven years.

This explains why the \$3 trillion fashion industry, which accounts for 2 percent of global gross domestic product, has been alternately identified as the second or third largest polluter in the world year after year, just behind oil.

The industry might be responsible for as much as 10 percent of global carbon

emissions, which is more than all international flights and maritime shipping combined, according to the UN Conference on Trade and Development. Clothing factories, mostly located in developing countries, churn out well over 80 billion garments every year, with fast-fashion brands dominating the retail market.

“As fashion changes so quickly, consumers tend to want to buy instantaneously and then, when fashion changes again, they want to dispose of it,” Kris Barber, founder and CEO of DGrade, a sustainable brand in the UAE that produces clothing from recycled plastic bottles, told Arab News.



Mannequins stand in line on the stairwell first floor and second floor at the flagship store of Japan's cheap-chic clothing chain Uniqlo at Ginza shopping district in Tokyo. (AFP/File Photo)

According to the 2015 documentary "The True Cost," an expose of the fashion industry directed by filmmaker Andrew Morgan, about 400 percent more clothing

was being produced worldwide at that time compared with 20 years previously. The figure is probably much higher now.

This, coupled with a steady fall in prices, mean that garment purchases are more affordable to a much larger section of the global population, pushing consumerism in the sector to an all-time high.

For better or worse, people now own five times the amount of clothing their grandparents did – and are more likely to throw clothes away after minimal use.

Surveys suggest that some items of clothing are worn an average of only seven times before they are disposed of, and most women use as little as 20 to 30 percent of the contents of their wardrobes.

“Generally speaking, the retail business model for products that have an inbuilt disposable element – not just in textiles but across the board, from mobile phones to televisions – is all about overproduction and driving down the unit cost,” said Barber.

His journey in eco-fashion began 12 years ago and, along with his colleagues at Dgrade, he is working to improve the quality of recycled fibers. The company produces more than 250 types of fabric that are indistinguishable in quality from those made from virgin fibers.



Members of Extinction Rebellion Argentina are seen dressed with model designs created with recycled elements by Trash Couture fashion designers, during a demonstration against fast fashion industry, at Florida pedestrian street in Buenos Aires. (AFP/File Photo)

“Production of each of our T-shirts, which are made of 100 percent recycled polyester, consumes 10 plastic bottles on average,” Barber said.

DGrade, which also produces customized clothing for businesses, recently expanded operations at its manufacturing plant in the UAE, where more than 1,000 tons of polyethylene terephthalate, or PETP, plastic bottles are recycled every month to make fabrics and food packaging. There are about 50,000 empty bottles in each ton.

The scale of the global issue the business is addressing is huge. Currently, the equivalent of one garbage truck filled with textiles is sent to landfill or incinerated every second, worldwide. Studies show that unless the fashion industry takes major steps to reduce waste, it will use up a quarter of the world’s carbon emissions budget by 2050.

Experts within the industry broadly agree on the need for checks on the production of garments, shoes and fashion accessories. Whether consumers will be willing to pay extra for more environmentally sustainable items is another matter altogether.

Juliette Barkan, co-founder of Palem, a sustainable fashion brand in the UAE, said that awareness of the industry’s environmental footprint and responsible consumption ought to go hand in hand.

“Unless consumers put pressure on industries and opt for more durable items, choosing slow fashion, quality and timeless pieces over fast fashion, the changes will remain anecdotal,” she told Arab News.

Based on her experience, Barkan says the role of social media in shaping consumption habits cannot be overstated.

INNUMBERS

*** \$3tn – Value of global fashion industry.**

*** 2% – Fashion industry’s share of global GDP.**

*** \$3bn – Projected value of KSA online fashion market.**

*** 75% – Middle Eastern poll respondents who said they buy from eco-conscious fashion companies.**

“In a world where we are all our own brand, our need to dress up has increased considerably, creating constant need for newness,” she said. “The demand is so big that the leaders of the sector are now investing in the metaverse to fill the demands of digital fashion.”

Palem uses natural fibers made from 100 percent sustainable materials, such as organic cotton, sustainable viscose or recycled fabrics in its fashion lines. To encourage more manufacturers to become equally sustainable, Barkan

says, consumers need to become more aware of what they are buying.

"The good news is we feel that there is an awakening, a new-found awareness among consumers in the Middle East," she said. "People are starting to ask questions and take ownership of the subject."

This is reflected in the number of sustainable fashion brands emerging in the region and the establishment of the Middle East Fashion Council in the UAE, which was founded jointly by Simon Lo Gatto and Payal Kshatriya Cerri.

The fashion council was set up as "a dictionary" for designers in the region and "a guide for whether a designer was looking to become more sustainable," said Lo Gatto.



Women search for used clothes amid tons discarded in the Atacama desert, in Alto Hospicio, Iquique, Chile. (AFP/File Photo)

Added Cerri: "Our place in this narrative is to bring together the leaders, challenge the way we think, challenge the way the sourcing and manufacturing is done to brands based in the region from other countries, as well as to be able to provide a platform and support for manufacturers within the region."

She believes the fashion industry in the Middle East needs to adopt innovative methods, in particular the use of blockchain and 3D printing, to help reduce waste and increase transparency in the production process. A greater localization of production would also help.

"Dubai is a massive retail hub for all brands but homegrown brands are where the fight is," Cerri said.

With sustainability at the core of its values, the Middle East Fashion Council has partnered with Dubai's Sustainable City, the first net-zero energy residential development in the emirate, to host two fashion shows, one this month, the other in October. Going forward, the organizers hope to host a sustainable fashion week showcasing eco-friendly brands.

The fashion market in Gulf nations and the wider region has grown exponentially in recent years. The first edition of Arab Fashion Week, following in the footsteps of long-established events in New York, Paris, London and Milan, took place in Dubai in 2015. It later became the first floating fashion show when it was staged aboard the Queen Elizabeth II cruise ship in 2018.

In Saudi Arabia, the online fashion market was worth \$715 million in 2018 and is expected to reach \$3 billion this year, making it the largest in the region. Over that same period, the online fashion market across the rest of the Gulf Cooperation Council area is expected to have grown from \$140 million to \$500 million, and in Egypt from \$125 million to \$300 million.



Juliette Barkan, co-founder of Palem. (Supplied)

This regional growth means the adoption of more sustainable production and consumption habits are all the more pressing. Despite the growth of e-commerce and the emerging fashion scene in the Middle East, however, many designers who attempt to take a more sustainable approach continue to face challenges to their efforts to grow their brands.

“Many new sustainable brands are not PR ready,” said Cerri.

Consumers in the GCC area are intensely loyal to big, well-established brands, says Alia Jashanmal, the co-founder of Aloushi’s, a sustainable lifestyle e-commerce store. But attitudes are beginning to change.

The good news is that attitudes are beginning to change. “I believe our society is adjusting to promote homegrown businesses,” Jashanmal told Arab News. “People are educating themselves on how to identify and support sustainable fashion.”

In its “Global Consumer Insights Survey 2021,” which was published in December, professional services network PwC identified a growing awareness of social and environmental sustainability among consumers in Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt.



Kris Barber. (Supplied)

Among those surveyed, about 65 percent said they had become more eco-friendly over the previous six months, while seven out of 10 shoppers said they engage in sustainable behaviors.

In fact, the respondents from the region consistently outscored global survey participants on a range of questions related to this issue. For instance, about 75 percent of Middle Eastern consumers said they buy from companies that are environmentally conscious, compared with 54 percent globally.

While fast fashion no doubt remains ascendant for now, it could also be the retail business model du jour. Which is why, for Barber and his colleagues at DGrade, the consumer survey's findings ought to be viewed as an incentive for the industry to do better.

"Without entirely blaming the fashion industry," he told Arab news, "I think it's more about trying to create products that are of very good quality, products that last longer and that people are going to use and wear more often."



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Middle East](#)

[sustainability](#)

[fashion](#)

[Editor's Choice](#)

How AI is advancing the Middle East's goal of sustainable
fishingCollaboration key to build sustainable future: Princess Lamia

[Iraqis queue for fuel as stations protest government](#)

Author:

AFP

ID:

1649958734936839600

Thu, 2022-04-14 20:56

BAGHDAD: Motorists in Iraq formed long queues for fuel Thursday after some owners of filling stations shut off their pumps to protest government policies on fuel distribution and pricing.

Some government-run fuel stations have been ordered to operate around the clock to meet demand, the official news agency INA reported.

Dozens of vehicles were lined up at stations that remained open. Some owners of petrol stations have denounced the method of fuel distribution imposed by the authorities, complaining they end up paying more for the quantity of fuel they receive from the government than what they say it is worth.

Iraq is the second largest producer in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and oil provides more than 90 percent of its income.

But the country, with a population of about 41 million, is also grappling with a major energy crisis and regular power cuts.

In recent days, private stations had already suspended their activities in the southern city of Najaf, according to INA.

The government has played down the problem, saying it is limited to "certain stations" in the capital Baghdad and the central and southern provinces, said Ihsan Mussa Ghanem, deputy head of the Iraqi agency in charge of distributing petroleum products.

In a statement, his agency said the owners of the closed stations were "manufacturing crises and obstructing the distribution of gasoline to citizens."

Owners do not have the right to stop supplies, it said, and "inspection committees will identify all stations that contravene instructions."

Those that have shut their pumps face having their licenses suspended and supplies of oil stopped, the statement said.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Iraq](#)

[fuel](#)

[Oil](#)

Iraq's Mosul revives shattered cultural scene with traditional music festival