

# UN Security Council condemns deadly Daesh terror attacks in Iraq

Author:

ARAB NEWS

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The UN Security Council on Wednesday strongly condemned recent terrorist attacks in Iraq that killed or injured dozens of people. Daesh has claimed responsibility.

At least four people were killed and 20 injured in an explosion in Basra on Dec. 7, and at least 13 died in an attack in the north of the country on Dec. 3.

The members of the Security Council offered their condolences to the families of the dead and wished the injured a speedy recovery. They also reiterated their support for the "independence, sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity, democratic process and prosperity of Iraq."

They urged all states to "actively" cooperate with Iraqi authorities to bring to justice the "perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of these reprehensible acts of terrorism." Such cooperation, they stressed, is in line with obligations under international law and Security Council resolutions. Council members "reiterated that any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivation, wherever, whenever and by whomsoever committed."

Pledging its continued support to Iraq in its fight against terrorism, and particularly Daesh, the council "reaffirmed the need for all states to combat by all means – in accordance with the charter of the United Nations and other obligations under international law, including international human rights law, international refugee law and international humanitarian law – threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts."



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## [Half of Iran's civil jets grounded for lack of spare parts](#)

Author:

Thu, 2021-12-09 00:44

TEHRAN: More than half of Iran's fleet of civilian aircraft is grounded due to a lack of spare parts, the deputy head of the country's airlines association has said.

"The number of inactive planes in Iran has risen to more than 170 ... as a result of missing spare parts, particularly motors," Alireza Barkhor said in an interview with state news agency IRNA.

The shortage represented more than half of the civilian aircraft in the sanctions-hit country, he said in an interview this week.

"If this trend continues, we will see even more planes grounded in the near future," Barkhor was quoted as saying.

"We hope that one of the priorities of the government will be helping to

finance airlines so that they are able to provide the spare parts to refurbish the grounded planes," he added.

According to the Iranian economic daily Financial Tribune, national carrier IranAir currently operates a fleet of 39 planes, the majority of them Airbus jets.

Iran's economy has struggled under sanctions that were lifted after a landmark nuclear deal in 2015 but reimposed again after the US withdrew from the pact in 2018.

In 2016, following the lifting of sanctions, Iran concluded deals to purchase 100 Airbus jets, 80 Boeing planes and 40 ATR aircraft.

But the Islamic republic received only 11 planes as deliveries were interrupted following the reimposition of sanctions, according to the daily.

Meanwhile, Iran has voiced criticism over new US sanctions imposed on a dozen Iranian entities and officials accused of "serious" human rights abuses.

Washington announced the sanctions late on Tuesday, adding to already stringent measures against the Islamic republic.

They came just before talks on reviving a nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers are to resume on Thursday in Vienna, according to Iran's main negotiator.

"Even amid #ViennaTalks, US cannot stop imposing sanctions against Iran," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh tweeted.

"Washington fails to understand that 'maximum failure' and a diplomatic breakthrough are mutually exclusive," he added.

"Doubling down on sanctions won't create leverage – and is anything but seriousness and goodwill."

The new US measures target government officials and organizations involved in the repression of protesters and political activists, and prisons where activists have been held in brutal conditions.

After a pause of several months the nuclear talks resumed in Vienna last week but paused on Friday.



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## [Music therapy helping lift spirits of war-weary Gazans](#)

Author:

Wed, 2021-12-08 23:45

GAZA CITY: Specialists in the besieged Gaza Strip are mixing psychiatry and music in therapy sessions designed to improve positivity among the Palestinian enclave's war-weary population.

And 12-year-old Reem, whose family home was bombed in May during the latest clashes in the ongoing Israeli Palestinian conflict, has been one of those to benefit.

The youngster was left traumatized after an explosion at her house in Gaza's Tel Al-Hawa neighborhood, an experience that has since regularly reduced her to tears and caused her to feel isolated and depressed.

But after getting involved in a music therapy scheme run by the Sununu Association for Culture and Arts and funded by the German GIZ organization, her stresses and fears have been significantly eased.

Reem listens to music without words during her weekly psychological support sessions organized as part of the Enjoy Your Life with Music initiative.

Program coordinator, Rania Al-Shurihi, said Reem's mental health had improved dramatically as a result of her treatment, adding that the association also held group sessions for Gazans suffering from the psychological effects of years of war and economic hardship.

Music therapy gained official recognition after World War II in successfully dealing with the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder and it is now used to treat a range of conditions including chronic pain, anxiety, depression, heart irregularities, and blood pressure issues.

Al-Shurihi pointed out that sometimes exposing people to sad music helped them shed negative energy through crying but added that happy and relaxing music incorporating the sound of rain and waves could have similar positive outcomes.

She noted that psychological pressure often generated the need to listen to music or readings from the Holy Qur'an for relaxation.

Mental health specialists also use therapeutic methods such as writing, cooking, sailing, and breathing exercises to relieve tensions.

"Despite society's inherited and negative view of mental health center visitors, the success of the music therapy experience has greatly contributed to changing these concepts," Al-Shurihi said.

Experts believe that many children living in Gaza suffer from psychological damage related to the conflict including depression, anxiety, behavioral disorders, urinary incontinence, and nervous mood swings.

According to UNICEF figures, 1 million children live in Gaza which has witnessed four wars with Israel since 2008. The aid organization said the deadly conflict in May had a devastating impact on many youngsters after schools, health facilities, homes, and offices were damaged or flattened in missile attacks.

Al-Shurihi said it was important that music therapy continued to be offered in Gaza not just to tackle the effects of war but also the daily pressures of life faced by Palestinians.

"We all need psychological intervention to varying degrees. And through music, we seek to help the neediest people to overcome difficult circumstances and not drown in a sea of psychological crises," she added.



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'She screams when someone comes near': Gaza children in trauma  
Gaza children fly kites with portraits of kids killed in last conflict with Israel

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## [Lebanese caught between old and new \\$100 banknotes](#)

Author:

Wed, 2021-12-08 23:27

BEIRUT: Lebanese money changers refusing to accept older \$100 banknotes, known as "white notes," is causing confusion, particularly after some people were charged an extra \$5 fee for exchanging \$100 white bills.

Dozens of customers flocked to banks to learn more about the news, especially since some of the white \$100 notes were issued by banks.

A customer told Arab News: "Every Lebanese is keeping a stack of \$100 bills in their home for when they need them the most since the banks confiscated our deposits, and no one dares to deposit a single dollar in the bank nowadays."

He added: "I went to my bank to inquire about this new rule adopted by money changers. My daughter told me that one refused to exchange the \$100 that she gave him, claiming it was an old edition and he had the right to take \$5 as commission if she wanted to exchange it. Who gave them the right to do this? I, my wife and my children all work and we save whatever we make in dollars. Does this mean that our savings have become worthless?"

He said: "The bank manager told me that the problem is with money changers, not banks, since they do not have instructions to stop dealing with the old \$100 bills; on the contrary, banks are using both the old and new editions. He suggested that I occasionally bring him \$200 to \$400, in exchange for which he would give me \$50 bills until the issue with money changers is resolved."

Over the past few days, the topic of "old, white" \$100 and the "new, blue" \$100 banknotes has dominated conversation.

Money transfer companies were also said to have refused to deal with the older notes. Some money changers have taken advantage of the ambiguity to impose a \$10 fee for exchanging white \$100 bills.

The confusion was said to have been stirred by one of the largest money shipping companies, shut down after it was subject to a judicial investigation into smuggling funds abroad after Oct. 17, 2019 – when the financial crisis hit Lebanon, and in light of which Banque du Liban froze transfers inside and outside Lebanon.

Mahmoud Murad, former head of the Syndicate of Money Changers, told Arab News: "This fad has been circulating in the Lebanese financial market for about a week now. We do not know its source, nor who invented it. The problem is that people believe anything in Lebanon."

He added: "People who come to my business to buy dollar bills only accept the blue-colored edition now. We, as money changers, are buying and selling both the old and new editions; nothing has changed."

Murad said: "If the \$100 notes are worn-out or torn, we buy them from people but never sell them again. Instead, we give them to shipping companies to return them to the US and replace them with brand-new ones.

"But everyone in Lebanon is now a money changer. The Lebanese, the Syrian, the Sri Lankan, the Bengali, the supermarket cashier, the butcher, all engage in exchanging money. Money changers should not be blamed for this."

Murad said that the Syndicate of Money Changers met on Wednesday and stressed that all money changers follow legal and moral rules when dealing with customers.

However, Banque du Liban revealed in a statement on Wednesday that “some banks and money changers have charged fees for exchanging \$100 banknotes, claiming that they are outdated.”

It added: “The specifications of valid \$100 notes are determined by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, an agency affiliated with the US Treasury,” noting: “BDL alone determines the specifications of valid Lebanese currency.”

The US Embassy in Lebanon also stated on Wednesday that “it is US government policy that all designs of Federal Reserve notes remain legal tender, or legally valid for payments, regardless of when they were issued. This policy includes all denominations of Federal Reserve notes, from 1914 to present.”

Meanwhile, the Association of Banks in Lebanon announced that “after the great controversy surrounding some money changers taking commissions on old \$100 bills, ABL would like to clarify that Lebanese banks deal with banknotes without any amendment to existing procedures. No additional fee is charged for accepting white \$100 banknotes.”

OMT Exchange also stated that it “has not stopped accepting white \$100 bills, if they are in good condition, and no additional fee is charged at any of our centers. OMT does not accept any banknotes that are torn, burnt, yellowed, or even partially damaged.”



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## [Kuwait detects first case of omicron variant](#)

Author:

ARAB NEWS

ID:

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Wed, 2021-12-08 23:18

KUWAIT: Kuwait has detected its first case of the omicron variant of the coronavirus, state news agency KUNA reported on Wednesday.

The variant was detected in a European traveler who arrived to Kuwait from an African country where the variant had been detected, KUNA reported, citing a health ministry spokesman.

Speaking to KUNA, Dr. Abdullah Al-Sanad said the traveler had received both dosages of the COVID-19 vaccine previously and now he is under institutional quarantine, according to the health protocol.

He added that the ministry has taken necessary precautions since several nations announced discovering the new variant.

Currently, the pandemic situation in Kuwait is stable, according to Al-Sanad, however, citizens and residents have been advised to take the booster shot to help the ministry curb the spread.

Studies have shown that current vaccines are effective against omicron, he stressed.

On Wednesday, health authorities recorded 18 recoveries, one death and 33 new coronavirus infections, bringing the cases to a total of 413,588 in Kuwait.



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Oman, UAE, Kuwait and Egypt ban travelers from southern African states over COVID-19 variant