

# Mikati fears slippery slope if Lebanese-Saudi crisis is not resolved

Author:

Mon, 2021-11-01 23:11

BEIRUT: Lebanon's Prime Minister Najib Mikati said on Monday Beirut faces a slippery slope in its growing diplomatic row with the Gulf following controversial comments made by Information Minister George Kordahi on the Arab coalition's intervention in Yemen.

Mikati, who is in Scotland to participate in the COP26 climate summit, sent a message on Monday via WhatsApp to government ministers, in which he wrote that he had "asked Kordahi to prioritize his patriotism over everything else, but this has not happened."

Mikati added: "We are consequently facing a slippery slope."

The prime minister also said: "If we do not resolve this crisis quickly, we will fall into a disaster that none of us wants. God bears witness that I have warned against this."

Kordahi has failed so far to apologize for his remarks, and appeared to rule out offering his resignation in a statement on Sunday.

Saudi Arabia believes Kordahi's statements to be offensive and represent "a new episode of reprehensible and rejected positions issued by Lebanese officials towards the Kingdom and its policies, in addition to Beirut's failure to take the measures to stop the export of narcotics from Lebanon."

Beirut has not yet taken any measure to restore ties between the two states, nor Lebanon's relations with other Gulf nations that have shown solidarity with Saudi Arabia, especially Kuwait, Bahrain and the UAE.

Mikati's warning came as DHL in Lebanon returned mail and goods to customers who wanted them shipped to Saudi Arabia.

"The DHL administration was informed by the company's branch in Saudi Arabia on Saturday that no packages can be shipped to the Kingdom, but there are no instructions so far regarding the fate of shipments from Saudi Arabia to Lebanon," a source told Arab News on Monday, adding "we have returned all packages to our customers and we are yet to receive new instructions."

This measure falls within the Saudi decision to cut diplomatic and economic ties with Lebanon, which was taken on Oct. 29, against the backdrop of the comments made by Kordahi a month before he was appointed.

Hezbollah's Mohammed Fneish continued to defend Kordahi and criticized those who stood by the importance of Lebanese-Saudi ties, describing their positions as "demonstrating weakness."

Fneish said: "If we stand our ground, we will be able to overcome these issues, just as we did many problems and challenges that we faced in the past."

The website of the National News Agency, the official news agency of the Lebanese state, supervised by Kordahi, was hacked on Saturday afternoon.

Pictures were published on the website containing threats against Kordahi, and the website has since been suspended.

While political observers in Lebanon unanimously agree that Kordahi's resignation would be the most positive outcome, they believe Mikati's hands are tied since Shiite government ministers threatened to boycott Cabinet if Tarek Bitar, the judge leading the investigation into the Beirut port blast, is not removed.

The same ministers to have dissented over Bitar are also among those to have also voiced their objection to Kordahi's removal.

Mikati's media office reported that he held meetings with several officials on the sidelines of the COP26 summit to discuss Lebanon's crises, especially the dispute with Saudi Arabia.

Mikati met with French President Emmanuel Macron and the President of the European Council Charles Michel.

He then met with the Managing Director of the IMF Kristalina Georgieva, the Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi, and outgoing German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

Mikati also spoke with Lebanese President Michel Aoun over the phone and discussed "possible measures to address the recent developments."



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Pressure mounts for removal of Lebanese information minister over Gulf row  
Saudi Arabia's King Salman thanks leaders of Kuwait, Bahrain for Lebanon stance

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## [What to expect following Biden's meeting with Erdogan](#)

Author:

Mon, 2021-11-01 23:02

ANKARA: The much-awaited meeting between US President Joe Biden and his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Rome on Sunday focused on several topics of longstanding disagreement between the two NATO allies.

During the meeting, Biden noted Turkey's importance as an ally and its defense partnership with the US, but also raised his concerns about the Russian-made S-400 missile system on Turkish soil that poses a threat to NATO

systems, especially amid talk of further purchases of Russian missiles.

Biden also emphasized the importance of strong democratic institutions and respect for human rights, although no details were given of specific human rights issues raised during the meeting, which came days after 10 foreign ambassadors in Turkey, including the US envoy, called for the release of jailed philanthropist Osman Kavala and for the respecting of a ruling by the European Court of Human Rights in a joint statement.

The Turkish presidential office said in a statement that the meeting was held in a positive atmosphere, and both leaders expressed their willingness to “further strengthen and improve Turkey-US relations and agreed to set up a common mechanism accordingly.”

Caroline Rose, senior analyst at the New Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy, told Arab News: “There is limited space for cooperation between Turkey and the US, but it’s unlikely in the near-term that relations will be able to experience a substantial reset or significant rapprochement.”

She added that with Turkey seeking to purchase a second S-400 missile system, rising tensions with Kurdish forces and allied US troops in northeast Syria, and the ripples from the recent diplomatic crisis over Kavala, the Biden administration is hesitant about relying too heavily on its relationship with Ankara.

“Turkey will continue to prove a useful partner against Iran in the Middle East as the US conducts further personnel reduction, as it pivots to Asia. It’s also possible for limited US-Turkey cooperation if tensions continue to de-escalate in the Eastern Mediterranean, opening a potential door to increased ties,” she said.

Soner Cagaptay, director of the Turkish program at the Washington Institute, underlined two reasons that might have pushed the US towards de-escalation with Turkey.

“Every time there is a crisis between Ankara and Washington, the consensus is (on) not ignoring Ankara and keeping it anchored inside NATO. (The) White House follows the same policy once again,” he said.

The Turkish parliament recently ratified a motion to extend troop deployment in Iraq and Syria for another two years, while Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar and US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin held a phone call last week to discuss regional defense and security issues.

For Cagaptay, another reason for this bilateral meeting is related to Turkey’s imminent operations in northern Syria to undermine territories held by the US-backed Syrian Kurdish People’s Protection Units.

“I think the US administration pushes for the meeting to take place (to) talk about the specifics of such a potential incursion and its mechanisms if this were to happen,” he said.

“But at some zones, the operation would require US troops not to stand in the

way of Turkish troops. Both parties would want to see US troops out of harm's way," added Cagaptay.

In the meantime, Turkey recently expressed interest in buying 40 Lockheed Martin-made F-16s and another 80 modernization kits for its existing warplanes, but the sale would require the approval of Congress.

By purchasing F-16s, Ankara also wants to recover a \$1.4 billion payment made just before it was kicked out of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter program because of its purchase of the S-400s.

Asked whether he was planning to provide Turkey with F-16s, Biden said they were "planning to have a good conversation." However, Cagaptay thinks such a deal will face resistance in Congress over the S-400 deal.

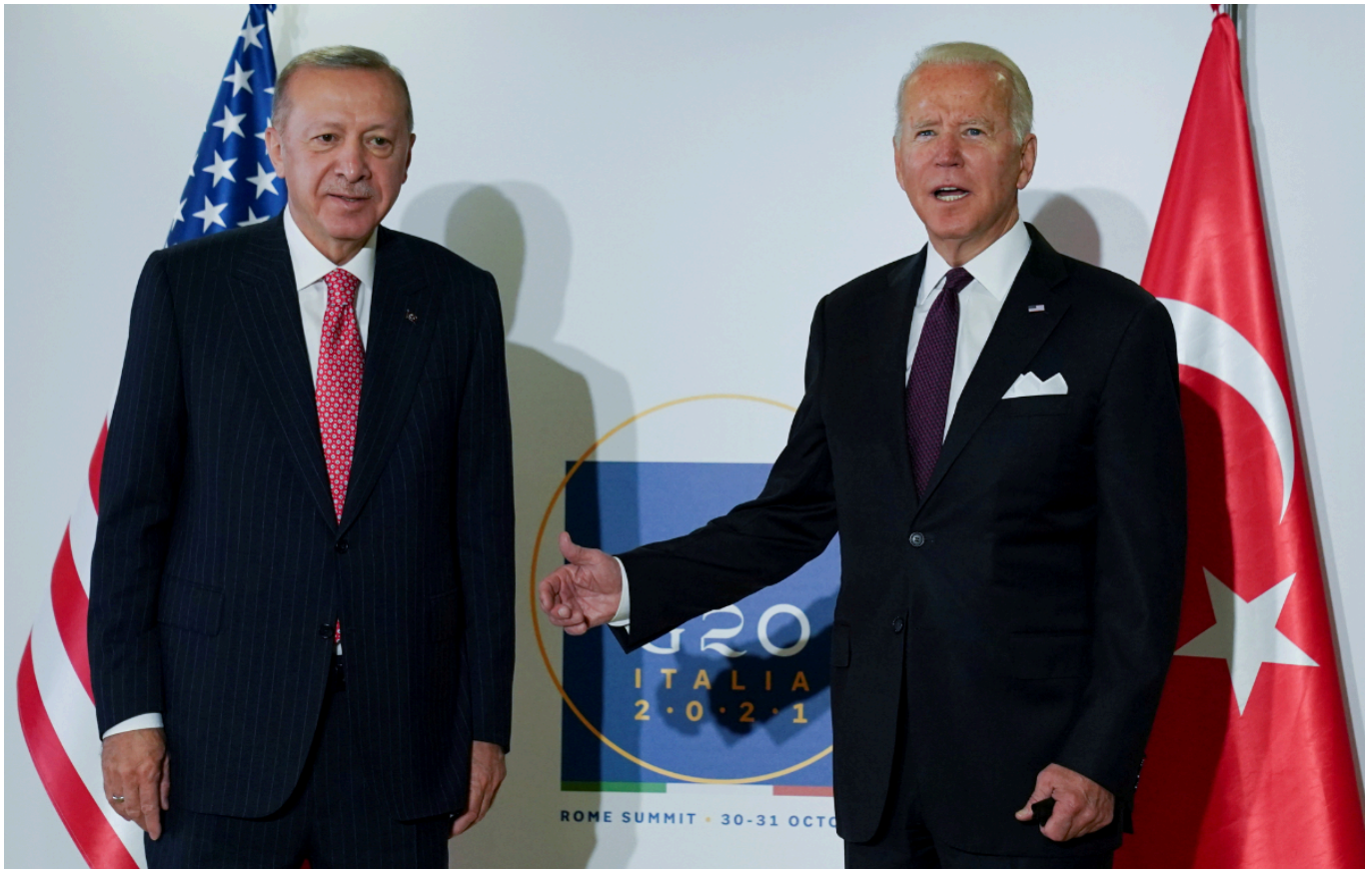
Turkish and US defense delegations had a meeting on the F-35s this week in Ankara, with experts thinking the issue could undermine Turkish-US ties.

"There is a strict separation of powers in the US political system, and Congress has a majority of opposition voices about this crucial sale," Cagaptay said.

The political process in Syria, humanitarian assistance for civilians in Afghanistan, elections in Libya, the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean and diplomatic efforts in the South Caucasus also formed part of the bilateral agenda during the Biden-Erdogan meeting.

According to Cagaptay, the Biden administration wants to keep dialogue channels open with Erdogan, especially to encourage Ankara to play an active role in maintaining flights in and out of the Afghan capital Kabul, and to contribute to airport security.

Biden and Erdogan last met in June to discuss whether Turkey could secure and operate the Kabul International Airport, but the plans failed after the rapid takeover of the country by Taliban forces.



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Turkey's Erdogan says he has signed \$3.2bn green climate fund deal Biden to use COP26 to ramp up pressure on Congress climate change funding vote

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## [UAE says all diplomats, citizens have returned 'safely' from Lebanon](#)

Author:

Mon, 2021-11-01 21:53

DUBAI: The UAE announced on Monday that all its diplomats, embassy staff and citizens have returned from Lebanon, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MoFAIC) said.

On Sunday, the UAE called on its citizens present in Lebanon to return to the Emirates as soon as possible to ensure their safety, following a diplomatic row that was sparked in solidarity with Saudi Arabia over controversial comments made by the Lebanese information minister that were critical to the Kingdom.

“The ministry attributed the development to the UAE’s decision to recall its diplomats and administration staff from Lebanon and bar Emirati citizens to travel to the country owing to the current security and political situation there,” the MoFAIC statement said.

“Out of the UAE’s determination on ensuring the safety of its citizens abroad, the ministry contacted UAE national in Lebanon to coordinate their return back home,” said Khalid Belhoul, the ministry’s undersecretary. He added that the ministry was following up on the procedures of all citizens in Lebanon until their safe return to the country.



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[\*\*Minister says Egypt has received 72m\*\*](#)

# doses of various COVID-19 vaccines

Mon, 2021-11-01 19:00

CAIRO: Egypt's acting minister of health, Khaled Abdel Ghaffar, said in a statement that the total number of coronavirus disease vaccine doses supplied to the North African country has reached 72 million.

Abdel Ghaffar, who is also Egypt's minister of higher education and scientific research, explained that around 38 million doses have been administered so far, leaving around 34 million jabs available.

He added that during the coming period, Egypt expects around 26 million more doses, including Sinovac, Pfizer, AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson vaccines, bringing the total to about 98 million doses.

Egypt also expects to receive materials for the manufacture of the Sinovac vaccine in the country's Vaccera factories in due course.

The minister stated that work is underway to expand Egypt's regional vaccination center capacity, with 1,079 centers currently operational, including 180 travel centers.

He stressed that the coming period will witness an expansion in the provision of mobile outlets dedicated to vaccinating citizens in crowded places such as malls, train stations and metro stations.

Abdel Ghaffar also announced that Egypt received its first shipment of Moderna jabs, coming in at a total of 784,280 doses, on Sunday morning at Cairo International Airport, meaning the country now has access to vaccines produced by all major, reputable international manufacturers.

In a statement, he said that the shipment was provided by Canada through the COVAX initiative, in cooperation with GAVI, as part of the country's plan to diversify and expand the provision of vaccines to citizens.

Dr. Awad Taj El-Din, advisor to the president of Egypt for health and epidemiological affairs, confirmed on Sunday that Egypt spent around \$400 million to secure its vaccines, and he expressed his thanks to all the parties working in support of Egypt.

He pointed out that the country was finalizing deals with international institutions for the local manufacture of various vaccines at factories in Agouza and 6 October City, which would see it become one of Africa's largest centers of vaccine manufacturing.



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Egypt COVID-19 vaccine to begin distribution in mid-August  
Egypt COVID-19 cases could be '10 times higher' than reported figures

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## [\*\*Demand for special UN rights council meet after Sudan coup\*\*](#)

Mon, 2021-11-01 18:34

GENEVA: Dozens of countries called Monday for the UN Human Rights Council to host a special session on Sudan, following a deadly crackdown on mass rallies against last week's military coup.

In a letter to the council president sent on behalf of 48 countries, British ambassador Simon Manley stressed the urgent need for the top UN rights body to discuss the situation in Sudan since the army's October 25 power grab.

“We request that the Human Rights Council hold a special session this week to address the human rights implications of the ongoing situation in the Republic of the Sudan,” said the letter, seen by AFP.

“A special session is needed because of the importance and urgency of the situation.”

The request came after top General Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan dissolved the government, declared a state of emergency and detained Sudan’s civilian leadership.

Tens of thousands of people turned out across the country for demonstrations on Saturday against the coup.

At least three people were shot dead and more than 100 wounded during Saturday’s demonstrations, according to medics, who said at least 12 people had been killed since the coup.

Police forces denied the killings, or using live rounds.

In his letter Monday, Manley said the call for a special session was being led by Britain, the United States and Norway, along with Germany and the government of Sudan, ousted in the coup.

In all, 48 countries had signed on to the request, including 18 of the Human Rights Council’s 47 member states.

Calling a special session outside of the thrice-yearly regular meetings requires the backing of at least a third of the membership, so at least 16 states.



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## [UN Human Rights Council \(UNHRC\)](#)

Sudanese ex-ruling party head Ghandour re-arrested Sudanese anti-coup protesters barricade streets