

Moroccans protest mass vaccination rules; some skirmishes

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RABAT, Morocco: Demonstrators took to the streets in cities around Morocco on Wednesday, some clashing with police as they denounced the country's decision to require coronavirus vaccination passes to be allowed to work and enter public venues.

The decision came into effect Oct. 21 and stipulates that Moroccans must provide proof of vaccination in order to enter their workplaces. In a statement, the government has said employers have "direct legal responsibility" to enforce the decision.

The pass is also required to access indoor services such as restaurants and banks as well as domestic and international travel.

The North African kingdom of 36 million people has Africa's highest vaccination rate, with more than 50 percent of the population fully inoculated. Earlier this month, the government also started administering booster shots.

But the abrupt and unusually widespread vaccine requirements have also prompted opposition, and led to big crowds at vaccination centers as people rushed to get shots.

In the capital, Rabat, protesters gathered outside the parliament building and chanted slogans against the rule, arguing that it goes against fundamental human rights and civil liberties. Police formed a line to prevent the angry demonstrators from getting inside the legislature.

A few protesters clashed with police as they were pushed away down Mohammed V Avenue that leads to the parliament building.

Among protesters was Nabila Mounib, a member of parliament and the secretary general of the opposition Unified Socialist Party. She joined the protest after being barred from entering the parliament building for showing up without a vaccination pass.

Similar scenes unfolded in other Moroccan cities, with dozens of protesters taking to the streets in the country's most populous city, Casablanca, as well as tourist hotspots of Marrakech and Agadir. They shouted "United against the pass!" as police pushed and swung batons at some of the demonstrators in an attempt to disperse them.



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Tunisia, Morocco hoteliers eye an end to COVID-19 downturn
Virus: Morocco suspending UK, Germany, Netherlands flights

[Western envoys met with Sudan's PM in his residence](#)

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Wed, 2021-10-27 19:10

CAIRO: Envoys from France, Germany, Norway, the UK, the United States, the European Union and the United Nations met with Sudan's Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok at his residence, the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance

Mission Sudan (UNITAMS) wrote on Twitter on Wednesday.

The mission added that the envoys found Hamdok in good health.



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World Bank suspends aid to Sudan after military coup
Japan condemns Sudan military leaders

[US urges Iran to show 'good faith' in talks resumption](#)

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Wed, 2021-10-27 18:38

WASHINGTON: The United States on Wednesday urged Iran to show “good faith” and quickly revive a nuclear deal after the clerical state indicated it would return to negotiations in Vienna next month.

Iran’s nuclear negotiator said after talks with European Union mediators in Brussels that Tehran had agreed to resume talks in Vienna next month. These discussions had been on hiatus since June.

“We are prepared to return to Vienna, and we believe that it remains possible to quickly reach and implement an understanding on return to mutual full compliance” with the 2015 nuclear deal, a State Department spokesperson said. The talks should focus on “closing the small number of issues that remained outstanding at the end of the sixth round of talks in June,” he said.

“As we have also been clear, this window will not remain open forever as Iran continues to take provocative nuclear steps, so we hope that they come to Vienna to negotiate quickly and in good faith.”

President Joe Biden has repeatedly offered to return to the nuclear accord reached in 2015 but his administration has voiced growing frustration at the prolonged delay, which comes as a new hardline government gets settled in Tehran.

Then president Donald Trump withdrew the United States from the deal in 2018 and imposed sweeping sanctions, leading Iran to step up contested nuclear work in protest.



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Iran says agrees to restart nuclear deal talks in Nov
Iraq blames Iran for drastic decline in river flow

Arab coalition says 105 rebels killed in latest Yemen strikes

Wed, 2021-10-27 17:43

AL-MUKALLA: The Arab coalition said on Wednesday it killed 105 Houthi rebels in airstrikes around Yemen's strategic city of Marib.

The coalition, supporting the internationally recognized government, has claimed the deaths of 2,000 Houthis around Marib in strikes it has reported almost daily since Oct. 11.

"Thirteen military vehicles were destroyed and 105" insurgents were killed in strikes in the past 24 hours, the coalition said, according to the Saudi Press Agency.

The latest bombing was carried out in Al-Jawba, about 50 km south of Marib, and Al-Kassara, 30 km to the northwest.

Marib, capital of the oil-rich province of the same name, is the internationally recognized government's last bastion in northern Yemen.

The UN Security Council last week called for "de-escalation" in Yemen, in a unanimously adopted statement to counter "the growing risk of large-scale famine" in the country.

Meanwhile, a group of EU diplomats visiting the port city of Aden, the interim capital of Yemen, has expressed support for the internationally recognized government of Yemen, hailed its return to Aden, and called upon the country's political forces to accelerate the full implementation of the Saudi-brokered Riyadh Agreement.

The EU delegation also urged the Iran-backed Houthis to end their deadly offensive in the central province of Marib and engage with peace efforts to end the war in Yemen.

The delegation includes the deputy head of the EU mission in Yemen, Marion Lalis, French Ambassador Jean-Marie Saffa, German Ambassador Hubert Jaeger, Dutch Ambassador Peter-Derrek Hof, and Swedish Envoy for Yemen Peter Semneby.

"The EU ambassadors welcome the return of the Yemen government to Aden, express full support for the government and call for the full implementation of the Riyadh agreement," the mission said in a statement.

The EU delegation touched down in Aden airport on Tuesday and then headed to the presidential palace for a meeting with Yemen's Prime Minister Maen Abdul Saeed.

The official news agency SABA reported that the prime minister told the EU envoys that the Houthis are spoiling efforts to end the war by aggressively attacking internally displaced people in Marib and civilian targets in Saudi Arabia.

He called for the Houthis and their supporters in Iran to be punished for undermining peace and security in Yemen.

"The terrorist behavior of the Houthis, their war crimes against civilians and IDPs in Marib, and the attack on civilian properties in Saudi Arabia test the international community," Saeed said.

"Peace process should be based on effective pressure and sanctions on the Houthis and their sponsors in Tehran," the premier said, urging international donors to expand their assistance to Yemen to include supporting the country's exacerbating economic meltdown.

Yemen's Foreign Minister Ahmed Awadh bin Mubarak, who also met the delegation, said that the Europeans discussed offering assistance to the economy and to help alleviate the humanitarian crisis.

"There is great European interest in discussing ways to support the Yemeni government, especially in the economic field," Bin Mubarak said.

The Dutch ambassador to Yemen said they held an "excellent" meeting with the government and discussed ways to help address the devaluation of the riyal, fight corruption and tackle other economic challenges.

"Excellent meeting today with @Yemen_PM in Aden, expressing EU support for the Government of Yemen and discussing the economic challenges including the exchange rate, inflation, boosting revenues, the needed government reforms and the fight against corruption," Peter Derrek Hof said on Twitter.

During a meeting with the EU delegation on Wednesday, Aden Gov. Ahmed Hamid Lamli thanked the Europeans for visiting Aden, stressing that the visit carries a message that the city is safe and ready to receive international delegations.

The Europeans also discussed the implementation of the Riyadh Agreement and supporting the government to smoothly resume its duties in Aden with the leader of the pro-independence Southern Transitional Council Aidarous Al-Zubaidi.

Yemeni officials and experts believe that the EU mission visit to Aden would spur the implementation of the Riyadh Agreement, help the government function effectively in Aden and convince many international diplomats to visit the city.

"This is an indication that Aden is safe. The presence of the Europeans in

Aden mounts pressure on parties to put into place the Riyadh Agreement and end hostilities in the city,” Najeeb Ghallab, undersecretary at Yemen’s Information Ministry and a political analyst, told Arab News.



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More than 90 Houthis killed, 16 military vehicles destroyed in coalition strikes on Jubah and Al-Kassarah Saudi Arabia summons Lebanese envoy over ‘offensive’ comments made by information minister

[Israel moves ahead with thousands of settler homes despite US opposition](#)

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Wed, 2021-10-27 13:41

JERUSALEM: Israel moved forward on Wednesday with plans to build some 3,000 homes for Jewish settlers in the occupied West Bank, defying the Biden administration's strongest criticism to date of such projects.

A senior Palestinian official said the decision showed that Israel's new government, led by far-right politician Naftali Bennett, was "no less extreme" than the administration of the veteran leader he replaced, Benjamin Netanyahu.

An Israeli defense official said a planning forum of Israel's liaison office with the Palestinians gave preliminary approval for plans to build 1,344 housing units and its final go-ahead for projects to construct 1,800 homes. It will be up to Defense Minister Benny Gantz, a centrist in Israel's politically diverse government, to give the nod for construction permits to be issued, with further friction with Washington looming.

"This government is trying to balance between its good relations with the Biden administration and the various political constraints," a senior Israeli official said.

The US on Tuesday said it was "deeply concerned" about Israel's plans to advance thousands of settlement units. It called such steps damaging to prospects for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and said it strongly opposes settlement expansion.

Washington desisted from such criticism when President Joe Biden's Republican predecessor Donald Trump was in office.

HIGHLIGHTS

Israeli move defies strong US criticism.

Palestinians condemn new housing projects.

Settlements a thorny issue for new government.

The latest projects, as well as tenders published on Sunday for more than 1,300 settler homes, amounted to the first major test case over settlement policy with the Biden administration, that took office in January. "The behavior of the Israeli government under Bennett is no less extreme than what it had been under Netanyahu," Bassam Al-Salhe, a member of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, said.

"The US administration has words, and no deeds, to change the policy that had been put in place by Trump," Salhe said.

There was no immediate comment from Washington on Wednesday.

Walking a political and diplomatic tightrope, Bennett has been facing calls from settler leaders to step up construction. Such projects are likely to be welcomed by his ultranationalist constituents, who share his opposition to Palestinian statehood. But along with the prospect of straining relations with Washington, Bennett could also alienate left-wing and Arab parties in a coalition governing with a razor-thin parliamentary majority, if they view settlement plans as too ambitious.

Most countries regard the settlements Israel has built in territory it captured in a 1967 Middle East war as illegal.

Israel disputes this and has settled some 440,000 Israelis in the West Bank, citing biblical, historical and political ties to the area, where 3 million Palestinians live.

Palestinians seek to create a state in the West Bank and Gaza, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Israeli-Palestinian peace talks collapsed in 2014.



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UN says Israel move designating Palestinian groups as 'terrorist organizations' unjustified Israel envoy to brief US over ban on Palestinian

groups