

Egypt can defend itself, says defense minister

Author:

Mon, 2021-10-04 00:21

CAIRO: Egypt boasts an advanced armament system and is capable of defending itself, said Defense Minister Lt. Gen. Mohammed Zaki during a military exercise.

At the final stage of the Raad-32 maneuver with live ammunition, which was carried out by units from the Western Military Region in cooperation with the main branches of the armed forces, he added that the army also has professional personnel capable of carrying out all tasks, whatever the circumstances.

Zaki praised the high level of the exercise, indicating a high combat readiness and training that led to professionalism in carrying out the planned tasks.

The senior officer stated that the maneuver included the management of combat operations to develop the attack with the assistance of the country's air assets.

He stated that the military drills also witnessed the armored elements and mechanized infantry developing the attack, penetrating hostile defenses, engaging and destroying them in complete harmony between all elements of the battle formation.

He added that the final stage of the Raad-32 drills revealed the high standard of Egyptian forces' field and combat skills and the use of the latest control and guidance systems for various weapons and equipment.

Zaki said that the maneuver showed the combat readiness of the participating elements and their skill in using the latest means of cooperation and technical and administrative control to carry out both planned and emergency tasks during the exercise.



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Egypt recovers two ancient statues from BelgiumEgypt affirms its continued support for all efforts to stabilize Libya

[Tunisians take to the streets to back president's anti-corruption drive](#)

Author:

Mon, 2021-10-04 00:11

JEDDAH: Thousands of marchers took to the streets of Tunisia on Sunday in demonstrations of support for President Kais Saied's drive to rid the country of corrupt politicians.

Crowds on Bourguiba Avenue, the main thoroughfare in central Tunis, chanted "We are all Kais Saied, we are all Tunisia" and "The people want the dissolution of parliament."

As well as Tunis, there were simultaneous marches in the industrial city of Sfax, the seaside town of Sousse, and Sidi Bouzid, Gafsa and Monastir.

With up to 5,000 demonstrators in Tunis alone, the event dwarfed minor protests last week against what the president's critics call a "power grab."

Saied assumed executive power under the constitution on July 25, when he sacked the prime minister, suspended parliament and began ruling by decree.

The moves command overwhelming public support among Tunisians frustrated by corruption and economic incompetence in a political class dominated by the Islamist Ennahda party, whose leader Rached Ghannouchi was parliamentary Speaker.

BACKGROUND

President Kais Saied, elected in late 2019, has said his aim was to save Tunisia from 'imminent peril' during an economic crisis aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Saied, elected in late 2019, has said his aim was to save Tunisia from "imminent peril" during an economic crisis aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Official unemployment has soared to almost 18 percent and the economy has grown by only 0.6 percent in the past decade.

Last week the president appointed university lecturer Najla Bouden as Tunisia's first female prime minister, and directed her to form a Cabinet to free Tunisia of political corruption.

"Saied wants to implement reforms and we back him," Noura ben Fadhel, a civil servant, said at the Tunis rally. "I came to support change to end the current decline. We're fed up with it. It's been going on for 10 years and that's enough."

Elyes Ouni, 28, who campaigned for Saied in 2019, said: "July 25 ended a faulty system. Now it's in the morgue and today we're going to bury it." He blamed parliament for the "deterioration of the country."

Another demonstrator, Noura Bensalah, said: "We demand that Saied dissolve Ennahda and the political parties involved in corruption."



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Tunisia police block MPs' access to suspended parliament
Tunisia's first woman prime minister raises spirits despite power grab

[Algeria escalates France dispute with flight ban](#)

Mon, 2021-10-04 00:16

PARIS: The diplomatic discord between Algeria and France deepened Sunday after Algiers banned French military planes from its airspace, its latest response to a row over visas and critical comments from President Emmanuel Macron.

France's jets regularly fly over the former French colony to reach the Sahel region of western Africa, where its soldiers are helping to battle jihadist insurgents as part of its Barkhane operation.

"This morning when we filed flight plans for two planes, we learned that the Algerians had stopped flights over their territory by French military

planes,” said an army spokesman, Col. Pascal Ianni.

He said the decision had “slightly impacted” supply flights but “does not affect our operations” in the Sahel.

But the move heightened tensions that had already flared on Saturday when the Algerian government recalled its ambassador to France, citing “inadmissible interference” in its affairs.

According to French and Algerian media reports, Macron told descendants of figures in Algeria’s 1954-62 war for independence that the country was ruled by a “political-military system” that had “totally re-written” its history.

“You can see that the Algerian system is tired, it has been weakened by the Hirak,” he added, referring to the pro-democracy movement that forced Abdelaziz Bouteflika from power in 2019 after two decades at the helm.

Macron’s office did not deny the reported comments, but said the president was discussing the war in Algeria with French youths and answering questions, not giving an official interview.

Ianni said there had been no official notification of the flight ban, and the French Foreign Ministry, contacted by AFP, declined to comment.

Last year, the Algerian government criminalized the dissemination of what it considers “false news” that harms national unity.

Saturday’s ambassador recall was the second time it had done so, having taken a similar response in May 2020 after French media broadcast a documentary about the Hirak movement.

Algerian officials have cracked down on efforts to revive the pro-democracy protests, and rights groups say dozens of people linked to it have been jailed in recent months.

Algiers was also angered last week after France said it would sharply reduce the number of visas it grants to citizens of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia.

Paris said the decision had been made necessary by the former colonies’ failure to do enough to allow illegal migrants in France to be returned.

When a French court denies a person’s visa request, authorities must still secure a consular travel pass from his or her home country in order to forcibly expel them, a document that Paris says Algiers, Rabat and Tunis are largely refusing to provide.

Macron has reportedly ordered the number of visa deliveries to Algeria and Morocco to be halved from 2020 levels, and by a third for Tunisia.

The Algerian Foreign Ministry summoned France’s ambassador Francois Gouyette on Wednesday to make a “formal protest” of the visa ruling.



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Algeria recalls ambassador to France as tensions rise
Algeria summons French ambassador over visa restriction decision

[New guidelines: Israel restricts its COVID-19 'green pass' rules, sparking protest](#)

Author:

Mon, 2021-10-04 00:09

JERUSALEM: Israel restricted its COVID-19 Green Pass on Sunday to allow only those who have received a vaccine booster dose or recently recuperated from coronavirus to enter indoor venues. The new criteria mean that nearly 2 million people will lose their vaccination passport in the coming days.

Israel is the first country to make a booster shot a requirement for its digital vaccination passport. The move is widely seen as a step to encourage booster vaccination among those who have yet to receive a third dose.

Under the new guidelines, people must have received a booster shot to be

eligible for a green pass. Those who have received two vaccine doses, and those who have recovered from coronavirus, will be issued passes valid for six months after the date of their vaccination or recovery.

The government's advisory Cabinet on coronavirus was set to convene Sunday to discuss existing restrictions and guidelines.

Technical problems hamstrung the Health Ministry's rollout of the updated green pass as millions of Israelis tried to reissue digital documentation that would allow entry to shops, restaurants, cultural events, gyms and other indoor venues.

Scores of Israelis staged demonstrations around the country in protest of the green pass system, with convoys of cars clogging morning commutes as many Israelis returned to work Sunday after September's Jewish High Holidays. Opponents of the system said it is a form of forced vaccination.

"We are totally against any forced vaccinations, or any forced medications, and we are totally against doing anything to our children and grandchildren that we don't agree with," said Sarah Felt, who protested along the main highway connecting Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

Israel raced out of the gate early this year to vaccinate most of its adult population after striking a deal with Pfizer to trade medical data in exchange for a steady supply of doses.

This summer Israel launched an aggressive booster campaign to shore up waning vaccine efficacy in its population.

Over 60 percent of Israel's population has received two doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine and nearly 3.5 million of Israel's 9.3 million citizens have received a booster dose of the vaccine.

But at least 2 million more have received just two doses, and many will lose the privileges bestowed by the green pass.

Recent months have seen a surge in new cases of coronavirus in Israel.

As of Sunday, over 70 percent of the 588 serious coronavirus cases in Israeli hospitals were unvaccinated individuals, according to Health Ministry data.

The ministry issued a statement Sunday morning that because of heavy traffic on its green pass website and app, previously existing certificates would be valid in the coming few days.



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Israel's chief envoy Yair Lapid in Bahrain for first official visit
Israeli settlers attack Palestinian village, wound toddler

[First official EgyptAir flight lands at Tel Aviv airport](#)

Author:

Mon, 2021-10-04 00:05

JERUSALEM: Egypt's national carrier on Sunday made its first official direct flight to Israel since the two countries signed a historic 1979 peace treaty as an EgyptAir jet landed at Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion Airport.

The airline's affiliate, AirSinai, has for decades operated flights to Israel without the company logo, out of fear of public backlash.

The national carrier will now run three weekly flights between Cairo and Tel Aviv with the EgyptAir markings.

The Israeli Embassy in Cairo tweeted that direct flights are "an important and welcome sign of strengthening bilateral ties between the two countries,

especially economic relations.”

Last week, Bahrain’s GulfAir made its first direct flight to Israel, further cementing commercial ties established with the signing of the “Abraham Accords” between Israel and four Arab states last year.

Sunday’s flight came two weeks after Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett made the first public visit to Egypt by an Israeli leader in over a decade.

He met with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi in the Sinai resort town of Sharm El-Sheikh in a sign of warming ties between the two countries.

In August, Israel removed a longstanding advisory for its citizens about travel to Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula, a move seen as a gesture to its strategic partner.



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EgyptAir to boost weekly flights between Cairo and Istanbul
EgyptAir reduces its ticket prices by 50% to European countries