

Tunisian president extends suspension of parliament's work

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TUNIS: Tunisian President Kais Saied extended on Monday the suspension of parliament until further notice, the presidency said. He also extended the suspension of the immunity of members of parliament. Saied last month dismissed his prime minister, froze parliament and assumed executive authority in a sudden intervention that his Islamist opponents have labeled a coup but that he said was necessary to save the country from collapse.



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Aid groups: Millions in Syria, Iraq

Losing access to water

Author:

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BEIRUT: Millions of people in Syria and Iraq are at risk of losing access to water, electricity and food amid rising temperatures, record low water levels due to lack of rainfall and drought, international aid groups warned on Monday.

The two neighboring countries, both battered by years of conflict and mismanagement, are in need of rapid action to combat severe water shortages, the groups said.

The drought is also disrupting electricity supplies as low water levels impact dams, which in turn impact essential infrastructure, including health facilities.

More than 12 million people in both countries are affected, including 5 million in Syria who are directly dependent on the Euphrates River.

In Iraq, the loss of access to water from the Euphrates and Tigris River, and drought, threaten at least 7 million people.

Some 400 sq. km of agricultural land faces drought, the groups said, adding that two dams in northern Syria, supplying power to 3 million people, face imminent closure.

Carsten Hansen, regional director for the Norwegian Refugee Council, one of the aid groups behind the warning, said that for hundreds of thousands of Iraqis still displaced and many more still fleeing for their lives in Syria, the unfolding water crisis "will soon become an unprecedented catastrophe pushing more into displacement."

Other aid groups included Mercy Corps, the Danish Refugee Council, CARE international, ACTED and Action Against Hunger.

They warned that several Syrian provinces – including Hassakah, Aleppo and Raqqa in the north and Deir Ezzor in the east – have witnessed a rise in water-borne diseases.

The areas include displacement settlements housing tens of thousands of people displaced in Syria's 10-year conflict.

CARE's regional chief for Mideast and North Africa, Nirvana Shawky, urged authorities and donor governments to act swiftly to save lives.

The latest crisis comes on top of war, COVID-19 and severe economic decline, she said.

"There is no time to waste," said Gerry Garvey of the Danish Refugee Council, adding that the water crisis is likely to increase conflict in an already destabilized region.

Severe water shortages have also hit Lebanon, which is mired in the worst economic and financial crisis in its modern history, where more than 4 million people – mainly vulnerable children and families – face critical water shortages in the coming days, the UN's children agency warned last week.

In Lebanon, severe fuel shortages have also halted the work of thousands of

private generators long relied on for electricity in the corruption-plagued country.

UNICEF called for urgent restoration of the power supply to keep water services running.

Lebanon's rivers are also heavily polluted.

Activists have long warned about pollution levels caused by sewage and waste in the Litani River, the country's longest and a major source for water supply, irrigation and hydroelectricity.



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Graft and security issues feed the trade in Iraq's past

[Copper mining in nature reserve sparks debate between Jordanian government and environmentalists](#)

Author:

Mon, 2021-08-23 23:33

AMMAN: Jordanian government officials have been embroiled in a debate regarding the decision to mine for copper in parts of the Dana Natural Reserve, one of the sites being considered by UNESCO as part of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.

Former Environment Minister Yaseen Khayyat argued that any change in the area of the reserve would cause a reevaluation of the Jordanian application to UNESCO and could lead to a refusal by the world body.

Khayyat said the mining plans could affect the environmental equilibrium in this rich environmental reserve.

The International Council for Monuments and Sites in Jordan, headed by former UNESCO goodwill ambassador Princess Dana Firas, issued an international call for protection of the reserve and called on the government to immediately reverse its decision.

The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature said it opposed any redrawing of the boundaries and that it would take "all legal and escalatory measures under Jordanian law" to protect the country's nature reserves.

Khalid Al-Irani is president of the RSCN, which is responsible for the site, and he described the announcement as a "black day" for Jordan.

Dana is Jordan's largest natural reserve, covering some 320 sq km of mountains and wadis along the Great Rift Valley.

It is home to a wide variety of plant and animal species, many of which are rare and endangered.

Environmentalists argue the decision is short-sighted, while the government insists it is necessary and will not have any lasting negative environmental effects.

Speaking at an event for World Humanitarian Day, organized by the JONAF coalition of Jordanian development agencies, former minister Yusuf Mansur called the decision "short-sighted"

The Dana Reserve was no longer emphasized as a center for tourist attractions in Jordan, said Mansur.

"We must not replace largely natural profit with little profit."

The government said that, since 2016, there had been an agreement with an international contracting company to look into the possibility of mining but that the RSCN had blocked its efforts to access the intended sites.

The government said it was well aware of the environmental importance of the nature reserve and that the mining decision would not affect it.

The government has even suggested making a piece of land available that will be equal to the one that will be cut from the reserve for copper mining.

The cash-strapped government has said that copper mining could bring in badly needed revenues to the country and will employ thousands of Jordanians.

Environmentalists and economists have questioned those claims, saying the gains would be relatively small.

Maher Hijazin, former director of the Natural Resources Authority, said that copper mining could bring in as much as JOD3 billion (\$4.23 billion) to JOD4 billion in the coming 20 years and that it would employ 1,000 Jordanians.

But the size of the revenue was questioned by Mansur.

“In 20 years, the annual revenue will be about JOD30 million,” he tweeted. “Therefore, there is no reason to be greedy.”



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[Copper mining](#)

Copper hits record high on higher demand hopesCopper hits 9-1/2-yr high on tight supply, solid demand

Moroccan-Italian jailed for 'insulting Islam' to walk free

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RABAT: A dual Moroccan-Italian citizen jailed for three and a half years for "insulting Islam" will walk free Monday after a court gave her a suspended two-month jail term, a rights group said.

"She will be leaving prison Monday evening," a member of Morocco's Association of Human Rights in Marrakesh, Omar Arbib, told AFP.

The 23-year-old woman was arrested in June at Rabat airport when she arrived from France and sentenced later that month to three and a half years in jail. The Marrakesh appeals court on Monday overturned the sentence, handing her a suspended two-month jail term, Arbib said. A fine of almost \$6,000 euros was also scrapped.

She was convicted for "insulting Islam" after sharing on Facebook Arabic phrases imitating an extract from the Qur'an "without knowing the content because she is not fluent in Arabic," her father said at the time.

Legal proceedings began after a religious association in Marrakesh submitted a complaint against her.

Article 267 of Morocco's penal code stipulates a sentence of between six months and two years in prison for the offense of "insulting Islam," but the penalty increases to a maximum of five years if the offense is committed in public, including via electronic platforms.

Rome welcomed the news of the court's decision, with Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio thanking Italian diplomats and European Affairs Undersecretary Enzo Amendola for their work on the case, Italian news agency ANSA reported.



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Italian-Arab literary magazine aiming to 'revitalize culture between Med shores'

[Boris Johnson and Joe Biden agree on Kabul evacuation efforts](#)

Author:

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Mon, 2021-08-23 22:03

LONDON: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and US President Joe Biden agreed on Tuesday to work together to ensure all those eligible to leave Afghanistan were able to, including after the initial evacuation phase ended, Johnson's office said.

“They discussed the ongoing efforts by the UK and U.S. to coordinate the rapid and safe evacuation of our nationals and those who previously worked with our governments from Kabul International Airport,” a Downing Street spokesman said after the two leaders spoke by phone. “The leaders agreed to continue working together to ensure those who are eligible to leave are able to, including after the initial phase of the evacuation has ended.”



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