

BAGHDAD (Xinhua) – The Iraqi Ministry of Health reported on Friday 2,767 new COVID-19 cases, the lowest daily number in three months, raising the total nationwide infections to 1,134,859.

A statement by the ministry also reported 27 new deaths, raising the death toll from the infectious virus to 15,910, while the total recoveries in Iraq climbed by 5,769 to 1,034,396.

A total of 9,840,649 tests have been carried out across the country since the outbreak of the disease in February 2020, with 22,680 done during the day.

If you are greeted then return the greetings more warmly. If you are favored, then repay the obligation manifold; but he who takes the initiative will always excel in merit.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

Zionist Escalation Shames Persian Gulf, Arab Partners



(L-R) The leaders of Bahrain, the Zionist regime and the UAE with then U.S. president Donald Trump after the signing of the normalization deal.

DUBAI (Dispatches) – The deadly escalation between the Zionist regime and the Palestinians has embarrassed Persian Gulf states which forged ties with the occupying regime and put a strain on their normalization deal that were billed as a ‘game-changer’.

The bloodshed has prompted condemnation from the regime’s new Arab partners, at a time when Muslims have been celebrating the end of the holy month of Ramadan.

Less than a year after signing the deal with the Zionist regime, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco have been forced to change course and turn to critical rhetoric.

“These statements are largely intended as a public relations exercise towards a domestic and regional Arab audience that continues to overwhelmingly support the Palestinians,” Elham Fakhro, an analyst at the Crisis Group think tank, told AFP.

The Abraham Accords swept away decades of consensus and were condemned as “treason” by Palestinian leaders who feared they undercut their demands for a homeland.

They were struck at the urging of then U.S. president Donald Trump, who hailed the “dawn of a new Middle East” as his son-in-law and advisor Jared Kushner dismissed

the Zionist-Palestinian conflict as a mere “real estate dispute”.

It has now come roaring back into the headlines.

“The Abraham Accords were never intended to address the conditions of military occupation and land dispossession facing the Palestinians,” Fakhro said.

In Bahrain, daily demonstrations have been staged in support of the Palestinians.

Internet users have shared photos of themselves wearing the Palestinian chequered keffiyeh scarf, and civil society groups have called for ties with the Zionist regime to be severed.

In the UAE, which has tight curbs on social media, many users have shared videos and photos to denounce the occupation and brutality of Zionist troops.

For Hugh Lovatt, an analyst at the European Council on Foreign Relations, the crisis is “the first real test” for the UAE, which for years had quietly cultivated ties with the regime.

“From Netanyahu’s perspective, the Abraham Accords vindicated his long-held belief that Palestinians could be effectively sidelined as Israel developed its ties with neighboring states,” Lovatt said.

“Is the UAE prepared to put its relations with Israel on the line for the sake of the Palestinians? The answer appears to be ‘no’ at present,” he said, pointing to gains such as technology partnerships and access to military hardware from the U.S.

“Given the deep bilateral interest that underpin normalization for Israel and the UAE, escalation in Palestine is probably at most a speed bump, not a brick wall.”

While criticism is muted in the UAE, things are more complicated for the other Arab states that moved closer to the occupying regime because of active civil society groups which support the Palestinians.

Normalization is a strategic issue for Morocco, linked to U.S. recognition of its sovereignty over the disputed territory of Western Sahara.

Faced with pressure from the street, the North African country condemned the actions of Zionist troops.

Lebanon Mourns Protester Martyred by Zionist Troops



Mohamad Kassem Tahan had been protesting at the Lebanese border against the Zionist regime’s latest assault on the Gaza Strip when he was hit by Zionist troops’ shellfire.

ADLOUN (Dispatches) – A large crowd of mourners brandishing Palestinian flags and the yellow colors of Hezbollah resistance movement gathered in south Lebanon on Saturday for the funeral of a Lebanese protester martyred by Zionist troops’ fire a day earlier.

Mohamad Kassem Tahan had been protesting at the Lebanese border against the occupying regime’s latest assault on the Gaza Strip when he was hit by shellfire.

That came after a number of young demonstrators gathered on the Lebanese border overseeing the occupied territories in town of Metulla, according to Lebanese state media.

On Saturday, Tahan’s hometown of Adloun held a funeral that coincided with the anniversary of the Nakba -- the “catastrophe” of the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians during the regime’s occupation in 1948.

Hezbollah fighters in military fatigues carried the 21-year-old’s coffin, wrapped in the movement’s yellow flag, through a crowd of mourners to the sound of pro-Palestinian

chants and sporadic gunfire.

“To al-Quds we will go, and the martyrs will be in the millions!”

Hezbollah, a key enemy of the Zionist regime, had declared Tahan a martyr on Friday and Lebanese president Michel Aoun condemned the “crime committed by Israeli forces”.

Speaking to AFP at the funeral, Tahan’s friend Karim called him “a very loving young man.”

“He was loved in Adloun. He used to help everyone, even if he was busy,” the 17-year-old said.

Beside him, a group of Tahan’s friends cried on a sofa, while outside, copies of his portrait lined roads leading to the funeral venue.

The funeral came as dozens of pro-Palestinian demonstrators gathered along the southern frontier to commemorate the Nakba and denounce the occupying regime’s violence in Gaza and al-Quds.

Brandishing flags and wearing chequered Palestinian scarves, they gathered at several locations including the Lebanese border towns of Maroun Al-Ras and Adaisseh, according to AFP correspondents in the area.

Taliban, Afghan Gov’t Negotiators Meet in Qatar

DOHA (Dispatches) – Negotiators from the Taliban and Afghanistan’s government have met in Qatar, according to the warring sides, after a long pause in talks between the two.

The development came on Friday, the second day of a three-day ceasefire announced by the Taliban for the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr.

They began negotiations in September last year to find a way to end decades of war. But the talks stalled after a few rounds and violence has esca-

lated since the United States started a final pullout of troops from Afghanistan on May 1.

“The two sides discussed the on-going situation of the country and emphasized speeding up the peace talks in Doha,” the negotiating team representing the Afghan government said on Twitter.

The spokesman for the Taliban’s political office, Mohammad Naeem, posted a similar message on Twitter, and added that both sides had agreed to continue talks after the Eid

holidays.

On Thursday, the Taliban announced a three-day ceasefire for Eid-al Fitr — the Muslim holiday — which marks the end of the holy month of Ramadan.

Finding common ground between the two warring sides has been a top priority.

The violence escalated after the U.S. missed a May 1 deadline and announced it will withdraw troops by September to end its 20-year occupation in Afghanistan.

The Taliban refused to attend a Washington-backed conference in Turkey’s Istanbul last month that was being held in a bid to speed up talks. The event was later indefinitely postponed.

Taliban leader Hibatullah Akhundzada said in a message on Thursday that the U.S. has so far violated the agreement reached between the group and Washington in Doha last year. Under the deal, Washington pledged to withdraw its forces.

Tourism Ad Mask Causes Uproar in Turkey

ANKARA (Middle East Eye) – A new video distributed by Turkey’s tourism ministry that features Turkish staff wearing masks with the words “Enjoy, I’m vaccinated” has triggered a backlash online, with people likening the masks to cattle tags.

Turkey has been in lockdown for the past two weeks, due to a surge in Covid-19 cases. The Turkish opposition blames the government for not securing enough vaccinations and for a slow start to the vaccination program.

One of the main factors behind Ankara’s decision to reimpose a 17-day-long lockdown - its strictest yet - was to allow for a potential opening ahead of the busiest tourist season.

The Turkish lira has lost nearly 60% of its value in the past two years, and the govern-

ment doesn’t want to lose income from a crucial industry. In 2019, Turkey made nearly \$35bn from tourism.

While Turks have been isolating at home, their government has allowed tourists who are visiting the country short-term to be exempt from the new lockdown measures, triggering widespread outrage.

Can Okar, a social media commentator, summed up a widespread feeling over the controversial video on Twitter.

“The vast majority of Turks aren’t vaccinated because of supply issues,” Okar tweeted. “Turkey doesn’t ask for PCR tests from many countries, let alone vaccinations. It places the health and welfare of tourists above the locals. It dehumanizes and instrumentalizes work-

ers.”

On Friday, the Turkish health ministry’s website indicated that only 14% of Turks have received their first dose of a vaccine so far.

Opposition leaders were quick to condemn the video, saying that the ad made it seem as if the Turkish government doesn’t value its citizens. “They left the citizens without vaccines. They bankrupted all sectors including tourism,” Ali Babacan, a Liberal Democrat opposition leader said in a tweet.

The tourism ministry later removed the ad from its official account, but the video has still been circulating online.

Russia and the UK - two countries crucial to Turkey’s tourism sector - halted direct flights due to concerns over soaring Covid-19 cases.

Egypt Prepares for Cross-Border Influx of Wounded Palestinians

CAIRO (Dispatches) – Hospitals in Egypt’s North Sinai, near the border with the Palestinian Gaza Strip, and Ismailia, near the Suez Canal, have made preparations to receive the victims of the Zionist regime’s air strikes on Gaza, Egyptian government officials told Middle East Eye.

The regime’s air strikes, ongoing since 10 May, have so far killed over 120 Gaza residents, including 31 children, and wounded over 900, according to the Health Ministry in the besieged Palestinian coastal enclave.

Gaza’s hospitals and medical professionals are struggling to respond to the needs of the casualties, but some of these victims are expected to arrive in Egypt for treatment via the shared border between Gaza

and Sinai.

The General Authority for Healthcare, an executive arm of the Egyptian Ministry of Health, said on Friday that it had made preparations for treating Gaza’s wounded victims who were expected to arrive in Egypt.

The authority’s head Ahmed al-Sobki told MEE that three major health facilities in Ismailia were ready to receive Gaza’s victims and offer them the necessary care.

Egyptian hospitals are busy responding to the Covid-19 pandemic as local medical teams work breathlessly to cope up with growing daily infections.

Gaza has been under siege by both the Zionist regime and Egypt since 2007.