



An anti-government protester uses a slingshot to fire a stone at security forces during on-going anti-government protests near Tahrir Square, Baghdad, Iraq on July 27. (AP)

## Iraq premier orders probe after two protesters killed

'Forces not authorized to fire'

**BAGHDAD, July 28, (AP):** Iraq's prime minister has said he had ordered an investigation into the killing of two anti-government protesters, saying security forces were not authorized to fire "a single bullet" toward the demonstrators. Twenty-one protesters were also wounded in the overnight clashes.

Separately, four katyusha rockets landed in Camp Taji, north of Baghdad, which houses U.S.-led coalition troops, according to three Iraqi security officials. One official said the rockets targeted a runway used by Iraqi helicopters, close to where American forces are present. One helicopter was damaged. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

The violence comes after months of quiet in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, and were an embarrassment to Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi, who has vowed to meet protester demands by holding early elections and investigating the death of hundreds of protesters at the hands of security forces in recent months.

Tensions between the security forces and the demonstrators soared late Sunday when dozens of protesters cut the road connecting two main intersections - Tayaran Square and Tahrir Square - in the capital Baghdad. Some burned tires while others chanted slogans about power cuts in the scorching summer months.

Iraq is facing electricity shortages amid searing summer temperatures that can top 50 degrees Celsius, or about 122 degrees Fahrenheit.

A senior Electricity Ministry official said the power supply fell short by 10,000 megawatts this summer, down 1,000 megawatts compared to last year, due to lack of maintenance in several power plants because of lack of funds in state coffers. This has also slowed investment projects to

add more power to Iraq's grid, he said, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

"Every bullet directed our youth and our people while demanding their rights is a bullet directed at our dignity and principles," al-Kadhimi said in a televised speech Monday evening. He said he had ordered a probe and requested to have the facts before him within 72 hours.

Al-Kadhimi said there is no "magic solution" for Iraq's electricity problem, which is a result of decades of corruption and mismanagement and "cannot be resolved overnight." He said his government was working on a solution, and reiterated his intention to pave the way for early elections in line with protesters' demands.

In October, mass anti-government protests erupted in Baghdad and across Iraq's predominately Shiite south as tens of thousands of angry Iraqi youth took to the streets to decry rampant government corruption, unemployment and poor services, including electricity. Pressure from protests led to the resignation of Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi.

Since October, over 600 demonstrators have been killed during protests due to live fire and tear gas used by security forces. But al-Kadhimi, who was sworn in as prime minister in May, also has to cope with an unprecedented economic crisis spurred by falling oil prices and the coronavirus pandemic.

Iraq's Health Ministry has reported 110,032 cases, including 4,362 deaths.

The spread of the coronavirus had halted mass rallies and prompted most protesters to leave, with only a few remaining at the tent sit-in at Tahrir Square, once the epicenter of the protest movement.

Ali al-Bayati, a spokesman for the semi-official Independent High Commission for Human Rights, also said two protesters had been killed. The commission said their reports indicate live fire and pellet rifles were used to disperse protesters.

Earlier, Iraqi security officials said demonstrators had hurled firebombs and stones at the riot police, while rioters monitors said security forces set fire to demonstrator tents at Tahrir Square.

### News in Brief

**RIYADH:** Saudi Arabia announced on Monday that COVID-19 has claimed 27 lives and 1,993 new infected cases.

The death toll rose to 2,760 and total confirmed cases reached to 268,934, while 2,613 recovered from COVID-19, bringing the total to 222,936 recovery cases (KUNA)

**MANAMA:** Bahrain Health Ministry announced on Monday the death of one patient due to COVID-19, increasing the death toll to 141 and new 384 cases.

The total recovered cases reached 35,689 and existing cases to 33,011, the ministry added in a statement. (KUNA)

**MUSCAT:** Sultanate of Oman sustained up to 1,058 new infection cases with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), during last 24 hours, raising the toll of contaminations with the highly contagious virus to 77,058.

Official Oman News Agency quoted a statement by the Ministry of Health as saying, on Monday, that 952 of the cases were of Omani citizens and 101 of expatriates. (KUNA)

**CAIRO:** Egyptian Ministry of Health said Monday 46 persons died of the coronavirus while 420 people tested positive for the virus in the past 24 hours.

Ministry spokesman **Dr Khaled Mujahed** said total deaths reached 4,642 and tally of registered infections was 92,482.

Mujahed said 1,007 people recovered from the virus to reach 34,838. (KUNA)

**GAZA:** A senior Palestinian man died of the novel coronavirus in the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian ministry of health said Monday.

It added in a statement a 69-year-old from Al-Jalzoun camp, in the governorate of Ramallah-Beireh, was in the intensive care unit following his infection with the virus.

This death raises today's fatalities to three and total to 81 in general. (KUNA)

**BRUSSELS:** Over 40 tons of medical and emergency supplies to reinforce the humanitarian response has arrived in Iraq as part of the latest in a series of EU Humanitarian Air Bridge flights, the European Commission announced Monday.

The flight is part of the ongoing EU support to deliver assistance to the most serious humanitarian crisis in the world, which are impacted by transport restrictions in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. (KUNA)

## Egyptian women jailed for TikTok dance videos

Egypt, S. Arabia affirm co-op for regional stability

**CAIRO, July 28, (Agencies):** Egypt and Saudi Arabia have affirmed ongoing coordination and cooperation between them for facing joint challenges and achieving regional security and stability.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shukri, speaking after holding talks with his Saudi counterpart, Prince Faisal bin Farhan, on Monday, that a meeting earlier today between the Saudi minister and President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi "affirmed intensification of bilateral cooperation for serving interests of the two brotherly peoples and tackling issues on the Arab arena, particularly with respect of restoring security and stability."

The two countries are capable of facing such challenges "within framework of the solidarity that bonds us," he said.

For his part, Prince Faisal said he listened to the president about Egypt's stance toward regional security.

He added that his discussions with minister Shukry dealt with coordination for facing major challenges in the region, affirming that the Saudi lead-

ership "has given instructions for full coordination with Egypt for serving interests of the two countries as well as those of the region."

Prince Faisal has affirmed Saudi Arabia's full support for Egypt regarding regional conditions, namely those in Libya, as well as for the "Cairo declaration," indicating Riyadh's desire to see the situation in Libya be tackled with peaceful solutions.

Moreover, he has also indicated that Riyadh desires to see a cease-fire in Libya, respect for fundamentals of Egypt's national security, stressing on the necessity to protect Libya against all forms of foreign intervention.

"We will continue coordinating closely to find chances of tackling the situation in Libya," he added

Meanwhile, an Egyptian court sentenced several young women to two years in prison Monday for posting "indecent" dance videos on TikTok in a fraught case that critics describe as a further crackdown on self-expression in the conservative society.

The women were also fined 300,000 Egyptian pounds (nearly \$19,000)

each for "violating the values and principles of the Egyptian family," inciting debauchery and promoting human trafficking, according to a statement from the public prosecutor.

Their lawyers vowed to appeal the ruling.

The prosecution statement named just two of the defendants - 20-year-old student Haneen Hossam and 22-year-old Mawada Eladhm - and said the other three helped run their social media accounts.

Both women recently vaulted to TikTok fame, amassing millions of followers for their video snippets set to catchy Egyptian club-pop tracks. In their respective 15-second clips, the women wearing makeup pose in cars, dance in kitchens and joke in skits - familiar and seemingly tame content for the platform.

But their social media stardom became their undoing in Egypt, where citizens can land in prison for vague crimes such as "misusing social media," "disseminating fake news," or "inciting debauchery and immorality."

## Gulf Bank Carries On Employee Wellbeing Campaign



• Salma Al Hajjaj

*In response to the unprecedented circumstances resulting from the current ongoing coronavirus pandemic, Gulf Bank has launched The Employee Wellbeing Program to assist its employees cope with the drastic changes and its effects on their emotional and mental wellbeing. The program, which offers employees access to professional counselling through a series of focused workshop sessions, is designed to target specific challenges facing the bank's workforce, particularly the customer facing employees. In partnership with Dr Amar Behbehani, who holds a PhD in Creative Psychology and Design Education, the sessions offer up to 40 hours of group counselling where employees discuss the state of their psychological wellbeing and are offered the tools and advice to cope with any emotional or mental challenges they face.*

The initiative was at first launched as public webinars targeting employees in the banking sector during Kuwait's full lockdown to monitor the psychological effects this period had on employees and to provide the guidance and advice on coping mechanism. Using a multitude of interactive tools and polls, attendees discussed issues related to personal, social and career wellbeing in light of the psychological challenges employees have been adapting to during the past few months on both a personal and career level.

The current ongoing workshop sessions, exclusive only to Gulf Bank employees, offers a more focused approach towards raising awareness on various topics such as mental health, human relations, creative problem solving and motivation. Dr Amar leads these workshops with particular attention to front line and customer facing employees who constitute the majority of attendees.

On the importance of this program, Gulf Bank's General Manager of Human Resources, Salma Al-Hajjaj has stated: "We are committed to looking after our employees' well-being, even as we continue to serve our customer, which is why we believe this initiative will be of great benefit to them. We designed this program to address specific challenges and provides employees with the tools they need to adapt. Being fully aware of the mental and emotional implications this pandemic has had on the masses, we believe it is an essential recovery program".

Gulf Bank is currently welcoming customers at a select number of branches throughout the country, and is keen on applying all the necessary precautionary measures to ensure the regular sterilization of its locations. These measures include taking customers' temperatures at the entrance, maintaining physical distance, and ensuring both customers and staff are wearing gloves and masks at all times. Gulf Bank is committed to applying the best preventive health measure to ensure the safety of both its clients and staff.

To learn more about Gulf Bank's services, customers can contact the Customer Contact Center by calling 1805805 or direct their queries through the WhatsApp service on 65805805. In addition, customers can also visit [www.e-gulfbank.com](http://www.e-gulfbank.com) for more information •

## Dozens killed in Yemen

Torrential rains wreak destruction

**SANAA, Yemen, July 28, (AP):** Flash floods have ravaged swathes of war-torn Yemen, leaving dozens dead and destroying thousands of homes, security officials and an aid group said Monday.

At a time when Yemen is already mired in escalated fighting, widespread hunger and a major coronavirus outbreak, the spate of torrential rains is exacerbating the world's worst humanitarian disaster. "The combination of coronavirus, conflict and heavy rains this year is hurting millions of Yemenis across the country," said Abdi Ismail, the head of the International Committee of the Red Cross mission in Yemen.

In southern Yemen, 33,000 displaced people who were sheltering in camps lost their tents and belongings in the floods, the ICRC reported, add-

ing that dozens have died across the country.

In the impoverished western provinces of Hajjah and Hodeida, security officials said 23 people were killed or missing over the last 24 hours and 187 homes were destroyed. With torrents sweeping away roads and dozens of cars, hundreds of newly displaced families in the area have become stranded without access to food. Dirty floodwater has contaminated wells that many Yemenis rely on for water. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to brief the media.

A hotel marooned in muddied water in the capital, Sanaa, collapsed late Monday, killing four people and injuring three. Rescue teams are still searching for other missing people.