

King chairs National Security Council meeting on Karak attack

- His Majesty underscores that security and safety of Jordanians are red line
- King says hand of justice will reach every terrorist, cowardly acts will not shake national unity
- His Majesty directs relevant authorities to respond with 'iron fist' against anyone attempting to undermine national unity
- His Majesty underscores importance of conducting comprehensive security assessment of response to terrorist attack

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah chaired a National Security Council meeting on Saturday, during which he received a security briefing on the terrorist attack that targeted a church in the village of Hmoud in Karak Governorate on Friday, resulting in the death and injury of a number of civilians.

During the meeting, attended by HRH Crown Prince Hussein, His Majesty asserted that there is no room for leniency when it comes to the lives

of Jordanians and reiterated his condemnation of the despicable terrorist act, according to a Royal Court statement.

The King underscored that the security and safety of Jordanians are a red line, asserting that the hand of justice will reach every terrorist, and that such cowardly acts have not, and will not, intimidate Jordan and its people, nor shake their national unity.

His Majesty directed the relevant authorities to respond with "an iron fist" against the like



His Majesty King Abdullah chairs a National Security Council meeting on Saturday, attended by HRH Crown Prince Hussein

need to firmly counter rumours and misinformation that might exploit this crime to incite fear and discord.

His Majesty also underscored the importance of conducting a comprehensive security assessment of the response to the terrorist attack, and directed the development of practical measures to boost security readiness and preempt future threats, while emphasising the need to uphold the rule of law and state authority.

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Prime minister vows to bring Karak attack perpetrators to justice

AMMAN (JT) — Prime Minister Jafar Hassan vowed that those responsible for the deadly attack in Karak Governorate would be brought to justice, pledging a sweeping security response and strict legal measures against extremism.

Speaking during a security meeting in Karak, Hassan expressed condolences for the victims, describing them as among the finest sons of the nation and wished the injured a speedy recovery, according to a Prime Ministry statement.

"The criminal hands that took the lives of our noble sons today (on Wednesday) will not escape punishment," Hassan said, adding that the government would mobilise all available re-



Prime Minister Jafar Hassan speaks during a security meeting in Karak, following the terrorist attack against a church in the southern governorate

sources to ensure those responsible face justice.

Hassan said that the measures were being implemented in accordance with directives from His Majesty King Abdullah, stressing that security agencies would

pursue the perpetrators without hesitation.

The prime minister attributed the attack to "extremist terrorist ideology and blind radicalism", warning that the government would not allow such ideologies to gain a foothold in Jordanian society.

He also vowed the strictest legal action against anyone who incites discord or seeks to promote extremism within the community.

"Under the King's leadership, Jordan would continue to stand firmly against takfiri ideology and the groups. The Khawarij have no place in our society," Hassan said.

"Anyone found to have cooperated with such groups would likewise have no place in Jordanian society,"



People gather outside Prince Ali Military Hospital, where some of those injured in Friday's terrorist attack in Karak are receiving medical treatment

Three injured in Karak attack discharged from hospital — official

AMMAN (JT) — Three people injured in an attack on a church in Karak Governorate were discharged from Karak Public Hospital on Saturday after their conditions stabilised, while two others remained hospitalised, the hospital's director, Ali Sarayreh, said.

Karayreh told the Jordan News Agency, Petra, that the three patients had been discharged following treatment, while the two others remained under medical care pending further improvement in their conditions.

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Sit-in condemns terrorist attack in Hmoud village in Karak

AMMAN (JT) — Representatives of political parties, religious communities, along with citizens, on Friday held a sit-in outside the Greek Orthodox Church in Amman's Sweifieh area to condemn the terrorist attack on Hmoud Church in Karak Governorate, which left several people dead and others injured.

The sit-in was attended by ministers, senators, MPs, representatives of political parties and youth organisations, tribal leaders and members of the public, who raised Jordanian flags, lit candles and



Representatives of political parties, religious communities, along with citizens, on Friday held a sit-in outside the Greek Orthodox Church in Amman's Sweifieh

chanted slogans affirming national unity and the country's security

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King vows firm response as Karak attack death toll rises to nine

By Mai Anati

AMMAN — His Majesty King Abdullah on Saturday vowed a firm response to the terrorist attack on a church in Karak Governorate, as the toll rose to nine following the death of an injured victim.

Chairing a National Security Council meeting attended by HRH Crown Prince Hussein, the King stressed that the lives and security of Jordanians were a red line and that those responsible would be brought to justice.

"The hand of justice



His Majesty King Abdullah visits those injured in Friday's terrorist attack on Hmoud Church in the southern city of Karak

will reach every terrorist," the King said, directing security agencies to act firmly against extremists and anyone seeking to undermine national unity.

The King ordered a

comprehensive review of security measures to strengthen preparedness and anticipate potential threats. He also called for a systematic plan, in coordination with religious authorities, to address the roots of extremist ideology.

The attack took place on Friday at a church in Hmoud village, Karak Governorate, during a condolence gathering. Authorities initially reported seven fatalities and 40 people receiving medical treatment.

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Queen Rania says Hmoud village tragedy touches entire Jordanian family

AMMAN (JTA) — Her Majesty Queen Rania on Friday stressed that the heinous crime against worshippers in Karak has devastated

Terrorism has no place in Jordan's values of humanity, respect for life — Safadi



AMMAN (JP) — Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi on Friday expressed his deepest condolences to the families of the martyrs killed in a terrorist attack targeting a funeral procession at a church in Karak.

Safadi also wished a speedy recovery to those injured in the attack, according to a post published on his official account on X.

Safadi emphasised that Jordan will remain safe, stable and resilient against terrorism through the unity and solidarity of its people.

He added that terrorist darkness has no place in a nation built on values, enlightenment, humanity and respect for life.

Crown Prince: Terrorism will not undermine Karak's legacy of honour, dignity



AMMAN (JT) — HRI Crown Prince Hussein affirmed that acts of terrorism would not undermine the Government of Karak or its long-standing legacy of honour and dignity.

In a special media post, the Crown Prince stressed that Jordanians would remain united in defending the country's security and stability.

His Royal Highness expressed his condolences to the families of the martyrs and sincere wish of a speedy recovery to those injured.

He also reaffirmed the resolve of Jordanians to stand together against any attempts to threaten the nation's security and stability.

Prime minister: Attack on Karak church an assault on all Jordanians



AMMAN (JT) — Prime Minister Jafar Hassan said that the attack on Husoud Church in Karak was an assault on all Jordanians, stressing that terrorism has no religion or homeland.

In a post on X, Jafar said, "The heinous crime that struck our brothers in Husoud Church in Karak is an assault on every Jordanian man and woman. Terrorism has no homeland and no religion, and there will be no place in this country for those who sow discord and extremism."

The prime minister added that justice would be served and that those responsible for the terrorist act would be brought to justice.

Regional, international support pours in for Jordan after Karak attack



AMMAN (WT) — Regional and international leaders, governments and organisations have condemned the deadly terrorist attack on a church in Karak on Friday, expressing solidarity with Jordan and offering condolences to the victims' families while reaffirming support for the Kingdom's security and stability.

Arab League Secretary General Nabil Fattouh on Friday stressed the organisation's full solidarity with Jordan following the heinous terrorist act that targeted a church in Karak Governorate, resulting in civilian casualties and injuries.

In an official statement, cited by the Jordan News Agency, Fattouh extended its sincere condolences to the Kingdom and the families of the victims, wishing the injured a speedy recovery.

The secretary general stressed that targeting places of worship constituted a rejected terrorist act and a condemned crime by all standards, marking a flagrant violation of human and religious values.

He called for maintaining national unity during this critical time, urging a united stance against attempts to sow division and spread chaos.

Fattouh expressed the Arab League's complete backing for Jordan's leadership, government and people, alongside supporting all measures taken by the Kingdom to protect peaceful coexistence, security, sovereignty and public safety.

The European Union also strongly condemned the terrorist attack targeting a church in Karak, some 140 kilometres south of Amman, expressing its solidarity with the victims and their families.

In an official statement, the EU affirmed its solidarity with the Jordanian people and government, expressing full support for the investigations conducted by security agencies to reveal the circumstances of the terrorist operation, Petri reported.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi

strongly condemned the terrorist attack targeting the church, expressing Egypt's full solidarity with Jordan in countering terrorism and violence.

Al Sisi extended his sincere condolences to His Majesty King Abdullah and the Jordanian people over the victims of the attack, emphasizing Egypt's unwavering support for the Kingdom in confronting all forms of extremism and terrorism.

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun and Prime Minister Nawaf Salam condemned the terrorist attack targeting churches at Saint George Church in Karak.

In an official statement, cited by Petra, Aoun expressed deep sorrow over the criminal act, emphasizing that targeting places of worship constitutes all religious and human values.

Aoun extended his heartfelt condolences to His Majesty, the Jordanian government, the people of the Kingdom and the families of the victims, while wishing a speedy recovery to the injured.

Salam strongly condemned the attack, emphasizing that targeting civilians and places of worship constitutes a flagrant violation of human and religious values.

Iraqi Prime Minister Al Nouri on Friday condemned the criminal terrorist act, emphasizing that the crime calls for standing united against all voices threatening an eternal security.

Lower House Speaker Marwan Thaghir (recused)

phone call from Iraqi Speaker of the Council of Representatives Hajj al-Hakim, who offered condolences over the victims of the terrorist attack.

Hakim extended sincere condolences to His Majesty and the Jordanian people, affirming Iraq's full solidarity and support for Jordan in confronting terrorism and safeguarding mutual stability.

President of the Libyan Presidential Council Mohamed Menfi on Friday expressed his condolences to His Majesty and the Jordanian people following the terrorist attack.

Menfi strongly condemned the criminal act, describing it as a flagrant violation of human values and moral principles.

Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Jassem Al-Thumairy strongly condemned the terrorist attack, affirming the council's total rejection of criminal acts that violate human and moral principles.

In a statement reported by the Saudi Press Agency, and cited by Petra, Al-Thumairy stressed the GCC's full solidarity with Jordan, expressing complete support for all measures taken by the Kingdom to safeguard its security, stability and citizens.

The Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Friday expressed Riyadh's condemnation in the strongest terms of the cowardly terrorist act.

The ministry voiced Saudi Arabia's full solidarity with the government and people of Jordan.

The ministry reiterated Kuwait's full solidarity with Jordan, expressing unwavering support for all measures taken by the Kingdom to maintain its security and stability.

The Bahraini Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed Mawarrah's strong condemnation of the armed terrorist attack.

In a statement, the ministry expressed sincere condolences to the Jordanian government, people and the families of the victims, while wishing a speedy recovery for all the injured, reiterating Bahrain's categorical rejection of all forms of terrorism and violence.

Uman also strongly condemned the shooting incident targeting:

- In a statement issued by the foreign ministry and reported by the Oman News Agency, Muscat reaffirmed its rejection of all forms of violence, the targeting of places of worship, and the terrorisation of innocent civilians.
- Uman expressed its full solidarity with Jordan, offering sincere condolences to the families of the victims as well as to the government and people of the Kingdom, while wishing the injured a speedy recovery.
- Syria strongly condemned the terrorist attack targeting the church.
- In a statement reported by the Syrian Arab News Agency, the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs affirmed Damascus's complete solidarity with the leadership and people of Jordan in confronting all threats to national security, stability and social cohesion.
- Apostolic Nuncio to Jordan Archbishop Giovanni Dini Dal Tese condemned the attack on the church, emphasising that the assault targeting innocent people during a religious ritual requires strong condemnation and stressing that religion calls for peace, not hatred.
- In a statement, the ambassador noted that he visited the injured and their families in several hospitals across Karbi

Anglican Bishop Willem Smalman to convey Pope Francis's thoughts and condolences. Petra reported.

Tal Theo said that he clearly witnessed Jordanians, both Christians and Muslims, standing together and supporting one another, describing this unity as proof of the Jordanian society's ability to overcome difficulties and continue living together in peace and harmony.

He reaffirmed the Catholic Church's strong commitment to this approach.

The Chinese embassy in Jordan expressed its sincere condolences to the families of the victims of the attack on the church in the village of Humud in Karak, wishing a speedy recovery to the injured.

In a statement, the embassy reaffirmed its solidarity with the Kingdom and its people during this difficult time. Petra reported.

The Japanese embassy expressed its sincere condolences to the families of the victims of the attack in Karak Governorate, wishing a speedy recovery to the injured.

In a statement, the embassy condemned acts of violence, reaffirming its solidarity with the victims' families and all those affected by the attack.

The Australian embassy also expressed its deepest condolences and sincere sympathy to the families of the victims of the terrorist attack, reiterating Australia's firm condemnation of terrorism and violent extremism in all forms and affirming its complete solidarity with the Jordanian people during this difficult time.

Poland in Saturday strongly condemned the terrorist attack targeting a church in the village of Humud in Karak Governorate.

In a statement, the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed its condolences to the families of the victims and reaffirmed its solidarity with the Jordanian authorities and the local

Christian community. The ministry emphasised that Jordan remains an important partner for Israel, noting years of co-operation in combating terrorism and extremism.

The statement also expressed appreciation for the key role Jordan plays in promoting interfaith dialogue.

The Azerbaijan Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed its solidarity with Jordan following the terrorist attack of firing its condemnation of violence against places of worship and attacks on civilians.

In a statement, the ministry extended its deepest condolences to the Jordanian government, people, and the families of the victims.

Patriarch of the Holy City Kyros Kyros Theophilos III, members of the Holy Synod, and Archbishop of Jordan Christophoros on Sunday offered their condolences to the families of victims, the Jordanian public, and the Hashemite leadership.

The Patriarchate strongly condemned the cowardly and bloody attack at the Saint George Greek Orthodox Church, expressing full confidence in national security agencies to swiftly apprehend the terrorists. Patri reported.

In an official statement, the Patriarchate stressed that this violent act will not undermine national unity, but will enhance Christian and Muslim solidarity around the Hashemite leadership.

The statement reaffirmed that the Jordanian society remains resilient against extremist ideology, noting that such criminal acts are entirely alien to the Kingdom's moderate Islamic values.

The Patriarchate also called on all believers to remain steadfast and offer prayers during this difficult time.

The Latin Patriarchate strongly condemned the terrorist attack targeting the church, describing it as a crime that violates the sanctity of places of worship and human

rights to life and freedom of worship.

In an official statement, the Patriarchate extended its sincere condolences to the families of the victims and offered prayers for the full recovery of those injured in the attack.

The Patriarchate expressed pride in the historical and national role of the Hashemite leadership led by His Majesty and High Crown Prince Hassan, in consolidating moderation, tolerance and religious freedom.

The statement emphasized that national cohesion serves as a safety valve against extremism, highlighting that Muslim and Christian Jordanians constitute one unified national family.

The Patriarchate affirmed its support for security agencies in pursuing the perpetrators, calling on all citizens to stand united in safeguarding the security and stability of the Kingdom.

The Royal Committee for Jerusalem Affairs strongly condemned the terrorist attack, reaffirming its absolute rejection of all forms of violence targeting places of worship or seeking to disrupt citizen security and national cohesion, Petra reported.

Abdullah Karoun, secretary general of the committee, said that targeting places of worship represents an assault on religious and human values and violates the principles of freedom of worship.

The Department of Palestinian Affairs and the Palestinian refugee camps in the Kingdom issued a statement on Friday expressing strong condemnation of the terrorist act.

They affirmed their total rejection of all forms of terrorism, extremism and violence that threaten national stability and the safety of Jordanian society, Petra reported.

The Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company on Saturday strongly condemned the criminal attack, reaffirming its total rejection of actions that threaten national security and social cohesion.



Royal Court Chief Yousef Isawi on Saturday checks on those injured in the terrorist attack in Karak

Royal Court chief checks on injured in Karak terrorist attack

AMMAN (JT) — Following Royal directives, Royal Court Chief Yousef Isawi on Saturday checked on those injured in the terrorist attack in Karak and followed up on their medical conditions.

Isawi visited the injured at Karak Military Hospital, Karak Government Hospital and the Italian Hospital, as well as those receiving treatment at Al Bashir Hospital and King Hussein Medical City, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The visits followed His Majesty King Abdullah's visit to those injured in the attack on the Greek Orthodox Church in Hamoud village in Karak Governorate.

Isawi received briefings from medical staff on the injured's conditions, treatment plans and the care being provided. He also spoke with the injured and their families, stressing that His Majesty and HRH Crown Prince Hussein were following up on their conditions until their full recovery.

Isawi also visited the Humana Charitable Society, where he met the families of those killed and injured in the attack and offered his condolences and support.

He said the pain of the affected families was shared by all Jordanians, adding that their patience and the solidarity shown across the country reflected national unity in confronting terrorism.

Isawi stressed that caring for the injured was a national responsibility and that Jordanians stood united against terrorism and any attempts to undermine the Kingdom's security and stability.

He said Jordan, under its Hashemite leadership and with the awareness of its people and the vigilance of its armed forces and security agencies, remained capable of confronting terrorism and extremism.

Isawi commended the medical and nursing staff for their efforts to treat the injured and provide them with the necessary care.

He stressed that all those involved in the attack, including those who planned, carried out, incited or supported it, would be held accountable under the law. He reaffirmed Jordan's commitment to protecting its security and stability and preventing terrorism from undermining national unity.

King receives condolences from UAE, Palestine, Greece, Cyprus leaders after Karak church attack

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Saturday received a phone call from United Arab Emirates President Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, during which the UAE president expressed his condolences for the victims of the terrorist attack that targeted a church in Karak on Friday.

Sheikh Mohamed expressed his country's condemnation of the terrorist attack and its solidarity with Jordan in confronting and combating terrorism.

He also extended his deepest condolences and sympathies to the families of the victims, and wished the injured a speedy recovery.

Also on Saturday, His Majesty received a phone call from Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who affirmed Palestine's solidarity with Jordan.

President Abbas expressed his sincere condolences to the King, the Jordanian people, and the families of the martyrs, and wished the injured a speedy recovery.

The call also touched on Israel's violations in the West Bank, Hebron, and Jerusalem, and the need for the international community to



His Majesty King Abdullah

take immediate action to end the dangerous escalations.

Also on Saturday, the King received phone calls from Greece's President Konstantinos Ar. Tsakos and Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, during which they offered their condolences following

the attack.

Both President Tsakos and Prime Minister Mitsotakis emphasised the importance of stepping up international efforts to combat terrorism and extremism, reaffirming their country's rejection of all forms of violence, and expressing their condolences to the families of the victims, and their wishes for a full recovery for those injured.

Also on Saturday, the King received a phone call from Cyprus President Nikos Christodoulides, who expressed condolences to His Majesty and the Jordanian people over the loss of the victims of the terrorist attack.

President Christodoulides expressed his condemnation and outrage at this criminal attack, emphasizing his country's solidarity and support for the Kingdom's efforts to counter extremism and combat terrorism.

PRESS CONFERENCE

Karak church attack was driven by extremist takfiri ideology — Momani

AMMAN (JT) — Government Communication Minister and Official Government spokesperson Mohammad Momani said that the attack was driven by extremist takfiri ideology, stressing that Jordanian Christians are an integral part of the country's national fabric and have contributed to its past, present and future.

Speaking at a press conference in Karak, Momani condemned the targeting of innocent people during a condolence gathering, describing it as a heinous crime that could not be justified under any circumstances.

"Any attack against a Jordanian, regardless of religion or belief, is an attack on Jordanian society as a whole," he said.



Government Communication Minister and Official Government spokesperson Mohammad Momani

Momani emphasised that Christians are deeply rooted in Jordan's history and national identity.

He added that those responsible for the attack did not represent Jordanian society or its values of coexistence, equal citizenship, mutual respect and human dignity.

He vowed that those responsible would be brought to justice, saying security agencies were pursuing anyone suspected of involvement in planning, carrying out, financing

or facilitating the attack. "Those convicted would face the maximum penalties provided for under the law,"

Health Minister Ibrahim Bishar said that 40 people were injured in the attack.

Two patients were in critical condition at the military hospital, while the remaining patients were reported to be in stable condition, the minister said.

He added that nine patients had been transferred to Prince Ali Military Hospital and three to Karak Government Hospital.

Surgical teams from the Royal Medical Services and the Ministry of Health were dispatched following the incident and were working together at full capacity to treat the injured.



JAF evacuates injured from Karak shooting to King Hussein Medical City

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) evacuated eight people injured in a shooting in Karak Governorate to King Hussein Medical City on Friday, following Royal directives.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Maj. Gen. Majdi Harasbi directed the director general of the Royal Medical Services to arrange the evacuation, according to a JAF statement.

Prince Ali Military Hospital received 26 injured people in connection with the incident. Eight were transferred to King Hussein Medical City by a Royal Jordanian Air Force helicopter while three others were transferred to a private hospital, JAF said.

JAF said that it remained committed to supporting citizens and deploying its available medical resources to fulfil its humanitarian and national duties.



The Public Security Directorate (PSD) on Saturday organises a blood donation campaign at Al Hussein Medical City and Prince Ali Military Hospital to support those injured in the terrorist attack in Karak

PSD organises blood donation campaign for Karak attack victims

AMMAN (JT) — The Public Security Directorate (PSD) on Saturday organised a blood donation campaign at Al Hussein Medical City and Prince Ali Military Hospital to support those injured in the terrorist attack in Karak.

PSD personnel from various units, along with local council members and citizens, took part in the campaign, demonstrating solidarity with the injured, according to a PSD statement.

The campaign aimed to support medical teams by providing the blood units needed to help treat the injured, reflecting the values of solidarity, compassion and national responsibility.

The initiative underscored the unity of Jordanians in times of adversity and their commitment to supporting those affected by the attack, the statement said.

SOLIDARITY

Aqaba launches blood donation campaign for Karak attack victims

AMMAN (JT) — The Aqaba Health Directorate, in cooperation with Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed Hospital in Aqaba and the Professional Associations Complex, on Saturday organised a blood donation campaign under the slogan "At Your Service, Your Majesty. From Aqaba to Karak" in support of those injured in the terrorist attack on a church in Karak.

The campaign, held at the hospital from 9am to 3pm, drew participation from local residents and aimed to boost blood supplies and provide the units needed to treat the injured, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

Aqaba Deputy Governor for Development Affairs Sultan Hassan said the campaign reflected national solidarity and the support



The Aqaba Health Directorate on Saturday organises a blood donation campaign in support of those injured in the terrorist attack on a church in Karak

of Aqaba residents for their fellow Jordanians in Karak.

He described blood donation as a humanitarian and national

duty, stressing the importance of community participation in initiatives that promote solidarity and help those injured.

Aqaba Health Director Sabia Shraideh condemned the attack on Hamoud village church in Karak, rejecting acts that threaten human

life, public security and stability.

She said that the campaign reflected national unity and solidarity, adding that the directorate, in cooperation with the organisers, seeks to promote voluntary blood donation and encourage public participation in initiatives that help save lives.

Hospital Director Musa Shalabi said the campaign conveyed a message of solidarity from Aqaba to Karak, reflecting Jordanians' commitment to supporting one another.

He said growing public interest and continued requests from potential donors could lead to extending the campaign until Sunday to allow more people to participate and increase blood supplies for the injured.



Protesters clash with riot police during a national anti-government demonstration — called by the student-led protest movement to demand better support for education and prime minister's resignation, in central Tirana on Saturday.

Police and protesters clash again at Albanian anti-government rally

TIRANA, Albania (AFP) — Thousands rallied in Tirana on Saturday at a fresh anti-government rally after days of violent street in the Albanian capital, with police firing tear gas to disperse the crowd.

Since mid-October, protesters and police have routinely clashed in Tirana in anti-government demonstrations that morphed from rallies against a development linked to the family of US President Donald Trump.

On Saturday, police fired rubber bullets while some protesters used fireworks against the security forces.

Several government buildings have been attacked, dozens of demonstrators detained and more than 300 protesters and police injured, said the authorities.

"There is a lot of anger," said activist Sadem Vuniku, labelling the movement a "revolution".

"It's not only a matter of students," she told AFP. "It's not only a matter of environmental struggles... It's a matter of the state of rights and state of law."

Thousands of people heeded calls from organizers for students and others around Albania to attend Saturday's rally. Groups representing university professors, artists and opposition parties, had declared their support.

Many shops had closed ahead of the protests, some carrying signs on their shutters, such as: "Don't touch. We're with you."

Soon after the rally began outside the education ministry, which has become a focal point for

protests, a group of demonstrators hurled stones at the building, many of whose windows had been smashed in previous days, according to an AFP reporter.

Riot police immediately retaliated with water cannons, tear gas and rubber bullets.

Protesters said they had some people slightly among their numbers. Police did not reply to a request for information on their side.

"We are here for one reason: We want to stay in our country and not have to dream of a life elsewhere," Rosela Mira, a first-year medical student, told AFP.

"I want to have a future here."

Her sister, a high school student, standing nearby, described deteriorating learning conditions, with 40 pupils per class and a lack of facilities such as laboratories, at her school.

More than 1.5 million people have left the Balkan nation since the fall of communism in the 1990s.

The population now stands at 2.2 million.

The average salary before tax is 930 euros (\$1,026) per month.

"We have to work several jobs, to help our parents, who receive meagre pensions," said Fabiola Nika, a third-year university law student.

"No violence", "Transparency" and "Democracy in danger" read some of the banners carried by high-school teachers and university professors.

They gathered on pavements partly stripped of their cobblestones, ripped up by protesters in previous days.

Albania ranks 91st

among 162 countries in watchdog Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index.

Anti-government protests started in May, sparked by a luxury hotel project linked to US President Donald Trump's family, which scientists said in July had already caused irreparable damage to a once-pristine stretch of Albania's coast.

"Anger over the resort development has morphed into a broader push against corruption, amid ongoing demands for Prime Minister Edi Rama to step down."

Rama has blamed "foreign actors" for the violence and accused both Russia and Iran of driving online misinformation.

The socialist prime minister has also called for "dialogue".

But red cushions laid on the ground around an improvised concrete table outside the government headquarters on Saturday, a symbolic gesture for dialogue, remained empty and were later set on fire by hundreds of protesters.

The demonstrators have distanced themselves from any political party, and regularly carry signs accusing both Rama and longtime opposition leader Sali Berisha of corruption.

"Rama in prison" and "Berisha in prison" they chanted on Saturday, blaming the entire political class for the crisis.

The prime minister had earlier published photos of around 40 people identified by their initials, whom he accused of violence and renewed his call for the heads of dozens of public institutions to resign.

Debris falls in Mecca, Jeddah, Taif, after interception of Houthi missiles — Saudi media

AMMAN (JT) — Debris from the interception of two ballistic missiles launched by Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi militia fell in several locations across Saudi Arabia on Saturday, the civil defence said.

The missiles were intercepted as they headed toward their targets, Arab News said, citing a spokesperson for the Saudi Civil Defence.

Parts of the missiles fell in Wadi Al Mughammas in Mecca, while interception debris landed in Jeddah's Al Nuzha neighbourhood, Wadi Jahl in Taif and Maiturah in Bahig Governorate, the spokesperson said.

Authorities implemented the approved procedures for such incidents. The statement did not report any casualties or further details of damage.



Debris from the interception of two ballistic missiles launched by Yemen's Houthi militia fell in several locations across Saudi Arabia's Mecca and Medina regions on Saturday, the Civil Defence said.

DEMONSTRATION

Thousands protest in Italy under heavy security

ROME (AFP) — Security forces deployed massively in Italy on Saturday for protests, which turned out to be small and mostly peaceful after a sweeping crackdown in the wake of violent clashes last weekend.

Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's hard-right government approved tough security measures this week and police had carried out dozens of searches and arrests in advance of the planned rallies.

A few thousand people rallied in Rome and Milan despite the heavy security, chanting slogans against the government and the police.

Surveillance helicopters hovered over Milan's central Piazza Del Duomo, soldiers in fatigues remained in groups, and five military vehicles and a water cannon could be seen parked nearby.

"Marching is a right. We need to make our voices heard," Alessio Simone, a 24-year-old betting shop worker, one of the protesters in Milan, told AFP.

A total of some 3,000 people marched through Milan, bringing traffic in the centre to a standstill. A



Demonstrators light fires during an anti-government protest organized by the Italia in Piazze movement, at Piazza Duomo in Milan, on October 17.

similar number rallied in Rome in areas near the Colosseum and the central train station in front of lines of police in anti-riot gear.

'We are not scared'

In Milan, some stores closed early and others boarded their windows following outbreaks of looting in the fashion hub last weekend.

Others remained defiantly open after a

call by the city's mayor Giuseppe Sala, not to "panic".

"We want to give the message that we are not scared by these kids," said Alessandro Buhse, 30, who works at the Philipp Plein menswear shop.

"Tourists are scared of this situation so we want to give the signal that you are safe if you enter our store," he said.

Stefania Segalini, 35,

a volunteer street fundraiser for the charity MSF, said she was relieved clashes had not broken out.

"We were a bit worried but we didn't stop and came out to fund-raise as planned," she said.

"We noted a big police presence," she said. "It means you don't feel alone, in case something happens".

After the clashes in Milan last weekend, the

government deployed 500 soldiers to the city and approved a decree easing detention rules for minors and imposing fines on their parents for any damage done by them during demonstrations.

Police on Saturday said they had arrested a 30-year-old man suspected of being the figure behind the "October 17 Movement", a group which had called for the protests.

Student groups have been highly critical of the government's public order response and have urged it to address protest demands such as cuts to military spending in favour of education.

The demonstrations are part of a wave of protests by students, truck drivers and farmers over cost of living issues like housing and fuel prices.

The government this week approved financial measures to help businesses dealing with the spike in fuel prices seen after the Middle East war.

The truck blockades that had paralysed southern Italy, leading to acute fuel and food shortages for a week, have now been lifted.

Clashes break out in Paris, other French cities amid fresh protests

PARIS, France (AFP) — Clashes broke out Saturday in Paris and other French cities amid demonstrations held a week after others that degenerated into street violence and prompted a robust security backlash as President Emmanuel Macron seeks to restore order.

Police arrested nearly 1,000 people as officers were confronted with "an extremely elevated level of violence" from black-clad "ultra-left" extremists, Interior Minister Laurent Nunez said.

Riot squads fired tear gas at protesters in the capital, as well as in Marseille, Lyon, Bordeaux, Lille, Toulouse, Montpellier and Nantes.

Two people were "seriously" injured, Nunez said. One man in Toulouse, who reportedly had fingers blown off, and another person in Clermont-Ferrand. He did not give details of either case.

Authorities had deployed 50,000 security forces across the country for the new marches, which were called



Protesters face the police's water cannon near Porte de Vincennes during a demonstration in favour of purchasing power, the protection of public services, and fiscal and social justice, in Paris on Saturday.

to protest the cost of living.

The violence came a week after rioting that saw public buildings vandalised, hundreds of shops looted and 2,700 people arrested, costing a poll over a country that goes to the polls in six months to choose a successor to President Emmanuel Macron after 10 years.

Nunez said Satur

day's outcome was more "positive" than a week ago, with more police on the streets acting more rapidly conducting more pre-demonstration checks and better protecting businesses.

There was nevertheless widespread anger at the government over a protest crackdown viewed as repressive and as an assault on

the right to protest.

Police battle 'rioters'

Saturday's demonstrations drew between 410,000 and 800,000 people across the country, according to different estimates by authorities and the organising CGT union.

The main Paris march had between 110,000 and 280,000 attend

ees, according to those sources.

Macron's government has ordered police to prevent protesters marching city centres, where shops are concentrated, and in Paris and some other cities, partial curfews were imposed in certain urban zones. The French president had ordered non-union demonstrations be banned as "illegitimate".

In Paris, where many shops had boarded up windows to prevent looting, and the Louvre and the Musee d'Orsay museums shut for the day, the main demonstration paused off largely peacefully.

The march had been pushed to the capital's southeast rim under a last-minute order by authorities.

Afterwards, though, clashes broke out as the crowd was dispersing, Nunez said: the confrontations "lasted two hours and involved 500 rioters" at the back of the march.

AFP journalists saw police charge several times and vigorously use tear gas and batons

against some, mostly young protesters.

"The police started moving towards everyone, telling them to get down and back off. They were just taking people down, you know, beating protesters," one demonstrator bleeding from a baton blow to his face, who gave his first name as David, told AFP.

"I hear the media talking about repression in Iran and China. And now I see that France is doing the same, if not worse," said Victor Legendre, a 22-year-old student.

He said he was "asking myself a lot of questions about what is going to become of this country", adding that it was "dystopian".

Ultra-right vs ultra-left

In the western city of Nantes, thousands of protesters broke through lines of police firing tear gas and a water cannon to reach the city centre, an AFP journalist there witnessed.

In Lyon, police used tear gas to disperse around 1,000 people

gathered in the south of the city.

"If they prohibit protests then that means we are heading more and more towards a regime that is fascist, that is dictatorial," said one 20-year-old protester in Lyon, who gave only his first name, Salem.

In the southern cities of Cannes and Montpellier, far-right activists came out onto the streets seeking confrontations with "ultra-left" militants, in what authorities said was an unprecedented development.

Meanwhile, the Yellow Vests, who staged disruptive protests against Macron eight years ago, called for more demonstrations on October 31 for "the freedom to protest".

Far-left presidential candidate Jean-Luc Melancon, who marched in the Paris rally, said Macron "is going to understand that this is going to repeat itself every week".

Several protesters leaving after clashes in Paris taunted officers with a "see you next Saturday".

Protest against Le Pen's party

Tensions were heightened by a rally in the city of Orleans by far-right leader Marine Le Pen's National Rally Party to kick off her campaign for the presidential election.

Thousands of counter-protesters chanting anti-fascist slogans marched in the city. Police put their number at 13,000 while organisers said twice as many participated.

The unrest across France highlighted the fierce political atmosphere ahead of the vote, in which Le Pen leads in surveys.

Inflation in France, particularly affecting the cost of fuel, has surged since the start of the Middle East war in February.

Protests have also been taking place in Italy, Belgium, Spain and Portugal over different issues, yet with some overlap on inflation and education problems. Italy has mobilised 500 troops to Milan after street violence there.

Israeli forces displace Hebron families after deadly attack

HEBRON, Palestinian Territories (AFP) — Israeli forces pushed into the occupied West Bank city of Hebron on Saturday and displaced around 250 families.

The Palestinian Authority called for international pressure on Israel to protect residents, who said soldiers announced the evacuations over loudspeakers late at night as they packed what they could and left.

The Israeli army said that over Friday and Saturday, it operated in 40 different areas throughout the West Bank.

Days before tight elections, prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he was planning an operation on a scale not seen since Israel first occupied the West Bank in 1967.

Right-wing finance minister Bezalel Smotrich, who also holds a position in the defence ministry overseeing civilian affairs in the West Bank, said he personally ordered "the immediate demolition of a row of illegal structures" following Friday's attack.

In the Hebron neighbourhood of Ein Deir Baha, nestled between two hills, vacated buildings were marked by X's and the streets were deserted, save a pair of



A Palestinian man looks on at empty homes after the Israeli security forced people to evacuate the En Deir Baha neighbourhood in the occupied West Bank city of Hebron on Saturday

Israeli military vehicles. Israeli flags were draped on a house on the slope apparently taken over by troops.

Higazi Shaver al Tamini, 70, a shopkeeper who plays a leadership role in the neighbourhood, said he was awakened at 1:00 am by soldiers and a senior officer who said he had to leave.

"I asked them how long the evacuation would last. They said 'Until further notice'."

He told AFP he had only short time to pack, adding that for some residents, getting out of the neighbourhood was an ordeal.

"For example, my wife's mother, who is 90 years old and lives in the area, had to be car-

rried out because she is ill," he said.

'Why should I be displaced?'

To Tamini, this is only happening because Netanyahu wants to win the election on "the blood of the Palestinian people".

He said people were not going anywhere. "I have lived through all the stages of the occupation, and I will die here."

The Palestinian Authority said it was consulting its diplomats to seek "urgent international action that goes beyond condemnation" to prevent forced displacement.

Tamini's brother, Khaled Shaver al Tamini, 88, was staying with his son after the evacuation order.

"The army was announcing through loudspeakers: 'Leave the area.' So we left."

He told AFP he was surprised to hear Friday's assaults came from the neighbourhood, which he described as middle class and law-abiding.

"We have never seen or even heard a single gunshot being fired," he said from his son's sitting room as children flitted about.

"Why should I be displaced from my house?" he continued. The attackers "are the ones who carried out the act, and if the Israeli government wants to punish them, it can punish them."

Helani governor Khaled Dahin told AFP the army started in the attackers' neighbourhood "but there is no guarantee that the operation will not expand", calling it a form of "collective punishment".

The governor said 150 families had been affected, while Hebron Mayor Yousef Al Juhairi and local activist Issa Amr put the figure at 250.

The Israeli military said the operation would last several days. But Netanyahu suggested bigger action was coming.

Asked if he agreed with the idea of dismantling the Palestinian Authority, as has been suggested by his far-right national security minister Itamar Ben Gvir, Netanyahu referred to Israeli military operations in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria and Iran.

"We transformed the Middle East," he said, repeating a campaign refrain, in an interview with 24News.

"There is a very big surprise for the Palestinian Authority as well."

Rights group Yesh Din reported 672 incidents of settler violence over the past 26 days, nearly half related to the annual olive harvest.

King chairs National Security Council meeting on Karak attack

Continued from page 1

The King directed the government and relevant institutions to review policies for countering extremist ideology and to intensify efforts to eradicate

its root causes through a systematic plan developed in coordination with religious authorities, the statement said.

His Majesty was also briefed on the latest developments in the investigation into the

attack, and security measures being taken to safeguard Jordan and its people.

The meeting was attended by members of the council, including Prime Minister Jafar Hassan, Deputy Prime

Steve Hilton, the Republican running for California governor in Trump's shadow

LOS ANGELES, United States (AFP) — California hasn't elected a Republican to statewide office in two decades, and animosity towards President Donald Trump makes the prospect unlikely.

Enter Steve Hilton: A gregarious, British-born conservative former pundit who believes he, against all odds, can break the mold and become the state's next governor in November's midterm vote.

The 57-year-old, once a senior adviser to British prime minister David Cameron, moved stateside in search of the "California dream" before becoming a US citizen in 2021.

Now he's in a longshot quest to replace Gavin Newsom, the outgoing Democratic governor of one of the bluest US states.

But according to Hilton, Newsom has left California in shambles.

The candidate told AFP he aims to allow "people to follow their dreams again" without "a bloated, nanny-state bureaucratic government that charges people too much money for services that are the worst in the country".

But Hilton must carry with him a glaring liability in California, where registered Democrats nearly outnumber Republicans two to one, an endorsement from President Donald Trump.

The president has dwindling approval ratings and Hilina must walk a tightrope, appealing to the six million voters who voted for Trump in 2024 while also convincing anti-Trump Californians to vote Republican under the banner of change.

"Donald Trump has been a huge drag on the Republican Party in California," Tim Kasser, a politics professor at the state university's San Diego campus, told AFP.

Trump hasn't taken pains to appeal to voters in the most US populous state, recently glibly suggesting Iran could "take out" Los Angeles and San Diego.

Asked whether he stood with backlash, Hilton sidestepped, emphasising how much he himself loves Los Angeles and intends to "revive" it.

"I didn't ask for the endorsement. I was surprised to get it, very humbled to get it," Hilton said.

"We share the view that where possible you should keep the government bureaucracy under control."

But Hilton said he disagrees with the president on "many things", including Trump's false claims he won the 2020 election.

The candidate insists voters can cast their ballots for him and still be anti-Trump.

Hilton said he's an "outsider" who can channel California's "rebel spirit" to make the state more business-friendly with less regulation.

Trump's war on Iran has seen global energy prices skyrocket. But in California, one of the country's most expensive places to live, Hilton argues that red tape and taxes are most to blame for the soaring cost of living.

He's cast his Democratic opponent, Xavier Becerra, as at best uninspiring. Critics including Hilton say the likely victor is overreliant on the mere fact that he is a Democrat.

Yes, Californian loyalty to Democrats is "entrenched" analyst Kasser said.

The party's label "comes with a set of policies that are strong and popular in California" including healthcare expansion, protections for immigrants and environmental regulations.

Three injured in Karak church attack discharged from hospital — official

Continued from page 1

Al Mamlaka's correspondent in Karak reported that many of those injured in Friday's attack on a church in Hamud village had

sustained injuries to major blood vessels complicating emergency treatment.

Some patients suffered severe bleeding and injuries to major arteries, while cases involving

internal bleeding posed additional challenges for medical teams, the correspondent reported.

Several patients required surgery and blood transfusions due to the severity of their injuries.

Health Minister Ibrahim Badar said on Friday that 40 people had been injured in the attack and were receiving treatment at Karak Public Hospital and Prince

Ali Military Hospital.

Gunsmen attacked the compound of a Greek Orthodox church in Hamud village on Friday during a funeral procession and opened fire. Nine people were martyred.

Gunsmen attacked the compound of a Greek Orthodox church in Hamud village on Friday during a funeral procession and opened fire. Nine people were martyred.

Sit-in condemns terrorist attack on Hmoud Church

Continued from page 1

Participants said that the attack was incompatible with Jordanian values and the teachings of religions, stressing that terrorism would not under-

mine national cohesion but strengthen solidarity in confronting extremism.

Representatives of Muslim and Christian religious communities condemned the attack, saying the tragedy af-

fected all Jordanians and that the bonds of brotherhood among them remained a model of coexistence and national unity.

Representatives of political parties, youth organisations and tribal

groups also affirmed their support for the Hashemite leadership, the Jordan Armed Forces - Arab Army and security agencies in confronting terrorism and safeguarding the country's security and stability.

Participants paid tribute to those killed in the attack and wished the injured a speedy recovery, stressing that the incident would not undermine Jordan's unity or stability.

King vows firm response as Karak church attack death toll rises to nine

Continued from page 1

Crown Prince Hussein condemned the attack, saying terrorism would not undermine Karak's legacy of honour and dignity. He extended condolences to the victims' families and wished the injured a speedy recovery, stressing the importance of national unity in safeguarding Jordan's security and stability.

Prime Minister Jafar Hassan also vowed that those responsible would face justice, saying security agencies would pursue the perpetrators in line with the King's directives.

Minister of Government Communications

and government spokesperson Mohamed Masmari said the attack was driven by extremist takfiri ideology, stressing that Jordanian Christians were an integral part of the country's social fabric.

"Any attack against a Jordanian, regardless of religion or belief, is an attack on Jordanian society as a whole," Masmari said, adding that anyone found guilty of planning, carrying out, financing or facilitating the attack would face the maximum penalties prescribed by law.

Political analyst Amer Sababheh said the attack, which he described as unprecedented in Jordan's

history, had both security-related and broader cultural and social implications.

On the security front, Jordan needed to adopt a different approach to emerging threats and attempts to bring crises into the country and destabilise society, Sababheh said.

The second challenge, he said, concerned national awareness, culture and social cohesion. He called for greater efforts to strengthen national identity and counter extremism through sustained engagement with communities across the country.

"There must be a national cultural project," Sababheh said, calling

for practical, long-term measures.

Public figures also condemned the attack, describing it as a national tragedy and reaffirming Jordan's commitment to religious coexistence, national unity and the fight against terrorism.

Father Rifat Badier, director of the Catholic Center for Studies and Media, said Jordanian families stood united behind the Hashemite leadership in the face of the tragedy, stressing that the bonds between Muslim and Christian Jordanians remained strong.

In an interview with Al Rai, Badier described the attack as a major loss for the country, saying such violence was alien to Jordanian society, its traditions and its values of peaceful coexistence.

He said the attack would not weaken social cohesion or undermine national unity.

Former minister Kamel Mahadin, speaking to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, said Jordan would not bow to terrorism. He described the attack on residents of Hammoud as an act of treachery that targeted innocent people and violated the sanctity of a place of worship.

"The tragedy is one shared by all Jordanians," Mahadin said, adding that grief extended beyond Hammoud and Karak to homes across the country.

He said the pain felt by the Christian community was shared by Muslims, stressing that an attack on any Jordanian was an assault on the dignity of the entire nation.

Mahadin also praised Karak's resilience, saying terrorism would neither diminish the city's standing nor instil fear among its residents. The attack, he added, would not fracture the national fabric built on mutual respect, sacrifice and coexistence.

He condemned attacks on places of worship and civilians, saying there could be

no justification for violence in a country where human dignity and the sanctity of life were fundamental values.

Former communications minister Palast Shboul described the attack in Hammoud as a deeply distressing terrorist crime that had brought grief to families across Jordan.

He said the national impact of the attack was reflected in King Abdullah's visit to Karak, where the King met injured victims, heard their accounts and offered condolences to the families of those killed.

Shboul said Jordan would confront extremist terrorism with determination, pointing to the King's public statement following the attack.

"Jordan would emerge from the tragedy stronger," Shboul said, citing the country's commitment to humanitarian values and the Amman Message, which promotes moderation, tolerance and mutual understanding.

He stressed that Jordan would not allow extremist ideology to achieve its aims, adding that public awareness, national solidarity and the vigilance of the armed forces and security agencies were essential to protecting the country's security and stability.

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Beyond the Karak attack: Takfiri threat amid regional turmoil

By Ahmad Abdelhameed Rayouh

The attack targeting mourners during a funeral at a church in Karak was more than an isolated act of violence. It raised serious concerns about the extremist threats facing Jordan amid regional instability, transnational radical ideologies and changing patterns of terrorism.

Beyond its human toll, the attack carries profound symbolic implications. Targeting a religious gathering threatens Jordan's longstanding Muslim-Christian unity and seeks to undermine public confidence in national security institutions.

The central question, therefore, extends beyond the perpetrators' identities to the ideology motivating their actions and its possible connections to extremist networks operating across the region.

Takfiri extremism represents more than ideological indoctrination; it is a worldview that rejects pluralism, challenges state legitimacy and justifies violence through distorted religious interpretations.

Its danger lies in its ability to inspire violence without direct organizational command. Contemporary terrorism increasingly involves individuals or small cells radicalized through digital propaganda rather than traditional hierarchical networks.

Jordan must consequently strengthen preventive intelligence capabilities while carefully distinguishing legitimate religious expression from violent extremist ideology.

Attacking church gatherings strikes at a defining pillar of Jordanian identity: religious coexistence.

Jordanian Christians are rooted in the Kingdom's national development, institutions and collective security. Violence targeting them threatens not only a religious community but the broader principles of citizenship and national solidarity.

Extremist organizations exploit sectarian tensions to fragment societies, weaken institutions and undermine stability.

Protecting religious coexistence must therefore remain a national security priority, not merely a social or religious obligation.

Jordan's security challenges cannot be separated from its geopolitical environment.

In Syria, shifting political and security conditions may create opportunities for extremist networks to reorganize. Iraq's experience with Daesh demonstrates that military defeat does not necessarily eliminate radical ideology, recruitment structures or clandestine financing.

Meanwhile, the continuing Palestinian conflict and associated humanitarian suffering may be exploited by extremist propagandists seeking recruitment opportunities.

A fundamental distinction must nevertheless be maintained between the Palestinian people's legitimate national rights and attempts to manipulate their cause to justify terrorism.

Jordan consequently faces two interconnected challenges: Potential external security infiltration and domestic radicalization through digital ideological influence.

Neither possibility, however, establishes that the Karak attack was externally directed. Such conclusions require credible investigative evidence.

Is Jordan's national model the target?

Takfiri ideology fundamentally opposes the modern nation-state, religious diversity and the rule of law.

Jordan's regional diplomatic role, counterterrorism commitments and established tradition of religious coexistence stand in direct contradiction to extremist ambitions.

Terrorist violence may therefore pursue objectives beyond immediate casualties: weakening institutional credibility, provoking social divisions, exhausting security resources and creating perceptions of instability.

Nevertheless, determining the perpetrators' actual motives and possible organizational affiliations must remain the responsibility of competent investigative authorities.

Jordan possesses substantial counterterrorism and intelligence experience. Yet, evolving threats require a comprehensive strategy integrating security preparedness, ideological prevention and societal resilience.

Priorities include strengthening early-warning systems, identifying terrorist recruitment networks, combating illicit financing and expanding regional intelligence cooperation within established legal frameworks.

Equally important are youth engagement, credible religious discourse, civic education and public confidence in state institutions.

Addressing social exclusion and economic vulnerabilities may also reduce opportunities for extremist exploitation, without suggesting any automatic relationship between poverty and terrorism.

Strategic communication is another essential component. Terrorist violence seeks to spread fear, misinformation and mistrust.

An effective national response must reject collective blame, discourage inflammatory narratives and reaffirm that Jordanians, regardless of religious affiliation, share equal citizenship and a common national destiny.

Assessing future risks

Three broad scenarios merit consideration.

The first involves containing an isolated incident without wider organizational consequences. The second concerns recurring attacks by self-radicalized individuals. The third involves identifying transnational extremist connections requiring deeper regional security cooperation.

No scenario should be treated as established without reliable intelligence and verified evidence.

Nevertheless, preparedness assumes all three possibilities remains essential to responsible national security planning.

The Karak attack underscores a fundamental reality: Combating terrorism requires confronting not only perpetrators but also the ideology that legitimizes violence against innocent civilians.

Jordan's strength rests on effective institutions, professional security services, the rule of law and a cohesive society.

Despite regional turbulence, the Kingdom possesses the institutional experience and national solidarity necessary to confront emerging threats.

Resilient protect territory, institutions safeguard the state, but national unity protects society against internal fragmentation.

Ultimately, the most meaningful response to terrorism is not simply bringing perpetrators to justice, but preventing their violence from achieving its intended political and social consequences.

Jordan's enduring victory lies in preserving a strong state, a united society and a national identity resistant to extremism and division.

The author is a strategic researcher and planner

Terrorism will not divide Jordanians



Hana Naimaqa

AMMAN — The heinous terrorist act that targeted the church in Hmoud village in Karak shook us all and left us struggling to comprehend the brutality of this attack.

There is shock that such cruelty could happen in our peaceful Jordan, anger at the loss of innocent lives and disbelief that anyone could attack a church, a sacred place of worship, and open fire on people gathered to mourn the death of a loved one.

In Jordan, we have never measured friendship by faith. We have lived together door to door, house to house and street to street, sharing our lives, raising our children and standing together in moments of joy and grief. Our grandmothers and mothers built friendships across generations, sharing meals, visiting one another and raising their children side by side. This is simply life in Jordan.

Terrorism seeks to turn difference into division. The attack on the church in Hmoud village was an attempt to undermine the trust that unites Jordanians, but it will not succeed because our shared identity is stronger than any attempt to exploit religious differences.

His Majesty King Abdullah

made this resolve clear in his response to the attack, affirming that those seeking to divide Jordanians would fail in the face of national unity.

Those who defile themselves into thinking that they can divide Jordanians with their bullets have no chance in the face of our unity," the King said.

"All Jordanians, from north to south, are partners in land and fate, and nothing stands between them," he added.

The King also vowed a firm response to those responsible, saying: "The terrorist attack against Karak will be met with the harshest retaliation." He concluded his message with a clear warning: "Every Jordanian life is precious, and we will strike with an iron fist against those who dare to threaten our nation."

These words affirm two essential principles: the security agencies will not tolerate attacks on our people, and no act of violence will be allowed to fracture the national fabric. Justice and security go hand in hand to protect the unity that defines Jordan.

Karak's tragedy must strengthen our resolve to defend what generations before us built: A society in which differences in faith do not divide people who share one homeland and one future.

We are neighbours, friends and families. We are Jordanians. No act of terrorism will make us fear one another or undermine the unity that binds us.

Hmoud: The pain of a village residing in the heart of a nation

By Hana Dalah

The tranquil village of Hmoud, in Karak, did not need a tragedy for Jordanians to realize that it is a piece of their own hearts. Villages — where life thrives on the familiarity of faces, the warmth of homes, and the peaceful bonds between neighbours — embody the very essence of the nation through their simple, everyday details: they give love a face, a name, and a memory. It was there — a place where neighbours share morning hews and the burdens of life, and where hearts connect through affection and good neighbourliness — that terrorists committed their despicable crime against innocent people who had gathered to bid farewell to a departed soul. In doing so, they compounded the grief and violated the sanctity of both human life and the place itself. In one painful moment, the house of mourning expanded to the scale of the entire nation; the pain of Hmoud became the pain of every Jordanian household, the tears of its mothers became the tears of the whole country, and the affliction of its people became a wound that united all Jordanians in solidarity, compassion, and loyalty.

Faced with such agony, words fall short. One stands helpless, unable to truly console a mother who has lost her son, a child waiting for a face that will never return, or a family whose rhythm of life has been abruptly shattered. The names of the martyrs are not mere statistics in a news report, nor are their photographs fleeting headlines on a screen. Behind every name lies a story: A table that once brought loved ones together, a chair that will now remain empty, and dreams that tragedy cut short before they could be fulfilled. Therefore, our primary duty is to honour the humanity of the victims and to recognize that the grief of their families imposes upon us a moral and national

responsibility — one that must endure long after the news cycle has moved on.

What befalls a Jordanian Christian family affects every Jordanian family: the pain that pierces a mother's heart in one home is felt by mothers across all the Kingdom's governorates. Here, the bond is that of a nation; the tragedy is a shared family sorrow, and the blood that has been shed is the blood of us all. A Jordanian need not ask about a brother's faith to feel his pain, nor know his name to realize that his loss diminishes the sense of security we all share — the very security we desire for our own children.

The blood of Jordanian Christians is the blood of this nation in its human and national essence; it flows through the veins of all Jordanians, uniting them in the belief that life is sacred and that our destinies are one. When a Jordanian extends an arm to donate blood, all barriers vanish in the face of saving a life.

Blood is not defined by sect, but by its power to restore a heartbeat and bring hope to a family awaiting the safe return of a loved one. This is the Jordan we believe in: People leaning on one another, hearts joined in solidarity, and a life guarded by all with love and a sense of responsibility. How beautiful it is when this spirit translates into action — donating when the need arises, supporting the injured, embracing bereaved families, and walking alongside them in the long path towards recovery. For whatever brings pain to a Jordanian Christian home brings pain to all our homes, and awakens within us a profound sense of loyalty.

Jordanian Christians are an integral part of this land — partners in its history, its present, and its future. In this homeland, churches and mosques stand side by side, and the stories of families intertwine in schools, workplaces, marketplaces and public life.

Generations grow up forming friendships that require no religious label — bonds of neighbourliness that honour both the right to celebrate and the sanctity of grief. This shared existence is the fabric we strive to protect: it is the very experience that gives our unity its true meaning.

For a sense of belonging is not forged by speeches alone; it is built by a hand extended in times of hardship, a door opened to a neighbour and a heart that knows its fellow human will never be left to face life alone.

Terrorism may gamble on the hope that shock will transform into mutual fear, and that rumors or religious differences will become gateways to division. The Jordanian response, however, is one of greater clarity: trust, and responsibility. His Majesty King Abdullah, through his condemnation of the attack, his condolences to the families of the martyrs, and his wishes for the recovery of the injured — has embodied a form of inclusive leadership that shares in the people's pain and upholds their unity.

This spirit is further reflected in the visits to the injured in hospitals, the support provided to their families, and the care extended to them. We protect one another by rejecting incitement and safeguarding the dignity of the victims; we protect our nation by estimating the investigation and the pursuit of accountability to the state's institutions. We affirm that responsibility lies solely with the perpetrators and their accomplices, and that Jordan will remain a single, cohesive family — standing firm against terrorism and remaining faithful to the lives and dignity of all its children.

From His Majesty the King to every individual citizen, the concept of the "one Jordanian family" extends to embrace the people of Hmoud in their grief. Sincere solidarity demands a presence that goes beyond mere words of consolation. It requires care for the injured, psychological

cal and social support for the families, attention to the children shaken by this tragedy, and a commitment to honouring the memory of the martyrs. Some wounds are visible on the body, while others dwell within the memory, requiring great patience to heal.

Those who have suffered such a loss are not expected to conceal their grief to prove their strength; rather, our own strength lies in granting them the time, care, and support they need, and in remaining close to them. A day will come when the clamor of media coverage fades and screams turn to other news; yet, the homes that have lost their loved ones will still need someone to knock on their doors with compassion. This is where true loyalty is tested: Through a call that never ceases, a visit not tied to any specific occasion, support offered with dignity, and memories shared with children in a spirit of respect. It is the duty of schools, universities, public forums, and the media to preserve this spirit — to transform citizenship into a daily practice, teaching our children that protecting those of a different faith is, in fact, protecting a brother, a partner, and a neighbour; and that the sanctity of life is the foundation of our collective security.

Hmoud, you have family in every governorate — in every city, village, and home; there are hearts that share this pain with you. Treachery will never erase the gentle resonance of your name, nor will it strip Jordan of the spirit that binds its people together. We shall grieve together, heal our wounds together, and ensure that our martyrs receive justice and are remembered with honour.

May God have mercy on our martyrs, grant healing to the wounded, and bring solace to the hearts of their families. We shall stand, one and all, as an impenetrable bulwark against terrorism — for what befalls one Jordanian family, befalls us all.

Jordan is different: Terror may strike its people, but it cannot break its soul

By Ahmad Jazairi

There are moments in a nation's life when tragedy exposes not only the cruelty of those who seek to destroy it, but also the values that enable it to endure. The terrorist attack in Karak was one such moment. It was an assault not only on innocent lives and a Christian place of worship, but also on the very idea of Jordan: a nation shaped by shared history, collective dignity and a sense of belonging that transcends religious differences.

Jordan is different — not because it is immune to extremism or violence, but because its national identity does not depend on excluding one community to affirm another. Christians and Muslims are not strangers learning to coexist. They are partners in a shared homeland, heirs to a common history and custodians of a collective future.

The bullets fired in Karak were intended to kill. Yet, terrorism seeks more than physical destruction. It aims to fracture trust, replace solidarity with suspicion and turn religious differences into political divisions. Its ultimate objective is to undermine the bonds that bind society together.

That is why the response to

terrorism must go beyond condemnation. It must reaffirm the principles that violence seeks to destroy.

The message conveyed by His Majesty King Abdullah in the aftermath of the tragedy carries significance beyond the immediate response to terrorism. It reaffirms a fundamental principle of Jordanian statehood: National unity is not a temporary reaction to danger, but a lasting foundation of citizenship, security and collective responsibility.

The principle is clear: An attack against one Jordanian is an attack against all Jordanians. Human dignity cannot be protected selectively, and national security cannot be separated from the safety and well-being of every citizen.

Jordanian Christians are not guests in their own country, nor is their belonging dependent on the tolerance of others. They are an integral and historic part of Jordan's national identity, institutions, culture and public life.

The significance of this message, therefore, extends beyond solidarity in grief. It calls on Jordanians to recognize that their country's strength lies in refusing to allow violence to redefine the relationships among its citizens.

Terrorism begins with brutality, but its most dangerous consequences emerge when fear becomes distrust and distrust becomes division. Its defeat begins when society refuses to surrender its shared humanity.

The intellectual vision of His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan Bin Talal offers a valuable framework for understanding the broader implications of the Karak tragedy.

For decades, Prince El Hassan has emphasised human dignity, interfaith understanding, shared responsibility and the close relationship between human security and sustainable peace. Within this vision, religious diversity is not a threat to be contained, but a historical and moral reality that can enrich society.

The distinction is important: Coexistence can mean little more than the peaceful presence of different communities alongside one another. Shared citizenship demands more: Equal dignity, mutual responsibility and recognition that the suffering of one community diminishes the security and humanity of all.

In Jordan, Christians and Muslims are not separate communities united only by national necessity. Their lives, memories, aspirations and re-

sponsibilities are woven into the same national fabric.

The tragedy in Karak is therefore a moral challenge as well as a security challenge. It asks whether grief can be transformed into renewed responsibility, whether education can overcome prejudice, and whether religious and civic institutions can protect future generations from the narratives of hatred that enable extremism.

Jordan's distinctiveness should not be understood as a claim of superiority over other nations. Rather, it reflects a historical experience in which religious plurality has long formed part of the country's social fabric and national identity.

In Karak, as elsewhere in Jordan, Christian and Muslim families have shared neighbourhoods, traditions, public responsibilities and generations of collective memory.

Jordan is different because its unity does not depend on the absence of differences, but on the ability to transcend them through shared belonging. Its strength does not lie in being beyond harm, but in refusing to surrender its humanity when wounded.

Ahmad Jazairi is the acting secretary general, Arab Thought Forum

BUSINESS

Sunday, October 25, 2026



In an aerial view, oil storage tanks are seen in a field in Stanton, Texas

Oil hits \$116 with stocks mixed on earnings, AI

LONDON (AFP) — Oil prices traded at five-month highs last week with benchmark crude contract Brent North Sea rising above \$116 a barrel, as the Middle East conflict raged on. Global markets were contending 'with concerns around surging oil prices and the sustainability of AI spending', noted AJ Bell's head of financial analysis Daisy Hewson.

'Oil is at five-month highs amid speculation there may be renewed US-Israeli strikes after next month's US mid-term elections.'

'Escalating tensions in Ukraine and the prospect of increased energy demand as the northern hemisphere heads into the winter months are only adding to the upwards pressure on oil and gas prices,' Hewson added.

Benchmark international oil contract Brent crude for December delivery rose as high as \$116.73 per barrel, the highest since late April. The benchmark US contract, WTI, rose above \$102 per barrel.

Wall Street's main indices were mostly lower in morning trading, with the blue-chip Dow sinking nearly one per cent but the Nasdaq Composite adding 0.2 per cent as tech shares sought to recover some of this week's heavy losses.

'Today everyone appears to be rotating back into the stuff they rotated out of yesterday,' Chris Beauchamp, chief market analyst at online trading and in-

vesting platform IG.

'No one wants to be caught holding risk over the weekend,' he added.

Stock markets mostly dropped in Europe following some poorly received earnings from Gucci parent Kering and Swedish group Volvo Cars.

'Investors are becoming much less forgiving'

AI slump

Asian equity indices closed out the week mixed as technology firms managed to claw back some of the week's hefty losses.

Rising energy prices have influenced movements across stock markets in recent days along with developments in the AI sector.

Facebook parent Meta and chip equipment maker Lam Research saw their share prices dive this week despite above-forecast earnings

for the pair.

'Strong results are no longer enough if the outlook fails to match an already demanding valuation,' noted Fawad Ranaqzada, a markets analyst at traders FOMEX.com.

'Investors are becoming much less forgiving.' The Philadelphia Semiconductor Sector Index, which tracks the main stocks in the chip sector at the heart of the AI boom, was down more than 5 per cent for the week.

Gucci firm down

Kering shed more than 16 per cent on Friday after the French luxury group published results that failed to reassure investors about a turnaround at its key Gucci brand.

Volvo Cars plummeted more than 24 per cent after it said US tariffs and strong competition from local brands in China pushed it into a third-quarter loss.

In response, the company announced a new 5 billion-kroner savings plan it said would lead to about 2,000 job cuts in Sweden and 500 more globally.

Aside from energy markets, AI and earnings next week focus will fall firmly on interest rate meetings for the US Federal Reserve and European Central Bank, as well as an update on US economic growth data.

'Moderate' inflation, resilient growth support Jordan's investment outlook — economists

By Iham Darwish

AMMAN — Jordan's moderate inflation, continued economic growth and resilient export performance are supporting a stable investment environment despite regional uncertainty, economists told The Jordan Times, highlighting opportunities to strengthen the Kingdom's competitiveness and attract further investment.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) maintained its economic growth forecasts for Jordan at 2.7 per cent for 2026 and 3.1 per cent for 2027 in its October 2026 Regional Economic Outlook, reflecting the resilience of the Kingdom's economy amid regional conflict.

Inflation averaged 2.26 per cent during the first nine months of 2026, while the year-on-year rate reached 2.73 per cent in September, according to Department of Statistics (DoS) figures released on October 12.

Former Jordanian minister of state for economic affairs Yusuf Mansour described the average inflation rate as reasonable, noting that it remained manageable alongside sustained economic growth.

'Overall, an average inflation rate of 2.26 per cent is not a cause for concern, especially as the economy continues to grow and make progress.'

He said that the current inflation rate was unlikely to significantly affect Jordan's attractiveness to European investors or tourists, although its effects could vary across economic sectors.

'The current inflation rate is unlikely to have a significant impact on European investors,' Mansour said, adding that the overall impact on investment and tourism was expected to be minimal.

Growth, trade reinforce economic resilience

Jordan's economy expanded by 3 per cent in the second quarter of 2026, compared with 2.8 per cent in the same period of 2025, according to official figures.

The positive performance was also reflected



A general view of Amman

in productive sectors and external trade.

A recent report by the Jordan Strategy Forum shows that manufacturing grew by 6.2 per cent in the second quarter, while agriculture expanded by 3.8 per cent.

Exports increased by 10.3 per cent to around JD6.4 billion during the first seven months of 2026, while imports rose by 1.4 per cent. The trade deficit narrowed by 6 per cent and the export-to-import coverage ratio improved to 58 per cent from 51 per cent.

Investment in development zones increased by 18.8 per cent during the first half of the year to JD6.9 billion, while the combined profits of companies listed on the Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) rose by 14.3 per cent to JD1.1 billion.

These indicators provide a positive backdrop for the investment outlook, pointing to continued activity across productive sectors, improved export performance and stronger corporate profitability.

The IMF's decision to maintain its growth projection for Jordan, despite downgrading its outlook for the wider Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan and Pakistan re-

gion, further highlights the Kingdom's relative resilience.

Competitiveness offers further opportunities

Raad Al Tul, professor of economics at the University of Jordan, said that Jordan's economic fundamentals and strategic advantages continued to offer opportunities to strengthen its investment appeal.

'Jordan has important advantages, including its strategic location, skilled workforce and access to regional markets,' Al Tul said.

He added that European investors valued stability, clear regulations and a predictable business environment when assessing investment opportunities.

Al Tul, who is currently assigned as a Chairperson of the Board at ASE, identified housing rents, transport, food prices and imported goods as key factors influencing inflation, noting that higher rents and transport costs could increase operating expenses for companies.

DoS figures show that rents contributed 0.72 percentage points to average inflation during the first nine months of 2026, while transport contributed 0.65 per-

centage points.

However, Al Tul said targeted measures to reduce these costs could strengthen the Kingdom's competitiveness and encourage further investment.

He recommended reducing transport and logistics costs, expanding the supply of affordable housing and lowering energy costs through renewable energy.

He also called for simplifying investment procedures, reducing unnecessary regulations and improving access to finance.

'These measures would lower business costs, improve productivity, and encourage more domestic and foreign investment,' he said.

Moderate inflation outlook

Both economists expected inflation to remain manageable, although international oil prices and regional developments will continue to influence the outlook.

Mansour said that lower oil prices could reduce the cost of goods and services in the coming months if regional tensions eased and maritime routes remained open.

'If the Strait of Hor-

muz and Bab Al Mandeb remain open and the conflict in the Gulf subsides, oil prices are expected to fall,' he said.

Al Tul projected inflation to remain moderate during the final quarter of 2026, provided there are no major increases in oil prices or significant regional disruptions.

He estimated that inflation could range between 2.5 and 3 per cent during the final quarter, with the annual average for 2026 reaching 2.5-2.6 per cent. He stressed that these were his estimates rather than official forecasts.

The IMF's October World Economic Outlook projected average inflation of 2.5 per cent in Jordan in 2026, before rising to 2.3 per cent in 2027.

For Jordan, the combination of moderate inflation, continued economic growth and improving trade indicators provides a constructive basis for the investment outlook.

Maintaining price stability while improving productivity and reducing operating costs could help the Kingdom build on this resilience and translate economic progress into stronger investment and sustainable growth.

Italy truckers end protests after fuel aid

ROME (AFP) — Truck drivers recently ended protests that have paralysed southern Italy for the past week as the last picket lines in Campania were dismantled, allowing deliveries to supermarkets to resume.

The protests had left parts of southern Italy facing shortages of food and fuel, impacting the production of pasta and mozzarella. They ended after the government announced aid to cope with high fuel prices.

'I joined the strike out of solidarity with my colleagues, even though I personally did not have to and I am glad things are now getting back to normal,' Vincenzo Parisi, a haulage company owner from Naples, told AFP.

'We already started making deliveries again yesterday. Of course, getting back up and running after a week-long stoppage is not



Truck drivers block the streets and the tram tracks near the port of Naples during a protest against the increase in fuel costs, on Thursday

easy, but we are working hard to restock supermarkets as quickly as possible, as people can find the shelves full again.'

The government in

Thursday approved a financial package of 175.2 million euros (\$195.2 million) for truck drivers, farmers and fishermen hit by soaring fuel prices linked to the war

in the Middle East. 'Fuel prices have risen dramatically since last year. Diesel that cost us 1.60 euros a litre a year ago now costs 2.40 euros,' Parisi said.

'That is simply too much, especially because fuel is not the only thing that has become more expensive. All our other costs have gone up as well (ASF) and everything connected to transport now costs more.'

Giuseppe Richichi, president of AIAS, an association representing Sicilian truck drivers, said the government was 'only giving us money I already owe us'.

He said he would not be striking again but 'not because I think the government's measures will help us'.

'We realised we were only hurting half of Italy, our half, the south,' he told AFP.

The country was being split in two, between people who were struggling to find food and fuel and others in the north who were barely affected at all.

American Express cutting 5% of global workforce

NEW YORK (AFP) — American Express announced on Friday it is cutting 5 per cent of its global workforce, or around 3,800 jobs, while it revamps operations as artificial intelligence (AI) erodes the payment industry.

The restructuring will make AmEx a 'more agile and efficient' organisation', Chief Executive Stephen Squeri told analysts on an earnings conference call.

'When completed, we believe this exercise will help us operate and execute more effectively, and give us greater capacity to invest in our business priorities.'

The job cuts resulted in one-time costs of \$336 million that lowered third-quarter earnings. The company

reported a 26 per cent rise in profits to \$3.7 billion.

AmEx had about 76,800 employees at the end of 2025, according to a securities filing.

'Agentic transaction volumes are still small, but the direction is clear'

The company did not provide additional details about the restructuring in response to

an AFP query.

AmEx, like other companies, is using AI to boost productivity and automate processes, Squeri said. But the company is also preparing for greater consumer use of AI.

'Agentic transaction volumes are still small, but the direction is clear,' he said. 'AI is fundamentally changing how consumers and businesses discover, compare, decide, pay and manage their finances and their lives.'

Squeri said AmEx was taking a 'risk-based approach' to AI to guard against rogue agents, but that the company must respond to the market.

'You have to embrace AI and you have to do what your customers want to do,' he said.

FOOTBALL

'Weeks, not days' in Kompany recovery, say Bayern

MUNICH, Germany (AFP) — Bayern Munich expect coach Vincent Kompany to miss an extended period as he continues his hospital treatment for a virus after collapsing on the training pitch on Friday. Speaking at a press conference on Saturday, Bayern sporting director Max Eberl confirmed Kompany was still hospitalised in a "stable" condition. Kompany's English assistant coach Aaron Danks will replace the 40-year-old for Saturday's Bundesliga match at Freiburg. Eberl told reporters "examinations were continuing" to determine the nature of the former Manchester City and Belgium captain's condition, with a recovery timeframe yet to be determined. "Vincent will be given all the time he needs. We're not starting to put together any timeframes. We need to firstly figure out what it is and then we'll discuss calmly what recovery time is to be. We won't be talking about days, but weeks. We need to all be clear on that." Taking Saturday's press conference in Kompany's absence, Danks said he had spoken with the former centre back briefly on Friday but only to wish him well. "I explained to him that we wouldn't be having no football conversations."

TENNIS

Rybakina overcomes wobble to reach Ningbo semifinals

SHANGHAI (AFP) — World No 1 Elena Rybakina recovered from a second-set dip to beat Poland's Katarzyna Kawa on Friday and reach the semifinals of the Ningbo Open. The seed and defending champion Rybakina cruised through the opening set but was forced into a decider by the 128th-ranked Kawa before sealing a 6-1, 3-6, 6-1 victory. Moscow-born Kaskh Rybakina will face Russian sixth seed Diana Shnaider in the last four in eastern China. Shnaider overcame US fourth seed Iva Jovic in three sets. Canada's Leylah Fernandez plays Marie Bouzkova of the Czech Republic in the other semifinal. Rybakina, 27, won the US Open for her third Grand Slam crown in September and usurped Aryna Sabalenka as world number one in New York. She was then stunned in the second round in Beijing at the start of this month, and pulled out of the Wuhan Open citing a foot injury.



Baffa Diop celebrating his late goal against Shabab Odein



Faisali players during the minute of silence for the martyrs of the Karak tragedy before their match against Jazera



Obeidah Namaneh celebrating his late goal against Doqara

Faisali stay top despite draw as Hussein Irbid and Wihdat claim vital wins

By Hassan Jaafra

AMMAN — Matchday 6 of the Jordanian Pro League (JPL) delivered another cracking round of drama, complete with late-match heroics, brilliant individual displays, missed spot-kicks and key shifts in the standings.

Hussein Irbid edge Doqara through late intervention

The round got under way on Thursday at the Amman International Stadium as defending champions Hussein Irbid, managed by Guero Torres, edged newly promoted Doqara 1-0.

In a tight affair with few clear chances, substitute Obeidah Al Namaneh broke the deadlock in the 87th minute — just ten minutes after coming on — converting a fine assist from Dutch overseas signing Raisha to match all three points.

Ramtha stall in goalless draw with Salt

Action continued on Friday at the Amman International Stadium, where Salt and Ramtha played out a cagey 0-0 stalemate. Neither side created genuine scoring opportunities in a defensive evening, forcing Ramtha to drop points for a second consecutive week.

Four-goal thrill-ride as Jazera hold leaders Faisali

Later on Friday at King Abdullah Stadium in Qadisiyah, league leaders Al Faisali were held to a pulsating 2-2 draw by a resilient Al Jazera side. Al Jazera took a shock lead in the very first minute when Yahya Al Bakhti met a corner from Yaseen Al Bakhti and powered a header past Abdullah Al Rikhoori. Faisali hit back rapidly in the 7th minute through league top-scorer Ahmed Al Risan, who latched onto Claudio Maradona's setup

to fire a low strike past their Abhass Maradona then turned provider again in the 29th minute, playing Risan through to slot home his sixth goal of the season. Unfazed, Jazera drew level in the 35th minute when Yahya Al Bakhti chased down Raashed Al Shahawneh's long ball and executed a delicate lob over Fakhouri for his second of the night. On Saturday afternoon at Petra Stadium, Raqa's hit their stride after the break to defeat Arashi Irbid 2-0. Mohammad Al Akash opened the scoring from the penalty spot in the 45th minute after a handball inside the box.

Just four minutes later, Abdulrahman Jarwan met Zaid Abu Abul's pass and curled a lovely finesse shot into the bottom corner to seal the win. Diop rescue act keeps Wihdat in touch. Closing out the round at King Abdullah Stadium, Al Wihdat claimed a crucial 1-0 win over Shabab Odein. Wihdat missed a prime opportunity right on half-time when Mohammad Al Muwail had his VAB-awarded penalty saved by Shabab Odein keeper Waleed Essam. However, 60th-minute substitute Baffa Diop saved the day

in the 87th minute, controlling a long punt from Shawiq Al Qar'a and slotting past Essam to spark wild celebrations. League standings after match-day 6. Faisali remain clear at the top with 14 points, holding a three-point cushion over Darqi's and Wihdat (11 points each). Ramtha, Al Jazera, and champions Hussein Irbid sit tied on nine points in fourth, fifth, and sixth. Salt occupy seventh with six points, Doqara and Arashi Irbid share eighth and ninth on four points, while Shabab Odein remain bottom with three.

CLIMATE

'Solution from the heavens': Indonesians pray for rain as fires burn

SURABAYA, Indonesia (AFP) — Indonesian schoolchildren prayed for rain on Thursday as another firefighter lost his life battling drought-fueled blazes consuming forests and peatlands and blanketing parts of Southeast Asia in a sickening haze. Wildfires have burned more than 1.9 million hectares in the nine months to September, according to deforestation monitor Nusantara Atlas — a figure the government has not confirmed or denied. The resulting haze has sickened hundreds of thousands in Indonesia and reached as far as Malaysia, Singapore and East Timor. In East Java, where fires have ravaged several regencies and conservation areas including Mount Bromo and the Bahuwan National Park, the governor urged communities to come together to "pray for rain". Islamic schools in the province compiled on Thursday, looking to Allah for relief. "Many areas are ex-



Firefighters from Indonesia's regional disaster management agency pump water to extinguish spreading wildfires amid dense smoke and haze in Barito-Kuala, South Kalimantan province, on Saturday

periencing drought, including fires and so on... Religion offers a way to solve the problem of drought," teacher Mohammad Jatin told AFP of prayers organised at his school in Surabaya, the capital of East Java. "As people of faith, we are of course optimistic." In Malang, also in the province, some 350 pupils bowed in prayer with their teachers at a vocational high school. "We hope that

this... will bring rain soon," said headmaster Lusian Andriani. "There have been many cases of acute respiratory infections in Indonesia, partly because the rain has not fallen for a prolonged period." Indonesia experiences fires every dry season, but this year's blazes have been particularly severe, making hundreds of thousands of people ill. The haze has prompted school closures in Malaysia and East Timor, and has

drifted into Singapore and as far afield as the Philippines. Five firefighters died in East Java last week after they were overwhelmed by smoke and flames in the Bromo Tengger Semeru National Park. Another firefighter died on Wednesday in South Kalimantan on Indonesia's part of Borneo island. The Mahatir Mohammad Zain Foundation, a disaster relief NGO, said the 51-year-old volunteer

passed away after falling ill with chest tightness while helping fight a fire in the Barito Kuala Regency. His death was "a reminder of the risks volunteers face in handling forest and land fires," said the foundation. The crisis has sparked protests against the government's perceived slow response, as well as a court case against President Prabowo Subianto and other officials in West Kalimantan. In the capital Jakarta, a dozen demonstrators gathered outside the Chinese embassy on Thursday demanding importers of Indonesian palm oil, mining and forestry products stand in "solidarity" with Indonesia. Back in Malang, resident Ahmad Salfudin joined others in praying for divine intervention. "For the past few days, I have been wondering why almost everyone is trying to solve these disasters using logic. Why don't we try seeking a solution from the heavens instead?" he told AFP.

370 books in 20 months: S.African author defends her use of AI

CAPE TOWN (AFP) — South African writer Coral Hart has published more than 370 books since February 2025 using artificial intelligence, a process she passionately defends despite criticism and threats. "Gritter", "villain" — insults abound on social media to describe the author, who, in her forties, has become the symbol of AI's arrival in publishing. Coral Hart — a pseudonym she uses to protect her real name — told AFP in an interview she had received "tons of thousands" of hate messages and several death threats. In this hostile environment, few authors using AI agree to speak publicly and show their faces. "I chose to be the one to step up and say these are conversations we need to start having," Hart said. "This is here... They're not going to switch it off or unplug it, because a bunch of authors said so." Before she started writing with AI around 20 months ago, Hart had been working in publishing for 14 years and written several dozen

works without the technology. It took her three months to familiarise herself with the various AI models and build a framework capable of producing a book. Now she juggles between ChatGPT, which is "really good at dialogue, terrible at prose"; Claude, "really good story structure, terrible at sex drives"; and others like Gek, "completely unedited" but good on "spicy scenes". "If you say, ChatGPT write me a book, or, Claude, write me a book, you're going to get a flaming dumpster fire of trash back because it doesn't have anything [to work with]," Hart said. The author defines the story concept, a style, details of the characters, and chapter outlines. And only then will her system generate the books. Hart said when she started, "We could write one paragraph at a time. I usually took two or three prompts to do that." "I can now draft the whole book in one sequence." Since last year, AI models have "im-

proved vastly", Hart said. "The prose has improved. The syntax has improved. The sentence structure has improved." 'Books are selling' The first draft of a book is generally not good, the writer said. It is run through AI for "developmental edits" and then again to fix any continuity issues, story issues, flat middles, character arcs that are incomplete, plot threads that have been dropped, people whose eye colour has changed. At the end of this process, a human proofreader reads through the text to fix any "AI tells that have slipped through" and do some rewording. "And it's usually ready to go." Although one of her novels made it into Amazon's top 100 bestsellers, the vast majority of her 371 titles — many of them romance — are tailored to certain readers based on rigorous market research. She has sold more than 1 million books, by her own estimate, in digital, print and audio formats, earning more than \$1 million so far this year.

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