



# Egyptian Government Sees Population Growth as 'Catastrophic'

Egypt is the Arab world's most populous country, with 96 million inhabitants, which is expected to reach 119 million in 2030. Egypt is mostly uninhabitable desert, so people are concentrated near the Nile. Many Egyptians view children as caretakers for their parents in old age. Poor families view children as sources of income. The standard of living is declining, and the government is promoting the slogan "two is enough."

Ali Abdelaziz sees children as a "gift from God", so much so that he has 10 of his own, even as Egypt's government struggles to stem a "catastrophic" population boom.

Abdelaziz works in the capital as a doorman, but his children stay in a village with their mother in the southern province of Minya where life is cheaper.

Egypt's overpopulation is adding pressure on the economy, already reeling from the political and security turmoil since the 2011 uprising that toppled former president Hosni Mubarak. With 96 million inhabitants – and 9.4 million expatriates – the Arab world's most populous country adds 1.6 million people every year to its population.

At the current rate, Egypt's population will reach 119 million in 2030, according to a May report by the United Nations Population Fund.

With 95 percent of Egypt's land uninhabitable desert, the population is concentrated around the narrow Nile valley and Nile Delta, with smaller numbers along the Mediterranean and Red Sea coasts.

A fall in mortality rates in the early 1970s further boosted the population growth.

President Abdel Fattah al-Sissi has said population growth is "a challenge as critical as that of terrorism."

The government launched a new family planning campaign this year under the slogan "two are enough," to try to contain the phenomenon.

"Children are protection: they care for their parents when they grow older," said Abdelaziz, the doorman, unconvinced of the campaign.

But Hayam Mohamed, a mother of three, does not want more children and uses a government family planning center in Umm Khenan village of Giza province.

"I don't want my children to feel deprived," Mohamed, 32, said after receiving her contraception pills, free of charge, from the center's doctor, like many others in her village.

"Education is expensive, and life has become difficult with the rising prices."

Fardous Hamed, a doctor at the center, told AFP that the number of people seeking its services has risen with the latest round of price increases since authorities floated the pound in November 2016.

"Awareness grew among people here," said Hamed.

Following the currency flotation, the pound lost more than half its value and inflation jumped to 33 percent in September.

"If I give birth to five or six children, I won't even be able to provide them food," said Mohamed.

'Collective suicide'

Abu Bakr el-Gendy, the head of Egypt's state statistics bureau which carried out the latest census, described the current rate of population growth as a "catastrophe."

He said the annual rate accelerated between 2005 and 2014, before stabilizing in 2016 at around 2.6 percent.

The rate must be at least three times lower than economic growth for people's living standards not to deteriorate, according to Gendy.

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## **UN Vote Condemns US Recognition of Jerusalem as Capital of Israel**

The UN General Assembly voted overwhelmingly to condemn President Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and called on the US to withdraw the decision. The vote was 128 countries rebuking Trump, with 35 countries abstaining, and only nine countries, including Israel and the US, voting in favor of the new capital. Nikki Haley, US ambassador to the UN, said she would note which countries opposed Israel and the US. Trump threatened to cut off US foreign-aid to the opposition. -GEG

One day after Trump escalated his war of words with the UN, threatening to cut off foreign financial aid over today's UN vote on the president's decision to recognize Jerusalem the capital of Israel, the United Nations on Thursday delivered what has been dubbed a "stunning rebuke" of the US President's Jerusalem decision, voting overwhelmingly to condemn the move and calling on the U.S. to withdraw the decision.

The final vote was a landslide against Israel, with some 128 nations voting in favor of the resolution. Nine countries opposed the resolution while 35 abstained.

Only Israel, Honduras, Togo, U.S., Palau, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Guatemala voted against Jerusalem resolution. Two-thirds of UN member states including Germany, France, Italy, Netherlands, Belgium, Portugal, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway, Spain and Greece voted in favor of the resolution. Canada abstained.

While the resolution – a formal statement of a U.N. opinion – is not legally binding, it represents a symbolic and diplomatic condemnation of Trump's decision and exerts political pressure on him to reverse the move... which Trump of course won't do.

As reported yesterday, in the runup to the General Assembly vote, Trump and US Ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley, warned countries against opposing the Trump administration's Jerusalem decision. Haley went so far as sending a letter to members of the international body this week, warning that Trump had instructed her to take names, i.e., list the countries that voted in favor of the resolution. The president followed up on that warning on Wednesday, suggesting at a Cabinet meeting that the U.S. could cut off foreign aid for countries that opposed the U.S. in the vote.

"They take hundreds of millions of dollars and even billions of dollars, and then they vote against us," Trump said. "Well, we're watching those votes. Let them vote against us, we'll save a lot. We don't care."

The threat did little to stop the countries from voting to blast Trump's decision.

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## **UK: Children Must Take Sex-Ed Classes That Favorably Teach Gay and Transgender Issues**

The Department of Education announced that all 5- to 16-year-old students will be required to take sex-ed classes that are "sensitive" to all sexualities and identities. Critics say that children are too young to understand adult sexual relationships such as homosexuality and transgenderism, so the "appropriate" understanding will be taught based on the social and ethical standards of government employees, including those who are gay and transgender. Input is invited from parents, but it is clear from the literature embedded in the program that views opposed to the announced objective are not welcome.  
-GEG

Students in the U.K. will have to take mandatory classes about sex that include lessons on gay and transgender issues.

Starting in September 2019, all 5- to 16-year-old students

will be required to take sex ed classes that are sensitive to all sexualities and identities, according to a Tuesday announcement from the U.K.'s Department of Education, the Telegraph reports.

The Department of Education explained it is also analyzing exactly what material will make up the new program and fully "expect[s] all schools to ensure that young people, whatever their developing sexuality or identity" feel comfortable with the program.

Many gay, transgender and queer activists, and some parents are happy with the new program. "We very much welcome the opportunity for all teachers, parents and young people to feed in their views on what relationships and sex education should look like," said an LGBTQ Stonewall spokesperson, according to the Telegraph.

Others are skeptical of the program's appropriateness for such young children and don't think children who don't even have a firm grasp of vocabulary and numbers should be taught such material. "There is no 'age-appropriate' way to teach primary school age children about homosexual relationships or transgenderism," Campaign Director of the Coalition for Marriage, Thomas Pascoe, told the Telegraph.

He posits that schools including various sexual preferences in educational programs when students are not old enough to understand such concepts fully is not appropriate. "We should be teaching young children broad values of respect and tolerance, not ordering them to accept adult sexual relationships which they are far too young to understand," he added.

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# US Drug Deaths Rose by 21% Over Last Year, Causing Drop in US Life Expectancy

US deaths from drug overdoses skyrocketed 21% last year, and for the second straight year dragged down American life expectancy. The government figures released Thursday put drug deaths at 63,600, up from about 52,000 in 2015. For the first time, the powerful painkiller Fentanyl and its close opioid cousins played a bigger role in the deaths than any other legal or illegal drug, surpassing prescription pain pills and heroin. The highest drug death rates were in ages 25 to 54.

-GEG

U.S. deaths from drug overdoses skyrocketed 21 percent last year, and for the second straight year dragged down how long Americans are expected to live.

The government figures released Thursday put drug deaths at 63,600, up from about 52,000 in 2015. For the first time, the powerful painkiller fentanyl and its close opioid cousins played a bigger role in the deaths than any other legal or illegal drug, surpassing prescription pain pills and heroin.

“This is urgent and deadly,” said Dr. Brenda Fitzgerald, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The opioid epidemic “clearly has a huge impact on our entire society.”

Two-thirds of last year’s drug deaths – about 42,000 –

involved opioids, a category that includes heroin, methadone, prescription pain pills like OxyContin, and fentanyl. Fatal overdoses that involved fentanyl and fentanyl-like drugs doubled in one year, to more than 19,000, mostly from illegally made pills or powder, which is often mixed with heroin or other drugs.

Heroin was tied to 15,500 deaths and prescription painkillers to 14,500 deaths. The balance of the overdose deaths involved sedatives, cocaine and methamphetamines. More than one drug is often involved in an overdose death.

The highest drug death rates were in ages 25 to 54. Preliminary 2017 figures show the rise in overdose deaths continuing.

The drug deaths weigh into CDC's annual calculation of the average time a person is expected to live. The life expectancy figure is based on the year of their birth, current death trends and other factors. For decades, it was on the upswing, rising a few months nearly every year. But last year marked the first time in more than a half century that U.S. life expectancy fell two consecutive years.

A baby born last year in the U.S. is expected to live about 78 years and 7 months, on average, the CDC said. An American born in 2015 was expected to live about a month longer and one born in 2014 about two months longer than that.

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# Judge Declares Mistrial in Bundy Ranch Case, Says Govt Willfully Withheld Evidence

In a shocking outcome, Judge Gloria Navarro declared a mistrial (instead of dismissing charges) in the Bundy Ranch case saying US prosecutors willfully withheld critical evidence from the defense. Prosecutors maintained the FBI was not involved in the standoff and that no video surveillance or sniper teams were used. They charged defendants with making false claims about snipers and videos in order to incite militia groups to their defense. Now we learn that the evidence withheld from the defense proves that all of Bundy's claims were true and that it was the government that was doing the lying. Judge Navarro set a Jan. 8 hearing to decide whether charges should be dismissed outright. She also set a new trial date, Feb. 26. Acting U.S. Attorney Steven Myhre didn't immediately say whether he would seek to retry the case.

In a shocking verdict, Judge Gloria Navarro dismissed jurors Wednesday, declaring a mistrial in the Bundy Ranch case saying U.S. prosecutors willfully withheld critical and "potentially exculpatory" evidence from the defense.

*As AZCentral.com reports, Navarro cited five key pieces of information that prosecutors did not disclose: records about surveillance and snipers at the Bundy Ranch; unredacted FBI logs about activity at the ranch in the days around the standoff; threat assessments about the Bundys dating to 2012;*

*and internal affairs reports about the BLM.*

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