

Local

What day is it?



Pandemic Diaries

By Jamie Etheridge

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Today marks Day 5 of the full curfew in Kuwait. This week also marks 12 weeks (or 3 months) since children stopped going to school and nine weeks since the airport, mosques and other public places were closed. Eight weeks ago the government imposed a partial curfew, a decision at the time that seemed remarkable and frightening. This weekend also marks six weeks since Mahboula and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh were isolated, their inhabitants cut off from the rest of Kuwait.

Each progressive measure adds to the surreality of the experience. What day is it? How many days since this all started? Where do we begin counting from? Time, our routine way of segmenting the day into minutes and hours, has lost its meaning. What does it matter if its Sunday or Thursday when there are no appointments, meetings or places to go?



The major event will be on May 30 (insha'Allah)

Life has become calendar-less. Working or being at home, the days begin to fold one into the other. By now, most of us have established some sort of routine. We might be working from home all day, sleeping at night. Or maybe sleeping until noon, watching TV or reading, exercising, waiting for iftar. Ramadan typically is spent visiting family and friends, attending gatherings, enjoying qhabqa feasts and spending the nights outside. Now, however, that is impossible, and so we wait out the long, quiet nights alone or in our small, family groups.

And the next day, we do it all over again and in this way time passes but within very narrow sets of experiences so that the days seem to mimic each other, to repeat themselves until we lose track of time, track of the days that have passed. Is it 12 or 13 weeks since schools closed? Are we on Day 5 or Day 6 of the lockdown? Is the day Friday or Saturday?

Most lose count, waiting only for the two upcoming events that will change the situation – May 23 or thereabouts for the end of Ramadan and the start of Eid. This will disrupt the routine in many households in Kuwait. The major event will be on May 30 (insha'Allah), when the planned and hoped for freedom will come with the end of the lockdown.

In the meantime, we stay at home and wait our way through the minutes, hours and days.

Ramadan 2020



Local Spotlight

By Muna Al-Fuzai

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The holy month of Ramadan will soon be over. It is a month of great sanctity and importance for fasting Muslims. But despite the fact that Muslims have performed the duty of fasting, the fear of an outbreak of the coronavirus and government measures taken in this regard in all Muslim countries, including Kuwait, have deprived them from practicing many social Ramadan rituals and traditions that they have been accustomed to since childhood.

I think the atmosphere of the holy month this year is sad, especially since many social customs have stopped completely. There are no visits between families and friends, no prayers in mosques, Ramadan evenings or cafes open until dawn. Everything is shut down. I think much of the joy of Ramadan was characterized by large family meetings and gatherings, especially since family gatherings are an important matter for Arab families, which has disappeared this year.

It's normal to say that everyone misses the atmosphere and spirituality of Ramadan, but there is hope is that the crisis will be over soon. The population of Kuwait as in the rest of the Arab countries is confronting exceptional circumstances, most notably a complete curfew, but the pub-

lic were granted two hours in the evening for walking in their area of residence. I believe that despite commitment by some people to follow the measures of social distancing and putting on masks outdoors, however the high figures recorded daily confirm that commitment to health rules is not working for everyone.

There are those who believe that getting infected with the virus means going to the hospital and being treated. This is something I think is not true. There are light symptoms that do not require going to the hospital. Also, the health system cannot fully absorb all cases, including those that may just be of seasonal flu, but unfortunately I think there is a lot of ignorance and misconceptions among some people.

The problem also is that there are those who believe everything they read on social media.

I personally only trust and believe the statements of the ministry of health. I have stopped listening to the statements of the World Health Organization these days, especially with the entry of international global political conflicts. The last thing I need to hear is a political view on a medical issue.

Technology has formed an ideal way to solve the problem of social divergence, as it has become a bridge to communicate with friends and family, as well as activating "online services" to purchase needs, after these features were neglected for a long time. I think it is natural that most people miss the atmosphere they were used to in Ramadan. But, despite the harsh lifestyle imposed by the pandemic in Kuwait, the crisis is global and requires a person to remain at home and stay safe.

Follow instructions for your safety



IN MY VIEW

By Abdellatif Sharaa

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A sad story from Egypt started with a well-built healthy young man, who was dismissing claims about the dangers of the coronavirus. He was saying the disease is as simple as the common cold, and that we should not have this fear, which is not necessary. He also bragged about how healthy his people are and can resist such a disease.

A few days ago, the same young man was shown on television, infected with the virus, and actually the video showed this man during his last hours, suffering severely from the symptoms before passing away. I hope and pray to Allah that people do not become complacent as time goes by, and risk being infected with the coronavirus because just one mistake may cause problems to many people who will suffer a lot and go through the torturous journey to recovery, I hope.

I am also shocked at the death of doctors - some of whom I met on occasions - because of COVID-19, and some are under treatment right now. May Allah grant them speedy recovery. So this is clear evidence that the virus does not discriminate at all - it does not see color, religion, profession, rich, poor or anything. It just hits and does not run at

all - in fact it fights as fiercely as we do against it, and has claimed and is claiming lives in large numbers.

Let us keep complying with the authorities' instructions and rules of common sense. If we look at statistics published by the health ministry, we realize how critical it is to be careful and considerate towards ourselves and others.

On May 4, there were 295 new cases and two deaths; the following day saw 526 cases with 11 in critical condition. May 6 saw 485 cases and two deaths. The numbers hovered around the same rate until May 10, when 1065 new cases were recorded, 19 of whom were in critical condition and nine deaths. Then on May 13, 751 cases were recorded including 11 critical cases, while there were seven deaths. The picture is very clear and self explanatory. Heed the warnings - stay home please!

Although the country is under a total curfew, authorities allowed people to go out for a walk around their homes every day for two hours in the afternoon. This is a good decision that will safeguard the physical and mental health of individuals, but what is not good are the scenes in some areas as I saw myself and on social media - people in large numbers walking close to each other, crossing in front of each other and standing and talking! Isn't this defeating the purpose?! I am afraid this could be due to ignorance or negligence, though there is no excuse as the crisis has been ongoing for six months!

Finally, it was a good sight when policemen were distributing masks to people during the two-hour walk period, and I hope that the masks are used, and used correctly!

Final word: "Our spirit is to be considerate and have compassion for people. It is a social responsibility." — Alan Wong