

130 mln Arab population in poverty: UN survey

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The Daily Morning Voice Online Desk: A survey released by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) on Friday said that poverty affects one-third of the Arab region's population, excluding the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and Libya. Dubbed "Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the Arab Region," it said that "poverty, measured against national poverty lines, increased to affect 130 million people in Arab countries." The survey expects a further rise in poverty levels in the next two years, reaching 36 percent of the population in 2024, according to Xinhua reports.

Moreover, the Arab region registered the world's highest unemployment rate in 2022 at 12 percent, said the survey, adding that there may be a very slight decrease in 2023 to 11.7 percent, owing to post-COVID-19 economic recovery efforts. It expects the region's economy to grow by 4.5 percent in 2023 and 3.4 percent in 2024. Ahmed Moumami, the lead author of the survey, said that GCC and other oil-exporting countries will continue to benefit from higher energy prices, while oil-importing countries will suffer from several socioeconomic challenges, including rising energy costs, food supply shortages, and drops in both tourism and international aid inflows. Moumami noted that oil-exporting Arab countries should diversify their economies away from the energy sector by investing in projects that generate inclusive growth and sustainable development.