

Jordan's king appoints veteran diplomat Bisher Al-Khasawneh prime minister

Wed, 2020-10-07 21:56

AMMAN: Jordan's King Abdullah II on Wednesday appointed veteran diplomat and palace aide Bisher Al-Khasawneh as the new prime minister, days after accepting the resignation of Omar Al-Razzaz, the royal palace said. The monarch dissolved parliament on Sept. 27 at the end of its four-year term, a move that under constitutional rules meant the government had to resign within a week.

In a letter of designation, the king said he entrusted Al-Khasawneh, who has been a palace advisor since last year after a career mostly spent as a diplomat and peace negotiator with Israel, to form a cabinet of qualified ministers who would rise to the country's challenges.

Al-Khasawneh will oversee parliamentary elections due on Nov. 10 whose outcome is expected under an electoral law that marginalizes the Islamist opposition to maintain a majority of pro-government deputies.

The country is facing a peak in COVID-19 infections at a time of rising popular discontent over worsening economic conditions and curbs on public freedoms under emergency laws.

Jordan's economy is expected to shrink by 6% this year as it grapples with its worst economic crisis in many years, with unemployment and poverty aggravated by the pandemic.



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Jordan's King Abdullah accepts resignation of Prime Minister Omar Al-Razzaz
Jordan to deploy armed forces in all governorates to enforce weekend COVID-19 curfew

[Two-state solution, Mideast peace at stake in US election: Activists](#)

Wed, 2020-10-07 19:45

CHICAGO: The two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and Middle East peace in general, are at stake for Arab Americans in the Nov. 3 election battle between US President Donald Trump and Joe Biden, activists for each side argued on Wednesday.

Ed Gabriel, former US ambassador to Morocco and a spokesman for the organization Arabs for Biden, and Republican activist and Trump supporter

Dalia Al-Aqidi were both guests on "The Ray Hanania Show," broadcast in Detroit on the US Arab Radio Network.

They said Arab Americans will help define which way the US moves forward in the Middle East.

Gabriel said Biden is "the last chance" for the two-state solution, and for giving Palestinians a stronger negotiating footing with Israel.

"We're hanging by a thread on a two-state solution," Gabriel said during the live radio show, which is sponsored by Arab News. "I think he can get us there because of the trust and confidence he has. One thing I learned in diplomacy: If you don't have the trust and confidence of both sides, you're in trouble ... Joe has got that."

[Watch: The Ray Hanania Show with guests Ed Gabriel and Dalia Al-Aqidi.](#)

Gabriel said in such matters, Biden is "very close in personality and approach" to former President Bill Clinton. "Biden has balance, he's trusted by both sides and he can bring them together," Gabriel added.

Noting that American Arabs and Muslims tend to be conservative socially and politically, Al-Aqidi questioned the failures of past Democratic administrations to deliver on their promises of peace, while Trump has delivered results.

"We just witnessed the most important two deals between two Middle Eastern countries (the UAE and Bahrain) and Israel ... More to come," she said.

"It's one of the best things to have happened to the Middle East in 40 years. This is step one to a more peaceful region."

Al-Aqidi said Arab Americans can play a role in supporting policies that keep threats from extremists such as Hezbollah and Iran in check.

"Let us not forget that in the Middle East, there's a huge threat from the Iranian regime and from Turkey as well," she added.

"It's the right time now for people in the Middle East to live in peace. That's what President Trump did, which many presidents failed in this aspect."

Gabriel said a Biden administration would be "tough" on Iran and Hezbollah. "We're going to go beyond a nuclear deal with Iran to look at missile technology and their proxies in the region that foment terrorism," he added.

"But ... this is America. We don't lead with our guns. We should be leading with our values. Joe Biden leads with his values. As Joe would say, inshallah."

Gabriel criticized Trump for ostracizing not only the Palestinians during his Middle East peace efforts, but also American Arabs and Muslims.

Biden “produced a six-page Arab-American policy paper which you can go online and read – six pages of how this future administration would deal with Arab Americans on domestic and foreign policies,” Gabriel said.

“We have dozens of meetings every month with all kinds of sub-groups of the Arab-American population. We’re listening and we’re changing. We’re always one email away from Joe Biden ... It comes from his heart,” he added.

“Last week in the (presidential) debate, he looked at Trump in the eyes, and when Trump gave one of his comments Joe said ‘inshallah.’ And Joe said that for a reason ... He has been across the table from Arab leaders ... He has a warmth about him that’s very Arab.”

The broadcast is available on the Arab News Facebook page, where the interviews were streamed live.



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‘Just shut up, man’ – Biden and Trump trade personal insults in first presidential debate
Trump ‘looking forward’ to next presidential debate

Tunisia considers curfew to slow second wave of pandemic

Author:

Reuters

ID:

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Wed, 2020-10-07 16:08

TUNIS: Tunisia was expected on Wednesday to announce a curfew in the capital after the governors of four provinces that make up greater Tunis called for action to halt a surge in coronavirus infections.

"The decision has come too late but it will help us break the rise in cases," said Imed Souissi, a fruit seller.

The governors proposed measures that would include a curfew between 8:00 p.m. and 5:00 am and a suspension of Friday prayers in mosques. A government decision was expected later on Wednesday, with the curfew likely to take effect from Thursday.

Tunisia entirely shut down its economy in March and closed its borders, limiting the spread of coronavirus to a few hundred confirmed cases. But it has now racked up more than 20,000 cases over the past month, with only 200 intensive care beds designated for COVID-19 available in the whole country. Elyes Fakhfakh, who stepped down as prime minister last month after denying allegations of a business conflict of interest, has announced he has tested positive, as has the leader of a major party, Abir Moussi.

Many Tunisians say the authorities should have done more to prepare with the time secured by the economic hardship of the lockdown.

"The Tunisian political class lost its opportunity to be ready for a second wave. What did they do to prepare over the past months? Nothing. They were just focused on their usual disputes," said Chaker ben Hussein, a baker in the Iben Khaldoun district of the capital.

Even before the pandemic, Tunisia was grappling to reverse a decade of sluggish growth, high unemployment, declining public services and concerning levels of sovereign debt.

The economy contracted by 21% in the second quarter as unemployment rose by 3 points to 18%, with expectations it will exceed 20% by the end of the year. The government has said the crisis has cost it 6 billion dinars (\$2.2 billion) so far.

A political crisis has rumbled since an election last year, with the fragmented parliament taking months to produce a government in January that lasted just eight months.

The new government, also seen as fragile, has said another lockdown is impossible. The new prime minister, Hichem Mechichi, sacked the culture minister within weeks of taking office for rejecting government coronavirus restrictions for public events.



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Tunisia's tourism industry hit hard by coronavirus pandemic Jordan to suspend in-school learning amid rise in coronavirus cases

[UAE reports 1,046 coronavirus infections, one death](#)

Wed, 2020-10-07 19:24

DUBAI: The UAE on Wednesday recorded 1,046 new COVID-19 cases and one death. The Ministry of Health and Prevention said the total number of cases since the pandemic began has reached 101,840, while the death toll rose to 436. The UAE, with a population of around 9.9 million people, has seen the number of daily new cases surge over the past two months from 164 on Aug. 3 to a new high of 1,231 cases on Saturday.

However, it has also become the first country, among countries with a population of over one million, where the number of coronavirus tests has exceeded the population, with around 10.4 million tests conducted so far since the pandemic emerged.

The ministry also said 1,154 cases recovered from COVID-19 over the previous 24 hours, bringing the total to 91,710.

Abu Dhabi police said they recorded 1,252 violations against anti-COVID-19 rules that ban or restrict meetings and gatherings.

#أخبارنا | #شرطة_أبوظبي تُحرر 1252 مخالفة لـ " منع التجمعات والحفلات والتجمع في العزب" بالإمارة
<https://t.co/GwiKay2cg3>
<pic.twitter.com/Qf4Gckw18n>

– شرطة أبوظبي (@ADPoliceHQ) [October 7, 2020](#)

The organizers were fined 10,000 dirhams and those who attended were fined 5,000 dirhams, Abu Dhabi Police said.

Dubai Economy issued fines to five businesses and warned seven other shops for not adhering to anti-COVID-19 measures.

Meanwhile, Ras Al-Khaimah's (RAK) Tourism Development Authority claimed it would be the first global destination to provide free coronavirus PCR (Polymerase chain reaction) tests for international visitors.

[#RasAlKhaimah](#) becomes the first destination to provide free Covid-19 PCR tests for international visitors. [@RAKTourism](#)
Read more: <https://t.co/zMD0ujIQaV>

– Ras Al Khaimah Government Media Office (@RAKmediaoffice) [October](#)

[7, 2020](#)

The testing, which will be subsidized by the authority, will be available until the end of the year.

“As travel corridors begin to open up, we will continue to incorporate and implement global best practices into our efforts to safeguard against the spread of the pandemic,” said Raki Phillips, CEO of the authority.

Elsewhere, Kuwait recorded 475 new COVID-19 cases, bringing the total to 108,743, while the death toll stood at 639 after seven new deaths were registered.

تعلن [#وزارة_الصحة](#) عن تأكيد إصابة 475 حالة جديدة، وتسجيل 597 حالة شفاء، و 7 وفيات جديدة بـ [#فيروس_كورونا_المستجد](#) COVID-19 ، ليصبح إجمالي عدد الحالات 108,743 حالة pic.twitter.com/0JwA1zd30L

– [@KUWAIT_MOH](#) [October 7, 2020](#) وزارة الصحة – الكويت –

Oman’s health ministry confirmed 1,651 new cases and 10 deaths, bringing the total to 103,465, with 1,000 respectively.

[#Statement](#) No. 200

October 7, 2020 pic.twitter.com/Fh2BDcs9Xp

– [@OmaniMOH](#) [October 7, 2020](#) وزارة الصحة – عُمان –



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Saudi Arabia records 24 more COVID-19 deaths UAE surpasses 100,000 coronavirus infections

[**Slow start as Algeria kicks off**](#)

constitutional campaign

Author:

Amal Belalloufi with Philippe Agret in Tunis | AFP

ID:

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Wed, 2020-10-07 14:22

ALGIERS: Algeria launched its campaign Wednesday for constitutional reforms for a “New Republic” that the government hopes will satisfy a popular protest movement – to the apparent indifference of many.

The constitutional changes, a flagship initiative of President Abdelmadjid Tebboune, are set to be put to a referendum on November 1, the anniversary of the start of Algeria’s 1954-1962 war of independence from France.

“November 1954: liberation, November 2020: change,” the official campaign slogan reads.

But many ordinary Algerians – struggling during a deep economic crisis that has seen unemployment soar – appear skeptical it will make any meaningful difference.

“What change are we talking about? Nothing has changed with these people in power,” said Ali, a former trade union official.

Popular anti-government demonstrations led by the Hirak – meaning in Arabic, “the movement” – pushed ailing president Abdelaziz Bouteflika from power last year.

Protesters demanded radical changes to the entire state system they revile as undemocratic and corrupt.

In a bid to shore up his mandate, Bouteflika’s successor Tebboune pledged to revise the constitution and allow people to approve or reject proposals in a referendum.

But some see the referendum as a cynical way for the government to appear to bring change while maintaining its power.

“They want to steal the hopes born from Hirak,” Ali added.

While the referendum was mentioned on radio and television stations, there were no campaign posters seen on the streets of Algiers.

“Why vote for a project to which I do not have access?” said elderly Algerian Brahim Bahmed, complaining that the “promised broad debate did not take place.”

“It’s hard to imagine popular enthusiasm during the campaign,” said political scientist Mansour Kedidir, noting that ordinary citizens “care more about the precariousness of life than the rhetoric of reform.”

Opposition parties are themselves divided, with some calling for people to vote against the changes, and others to boycott the referendum entirely.

“Abstention risks being... the main winner and a crisis of legitimacy its logical consequence,” said Louisa Dris-Ait-Hamadouche, a lecturer from the University of Algiers.



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Constitutional vote for 'New Republic' splits Algeria US defense chief's rare
Algeria visit points to Sahel region threats