

# Algeria confirms Tebboune as new president, despite protests

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Mon, 2019-12-16 18:40

ALGIERS: Algeria's Constitutional Council has confirmed Abdelkader Tebboune as the new president of Africa's largest country for the next five years – despite mass protests challenging his election last week.

Tebboune won the vote in the first round with 58% of the vote, the head of the Constitutional Council announced on state television Monday. The other four candidates didn't contest the result.

The constitutional body said the vote was carried out in a "good climate" – and didn't mention the protests that have filled the streets of Algiers and other cities every Friday since February.

The peaceful pro-democracy movement pushed out Tebboune's ailing predecessor, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, after 20 years in charge of this oil-rich country struggling with corruption. The protesters reject Tebboune because he served as prime minister in the old regime, and because the vote was organized by a power structure they want thrown out.

Tebboune vowed after his victory was announced Friday to reach out to the protesters and fight corruption.

The inauguration date has not been set but is expected before the end of the year.



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New Algerian president faces tough challenge

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## [Iraqi state forces 'complicit' in massacre of Baghdad protesters](#)

Mon, 2019-12-16 20:43

RIYADH: The killing of dozens of Iraqi protesters in Baghdad earlier this month was carried out by unidentified armed forces in cooperation with Iraqi national and local security forces, Human Rights Watch said Monday.

Between 29 and 80 people were killed and 137 injured when gunmen opened fire on a crowd gathered in Al-Khilani Square on Dec. 6, the organization said in a report into the attack.

The killings came amid a brutal crackdown against widespread protests across southern Iraq that have left more than 500 dead.

The high death tolls have been blamed on a brutal response by government security forces but also the involvement of armed groups. Iran has also been blamed for playing a hand in organizing a response to the protests.

"Police and military forces withdrew as the unidentified militia, some in uniforms, began shooting," the Human Rights Watch report said.

Witnesses said about 1,000 people were gathered in the square and a nearby five-story parking garage that had been used as a hub for the protests when seven pickup trucks sped into the area.

"As the vehicles drove through the square slowly, gunmen in plain black uniforms and civilian dress opened fire with AK-47s and PK machine guns above the protesters, before lowering and firing directly at them," the report said.

The attackers then moved on to the building known as Al-Senak garage. Men carrying machetes and sticks stormed the building before more arrived with guns and opened fire inside.

"Five of my friends are still missing, and I don't know if they are dead or were detained," one of the witnesses said. "I saw the armed men loading bodies into their buses and trucks an hour before they drove away."

The witnesses said about two dozen Federal Police and Iraqi Security Forces, who were manning two checkpoints in the square leave as the gunmen arrived.

Nine hours later, at 4:30 a.m. on Dec. 7, the armed men left and the security forces returned within minutes.

"There's very strong evidence the Iraqi authorities outsourced their dirty work against protesters, leaving just as the killings commenced and returning to assist with arrests," Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East director at Human Rights Watch, said. "If they stood by and allowed these armed men to attack protesters or carried out the murders themselves, the Iraqi government forces will be responsible."

"The authorities, it seems, even allowed the lights to go out, blanketing the protesters in darkness with only flying bullets to light up the sky."

The report said that videos show some people detained during the violence being released and claiming they had been abused. A police officer tells them that they had been held by Kata'ib Hezbollah, an armed group in the Popular Mobilization Forces linked to Iran.

Human Rights Watch called on Iran, along with the US and UK, to stop providing military support to the Iraqi government until the killings of protesters stop.



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Pentagon chief urges Iraq to stop attacks on bases housing US forces  
Backer of Iraq anti-government protests killed in Baghdad

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## [UN Libya mission concerned over journalist's disappearance](#)

Mon, 2019-12-16 19:26

LONDON: The UN's mission in Libya said Monday it is concerned over the "enforced disappearance" of a human rights activist and journalist.

Reda Fhelboom was detained at Mitiga airport by a Tripoli-based armed group on Saturday night after arriving from Tunis, UNSMIL said. Tripoli is controlled by the Government of National Accord, but militias hold sway across the city and other parts of the country. A rival administration based in the east is fighting against the GNA and the armed groups that support it.

UNSMIL expresses concerns over the enforced disappearance of human rights defender and journalist Reda Fhelboom, calls for his immediate release – full statement: <https://t.co/McKANUIxJy>  
[pic.twitter.com/gjd3NuBEbn](https://t.co/gjd3NuBEbn)

– UNSMIL (@UNSMILibya) [December 16, 2019](#)

“UNSMIL is concerned that Mr. Fhelboom’s arrest and detention may be on account of his work as a defender and journalist and therefore in violation of Libya’s international human rights law obligations regarding the right to liberty and security of the person and freedom of opinion and expression,” the Un mission said.

It called for Fhelboom’s prompt release and urged that all human rights activists and journalists working in Libya should be protected.



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# Amnesty raises to 304 number of Iranians killed in protests

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DUBAI: Amnesty International said Monday that at least 304 people were killed in last month's anti-government protests in Iran, a significantly higher number than what the rights group had reported previously.

The protests, which lasted about four days in several cities and towns in Iran in November, were sparked by a sharp rise in gasoline prices. During the violence and in the days that followed, Iranian authorities blocked access to the Internet.

Amnesty said that Iranian security forces opened fire on unarmed protesters, killing scores. Iranian authorities subsequently arrested thousands of protesters as well as journalists, human rights defenders and students in a sweeping crackdown to prevent them from speaking up about the protests, the London-based watchdog said.

Tehran has yet to release any statistics about the scale of the unrest, though two weeks ago the government acknowledged that the security forces shot and killed protesters. Iranian state media referred to some of those shot and killed as "rioters".

Amnesty said earlier this month that at least 208 were killed in the Nov. 15-18 protests. It did not provide an explanation for the new and higher death toll, reiterating that it had spoken to dozens of people inside the country and had compiled credible reports.

The majority of the deaths recorded by Amnesty were the result of gunshots to the head, heart and other vital organs. Among those killed, according to Amnesty, was a 15-year-old boy in the city of Shiraz who was shot as he passed by a protest on his way from school.

The rights group had noted how during the protests, Iran shut down Internet access, blocking those inside the country from sharing videos and limiting knowledge about the full scale of the turmoil.

The protests were rooted in widespread economic discontent that has gripped the country since President Trump imposed crushing sanctions after withdrawing America from Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers.

Iran's national currency, the rial, has sharply plunged from the time of the 2015 nuclear accord while daily staples have risen in price.

Despite the hike in prices, gasoline in Iran remains among the cheapest in the world.



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## [Tampa attorney forces Qatari emir's brother into legal corner](#)

Mon, 2019-12-16 18:02

A Florida attorney has succeeded in forcing Qatari Sheikh Khaled Al-Thani to either respond to a lawsuit accusing him of ordering two former American security employees to kill individuals he believed were involved in embarrassing and blackmailing him, or face a Federal Court default judgment. The US District Court for the Middle District of Florida has accepted that Tampa attorney Rebecca Castaneda has successfully served Sheikh Khaled— the brother of Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani – with a legal order to either appear in court or default and accept a court judgment in favor of the two former employees, Matthew Pittard and Matthew Allende.

Among causes of action named in the lawsuit is an allegation that when Sheikh Khaled discovered that Pittard had helped an American escape from his palace in Doha, he fired Pittard and threatened to kill him. After Sheikh Khaled refused to give Allende time off after a three-day party, the employee escaped from the sheikh's palace by scaling a six-meter-high fence, shattering one of his legs in the process.

Castaneda told Arab News that the two employees are prepared to reveal under oath in court details of lurid accusations that Sheikh Khaled – a playboy race car driver who competes around the world through his Massachusetts company Al-Anabi Racing LLC – engaged in sex and drug parties involving homosexuality that were part of a blackmail scheme.

"Sheikh Al-Thani and Al-Anabi Racing USA LLC have been served. His legal options now are to respond to the suit by either admitting or denying what the plaintiffs allege," Castaneda said.

"The alternative is that the sheikh can refuse to answer the charges in court. In that case, the judge would issue a default judgment against him." A default judgment in the US would allow the plaintiffs, Pittard and Allende, to win their case.

Castaneda said that Sheikh Khaled was personally served with legal documents sent to Al-Anabi Racing LLC on Friday, Dec. 13 – a day that is traditionally considered "bad luck" by Americans.

"Serving a foreign defendant can be difficult. It is especially difficult in cases where a country is not a member of certain legal treaties. There was never a question as to whether he would actually be served. It was merely a question of how long it would take. Six months. Six years. He was absolutely going to be served," said Castaneda, who has been trying to force Sheikh Khaled to appear and answer claims against him in the Florida Federal Court since the lawsuit was filed in July.

Castaneda said that Sheikh Khaled has until Jan. 2, 2020 to formally respond to the lawsuit or face a default Federal Court judgment that could severely affect his multiple companies and investments in the US and other countries where the US legal jurisdiction is binding.

The attorney said that Pittard and Allende are prepared to detail in open court the individuals and the reasons Sheikh Khaled ordered the alleged killings, as well as the sheikh's threats to kill one of the two plaintiffs. In one case, Sheikh Khaled is alleged to have ordered the killing of a Los Angeles-based drug dealer who was trying to blackmail the sheikh with claims he had photos and videos of him taking part in drug and homosexual sex parties.

"We don't know the veracity of the drug dealer's claims, but the sheikh took them seriously and asked Pittard to kill the blackmailer," Castaneda said. In another case, Castaneda said Sheikh Khaled ordered Pittard to murder a Moroccan woman who was a friend of the sheikh's wife.

Castaneda said that Sheikh Khaled feared the woman was feeding embarrassing information about him to a Saudi national at a time when his brother, Sheikh Tamim, and Qatar were engaged in an international row with Saudi Arabia and three other Arab countries.

Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates broke ties with Qatar and expelled their diplomats in June 2017 over accusations that Sheikh Tamim and Doha were funding and enabling terrorism.

If Sheikh Khaled fails to appear before the Federal Court, Federal Judge



Thomas P. Barber could rule against him, imposing fines, penalties and judgments.

Pittard and Allende are seeking \$33 million in the lawsuit against the Qatari royal, accusing him of not only threatening their lives but also damaging their ability to work.

Castaneda also expanded the original lawsuit, filed in July 23, 2019, to include 18 of Sheikh Khaled's aliases. Castaneda said that the sheikh has used variations of his name on businesses, bank accounts and property that he owns.

The lawsuit identifies 21 variations of Al-Anabi Racing LLC, including Al-Anabi Racing USA LLC.

A telephone call to Al-Anabi Racing's offices at 27 Pill Hill Lane in Duxbury, Massachusetts, went unanswered. The company sponsored five cars at last year's National Hot Rod Racing Association Pro Mod races.

Also named as defendants in the original lawsuit are Sheikh Khaled's companies Geo Strategic Defense Solutions (GSDS) and KH Holdings, alleging violations of the US Fair Labor Standards Act and violating US laws.

Castaneda said that KH Holdings has already been properly served and could be defaulted at any time. GSDS has yet to be served.



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US lawsuit against Qatari emir's brother expanded  
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