

# Palestinians wait as elections edge closer

Tue, 2019-11-05 00:58

GAZA CITY: As Palestinians await further developments on talks of possible elections, the positive noises emanating from Hamas and President Mahmoud Abbas have not put minds at ease. Abbas met with Hamas's approval last week to hold legislative polls no more than three months before the presidential election.

For the second time in seven days, the Central Election Commission (CEC), headed by Dr. Hanna Nasser, met with Hamas and other Palestinian leaders in Gaza to brief them on Abbas's position and to discuss further details.

But it is enough worry many Palestinians who recall many failed past experiences, the most important of which was the Egyptian-sponsored reconciliation agreement in 2017 and the municipal elections that were agreed upon and were supposed to take place two years ago.

The overdue polls come amid the backdrop of recent electoral stalemates in Israel, and the political upheaval in Lebanon.

Ibrahim Abrash, a professor of public law and political science, told Arab News that talk about successful elections in Palestine was "premature" given so little progress had been made in the recent past.

The CEC's actions came in response to a call for a general election launched by President Abbas on Sept. 26, which, Abrash believes, was due to "people pressure" rather than any actual desire to go to the polls.

"The political class and parties do not want to hold elections, and every party is satisfied with his hand," he said, adding that a genuine and sincere intention to go to the polls would require national dialogue sessions to agree on the electoral laws, and to establish mechanisms and procedures to ensure a healthy, transparent and fair election.

"Without this, the elections will fail, and the ordinary Palestinian will be the one who suffers."

## **BACKGROUND**

Central Election Commission Executive Director Hisham Kuhail said legislative elections would need 120 days following the issuance of the presidential decree, and that the public should 'therefore expect the elections in February 2020.'

Legislative elections have been held twice previously in Palestine, the first in 1996 for the Legislative Council and the Presidency following the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, and the second in 2006, preceded by the presidential elections in 2005 following the death of President Yasser Arafat.

The former presidential candidate and head of the National Initiative Movement, Mustafa Barghouti, identified several obstacles that could hinder

Palestinian elections, notably Israel's refusal to allow them to be held in occupied Jerusalem, its arrest of candidates in the West Bank, and the potential collapse of the current national talks, and the failure of Hamas to allow elections in Gaza.

Barghouti told Arab News that the current movement was a "precious opportunity" that should be treated as a form of popular resistance to the stale state of Palestinian politics, that, if successful, could lead to elections that reflect the will of the Palestinian people.

Following the meeting with the CEC on Sunday, Hamas's Ismail Haniyeh said that the talks discussed details that would ensure a successful electoral process.

Talal Abu Zarifa, a member of the political bureau of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, said that ensuring the holding of elections and respecting their results called for the provisional leadership framework to be convened to discuss electoral law, especially full proportional representation, as well as discussing the issue of freedom of candidacy. CEC Executive Director Hisham Kuhail told Palestine Radio that legislative elections would need 120 days following the issuance of the presidential decree, and that the public should "therefore expect the elections in February 2020."



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Palestine 'dear to the hearts of Arabs', Saudi envoy tells UN

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# Egypt army kills 83 militants in North Sinai

Author:

Tue, 2019-11-05 00:53

CAIRO: Egypt's army said on Monday it had killed 83 militants in clashes in the restive Sinai Peninsula, where a Daesh affiliate has waged a long-running insurgency.

Security forces killed 77 extremists, who were found with stacks of weapons and ammunition in north and central Sinai, the army said.

Six other "highly dangerous" militants were killed in shootouts in the region, the army said in a statement on a nationwide anti-militant operation between Sept. 28 and Nov. 4.

About 61 "criminals, wanted individuals and suspects" were arrested, it said. Security forces also destroyed dozens of hideouts and vehicles as part of the ongoing operation, according to the statement.

## **Security**

Egypt has for years been fighting an insurgency in North Sinai that escalated after the military's 2013 ouster of the then-president following mass protests.

In February 2018, the army and police launched a nationwide operation against militants, mainly focused on North Sinai.

The operation also targets other areas including the Western Desert along the porous border with Libya.

The latest army figures brings the death toll of suspected militants in the Sinai region to more than 830.

About 60 security personnel have been killed since the start of the offensive.

Following the death of Daesh chief Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi late last month, the group's North Sinai affiliate has pledged allegiance to his successor, Abu Ibrahim Al-Hashimi Al-Quraishi.



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Egypt kills 15 militants in North Sinai shootout: ministry  
Egypt officials: Attack kills 3 soldiers, 3 militants in Sinai

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## [Iraq PM says anti-government protests cost country 'billions'](#)

Author:

Zaynab Khojji

ID:

1572808184462861900

Sun, 2019-11-03 22:07

BAGHDAD: Protests threatening the oil industry and blocking access to Iraq's ports have cost the country "billions," Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi said on Sunday.

The embattled leader issued a long statement in response to weeks of demonstrations against the government that have been met with a brutal response from the security forces, killing more than 250 people.

Abdul-Mahdi said the protests have delayed the arrival of goods and this has contributed to an increase in prices paid by citizens, the poor in

particular.

He also said demonstrations have affected the growth of the economy and delayed the submission of the budget for 2020.

Last week, President Barham Salih said Abdul-Mahdi is willing to resign amid the crisis once political leaders agree on a replacement.

But the prime minister made no mention of standing down, instead focussing on the economic damage of the protests.

He said the Baghdad International Fair was delayed because of the demonstrations, and that sick people's lives have been put at risk because medical clinics have been forced to close and ambulances obstructed.

He called on anti-government protesters to reopen roads saying "it's time for life to return to normal."

The prime minister differentiated between peaceful protesters, who he said had turned the demonstrations into "popular festivals" that bring the nation together, and "saboteurs" who had used the demonstrators as "human shields" while attacking security forces.

He also called for markets, factories, schools and universities to reopen after days of protests in the capital and across the mostly Shiite south. Tens of thousands of protesters have gathered in Baghdad's central Tahrir Square and across southern Iraq in recent days, calling for the overhaul of the political system established after the 2003 US-led invasion.

Protesters have also taken over a large tower in the square that was abandoned after it was damaged in the war.

Thousands of students have skipped classes to take part in the street rallies, blaming the political elite for widespread corruption, high unemployment and poor public services.

Earlier Sunday, protesters blocked roads around their main protest site with burning tires and barbed wire, unfurling a banner at one roadblock reading: "Roads closed by order of the people."

They appeared to be borrowing a tactic from Lebanon, where similar anti-government demonstrations have been underway since Oct. 17, and have repeatedly blocked major roads in order to ramp up pressure on authorities.

(With AP)



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[Adel Abdul-Mahdi](#)

Iraqi protesters storm Iranian consulate in Karbala  
Tehran fury as Iraq's Shiite leadership rejects Iranian 'interference'

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## [Turkey thanks Qatar for supporting Syria invasion](#)

Author:

Sun, 2019-11-03 19:54

LONDON: Turkey on Sunday thanked Qatar for supporting a widely-condemned invasion of northern Syria.

Doha acted in defiance of the Arab League last month when it voiced support for the Turkish operation against Kurdish forces in north-east Syria.

Other Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia, condemned Turkey's "aggression" as a threat to regional peace and security and a violation of Syria's

sovereignty.

The operation, which came after Donald Trump withdrew US troops from the region, was also denounced by European countries and aid groups.

Qatar however defended Turkey, saying Operation Peace Spring was in response to an “imminent threat” from Kurdish groups. One of the few other voices of support came from the hardline Palestinian militant group Hamas.

At our meeting in #Doha w/Amir @TamimBinHamad of brotherly #Qatar, conveyed greetings of President @RTErdogan. Thanked for Qatar’s support to #OperationPeaceSpring. [pic.twitter.com/QAVH47LyCC](https://pic.twitter.com/QAVH47LyCC)

– Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu (@MevlutCavusoglu) [November 3, 2019](#)

On Sunday, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu personally thanked Qatar’s Emir Sheikh Tamim for supporting the operation during a meeting in Doha. In a tweet he described Qatar as a “brotherly” nation and conveyed the greetings of Recep Tayyip Erdogan.”

Turkey and Qatar have grown closer since Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE and Bahrain launched a boycott of Qatar over its links to extremist groups and cooperation with Iran. Ankara boosted its military presence in Qatar and as Doha promised support for Turkey’s economy.

The Turkish operation was launched on Oct. 9 to push back from its border Kurdish fighters, who it considers terrorists for their links to decades of insurgency inside Turkey.

A truce deal signed last week between Ankara and Moscow demanded Kurdish fighters withdraw from the border, handing the Turks a 120 kilometer-long stretch of Syrian territory.

The deal includes joint Russian-Turkish patrols along other parts of the frontier that started on Friday.



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## [Sudanese protests demand answers over June crackdown deaths](#)

Author:

By SAMY MAGDY | AP

ID:

1572798511692010600

Sun, 2019-11-03 16:01

CAIRO: Hundreds of protesters took to the streets in Sudan's capital and across the country on Sunday, demanding the disbanding of the former ruling party that underpinned Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir's three decades in power.



The demonstrations were organized by local groups linked with the Sudanese Professionals' Association, which spearheaded the uprising that toppled Al-Bashir in April. Protests continued throughout the summer, despite a violent clampdown by the country's security forces, forcing the ruling generals into a power-sharing agreement with civilians.

In the capital of Khartoum, the protesters also called on authorities to step up an investigation into the hundreds of people who went missing on June 3, when security forces dispersed the main sit-in outside the military headquarters. According to the protesters, at least 128 people were killed and hundreds went missing. Authorities put the death toll at 87, including 17 inside the sit-in area.

Dura Gambo, an activist with the SPA, said the demonstrators wanted to know the fate of those who disappeared in the June crackdown.

"If they are alive, where are they, and if they were dead, where are their bodies? This what we want to know," she said.

The protesters carried posters of the missing people, and marched to the office of the country's chief prosecutor, where they presented officials with written demands for a new investigation by an independent committee.

Protesters already rejected the results of the prosecutor's investigation in September, which said the country's ruling generals did not order the deadly break-up, and blamed the deaths on paramilitary forces who exceeded their orders.

Setting up an independent probe into the crackdown was a key point in the transition deal between the military and civilian leaders signed in August. The new government has just over three years to steer the country toward democratic elections.

Sunday's rallies also took aim at the lingering influence of Al-Bashir's political system, including his National Congress party.

Footage circulated online showing the protesters, mostly youth, in the city of Wad Madani, the provincial capital of Al-Jazirah province, waving Sudanese flags and calling for the former ruling party's dissolution as well as resignation of the local governor whom Al-Bashir appointed.

There were no reports of any clashes with police or casualties during the protests.

The transitional government previously said it won't appoint governors or an interim parliament until it makes peace with the country's rebel groups. The first round of peace talks between government and the rebel leaders took place in October in South Sudan's capital, and are to resume later this month.



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Sudan rebel faction, govt hold first round of talks