

Algeria army chief wants presidential election in December

Author:

Associated Press

ID:

1567448772239212900

Mon, 2019-09-02 17:28

ALGIERS: Algeria's powerful army chief says that the date of the nation's long-delayed presidential election should be announced on Sept. 15 to quickly pull the nation out of political limbo.

By law, elections come 90 days after an announcement, which would mean a December vote.

The official APS news agency quoted Ahmed Gaid Salah as saying on Monday that an independent body "for the preparation, organization and surveillance of the election" should be quickly installed.

The country has been without an elected leader since longtime President Abdelaziz Bouteflika was forced out in April, in part by a grassroots revolt that still holds weekly protests. Many in the vast protest movement seek a transition period toward democracy rather than a quick election, and worry over Gaid Salah's growing role as behind-the-scenes powerbroker.



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Algerian economy creaks at the seams after six months of turmoil
Algeria's culture minister resigns after deadly concert stampede

[UN criticizes transfer of 1,600 displaced Iraqis](#)

Author:

AFP

ID:

1567444859948871600

Mon, 2019-09-02 17:11

BAGHDAD: The United Nations on Monday criticized Iraqi authorities for transferring around 1,600 people from camps to their areas of origin, saying the returns could put them in danger.

The returnees, who fled violence during and after the Daesh group's 2014 seizure of swathes of Iraq, had sought refuge at displacement camps in the northern province of Nineweh.

Since August 23, Iraqi authorities have bussed about 300 families, an estimated 1,600 people, from the three camps to their provinces of origin. The transfers took place despite humanitarian groups' concerns that the families had no homes or access to services and may be targeted by their home communities for perceived links to Daesh.

The UN said Monday returnees had "expressed fears that they would be threatened upon their return, and had reportedly received threatening phone calls from community members in their areas of origin warning against return."

"Despite such concerns, security actors confiscated the (displaced people's) civil identification, informing the families that their documents would only be returned once they boarded the convoy," it said in a statement.

More than 1.6 million people remain displaced in camps, unfinished structures or rented apartments across Iraq, nearly two years after the country declared victory over Daesh.

The government has stressed its policy is for all those displaced to return home and for camps to be shut.

Last week, AFP journalists witnessed transfers from the Hammam Al-Alil camp in Nineweh province of hundreds of Iraqis originally from Kirkuk, further south.

Women and children, some of them crying, were loaded onto buses by security forces. Some said they did not know where they were being taken.

The transfers often happened "with little notice or apparent planning," the UN's Iraq humanitarian coordinator, Marta Ruedas, said on Monday.

“I am concerned about the lack of organization and advanced communication with affected communities and humanitarian partners,” she said. In some cases, the UN said, security forces denied families entry to camps in their home provinces, displacing them a second time. In the worst case of violence against returnees so far, three hand grenades were thrown into the Basateen camp in Iraq’s Salahaddin governorate on Sunday, a day after the arrival of 150 displaced families from Nineweh. “The grenades caused no damage, injuries or casualties (but) are a cause of great concern for the safety of the camp residents,” the UN said. Other rights groups have already sounded the alarm, including Amnesty International, which has called the returns “premature” and urged Iraqi authorities to halt them immediately. The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) called on the government to double down on reconciliation efforts to heal lingering resentment from the fight against Daesh.



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Iraq suspends US-funded broadcaster Al Hurra over graft investigation
Iraq probes find Israel behind ‘some’ base attacks: MP

[Russia's ambassador to Egypt dies, aged 68](#)

Author:

Associated Press

ID:

1567443907318766200

Mon, 2019-09-02 12:23

MOSCOW: Russia's Foreign Ministry says that its ambassador to Egypt has died. He was 68.

The ministry said Sergei Kirpichenko died suddenly Monday morning in a hospital in the Egyptian capital, Cairo. It did not name the cause of death. A career diplomat, Kirpichenko was Russia's ambassador in Egypt since 2011 and also served as Russia's envoy to the Arab League, which is based in Cairo. He was previously posted in the United Arab Emirates, Libya and Syria. The flag over the Russian Embassy in Cairo is flying at half-staff in Kirpichenko's memory.



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Russia and Iran to hold joint naval drills in Indian ocean
Rising seas threaten Egypt's fabled port city of Alexandria

[Damascus hails Hezbollah attack on Israel across the Lebanese border](#)

Author:

AFP

ID:

1567433544708013400

Mon, 2019-09-02 13:45

DAMASCUS: The Syrian government on Monday hailed Hezbollah's strike the previous day on an Israeli military vehicle.

Hezbollah said it had fired anti-tank missiles into northern Israel on Sunday, destroying a military vehicle.

Israel's army said it responded with around 100 artillery shells after Hezbollah fired two or three anti-tank missiles at a battalion headquarters and military ambulance, hitting both.

On Monday, the Syrian government threw its support behind Hezbollah, whose fighters have since 2013 been fighting on President Bashar Assad's side in Syria's civil war.

"The Syrian Arab Republic expresses its pride at the... operation that the Lebanese national resistance carried out against the military patrol of the Zionist occupier," a source at the ministry of foreign affairs told state news agency SANA.

"Syria repeats that it stands fully by the Lebanese national resistance and its legitimate right – side by side with the Lebanese army – to work toward preserving the sovereignty of Lebanon," the source said.

Sunday's exchange of fire over the Lebanese-Israeli border comes one week after Hezbollah accused Israel of carrying out a drone attack on its southern Beirut stronghold.

On August 24, Israel also said it had carried out strikes in Syria to avert an Iranian drone attack on the Jewish state. Hezbollah said those strikes killed two of its members.

Israel has carried hundreds of strikes in war-torn Syria, mostly against what it says are Iranian or Hezbollah targets.



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Lebanon-Israel border quiet after Hezbollah clash
Hezbollah and Israel exchange fire on the Lebanese border

[Four wounded in rocket fire on Libyan capital's airport](#)

Author:

AFP

ID:

1567344622559626200

Sun, 2019-09-01 13:03

TRIPOLI: Rocket fire by forces loyal to strongman Khalifa Haftar against the Libyan capital's sole functioning airport wounded four civilians overnight, the UN-recognized government said on Sunday.

The strikes coincided with the arrival of a Libyan plane inbound from the

Saudi Arabia, which was carrying pilgrims on their way back from Makkah. Three pilgrims, including a woman, were among four civilians wounded, said Wedad Abu Niran, a spokesman for the UN-recognized Government of National Accord's health ministry.

Airport director Lotfi Al-Tabib said Mitiga's runway was damaged and a Libyan Airlines plane was hit by shrapnel, putting it out of service.

Flights have been suspended "until further notice," Tabib added.

The Tripoli-based GNA controls the former military air base east of the city, which has been used by civilian traffic since Tripoli international airport suffered severe damage during fighting in 2014.

In a statement, the GNA blamed what it called a "terrorist attack" on forces of Haftar and urged the international community to assume "its responsibilities concerning the protection of civilians."

Haftar's self-styled Libyan National Army launched an offensive on April 4 to conquer Tripoli.

The two sides have since been embroiled in a stalemate on the capital's southern outskirts and Haftar's forces have allegedly repeatedly targeted Mitiga, accusing the GNA of using it for "military ends."

A similar strike on Mitiga killed a guard and wounded several security agents on August 15.

Last week, the airport closed temporarily due to a rocket strike that hit as two planes were arriving, though no casualties were reported.

Haftar's forces say they are targeting "Turkish drones" that they claim take off from the airport to conduct strikes on their troops in the south of Tripoli.

The UN mission in Libya said it is concerned by the "growing frequency" of these attacks, which have come close to hitting civilian aircraft.

Since April, fighting between GNA and Haftar forces has killed at least 1,093 people and wounded 5,752, while some 120,000 others have been displaced, according to the World Health Organization.

Libya has been mired in chaos since a NATO-backed uprising that toppled and killed dictator Muammar Qaddafi in 2011.



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