

Ousted mayors in Turkey denounce 'political' sackings

Author:

Thu, 2019-08-29 21:11

ISTANBUL: Three pro-Kurdish mayors sacked by the Turkish government this month over alleged links to militants lambasted on Thursday a "political putsch" they vowed to challenge in court.

The mayors of the eastern cities – all members of the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) elected in March – were removed on Aug. 19 over alleged ties to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

The sacking of the Diyarbakir, Mardin and Van mayors – Adnan Selcuk Mizrakli, Ahmet Turk and Bedia Ozigokce Ertan respectively – came after they had won strong majorities.

Since their removal, there have been protests in the Kurdish-majority region, often blocked by police using heavy force including water cannon.

"We were deprived of the opportunity to serve the people by the political putsch on Aug. 19," said Turk, the deposed Mardin mayor and a key figure in the Kurdish movement.

"It's a political decision aimed at preventing the Kurdish people's struggle for democracy, to intimidate the people and to block our efforts to bring about change in Turkey," he added.

Ertan said the HDP was going to "exhaust all legal channels" to challenge the sackings.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan last week defended the decision accusing the mayors of serving "terrorists instead of the people."

The Interior Ministry said there had been complaints against the three of providing financial support to the PKK. The PKK is banned as a terrorist organization by Ankara and its Western allies.

Turk said the allegations were "unfounded."

The Ankara-appointed governors of each province will be in charge of the three municipalities.

Erdogan often accuses the HDP of having links to the PKK, but the party says it is being targeted because of its strong opposition to the president.

Dozens of officials and elected HDP MPs were arrested during a crackdown after a failed 2016 coup bid.



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Turkey suspended mayors of 3 major Kurdish-majority cities. What's next? Istanbul's new opposition mayor cuts funding to some pro-government groups

[Palestinians to file complaint over Honduras Jerusalem move](#)

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Thu, 2019-08-29 15:03

RAMALLAH: The Palestinian foreign ministry said Thursday it would file a complaint at the United Nations against Honduras, after the Central American state recognised the disputed city of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Israel considers all of Jerusalem as its undivided capital, while the Palestinians see the eastern part of the city as the capital of their future

state.

US President Donald Trump recognised Jerusalem as capital of the Jewish state in December 2017, breaking with decades of international consensus that the city's status should be decided in peace talks.

Both Washington and Israel have since encouraged other countries to take similar steps.

So far only Guatemala and Paraguay have transferred their embassies, and Paraguay later reversed its decision.

On Tuesday, Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez announced that his country would open a diplomatic office in Jerusalem.

The mission will be an extension of Honduras' Tel Aviv-based embassy, but Hernandez said Tuesday it was "recognition that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel."

In a statement Thursday, the Palestinian foreign ministry confirmed it would submit a formal complaint against Honduras to the UN's Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

It called the decision a "direct aggression" against the Palestinian people and a "blatant violation of international law and legitimacy."

Israel occupied predominantly Palestinian east Jerusalem in 1967 and later annexed it in moves never recognised by the international community.

Around 200,000 Israelis now live in east Jerusalem in settlements considered illegal by much of the international community.

In a statement, senior Palestinian official Hanan Ashrawi said the leadership would "reassess its relationship with Honduras".

"The status of Jerusalem as an occupied city is endorsed by the vast majority of states, in line with their standing legal and moral obligations to uphold international law," she added.

Hernandez is expected to visit Israel and open the new mission in the coming days.

Ashrawi also condemned the tiny Pacific Ocean island state of Nauru, which recently recognised Jerusalem as Israel's capital.



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Honduras recognizes Jerusalem as Israel's capital
Jerusalem demolishes
Palestinian home built without permit

[Satellite photos shows burning rocket at Iranian space center](#)

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Thu, 2019-08-29 15:47

DUBAI: A rocket at an Iranian space center that was to conduct a satellite launch criticized by the US apparently exploded on its launch pad Thursday, satellite images show, suggesting the Islamic Republic suffered its third failed launch this year alone.

State media and officials did not immediately acknowledge the incident at the Imam Khomeini Space Center in Iran's Semnan province.

However, satellite images by Planet Labs Inc. showed a black plume of smoke rising above a launch pad there, with what appeared to be the charred remains of a rocket and its launch stand. In previous days, satellite images had shown officials there repainted the launch pad blue.

On Thursday morning, half of that paint apparently had been burned away.

"Whatever happened there, it blew up and you're looking at the smoldering remains of what used to be there," said David Schmerler, a senior research associate at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies.

Schmerler told The Associated Press that the images of the space center suggested that the rocket either exploded during ignition or possibly briefly lifted off before crashing back down on the pad. Water runoff from the pad, likely from trying to extinguish the blaze, could be seen along with a host of vehicles parked nearby.

NPR first reported on the satellite images of the apparent failed launch at the space center, some 240 kilometers (150 miles) southeast of Iran's capital, Tehran.

Iranian satellite launches had been anticipated before the end of the year. In July, Iran's Information and Communications Technology Minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi told the AP that Tehran planned three more launches this year, two for satellites that do remote-sensing work and another that handles communications.

The Nahid-1 is reportedly the telecommunication satellite, which authorities plan to have in orbit for two-and-a-half months. Nahid in Farsi means "Venus." The satellite, which had Iran's first foldable solar panels, was supposed to be in a low orbit around the Earth for some two-and-a-half months.

The semi-official Mehr news agency quoted Jahromi on Aug. 13 as saying that the Nahid-1 was ready to be delivered to Iran's Defense Ministry, signaling a launch date for the satellite likely loomed. Iran's National Week of Government, during which Tehran often inaugurates new projects, began Aug. 24.

Earlier on Thursday, Iran's Defense Minister Gen. Amir Hatami told the state-run IRNA news agency that the country's satellite activities were "being done in a transparent way," responding to AP and other foreign media reporting on activity at the space center.

"Whenever activity and research bear successful results, we will announce the good news," Hatami said. Iran at times in the past hasn't acknowledged failed launches.

The apparent attempt to launch the Nahid-1 comes after two failed satellite launches of the Payam and Doosti in January and February. A separate fire at the Imam Khomeini Space Center in February also killed three researchers, authorities said at the time.

Over the past decade, Iran has sent several short-lived satellites into orbit and in 2013 launched a monkey into space.

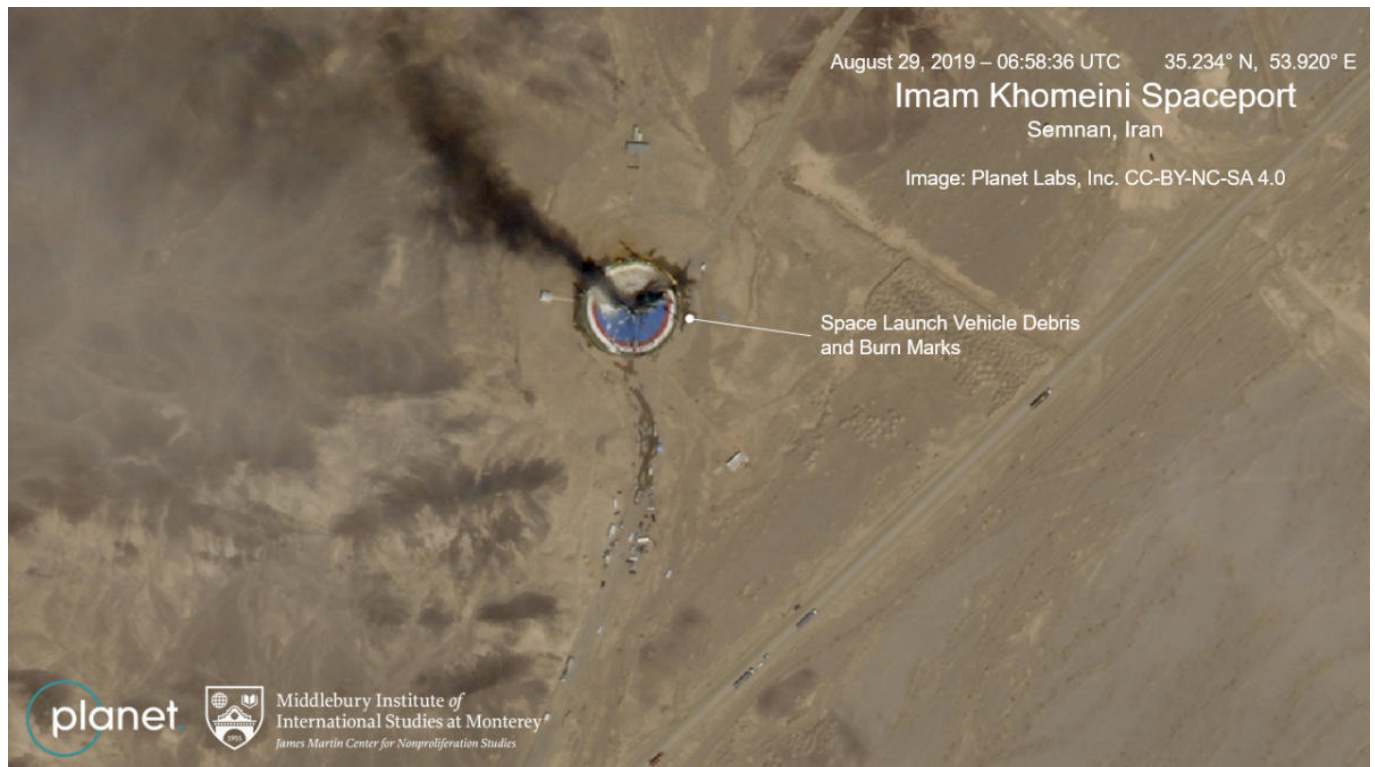
The US alleges such launches defy a UN Security Council resolution calling on Iran to undertake no activity related to ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons.

Iran, which long has said it does not seek nuclear weapons, maintains its satellite launches and rocket tests do not have a military component. Tehran

also says it doesn't violate the UN as it only "called upon" Tehran not to conduct such tests.

The tests have taken on new importance to the US amid the maximalist approach to Iran taken by President Donald Trump's administration. Tensions have been high between the countries since Trump unilaterally withdrew the US from Iran's nuclear deal over a year ago and imposed sanctions, including on Iran's oil industry. Iran recently has begun to break the accord itself while trying to push Europe to help it sell oil abroad.

The State Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment.



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Satellite images suggest Iran satellite launch loomsIran journalist flees Zarif delegation to stay in Sweden

[Trump, Erdogan speak over telephone about trade and Syria situation](#)

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Thu, 2019-08-29 14:24

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump and Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan spoke by phone on Wednesday on a range of issues, including trade and the humanitarian situation in Idlib, Syria, the White House said on Thursday.

Turkey's Anadolu news agency reported the call on Wednesday, saying the two leaders agreed to cooperate to protect civilians in the Idlib region after jets believed to be Syrian or Russian struck a rebel-held city in northwest Syria.

On Thursday, Erdogan vowed Turkey would not allow the US to delay the establishment of a 'safe zone' in northern Syria.

Ankara and Washington earlier this month agreed after difficult talks to set up a buffer zone between the Turkish border and Syrian areas controlled by the US-backed Kurdish YPG militia.

The NATO allies agreed to set up a joint operations centre which Turkey said at the weekend was at full capacity.

"We will never allow a delay similar to that in Manbij. The process should advance swiftly," Erdogan said, according to CNN Turk broadcaster.

Turkey and the US in May last year agreed a road map including the withdrawal of the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) from Manbij in northern Syria.



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Erdogan says won't allow US to delay Syria 'safe zone' Putin, Erdogan in new deal on Idlib

Ministerial Direction on Investigative Action Involving Journalists

The Minister for Home Affairs Peter Dutton has today issued a Ministerial Direction to the Australian Federal Police (AFP) Commissioner.