

[Algeria council accepts Bouteflika resignation](#)

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Wed, 2019-04-03 13:40

ALGIERS: Algeria's Constitutional Council officially accepted the resignation of president Abdelaziz Bouteflika, state TV reported Wednesday, a day after the 82-year-old announced he was quitting following weeks of massive demonstrations.

The council informed parliament "of the declaration of the definitive vacancy of the Presidency of the Republic," the television station announced in a news ticker.

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Algerian businessman Ali Haddad placed in custody Abdelaziz Bouteflika resigns as president of Algeria after 20 years in power

[Palestinians pray for fish as Israel opens deeper waters](#)

Author:

Tue, 2019-04-02 22:18

GAZA: As their rickety motorboats pattered out into deep Mediterranean waters for the first time in almost two decades, the Palestinian fishermen prayed for deepwater mackerel and tuna to supplement Gaza's usual shallows fare of sardines, shrimp and crab.

This week, as part of Egyptian-mediated efforts to ease the plight of 2 million residents of the blockaded Gaza Strip, Israel has extended the area where it permits Palestinians to fish.

"Such a distance has been off-limits. And hopefully there are lots of fish to bring back," said 69-year-old fisherman Ahmed Al-Amoudi.

Israel keeps a naval cordon on Gaza, part of a blockade it and neighboring Egypt say is necessary to prevent arms smuggling by the Hamas extremists that rule the coastal territory.

Since 2000, Israel has limited Palestinian fishing waters to just 6-9 miles from the Gaza coast. But on Monday it broadened the limit to 12-15 miles (19-24 km) out.

"This step is part of the civilian policy aimed at preventing a humanitarian deterioration in the Gaza Strip and reflects the policy of distinguishing between terror and the uninvolved populace," an Israeli official said.

Palestinians saw the move as an Israeli concession to a year of protests at the border, combined with several surges of cross-border fighting which have prompted foreign mediation on ways to help Gaza's economy.

"Thanks to God and then to the 'March of Return', which opened up the sea for us," Al-Amoudi said, referring to the weekly demonstrations at the frontier, which demand a lifting of the blockade and the right for Palestinians to return to homes their families fled or were forced from when Israel was founded.

April to June are peak Gaza fishing season. The sector accounts for less than 5 percent of the enclave's GDP and supports some 50,000 people, a fraction of the 2 million population.

But the fishing has value beyond the numbers, as one of the few viable industries in Gaza, where more than half the population is unemployed and nearly 80 percent receive some form of aid, according to the World Bank.

With Gaza's land borders tightly controlled by neighboring Israel and Egypt, the sea's horizon provides many Palestinians with a glimpse of hoped-for freedoms of movement in the future.

The fishermen still have it hard, with fuel and spare parts for their boats scarce. They say that Israel has also barred the importation to Gaza of wire cables that would allow them to line nets for plumbing the depths.

But fisherman Wael Abu Mohammed was still cautiously upbeat.

"With 15 miles now we will be comfortable, if there are no problems with the Israelis," the father of 10 said. "We hope for the best."

The past year has been the deadliest in Gaza since the last war between Hamas and Israel five years ago, with nearly 200 Palestinians killed by Israeli forces at the border demonstrations. One Israeli soldier was killed.

United Nations investigators say Israel has used excessive force. Israel says it has no choice but to use deadly force to protect the border from militants and infiltrators.

The Israeli navy has in the past fired on Palestinian boats that strayed from the fishing zones, sometimes impounding the vessels and detaining their occupants. In addition to smuggling, Israel worries about seaborne attacks. In the 2014 Gaza war, Hamas frogmen swam from Gaza to storm an Israeli coastal base.

The Israeli official said that maintaining the expanded zone for Gaza fisherman "depends on (them) honoring the agreements" and that any attempt to venture beyond it "will be handled accordingly by the (Israeli) security services."



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Gaza fisherman battles poverty with plastic-bottle boat
Gaza fisherman killed at sea by Egyptian fire: union

[Twitter says action taken against Netanyahu bot network](#)

Author:

Tue, 2019-04-02 21:54

JERUSALEM: Twitter said on Tuesday it has “taken action” after an Israeli watchdog exposed an alleged bot network spreading propaganda in support of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and smearing his opponents.

Noam Rotem, one of the researchers behind the report, said Tuesday he has seen Twitter shut down 258 of the over 400 automated and fake accounts his team identified.

Twitter did not comment on the number of accounts removed, but said that the platform prohibits fabricated accounts and “has taken action where violations are identified” to ensure healthy dialogue online during election cycles.

With just a week until the national vote, the pro-Netanyahu bot network discovery jolted Israel’s already turbulent campaign season.

Netanyahu lambasted the report as “libel,” and his challenger Benny Gantz accused him of “trying to steal the election.”

Netanyahu’s Likud party had denied using fake accounts.

In a video clip dismissing the report’s findings, Likud said 985,408 Israelis had voted for Netanyahu in the previous election in 2015.

Separately, the premier’s office said that Netanyahu will meet Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow on Thursday, just five days ahead of an April 9 Israeli election.

Netanyahu has held a series of meetings with foreign leaders in the runup to the vote, helping him further his argument that he is Israel’s irreplaceable statesman. His office did not provide further details in its brief statement on the meeting.

Israel and Russia coordinate their military activity in Syria to avoid accidental clashes.



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Israeli watchdog finds online manipulation favoring Netanyahu ahead of vote
Israel's Netanyahu to meet Putin in Moscow on Thursday

Abdelaziz Bouteflika resigns as president of Algeria after 20 years in power

Tue, 2019-04-02 21:59

ALGIERS: Algeria's veteran President Abdelaziz Bouteflika informed the Constitutional Council that he is resigning in a move that is to take effect on Tuesday, state television said.

Bouteflika "officially advised the Constitutional Council of the end of his term of office as President of the Republic" from Tuesday, said a news ticker on the television, shortly after the army chief demanded the immediate launch of impeachment proceedings against the protest-hit leader.

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Algerians demand 'radical' change despite Bouteflika's vow to quit
Algeria's president Bouteflika says he will step down before April 28

[Hamas leader says rocket that hit Israeli house fired in error](#)

Tue, 2019-04-02 21:41

GAZA CITY: Hamas leader Ismail Haniya said on Tuesday the rocket from Gaza that hit a house in Israel last week launched due to a technical error, his first official statement on the strike.

The rocket that was fired from the Gaza Strip on March 25 destroyed a house north of Tel Aviv and injured seven Israelis.

Israel responded by striking a series of Hamas targets in the Palestinian enclave, including flattening Haniya's office, before Egypt brokered a

ceasefire that prevented a full conflict.

In his comments on Tuesday, Haniya said the rocket was "due to a technical defect, but was a mini demonstration if (Israel) thought to commit folly against the Palestinian people."

The statement from his office said he made the remarks during a meeting with political analysts.

He did not provide further details on what type of technical defect could have caused the launch.

Previously only unnamed officials from Hamas, the militant movement that rules Gaza, have said the rocket was fired due to a technical error.

Following the latest ceasefire, Hamas said Egypt had brokered a truce that would see Israel ease its crippling blockade of the enclave in exchange for calm. Israeli government has not publicly commented on the reported agreement.

An Egyptian security delegation visited Gaza late Monday and met with Hamas.

Haniya said the delegation brought a timetable from the Israeli side for implementing the agreements.

Meanwhile, the Health Ministry in the Strip said that a Palestinian wounded three days ago during clashes along the Gaza border died Tuesday, bringing to five the number of fatalities from the day.

Faris Abu Hajaras, 26, was shot by Israeli fire in his stomach east of Khan Yunis Saturday and succumbed to his wounds Tuesday, the ministry said in a statement.

Tens of thousands of Palestinians gathered in different spots along the Gaza border Saturday for the first anniversary of the often violent protests there.

At least 263 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire since the protests and clashes began a year ago.

Two Israeli soldiers have been killed over the same period in Gaza-related violence.



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Despite setbacks, Hamas' grip on Gaza has never been tighter
Tense calm in Gaza after Israel, Hamas exchange heavy fire