

[Sudan summons Egypt ambassador over Red Sea oil and gas exploration blocks](#)

Author:

Reuters

ID:

1553185439842818000

Thu, 2019-03-21 16:06

KHARTOUM: Sudan's Foreign Ministry said on Thursday it has summoned Egypt's ambassador to Khartoum, Hossam Issa, over Egypt offering oil and gas exploration blocks "in Red Sea areas subject to Sudanese sovereignty." Undersecretary Badreddin Abdullah expressed Sudan's protest at the offering and called on Egypt "not to proceed in this direction that contradicts the legal status of the Halayeb triangle."

The Halayeb triangle, which is controlled by Egypt, has been claimed by Sudan since the 1950s. However, Cairo says it is Egyptian territory and it has long been a source of contention between the two neighbors.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Egypt](#)

[Sudan](#)

[Red Sea](#)

Sudan protesters rally as new Cabinet sworn in Egypt's aviation ministry to increase departure fee for travelers in November: Reports

Algeria tensions: Governing party chief backs protesters

Author:

Associated Press

ID:

1553112738735770800

Wed, 2019-03-20 17:46

ALGIERS: The acting head of Algeria's governing party says it is throwing its support behind protests against President Abdelaziz Bouteflika. Critics viewed the move Wednesday as an effort to save the reputation of the FLN party, or National Liberation Front, amid increasing disillusionment with Algeria's power structure.

FLN interim leader Moab Bouchareb told a meeting of party leaders that the party "supports the popular movement." But he also appeared to support Bouteflika's "roadmap" for political reforms.

Bouchareb himself has been criticized as representing a leadership considered corrupt and out of touch with Algeria's struggling youth. The FLN is Bouteflika's party.

On Wednesday, foreign affairs minister Ramtane Lamamra said the Algerian government is "ready for dialogue" with demonstrators.

"As I see it, the demonstrations have only grown more numerous, and there will be no solution except through dialogue," he said in a press conference in Berlin.

"The Algerian government is ready for dialogue, and beyond that, they are prepared to welcome the representatives of the opposition and civil society in the new government which is currently being formed."

Algerian Prime Minister Nouredine Bedoui has been struggling to form a new government as candidates sought to keep their distance from Bouteflika.

Bedoui, who was appointed last week, had promised to create a new cabinet within days to respond to the demands of Algeria's demonstrating youth.

Separately, the Protestant Church of Algeria issued a statement supporting the protests. The Church, whose exact number of members is not precisely known in the largely Muslim country, said it "fully shares the aspirations and legitimate claims of the Algerian people."

Algeria's union for imams and the Islamic High Council, a consultative body, had previously expressed their support for the protests.

Protesters want the ailing Bouteflika to step down after 20 years in power. Bouteflika responded by abandoning plans for a fifth term and promising reforms, but also delayed presidential elections indefinitely.

Demonstrators have demanded the government quit at the technical end of its mandate in April, along with the president who has rarely been seen since a 2013 stroke.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Algeria](#)

[Protests](#)

[Moab Bouchareb](#)

[Abdelaziz Bouteflika](#)

[Netanyahu and Pompeo vow to counter Iranian aggression](#)

Author:

AFP

ID:

1553111825085672200

Wed, 2019-03-20 18:16

JERUSALEM: Top US diplomat Mike Pompeo and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed Wednesday to counter Iranian “aggression” as the two met in Jerusalem just weeks ahead of Israel’s elections.

Pompeo was on a regional tour focused largely on Iran, but the meeting and his warm words on Netanyahu’s leadership will likely be seen as support from US President Donald Trump’s administration amid the Israeli premier’s re-election fight.

Netanyahu, facing a stiff challenge from a centrist alliance in April 9 polls whilst under threat of indictment for corruption, will next week visit Washington, where he will meet twice with Trump.

Pompeo's visit offered the right-wing premier an opportunity to burnish his security and diplomatic credentials – both key planks of his re-election campaign.

In comments after Pompeo's arrival, Netanyahu said Trump's pressure on Israel's main enemy Iran was already having an effect, referring to his withdrawal from the nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers and Washington's reimposition of sanctions.

"We need to increase it, we need to expand it, and together the United States and Israel are working in close coordination to roll back Iranian aggression in the region and around the world," he said.

Pompeo noted a Middle East conference in Warsaw last month that included Arab nations as well as Israel, saying the discussions involved efforts "to stop Iran's regional rampage" among other issues.

The US secretary of state also spoke of Iranian calls for Israel's destruction.

"With such threats a daily reality of Israeli life, we maintain our unparalleled commitment to Israel's security and firmly support your right to defend yourself," he said.

Netanyahu reiterated his pledge to keep Iran from entrenching itself militarily in neighboring Syria, where the Islamic republic backs President Bashar Assad's regime.

Israel has carried out hundreds of air strikes there against what it says are Iranian and Hezbollah targets.

"There is no limitation to our freedom of action, and we appreciate very much the fact that the United States backs up our actions as we do them," Netanyahu said.

Pompeo's stay in Jerusalem also included a four-way meeting with Netanyahu, Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras and Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades on Wednesday night.

The discussions were to include plans to build a natural gas pipeline from the eastern Mediterranean to Europe.

Pompeo, who later travels to Lebanon, kicked off his regional tour in Kuwait where he met Emir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

He is pushing for a greater role for the Middle East Strategic Alliance (MESA), a US-sponsored Arab NATO-style bloc aimed at uniting Washington's Arab allies against Tehran.

Pompeo said before his arrival that his trip to Israel had nothing to do with politics, saying the "relationship matters, no matter who the leaders are."

No meetings with Netanyahu's opponents are scheduled, and the secretary of state will not meet with representatives of the Palestinian Authority.

Trump's administration has taken a series of steps that the Palestinian Authority has deemed so hostile that it now refuses any contact with the US administration.

They included cutting most US aid to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees. President Donald Trump's decision in December 2017 to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israeli delighted Netanyahu's government.

But it enraged Palestinians, who want to make the eastern, mainly Palestinian part of the city the capital of their future state.

Pompeo's two-day visit to Jerusalem also includes a stop at the new US embassy, which was transferred from Tel Aviv on Trump's orders last year. A shift in semantics and policy has also marked the Trump term. The US has ceased to refer to the Golan Heights as "Israeli-occupied" and instead calls the territory seized from Syria "controlled" by Israel – a change seen by some as a prelude to US recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the strategic plateau.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Benjamin Netanyahu](#)

[Mike Pompeo](#)

[Israel](#)

[Iran](#)

Pompeo thanks Saudi crown prince for supporting UN Yemen envoy Griffiths during Middle East tour
Iran lays false trail to dodge US sanctions

[Daesh holdouts in Syria battle 'gone](#)

by tonight:’ Trump

Author:

AFP

ID:

1553112358745727500

Wed, 2019-03-20 20:01

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump said Wednesday that the Daesh’s last bastion in Syria will be “gone” by the end of the day. He showed off maps that illustrate the dramatic shrinking of territory held by the militant group in the period from his election in 2016 and now. In one map shown by Trump to reporters in Washington and then again at a rally to factory workers in Lima, Ohio, Daesh territory marked in red extends over large areas. A second map, he said, shows the militant organization about to be wiped out. “There is no red. In fact, there’s actually a tiny spot which will be gone by tonight,” he said. Fighting continued in Baghouz, Syria, on Wednesday, but the Daesh militants are down to a tiny scrap of land, where they are surrounded and under heavy fire from a US-led coalition of Kurds, Syrians and others.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Trump](#)

[Syria](#)
[Daesh](#)

Daesh fighters pinned on Syrian riverbank, warplanes fly above

[Turkey's economic woes lift opposition hopes](#)

Author:

Wed, 2019-03-20 22:36

ANKARA: As Turkey's March 31 local elections draw closer, economic issues are becoming a major priority for the country's voters.

While the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) has based its electoral success on the country's prosperity for almost two decades, declining living standards and an economic downturn may signal a shift to rival parties in the election.

Turkey was once an attractive option for investors trying to reach out to emerging markets, but the country's economic outlook has changed significantly in recent years with double-digit inflation and a currency growing weaker by the day.

Analysts say the economic concerns of middle-class voters, whose purchasing power has been primarily hit, will determine the electoral outcome if they turn against the AKP.

In the previous local elections, the AKP won 43 percent of the vote, while its nearest rival, the Republican People's Party (CHP), polled below 25 percent.

Growing tensions between Turkey and the US are expected to further erode the value of the Turkish lira in the coming months.

To reduce the impact of economic hardships on impoverished voters, Turkey's government recently opened market stalls selling cheap produce. Long queues are a common sight at the stalls.

Voter frustration may translate into the loss of some big cities, including the capital Ankara and Istanbul, where the AKP has ruled for decades. Istanbul has added significance for President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who began his political career as mayor of the city. Former Prime Minister Binali Yildirim is running for election in the city against his secular rival Ekrem Imamoglu.

A recent poll by the opposition CHP in 29 provinces found that about 60

percent of voters are frustrated over the country's economic decline.

Burhanettin Bulut, a CHP parliamentarian, said Turkish voters' top priority will be "their empty cooking pot in the kitchen."

"Parents cannot give pocket money to their children when sending them to the school. From early morning until night, their main concern is how to feed themselves. Nobody is happy about this trend," he told Arab News.

Berk Esen, an international relations professor at Ankara's Bilkent University, believes the poor economic outlook will make the election results in some cities, such as Ankara and the northwestern industrial hub Bursa, much tighter than in previous polls.

"Although AKP voters will not split with their parties in a single stroke, some may opt not to vote to show their frustration. Voter turnout will be important in these elections when even 1 percent of votes can determine a candidate's success," he said.

Some analysts said the alliance between the AKP and the nationalistic MHP party could offset the votes lost due to the economic outlook.

But Esen said that in some cities where MHP candidates were not nominated, nationalistic constituencies may choose not to vote or to vote for opposition parties.

The use of "religion" card by the government following the New Zealand terror attack is also seen as a strategy to divert attention from its economic failures.

According to this view, voters in Turkey will not change loyalties because of ideological commitment.

"If we focus on 30 metropolitan provinces where the majority of voters live, the number of battlefront elections is about 12," Dr. Emre Erdogan, founder and director of the independent Infakto Research Workshop in Istanbul, told Arab News.

"The CHP is guaranteed two provinces in the west, including Izmir, and the pro-Kurdish HDP can already list three provinces in the southeast. It seems that the AKP will gain 13 provinces hosting 10 million voters. The remaining provinces where 25 million voters live are accepted as competitive," he said.

Erdogan said that declining economic conditions might lead to eight of these provinces, including the southern provinces of Antalya and Mersin, as well as the northwestern province of Balikesir, voting for opposition parties.

"In Ankara and Istanbul, the two biggest cities, the victory of the opposition will depend on third parties – Kurdish and nationalists votes," he said.

The HDP, with electoral support of about 10 percent, did not nominate

candidates for Istanbul and Ankara, and is supporting opposition candidates.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Turkey](#)

[Ankara](#)

[AKP](#)

[CHP](#)

[Istanbul](#)

Turkey's ruling AKP submits constitutional reform package to parliament
Turkey opposition chief hosts 'justice congress' in challenge to Erdogan