

# [Algeria's President Bouteflika says he will not stand for fifth term and postpones election](#)

Mon, 2019-03-11 20:36

ALGIERS: Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika bowed to widespread protests on Monday by announcing he will not seek a fifth term and delaying next month's presidential election.

After 20 years in power, Bouteflika made the dramatic move in a letter to the Algerian people released by his office. He promised an interim leadership structure to plan new elections, and said he will not seek to run again.

Bouteflika, who is 82, has barely been seen in public since a 2013 stroke. He has faced unprecedented protests in recent weeks demanding that he abandon plans to seek another term.

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President Bouteflika returns to Algeria amid fresh protests  
President Bouteflika returns to Algeria amid fresh protests

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## [Tunisia minister says hospital infection killed 12 newborns](#)

Author:

AFP

ID:

1552318114378512200

Mon, 2019-03-11 14:45

TUNIS: A dozen newborn babies whose deaths at a Tunisian state hospital sparked public outrage are believed to have been killed by an infection acquired in the clinic, the acting health minister said Monday.

Sonia Ben Cheikh told a news conference that a 12th infant had died at the Rabta state hospital in Tunis on Sunday.

According to the preliminary findings of the ongoing investigation, a nosocomial (hospital-acquired) infection caused the deaths, she said.

"The whole health sector is in a state of emergency," she told a news conference.

Reforms were needed to restore confidence, added Ben Cheikh, whose predecessor resigned Saturday in the face of a growing outcry over the deaths.

Prime Minister Youssef Chahed swiftly vowed that "those responsible for any negligence" will face prosecution.

Officials launched medical and judicial investigations after the premature babies began dying on Thursday at the Rabta state hospital in Tunis.

The public health system, once a source of pride in Tunisia, has been hit by management and financial problems that lowered standards and caused drug shortages.



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## [Palestinians in Gaza receive new Qatari aid](#)

Author:

AFP

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1552307816777619400

Mon, 2019-03-11 12:31

GAZA: Tens of thousands of Palestinians in Gaza began receiving \$100 payouts from Qatar on Monday, the latest tranche of funds under an informal deal between the territory's Islamist rulers Hamas and Israel.

A flare-up of violence along the border fence between Israel and the Gaza Strip this month has threatened another escalation between the two sides, but the Qatari cash could help ease tensions.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday warned Hamas he would not hesitate to launch a "large-scale operation" in Gaza.

Many analysts however believe he wants to avoid a conflict with unpredictable results while campaigning for re-election in Israel's April 9 polls.

The Qatari Gaza Reconstruction Committee, in a statement, said "disbursement began Monday of the fourth payment of cash assistance to poor families in the Gaza Strip."

In total 55,000 families in the strip would receive payments of \$100 each. Thousands of Palestinians could be seen queueing early at post offices across Gaza.

"I am here to receive \$100, but \$100 does not solve the crisis," said Bassam Khalil Jaber, 40. "We need permanent solutions, and this grant is a temporary solution."

In November, the Gulf state, which is a longtime Hamas ally, committed to around \$15 million a month in aid over six months.

In exchange, Hamas committed to relative calm along the Israeli border, which has been rocked by often violent Hamas-backed protests since March 2018.

But the deal became a major bone of political contention in Israel – whose territory was used for delivery of the cash – and also in Gaza.

Part of the funds were originally used to pay salaries of Hamas employees, but this was stopped after political criticism in Israel.

Instead much of the money will be funneled into cash for work programs with the United Nations.

The impoverished strip, which has a population of around two million, has been under a crippling Israeli blockade for more than a decade.

Israel says it is necessary to isolate Hamas but critics say it amounts to collective punishment of residents of the densely-populated coastal territory.

The two sides have fought three wars since 2008.



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Palestinian wounded in Israel border clashes dies: Gaza ministry

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## [Palestinian Authority cuts back wages in tax, prisoner dispute with Israel](#)

Author:

Reuters

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1552239969571148200

Sun, 2019-03-10 14:39

RAMALLAH: The Palestinian Authority is scaling back wages paid to its employees in response to a cash crunch deepened by a dispute with Israel over

payments to families of militants in Israeli jails, it said on Sunday. In February, Israel announced it was deducting five percent of the revenues it transfers monthly to the Palestinian Authority (PA) from tax collected on imports that reach the occupied West Bank and Hamas-run Gaza Strip via Israeli ports.

Israel said the sum represented the amount the PA pays to families of Palestinians jailed in Israel or killed while carrying out attacks or other security offenses.

Palestinians see their slain and jailed as heroes of a national struggle but Israeli and US officials say the stipends fan Palestinian violence and are scaled so relatives of prisoners serving longer sentences receive larger payments.

After Israel's deduction announcement, Palestinian President Mahoud Abbas said the PA would not accept any of the tax revenues, which totalled 700 million shekels (\$193 million) in January and account for about half of the authority's budget.

As a result, Palestinian Finance Minister Shukri Bishara said the PA would pay full salaries – which had been due on March 1 – only to its lowest-earning employees, or the 40 percent of its workforce that takes home 2,000 shekels (\$550) or less a month.

Civil servants earning more than that, including cabinet ministers, will have their wages cut by half, he told a news conference.

However, Bishara said prisoners' families will continue to be paid their full allocations.

"No force on earth can alter that," he told a news conference.

Bishara said the PA will have to take bank loans of between \$50 million to \$60 million for the coming five to six months to weather the crisis.

An Israeli official, commenting on condition of anonymity, said the PA had a cash-flow problem as a result of US cuts in aid to the Palestinians and the tax revenues dispute but that the situation would not spiral out of control.

"The nightmare scenario of the PA collapsing, or of PA security coordination with Israel ceasing, won't happen," the official said.

"No one, including us and the United States, would allow that. If need be, we'll look for ways of preventing this."

The US has cut all aid to the Palestinians, including \$360 million it used to give to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees. The cuts were widely seen as a bid by Washington to press the Palestinians to re-enter peace talks with Israel that collapsed in 2014.

(\$1 = 3.6288 shekels)



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