

# Free and fair Palestinians elections must include East Jerusalem: UN experts

Author:

Mon, 2021-07-26 19:07

NEW YORK: UN human rights experts have urged both the Palestinian Authority and Israel to reschedule the presidential, legislative and municipal elections “in the very near future” and ensure that they are “peaceful and credible.”

In April, Palestinian president Mahmood Abbas issued a presidential decree postponing the elections – originally planned for May and July – “until the participation of our people in Jerusalem is guaranteed.”

He blamed Israel for uncertainty about whether it would allow Palestinians to vote in East Jerusalem.

Expressing concern over the postponement, the UN experts recalled the importance of the elections as a means to “address the long-standing internal political divisions, to strengthen accountable institutions and to take an important step toward achieving the fundamental national and individual rights of the Palestinian people.”

The experts include Martin Lynk, the special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory; Irene Khan, special rapporteur on the protection of the right to freedom of expression; and Clement Nyaletsossi Voule, special rapporteur on rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.

Special rapporteurs are independent experts who serve in individual capacities, and on a voluntary basis, at the UN’s Human Rights Council. They are not members of UN staff and are not paid for their work.

They called on Israel as an occupying power to “clearly state” that it will allow the democratic process to take place unhindered, and to “interfere as little as possible with the rights and daily lives of the Palestinians.”

The 1994 Oslo Accords between the Palestine Liberation Organization and the state of Israel provided for the right of Palestinians in East Jerusalem to participate in elections.

Article XI of the interim agreement explicitly stated that “the two sides view the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as a single territorial unit, the integrity and status of which will be preserved during the interim period.”

It has been 15 years since Palestinians last cast ballots. In previous elections, Palestinians from East Jerusalem had been allowed to cast their ballots, although not without difficulty.

In the lead-up to the 2006 elections, Israel launched a campaign of arrests against members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, revoked their Jerusalem identity cards, banned candidates from holding election campaigns inside Jerusalem and prohibited public meetings and rallies.

Recalling the UN Security Council and General Assembly's statements that any Israeli alterations to East Jerusalem and its political and legal status are "null and void," the experts called the present moment "a golden opportunity for the world to affirm these commitments in the name of democracy and international law."

They called on the Palestinian Authority to reschedule the elections "in the very near future," and demanded that "the democratic rights of voters, candidates, political parties and participants (be) fully respected by all, including the occupying power.

"Arrests and detentions and the disruption of political meetings and campaigning by any governing authority are utterly incompatible with international human rights protections."

The human rights experts said that they were "disturbed" by the eligibility rules established by the Palestinian authority for the upcoming elections, including a requirement that each political list pay a \$20,000 registration fee and that candidates working in civil society resign from their current jobs in order to run.

The experts said these rules "appear to create unjustified obstacles (and) inhibit the full and free participation of Palestinians in the democratic process." They called on the Palestinian leadership to remove these legal barriers.

The human rights experts concluded: "We do not underestimate the challenges of holding free and fair democratic elections while under an entrenched and harsh occupation.

"We welcome the assistance offered by the international community, particularly the European Union and the United Nations, to facilitate these elections. But the elections will only achieve credibility and open the door to political renewal, particularly among younger Palestinians, if all sides respect the values of democracy and human rights."



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Palestinian teen bears scar of eviction battle in East Jerusalem

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## [New Houthi demand to agreement before granting access to decaying oil tanker 'disappointing': UN](#)

Mon, 2021-07-26 19:41

LONDON: The UN on Monday called a new Houthi demand for an agreement before allowing access to decaying oil tanker Safer for light maintenance "disappointing."

FSO Safer has been moored in the Red Sea off the coast of Yemen, near the Ras

Isa oil terminal, for more than five years.

“The big point of dispute really is that they (the Houthis) want an agreement in advance to perform light maintenance. And they want the light maintenance activities to be mentioned in the (November 2020) mission plan,” a spokesperson for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told Arab News.

“We’re continuing to negotiate...We can’t provide those advanced guarantees (because of) the lack of safety onboard the ship...If it is safe, we are definitely willing to do light maintenance activities. First, we need to make sure it is safe,” UN spokesperson Farhan Haq said.

Haq told reporters in New York that the “The Safer is a very dangerous site and advanced guarantees before verifying conditions on board are not possible.”

“That is why the November 2020 agreement (between the UN and the Houthis) explicitly conditions the light maintenance activities on the safety environment we find on board,” he explained.

The UN remains eager to help but a safety assessment is necessary to carrying out “some light maintenance that we hope will buy more time for a longer term solution,” Haq added.

“We also remain open-minded regarding any other safe and quick solutions to the problem,” he said.

The tanker’s structure, equipment and operating systems are deteriorating, leaving the tanker at risk of springing a leak, exploding or catching fire.

With 48 million gallons of oil on board, the UN warns a potential leak would be four times bigger than the 1989 Exxon Valdez disaster off the coast of Alaska, considered the world’s worst oil spill in terms of environmental damage.



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Failure of UN talks with Yemen's Houthi militia on Safer tanker 'not surprising' – information minister

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## [El-Alamein International Airport prepares to receive more international flights](#)

Author:

Mon, 2021-07-26 01:21

CAIRO: Days after Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi's inspection tour

in New Alamein, a city in the northwest of the country, Minister of Civil Aviation Mohamed Manar has spoken of the need to prepare El-Alamein International Airport to receive more flights.

This came during his tour of the airport, which serves the North Coast region and New Alamein, and is considered one of the important regional airports.

During the tour, Manar inspected the travel and arrival halls, passport counters, baggage belts, the control tower and the airstrip, and was told of the readiness of the equipment for ground services.

He was also briefed about the application of security measures, as well as the implementation of preventive measures to ensure the safety of passengers and airport workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The minister said that Egypt's political leadership attached great importance to the New Alamein (project), which will provide many investment opportunities.

The North Coast project contains a large number of tourist resorts with distinctive coastal villages and charming Egyptian beaches.

The Egyptian president has spoken of the need to prepare to receive more trips to activate internal and external tourist numbers.

New Alamein is the second major project implemented by the Egypt's Ministry of Housing after the New Administrative Capital project, with the target population for 2030 being about 4 million people.

New Alamein has witnessed the implementation of a number of residential and service projects, including the beach towers project: 15 towers are to be finished in the first phase, and eight towers in the second.



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## [Air traffic between Russia, Hurghada and Sharm El-Sheikh to resume in August](#)

Author:

Mon, 2021-07-26 00:07

CAIRO: The Russian Embassy in Egypt has announced the resumption of Russian air traffic to the cities of Hurghada and Sharm El-Sheikh in August, after a hiatus of nearly six years.

The embassy said in a statement on its official Facebook page that on July 23 representatives of the Russian government's Anti-Coronavirus Operations Center met to consider the resumption of flights between Russia and the Egyptian cities of Hurghada and Sharm El-Sheikh, and decided to restart air traffic on Aug. 9.

The embassy said that the return of travel would be at a rate of five flights a week from Moscow to Hurghada and Sharm El-Sheikh.

The embassy also confirmed that the decision to increase the number of flights to Egyptian resorts would depend on the outcome of the Russian delegation's visit to Egypt to assess the latest situation. Air traffic between Egypt and Russia was suspended in 2015 after a Russian passenger plane crashed in Sinai following a terrorist act. Air traffic between Russia and Cairo Airport resumed in 2018, while charter flights from Russia to Egyptian tourist resorts continued to be suspended until a set of safety requirements requested by Russia were implemented. "In general, we are ready to receive Russian tourists in Egypt, with any numbers and trips, whether in Sharm El-Sheikh and Hurghada or the rest of the Egyptian tourist resorts. Stakeholders from tour operators and owners of private airlines should try to free themselves from bureaucratic restrictions and the lobby that works against their interests," a source at the Egyptian Ministry of Civil Aviation said.



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# Tunisia's president sacks prime minister, freezes parliament

Sun, 2021-07-25 23:41

TUNIS: Tunisia's president said on Sunday he was dismissing the prime minister and freezing parliament in a major escalation of political feuding in the democratic country following protests in several cities.

President Kais Saied said he would assume executive authority with the assistance of a new prime minister, prompting the biggest challenge yet to a 2014 constitution that split powers between president, prime minister and parliament.

"Many people were deceived by hypocrisy, treachery and robbery of the rights of the people," he said in a statement carried on state media.

"I warn any who think of resorting to weapons... and whoever shoots a bullet, the armed forces will respond with bullets," he added.

Saied has been enmeshed in political disputes with Prime Minister Hichem Mechichi for over a year, as the country grapples with an economic crisis, a looming fiscal crunch and a flailing response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

He said in his statement that his actions were in line with the constitution, and also suspended the immunity of members of parliament.

Saied and the parliament were both elected in separate popular votes in 2019, while Mechichi took office last summer, replacing another short-lived government.



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