

Huge Arab voter turnout 'thwarts Netanyahu's bid to stay in power'

Author:

Wed, 2020-03-04 00:25

AMMAN: A massive Arab vote in Israel's parliamentary election appeared on Tuesday to have thwarted attempts by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to stay in power and avoid prosecution for fraud and corruption.

Arab voter turnout hit an unprecedented 66 percent, compared with less than 60 percent at the last election in September, and the Arab Joint List is expected to increase its number of parliamentary seats from 13 to 15.

With almost all votes counted on Tuesday, Netanyahu's right-wing bloc was heading for 59 seats – two short of the 61 required for a majority in the Knesset. Opposition leader Benny Gantz refused to concede defeat, and said the election could result in another deadlock.

"The results of the Joint List are great, and we are hoping it will spoil Netanyahu's chances of forming a government," Nazareth lawyer Boutros Mansour told Arab News. "But regardless, it is a great victory for Palestinian citizens of Israel."

Netanyahu is due in court on March 17 on charges of fraud, corruption and abuse of power.

He requires a majority in the Knesset to pass legislation granting him immunity, which now looks increasingly unlikely.

Netanyahu's Likud party will struggle to cobble together a working coalition, Wadi Abunassar, director of the International Center for Consultation, told Arab News. "Despite doing well, Netanyahu has an uphill battle," he said.

"His limited options include trying to chisel two or three members from the other bloc to join him."

Netanyahu is thought to be wooing Moshe Ya'alon, a member of Gantz's opposition Blue and White Party and a former defense minister under Netanyahu; and Orly Levy-Abekasis, a former member of Avigdor Lieberman's far-right Yisrael Beiteinu who now represents her own independent Geshet party in the Labor/Meretz coalition.

Levy-Abekasis has ambitions to be a minister and could be persuaded to flip but Ya'alon will not, said

Boutros Mansour, who has been closely following the Israeli political scene for decades. "There is a lot of hatred now against Netanyahu and it is highly unlikely for this to work," he said.



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Netanyahu ahead in Israeli election, but still lacking governing majority
Netanyahu pledges 'immediate' annexation steps if re-elected

[Houthi court sentences 35 Yemeni lawmakers to death](#)

Author:

Wed, 2020-03-04 00:18

AL-MUKALLA: A court controlled by Iran-backed Houthis on Tuesday sentenced 35 pro-government parliamentarians to death and confiscated their properties, a local lawyer who attended the trial said.

Abdul Basit Ghazi said on Facebook that the Specialized Criminal Court in Sanaa handed down the verdicts on members of the Yemeni Parliament charged with treason for supporting the internationally recognized government and military operations by the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen.

Convicted lawmakers included Sultan Al-Barakani, the parliamentary leader and his deputy Abdul Aziz Jubari; Ameen Al-Okaimi, governor of Jawf; Ali Amrani, Yemen's envoy to Jordan, and several former ministers, tribal leaders and businessmen.

In February, Al-Barakani complained to Martin Griffiths, the UN envoy to

Yemen, that Houthis had confiscated the property of 35 Yemeni MPs who supported the internationally recognized government.

Houthi extremists have stepped up their legal attacks on lawmakers since early last year when MPs met in Seiyun in Yemen's Hadramout province for the first session of the Parliament since the beginning of the war.

Dozens of legislators in Houthi-controlled areas, including the current Parliament's head, have switched sides and joined the internationally recognized government since December 2017 when militants killed former President Ali Abdullah Saleh.

Pro-government lawmakers who fled Sanaa say Houthis barred their peers from leaving the capital and forced them to attend the rebel-controlled Parliament. Houthi-controlled courts previously sentenced President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, his deputy Ali Mohsen Al-Ahmer and the Prime Minister Maeen Saeed and other ministers to death for treason.

After the trial, armed Houthi fighters stormed the properties of the sentenced men and ordered local banks to freeze their accounts.

Political analysts say that Houthis are targeting opponents to justify confiscating properties and intimidate those who might consider fleeing areas under rebel control.

"They seek to accelerate looting properties of lawmakers, including houses and other properties in their areas. They also want to terrorize politicians and other lawmakers in Sanaa who plan to sneak out to government-controlled areas or outside the country," Saleh Al-Baydhani told Arab News.

On the battlefields, fighting continues between government troops and Houthis in the province of Jawf and Nehim district, near Houthi-controlled Sanaa. Government officials say that militants executed several opponents shortly after seizing control of Hazem on Sunday.

Yahya Qoma, director of the Ministry of Information's office in Jawf, said that Houthi militants killed several people on Tuesday and stormed opponents' houses in Hazem. Houthis have made major gains in the northern province of Jawf after seizing control of Hazem, the capital of Jawf and Ghyal district. The conflict began in late 2014 when Houthis seized control of Sanaa and placed Hadi under house arrest. The rebels extended their operations across Yemen, triggering a civil war that has killed tens of thousands of people, according to the UN.



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UK to withdraw embassy staff as Iran coronavirus death toll rises
Turkey's pressure on EU by opening borders to Syrian refugees questioned

[The Middle East grapples with a knowledge and skills gap](#)

Tue, 2020-03-03 23:39

DUBAI: At a time of intense debate worldwide about the social impact of automation and global integration, many companies are facing a problem of a very different kind. The gap between the skills of available workers and those demanded by the market is hitting their bottom line.

The “knowledge and skills gap” is a growing challenge in almost every part of the world. For business communities and recruitment companies in the Middle East, it is a sad fact of life.

Research has shown that technological progress is the largest contributor to the skills gap in most industrial sectors. Studies also show that the root of the mismatch between available expertise and in-demand jobs lies in education

systems that have not kept pace with the times.

A recent report by Korn Ferry, the US management consulting firm, predicts that the demand for skilled workers will outstrip supply, resulting in a global talent shortage of more than 85.2 million people by 2030.

The skills gap could get a lot worse before it gets better, if at all. A report by the International Labor Organization (ILO) says that the global youth unemployment rate has risen between 1991 (9.3 percent) and 2018 (12.8 percent). In the Middle East, the rate has stood stubbornly at 26.1 percent – double that of the global average.



According to Nancy W. Gleason, director of the Hilary Ballon Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at NYU Abu Dhabi, “there is a gap between academia and the job market” in the Arab region.

“The fourth industrial revolution is pushing a skill shift in the workplace that higher education has not entirely responded to yet,” she told Arab News.

Consequently, “disruptive technologies such as additive manufacturing, artificial intelligence and blockchain” continue to collectively change what is needed in the workplace, resulting in an incompatibility between the skills demanded and those supplied.

Gleason says that while hard skills remain in high demand across the Arab region and the world, soft skills such as “reasoning, problem-solving, and ideation” are growing in importance in the workplace.

FASTFACTS

- Economic returns from different skills and education levels are changing rapidly.
- Opportunities are now concentrated in relatively high-skill, high-wage jobs and low-skill, low-wage jobs.
- Automation and AI is replacing workers and may also limit job creation in growing sectors.
- Middle classes have been hollowed out by the disappearance of routine occupations.
- Income gaps between the generations have widened significantly in many countries.
- Increase in temporary contracts has decreased job stability, particularly for the young.

She said that non-technical skills are “habits of mind” – the tools needed to enable employees to adjust to new forms of work and to overcome any complications that could arise with the job.

“Firms are starting to hire based on an individual’s ability to learn,” Gleason told Arab News.

A startup called Qureos is aiming to bridge the gulf between the academic world and the corporate workplace in the Arab region by helping young men and women to develop “job-relevant skills.”

The startup provides students with a platform that allows them to build an “experiential portfolio” and engage in projects with mentorship from industry experts.

According to Mehrad Yaghmai, chief operating officer of Qureos, research of the market revealed a rise in the requirement for “data science and analytical skills,” a consistent demand for software-development skills in engineering, and a focus on machine learning in most industries.

“Beyond technical skills, there is a need for critical thinking, data-computer literacy and the skill to adapt and learn on the job,” he said.

Qureos, which currently has 2,000 registered students, hopes to do its bit for the region by partnering with 50 companies by the summer of 2020.

The talent gap blighting the job prospects of university graduates in the Middle East was underscored by the findings of the World Economic Forum’s latest Global Competitiveness Report.

One executive opinion survey question asked: “In your country, to what extent do university graduates possess the skills needed by businesses?” The answers ranged between 1-7, with 7 indicating “to a great extent.”

As automation outmodes pattern-based hard skills, the ability to adapt and learn new things will be a valued skill in and of itself.

Nancy W. Gleason, Director of the Hilary Ballon Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at NYU Abu Dhabi



Among countries in the Middle East, the UAE and Qatar reported 5.3, followed by Lebanon at 5.2, Saudi Arabia at 5.1 and Oman at 4.8.

The Global Competitiveness Report rankings, which measures the overall national competitiveness of 141 economies, placed the UAE (25) ahead of Qatar (29), Saudi Arabia (36), Bahrain (45) and Kuwait (46.)

“The global context of these numbers is important to consider,” said Gleason, adding that education is only one piece of the puzzle.

“As automation outmodes pattern-based hard skills, the ability to adapt and learn new things will be a valued skill in and of itself.”

She says educational institutions need to go beyond transferring content knowledge and help students to articulate cognitive skills.

Work is “task-based and fluid” and “learning in the classroom should be too, regardless of what content you choose to focus on in your education.”

For their part, higher education institutions need to do more to develop “future-ready graduates,” Gleason told Arab News, adding that they need to “emphasize the competencies that are demonstrated though pre-professional and technical educational degrees.”

According to Gleason, graduates can apply what they learned to other contexts

through a mix of interdisciplinary education, implementation of internship schemes and experimental learning.

"It is when the content knowledge is applied that real learning happens," she told Arab News.

"Many education institutions across the MENA region are acting to create opportunities in this space."

Mohammad Ayish, head of the department of mass communication at the American University of Sharjah (AUS), does not mince words when discussing "the gap between academia and the market."

It is a "huge one," he told Arab News, adding that universities have underestimated the reality of a fast-changing job market.

"Their program learning outcomes have little relevance for emerging market needs," he said.

"When their graduates start hunting for jobs, they find themselves too detached from the competencies required in the workplace."

That said, changes in university curricula are being made in response to demands by higher-education regulators, according to Ayish.

The majority of universities in the Middle East are "highly keen" on equipping students with the appropriate knowledge for meeting shifting market demands, he said.

However, some institutions continue to follow traditional approaches, Ayish said, although with accelerating transitions in the market, they will have no choice but to adapt.

In an era when technology reigns supreme, he said, universities should "promote values of entrepreneurship and innovation and bolster enduring ties with market players to ensure their students find relevance in the workplace."

Ayish's argument, however, begs the question of whether higher education institutions are capable of addressing the "knowledge and skills gap" challenge on their own.

According to NYU's Gleason, coordination among government, industry and education establishments is essential for "impactful development of employees of all ages."

For instance, computer science and mathematics are among the fields that struggle to attract specialists who possess the needed skills in combination with "emotional intelligence and creativity."

At the same time, she says, new areas of employment such as space-related industries are hard pressed to find employees with computation thinking skills and digital literacy.

Gleason says that educational institutions should focus on assembling a faculty capable of understanding the market's major shifts and implementing non-traditional methods of teaching.



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Education conference calls for deep learning in Saudi schools
Over 5,000 Saudis benefit from new career education platform

[Watch: Turkish state media airs pro-ISIS video, describes terrorists as “moderates”](#)

Tue, 2020-03-03 02:41

RIYADH: A shocking pro-ISIS video aired by an official Turkish state news agency has left several social media users and terror watch groups in disbelief.

In a number of posts on its official Arabic social media accounts, the state-

owned Anadolu news agency described ISIS fighters as the “moderate faction of the Syrian opposition.” All posts have been now deleted, however Arab News managed to obtain screen shots of them prior to their removal.

The main video in question shows a number of soldiers wearing the ISIS insignia, and was published under the title “Moderate Opposition Retook The Strategically Important Saraqib Town in Idlib” before ultimately being unpublished later on. The news agency then resorted to reposting the same story but without the controversial clip.

Several social media users slammed what was posted as further evidence of unwavering Turkish support and sympathy for terror groups. The fact that Anadolu is known for being closely controlled by officials close to President Erdogan’s Justice and Development Party (AKP) has further supported the assumption that the deleted video reflects the actual thinking within the agency, the party and the Erdogan government.

“What more do people want to see to believe that the Erdogan regime is playing with fire! The blood on innocent is on their hands,” wrote one Facebook user.

“Europe might just be feeling the danger of Erdogan now, but we have been suffering for years,” said another.

Turkey’s questionable actions in Syria and towards ISIS have long raised serious questions among its allies, let alone its critics.



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... من النظام استطاعت قوات المعارضة المعتدلة تجاوز خطوط قوات النظام السوري غير عملية بدأت مساء الأربعاء من الأحياء الخارجية للمدينة



Last December, French President Emmanuel Macron accused Turkey of working with Islamic State proxies and said Ankara's ambiguity toward the group was detrimental to its NATO allies fighting in Syria and Iraq.

"The common enemy today is the terrorist groups. I'm sorry to say, we don't have the same definition of terrorism around the table," Macron told reporters.

"When I look at Turkey they are fighting against those who fought with us shoulder to shoulder against ISIS (Islamic State) and sometimes they work with ISIS proxies."

"I think any ambiguity with Turkey vis-a-vis these groups is detrimental to everybody for the situation on the ground," Macron said. "The number one (priority) is not to be ambiguous with these groups, which is why we started to discuss our relations with Turkey."



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[Lebanon: Health staff 'trained to deal with quarantined patients'](#)

Tue, 2020-03-03 01:58

BEIRUT: The number of people infected with the coronavirus (COVID-19) has risen to 13 in Lebanon after the Ministry of Health announced on Monday that it "recorded three laboratory-confirmed cases."

Most of those infected are either passengers from an Iranian plane that flew from Qom to Beirut over a week ago, or from their relatives.

The three new cases are all from the same family of a Syrian patient whose son was on board the plane from Qom.

He was infected with the virus, but his condition was not reported at the time, so he transmitted the infection to his family members.

They were placed in quarantine pending the results of the tests that confirmed their infection, before being transferred to Rafik Hariri University Hospital in Beirut.

The Ministry of Health said in its daily statement that the three infected people "had mixed with one of the previously diagnosed cases. As soon as symptoms appeared, a laboratory examination was performed."

While schools and universities are still closed across Lebanon, decisions

regarding other institutions have been issued varying advice by local municipalities. Weekly markets have been closed in the north and south of the country, and in the Beqaa Valley.

FASTFACT

The three infected people 'had mixed with one of the previously diagnosed cases.'

Rafik Hariri University Hospital organized a tour for the media in the departments dealing with COVID-19 patients, including the isolation unit, where more rooms have been prepared.

The head of the hospital's infection control department, Ghada Shuaib, said: "Staff have been trained in how to deal with quarantined patients."

Four wards have been allocated in the hospital, and each wing accommodates 16 patients in addition to having 8 intensive care rooms and the final isolation department which accommodates 4 patients.

Opinion

This section contains relevant reference points, placed in (Opinion field)

"The new emergency department is a miniature hospital that has been prepared with a gift from the International Committee of the Red Cross, and was equipped within 24 hours of the spread of the coronavirus," said Jihad Shehimi, head of the engineering and maintenance department.

The director of the hospital, Dr. Firas Al-Abyad, stated: "There is one case whose condition is unstable because the patient, who is an old Iranian, suffers from severe diseases. The rest of the patients are stable."



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Virus kills member of council advising Iran's supreme leaderIran regime criticized for coronavirus response as Shiite pilgrim 'shrine licking' videos emerge