

Turkish leaders' war of words over 'secret meetings' claim

Author:

Fri, 2019-11-22 23:38

ANKARA: Claims that a high-ranking member of Turkey's main opposition had been encouraged by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to seek leadership of the party have sparked a war of words between the rival political forces.

A column in Turkey's leading daily Sozcu claimed that the politician from the Republican People's Party (CHP), Turkey's main secular opposition, visited Erdogan in his palace on Nov. 9.

The columnist claimed that Erdogan urged the CHP official to stand for party leadership and promised help if his proposal was accepted.

Despite mounting political gossip, the name of the politician remains a secret.

However, the claims triggered a heated row between the opposition and government with CHP leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu accusing Turkey's president of seeking to splinter the CHP, which remains the government's main electoral rival.

"Erdogan, who speaks about everything, keeps silent on this matter. I'm asking him loud and clearly: Is this story true or false?" Kilicdaroglu said.

But Fahrettin Altun, the president's communications director, denied the claims of a secret meeting, saying that "Erdogan, in his 43 years in politics, has never intervened in the internal affairs of another party."

Gursel Tekin, a leading CHP parliamentarian, believes that no such meeting was held.

"The presidential palace is trying to change the agenda through such artificial allegations. It is baseless," he told Arab News.

"If Kilicdaroglu is aware of such a meeting, he should fire that person. We will never let anyone break up our party."

Tekin described the allegations as a "gossip mechanism" to cover the economic challenges facing the government.

There are 8.5 million unemployed people in Turkey. About 500,000 people in Istanbul could not pay their water bill. These problems are never talked about.

Gursel Tekin, CHP parliamentarian

“There are 8.5 million unemployed people in Turkey. About 500,000 people in Istanbul couldn’t pay their water bill. These problems are never talked about. Instead the attention of people is diverted to gossip about who entered the palace,” he said.

Many observers believe Turkey’s next general election will take place well before the scheduled 2023 date, and such debates are often seen as maneuvers in advance of a poll.

According to a recent survey by Socio-Political Field Research Center, if a general election was held now, only three political parties would pass the electoral threshold: The ruling AKP with 34.6 percent of the vote, CHP with 25 percent, and the pro-Kurdish HDP with 9.2 percent.

In a public address on Friday, Erdogan rejected claims of the meeting and called on Kilicdaroglu to offer proof or resign as CHP leader.

Seren Selvin Korkmaz, co-founder and executive director of the independent IstanPol Institute in Istanbul, said the dispute of the alleged palace meeting shows the limited capacity of the opposition to set the policy agenda.

“The CHP is notorious for its internal power struggles, so is more prone to this counter-attack by the government or any other opponent,” she told Arab News.

Korkmaz believes the debate is a part of a government tactic that began with the military incursion into northern Syria.

“The government began to gain a psychological advantage that they lost with the municipal elections. The AKP and Erdogan have worked hard to build and sustain a nationalist coalition around the party since 2015,” she said.

She said that the opposition has failed to establish a credible strategic stance against AKP policies.

The decision by Turkey’s previously fragmented opposition parties to join forces behind the CHP was a major factor in AKP’s defeat in key cities such as Istanbul and Ankara in the March local elections.

Meanwhile, the opposition front is expanding with new political parties on the horizon.

Former prime minister Ahmet Davutoglu and one-time economy chief Ali Babacan are expected to form parties by the end of the year in a bid to capture constituencies from the AKP’s electoral base.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Turkish](#)

[Recep Tayyip Erdogan](#)

US consular staff in Turkey quizzed over video that 'mocked Islam' Turkey:
About 100,000 Syrians left Istanbul since early July

[Kazakhstan to host Syria talks next month](#)

Author:

Fri, 2019-11-22 23:30

NUR-SULTAN: Kazakhstan will host a fresh round of Syria peace talks sponsored by Russia, Turkey and Iran on Dec. 10-11, Kazakh Foreign Minister Mukhtar Tleuberdi said.

Tleuberdi provided no details about the agenda or participants in the talks.

The war in Syria has killed more than 370,000 people and displaced millions since it erupted in 2011.

The Syrian regime's television reported that opposition rocket fire on the regime-controlled northern Syrian city of Aleppo killed seven civilians and

wounded 30.

“Seven civilians were killed and 30 more were wounded by a rocket attack carried out by terrorist groups,” the regime broadcaster said, referring to opposition factions in the west of Aleppo province.

A salvo of rockets slammed into five districts of the city including Salaheddin, the regime’s media said.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group said that “one rocket fired from western Aleppo hit a car in Salaheddin, killing four occupants.”

Extremists of the Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham group (HTS), formerly the Syrian affiliate of Al-Qaeda, operate in western Aleppo province bordering Idlib province to the north where smaller rebel groups are present.

Observatory chief Rami Abdel Rahman said the toll from Thursday’s attack could rise because several people were critically wounded.

Government forces retook Aleppo at the end of 2016, but the city still sees sporadic attacks by radical factions.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Kazakhstan](#)

[syria talks](#)

Syria talks on fragile Idlib truce begin in KazakhstanUN invites US and allies for Syria talks next month

US sanctions Iran minister over Internet censorship

Fri, 2019-11-22 18:38

WASHINGTON: The US Treasury slapped punitive sanctions on Iran's communications minister, Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi, Friday after the Tehran regime blocked Internet communications amid violent protests triggered by a petrol price hike.

"We are sanctioning Iran's Minister of Information and Communications Technology for restricting Internet access, including to popular messaging applications that help tens of millions of Iranians stay connected to each other and the outside world," said Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin in a statement.

"Iran's leaders know that a free and open Internet exposes their illegitimacy, so they seek to censor Internet access to quell anti-regime protests," Mnuchin said.

The protests erupted across the country on November 15, after the price of petrol was raised by as much as 200 percent.

Officials have confirmed five deaths, while Amnesty International said that more than 100 demonstrators were believed to have been killed after authorities reportedly used live ammunition to quell the protests, which brought attacks on police stations and petrol stations and some looting of shops.

The Treasury said Azari Jahromi is a former official of the Ministry of Intelligence who has advanced Internet censorship since becoming minister two years ago.

He has "also been involved in surveillance against opposition activists," the Treasury said.

Internet service remained mostly blocked on Friday for a sixth day, with officials and news agencies saying the blackout was gradually being rolled back.

The sanctions would freeze financial assets and property Azari Jahromi has in US jurisdictions and forbid Americans or US businesses, especially banks, from dealing with him.

On Thursday, President Donald Trump accused Iran of blocking the Internet to cover up "death and tragedy" resulting from the protests.

"Iran has become so unstable that the regime has shut down their entire Internet System so that the Great Iranian people cannot talk about the tremendous violence taking place within the country," Trump tweeted.

"They want ZERO transparency, thinking the world will not find out the death and tragedy that the Iranian Regime is causing!" he wrote.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[US Treasury](#)

[iran sanctions](#)

[Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi](#)

US will enforce Iran sanctions: PompeoOil supply drops as Iran sanctions bite: IEA

[Suzanne Mubarak in intensive care](#)

Author:

Fri, 2019-11-22 03:29

CAIRO: One of the sons of Egypt's former President Hosni Mubarak has said his 78-year-old mother and former first lady is in hospital.

Alaa Mubarak tweeted that Suzanne Mubarak was in intensive care but did not elaborate on her illness.

He sought to reassure his followers and tweeted: "Things will be fine, God willing!"

During Hosni Mubarak's 30-year-long rule, his wife had enjoyed significant political power and championed several projects, including efforts to eradicate female genital mutilation.

The 91-year-old Mubarak was ousted in the 2011 uprising that swept Egypt as part of the Arab Spring uprisings across the region.

He was sentenced to life imprisonment but later retried and subsequently acquitted and released in 2017.

Mubarak's two sons, Alaa and Gamal, were both convicted and served terms for corruption.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Suzanne Mubarak](#)

[Egypt](#)

Hosni Mubarak reminisces about 1973 war in video message
Egypt's Hosni Mubarak asks El-Sisi for 'permission' to testify in Morsi trial

[Amid tension in southern Gaza, a](#)

newlywed couple's future is thrown to the wind

Author:

Fri, 2019-11-22 03:23

AL-QARARA, Gaza Strip: Mohammed Abu Amra and his wife, Marwa, had not even finished their honeymoon when they found themselves without a house, after Israeli warplanes turned the family building in Al-Qarara in the southern Gaza Strip to rubble.

Mohammed, 34, had worked and saved to pay for his wedding and apartment for three years. In moments, it was gone.

Since Wednesday, Mohammed, Marwa, and his large family of 20 have been crammed into a small shack, after Israel escalated activities in Gaza after the assassination of a senior military leader of the group Islamic Jihad.

"We became displaced, and the work of years now lies in the ruins of the house, with all our furniture, possessions, even our identity papers," Mohammed told Arab News.

The couple were dreaming of a calm and stable life. Mohammed is in shock, and does not know what to expect in the coming days, while his bride Marwa suffered "severe psychological trauma" after the attack. "I dreamed that my happiness would last with my wife, that the honeymoon would be completed and that our days would become more beautiful, but the work of years was destroyed," he said.

With sadness and pain, Mohammed remembers the moment of the bombing of his house, built by his father three decades ago to house his children and grandchildren.

"That night, my father's cell phone rang from someone who identified himself as an Israeli Defense Force (IDF) officer, who asked my father to leave the house within seven minutes," he added.

Hamouda Abu Amra, Mohammed's father, took up the tale of the fateful night.

"At that point, I only had minutes to save my family. I screamed at them to evacuate, and rushed to the neighbors.

"I received a second call from the officer, who told me that they would bomb the house within two minutes. Then I remembered that Mohammed and his bride were still in their apartment. I rushed and brought them out with nothing but the clothes they had on."

Israel has been bombing the Gaza Strip since the 2014 war, informing residents of the need to evacuate minutes before destroying targets.

"We gathered, my family and my neighbors, 200 meters from the house. A drone

fired a warning missile, then a warplane fired two missiles,” Hamouda said.

The IDF launched an operation in the Gaza Strip on Tuesday last week, with the assassination of the commander of the northern Al-Quds Brigades, the military arm of Islamic Jihad, Bahaa Abu Al-Atta and his wife.

Thirty-four Palestinians, including eight children and three women, have since been killed and 109 others injured. The Ministry of Public Works and Housing in Gaza announced that Israeli airstrikes destroyed had 30 housing units completely and 500 others partially were damaged.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Gaza](#)

[Palestine](#)

Saudi Cabinet condemns Israeli airstrikes on the Gaza Strip
 Hamas, Islamic Jihad endure 'rift' in Gaza