

# The post-Hariri resignation stage: Paving the way to assign a replacement

Author:

Thu, 2019-10-31 00:48

BEIRUT: Prime Minister Saad Hariri announced the resignation of his government in a move that suggested there is no winner in Lebanon. Neither have the two-week protests fulfilled all their demands nor has Hariri succumbed to some of the powers' rejection to bring about any government change.

At two in the afternoon on Wednesday was the deadline set by the Lebanese army command for the protesters to reopen all the roads they have blocked across Lebanon. This demand aimed to "reconnect all regions in accordance with the law and public order." The army command stressed "the right to protest in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and under the protection of the law in public squares only."

It was not easy to convince the protesters, who were adamant to continue to escalate, to leave the streets despite that their first demand, which is the resignation of the government, has been fulfilled.

There have been many debates between those who refused to leave the streets and those who are convinced that the squares should suffice in the next stage. Frustrated protesters have expressed outrage by accusing unnamed parties of having attempted to thwart the movement. Their high-pitched yelling expressed their disappointment, but everyone complied with the army command and left the streets.

Free Patriotic Movement ministers and MPs said in a statement that they were shocked by Hariri's decision to resign and that he had not coordinated with President Michel Aoun.

The pro-Hezbollah Al-Akhbar newspaper said that Hariri succumbed to external pressure and participated in the coup against the Covenant in light of the foggy events in the streets.

Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah had said last Saturday: "We do not accept overthrowing the Covenant, we do not support the resignation of the government, and we do not accept early parliamentary elections because this is a complicated issue."

On the fourteenth day of the protests, Lebanon entered the stage of the constitutional steps that follow the resignation, intensifying communication to restore the political situation. In the presidential palace, off-the-record active communication between President Aoun and his political allies took place to formulate a vision for the next political phase. The General Directorate of the Presidency issued a communiqué declaring that President Aoun has accepted Hariri's resignation and demands that the government

continues to operate normally until a new government is formed. The communiqué did not specify the dates for parliamentary consultations to appoint a new prime minister to form a government.

The Association of Banks announced a tacit agreement to commence operation starting Thursday, but the banks' doors will remain closed to customers until a decision on this subject is taken in the coming days.

Walid Fakhreddine, political expert and civil movement activist, told Arab News: "The street is still intense as people have fulfilled their first demand to bring down the government, but we await the next stage. If no date is announced for the start of the parliamentary consultation to assign a new prime minister, we shall be ready. PM Hariri took responsibility and the ball is now in the court of the political powers."

He added: "The street has won so far, and the victorious party shall be determined through the political considerations in the formation of the next government. We shall watch and see if the politicians understand the street's demands and how they will seek to please it. The squares are available and have not been closed, and blocking roads is also accessible."

"People are exhausted but have not lost faith. It is true that we are now in the stage of catching our breath, but at the same time, we are observing. The key to the solution has been put in place—the government must resign, and if the political forces return to their previous ways for handling the protests, we shall be on the lookout."

"The people overthrew the government that Hezbollah was preventing from getting overthrown, and this is the first political victory," former MP Fares Souaid told Arab News.

"Even if some thought they can re-engineer political life and restore it to how it was before the protests, they will not be able to do that because the people who have tested themselves and their abilities will take to the streets again," he added.

Souaid said: "In revolutions, the final results need time. Lebanon's social media generation resembles that of Iraq, Khartoum and Algeria, and violence cannot be used against them. They have fought for Lebanon's lifestyle, and their achievements deserve respect and encouragement."

As part of the foreign reactions to the resignation of the government and the assault on protesters in Beirut, the embassy stressed Lebanon's need for "a government capable of urgently implementing vital and necessary reforms to build a better country for everyone." It also warned that "violence or intimidation by any group during peaceful protests will only contribute to undermining Lebanon's unity and stability."

UN Secretary-General António Guterres appealed for calm and restraint. He called on all political actors to seek a political solution that preserves the stability of the country and responds to the aspirations of the Lebanese people.

He also called on all actors to avoid violence and respect the rights to peaceful assembly and expression.



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## [Moment of truth rapidly approaching for Iraq PM Abdul Mahdi](#)

Author:

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Thu, 2019-10-31 00:39

BAGHDAD: Whether or not the government of Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi can survive the unrest in Iraq is likely to depend on how his allies and opponents respond to the protests and to the resultant demands of influential Shiite cleric Muqtada Al-Sadr, politicians and analysts told Arab News on Wednesday.

There have been mass demonstrations in Baghdad and seven southern, Shiite-dominated provinces since the beginning of October in protest against corruption, high unemployment and a lack of basic day-to-day services. Abdul Mahdi and his allies ordered a brutal crackdown on the protesters, killing at least 147 and injuring more than 7,000. This succeeded in halting the demonstrations for two weeks.

However, the protesters returned to the streets last Friday in even greater numbers after domestic and international pressure led to a pledge from security forces that they would not use live ammunition against demonstrators. Even so, at least a further 100 people were killed and more than 5,500 injured according to the Iraqi Higher Commission of Human Rights, in clashes with guards at the offices of political parties and armed factions, during which the buildings were attacked and set on fire. The resumption of the protests was accompanied by additional demands, including the resignation of Abdul Mahdi's government, changes to election law and early parliamentary elections.

Al-Sadr, who controls the largest parliamentary bloc and the biggest armed faction in Iraq, has announced his support for the demands of the demonstrators. He has millions of followers and the ability to mobilize large numbers to join the protests. In a message published by his office on Sunday, he called on Abdul Mahdi to resign and call early, UN-supervised parliamentary elections, appoint new members of the Independent High Electoral Commission, and change the country's electoral laws.

On Tuesday, Abdul Mahdi responded by saying that his position as prime minister was decided by political and parliamentary consensus, in which Al-Sadr and his allies were key partners.

This response, seen by some as a "blatant" and "unprecedented" challenge to Al-Sadr, hastened the return of the cleric from Iran. He flew to Najaf hours later and went straight from the airport to join the protests in the heart of the city.

In addition to adding momentum to the demonstrations with his presence, he also called on Hadi Al-Amiri, leader of the Iran-backed Al-Binna'a coalition, the second largest parliamentary bloc, and the biggest ally of Abdul Mahdi, to work with him to force Abdul Mahdi from office and address the demands of the demonstrators.

Al-Amiri responded to this request late on Tuesday evening after a three-hour meeting with his Shiite allies. In a letter sent to the media, he said: "We will work together to achieve the interests of the Iraqi people and save the country."

A prominent Shiite commander who participated in the meeting told Arab News: "The meeting was limited to the leaders of Al-Fattah (the political wing of the pro-Iranian armed factions) to discuss how to response to Al-Sadr's request.

"Adel (Abdul Mahdi) is finished; we were not discussing this. This (his dismissal) is something that was agreed upon some time ago. The problem now is how to announce this. All the leaders of the armed factions have problems with Al-Sadr and their disputes with him have existed for years. None of them wants to give him a popular or political victory."

Al-Sadr on Wednesday said that the response from Al-Amiri and his allies suggested that "the resignation of Abdul Mahdi now will deepen the crisis." However, in a direct message to Al-Amiri and his allies, Al-Sadr added: "The



survival of Abdul Mahdi (as PM) means more bloodshed and the transformation of Iraq to another Yemen or Syria, therefore I will not participate in any more alliances with you.”

A prominent Shiite leader familiar with the negotiations said: “Al-Fattah leaders have abandoned Abdul Mahdi ... but they want to teach Al-Sadr a lesson and do not want to surrender to him too easily. They are now seeking to procrastinate and buy time, and will continue to publicly state their support for Abdul Mahdi until the last possible moment.

“After a while, they will sit down with Al-Sadr to agree a new government – but I suspect that before then, Abdul Mahdi might preempt them and resign.”



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Iraq prime minister's fate in limbo as crowds of demonstrators swell  
Cleric Al-Sadr urges rivals to help oust Iraq's prime minister

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## [US military gives more details on Al-Baghdadi raid](#)

Thu, 2019-10-31 00:12

WASHINGTON: The head of United States Central Command said Wednesday that

Daesh leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi was buried at sea after a weekend raid on his compound.

Gen. Frank McKenzie told reporters that Al-Baghdadi died after he exploded a suicide vest just before US troops were going to capture him.

McKenzie said two children, under the age of 12, were killed in the explosion set off by the Daesh leader.

The US said earlier that three children were killed.

US forces raided the compound in northwestern Syria on Saturday. There were no US casualties.

Syria: Reported ISIS-Leader Al-Baghdadi Compound



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# US House of Representatives recognizes 'Armenian genocide'

Author:

Wed, 2019-10-30 01:16

WASHINGTON: The US House of Representatives took the historic step Tuesday of passing a resolution officially recognizing the "Armenian genocide," a move sure to anger Turkey amid already-heightened tensions with Washington. Cheers and applause erupted when the chamber voted 405 to 11 in support of the resolution "affirming the United States record on the Armenian Genocide," a first for the US Congress where similar measures have been introduced but never reached the floor for a vote.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said she was honored to join her colleagues "in solemn remembrance of one of the great atrocities of the 20th century: the systematic murder of more than 1.5 million Armenian men, women and children by the Ottoman Empire."

The Armenians say the mass killings of their people from 1915 to 1917 amounted to genocide, a claim recognized by some 30 countries. Turkey strongly denies the accusation of genocide.



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# [Jordan recalls envoy to Israel to protest detention of two citizens](#)

Author:

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Tue, 2019-10-29 20:32

AMMAN:Jordan recalled its ambassador to Israel for consultations in protest at Israel's refusal to heed its demands to release two citizens it said were illegally detained for months without charges, the kingdom's foreign minister said on Tuesday.

Ayman Safadi said in a tweet he held the Israeli government responsible for the lives of Hiba Labadi and Abdul Rahman Miri whose "health conditions have severely deteriorated," adding this was a first "step." He did not elaborate.



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