

Algeria's July election date implausible: Media

Author:

Mon, 2019-05-27 23:17

ALGIERS: Algerian media said Monday there was very little chance a presidential election will be held as planned on July 4, after only two candidates – both little known – submitted their candidacies.

“The election ... will without any doubt be postponed or canceled,” the francophone El Watan daily asserted.

The poll was originally meant to take place on April 18, but longtime President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's resignation early last month, on the back of huge street protests, forced a postponement.

To be eligible, the candidates – aeronautical engineer Hamid Touahri and Abdelhakim Hamadi, who heads a veterinary drug company – have to be backed by 600 local councillors and lawmakers or 60,000 voters in more than half the country's regions.

“There is little chance that these two (candidates) will successfully collect” the required signatures, El Watan said.

Arabic daily Echorouk said there was no doubt that “the Constitutional Council should officially announce the postponement” of the poll.

Touahri and Hamadi met a deadline of midnight on Saturday to submit their candidacies, setting in motion a 10-day period for the Constitutional Council to rule on their eligibility.

Despite Bouteflika's departure, protesters have continued to stage mass demonstrations each Friday.

They want regime figures including army chief Ahmed Gaid Salah and interim President Abdelkader Bensalah to step down ahead of any poll, and demand new independent institutions to oversee voting.



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[Israel targets anti-aircraft positions in Syria's Quneitra province](#)

Mon, 2019-05-27 21:42

JERUSALEM: Israel's military said it attacked a Syrian anti-aircraft position that fired on one of its warplanes on Monday, and Syrian state media reported that a soldier had been killed in what it called an "Israeli aggression." "Syrian anti-aircraft systems fired at an IDF fighter jet during a routine flight in northern Israel," an Israeli military statement said, adding that the plane was not hit but that the Syrian projectile landed in Israeli territory.

A Syrian military source was cited by state news agency SANA as saying "the Israeli enemy targeted one of our military positions" in Quneitra province, which is adjacent to the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights.

It said one soldier was killed, another injured and a military vehicle

damaged.

Last year, anti-aircraft fire brought down an Israeli jet returning from an air raid in Syria, prompting a wave of Israeli strikes against other targets there.

Israel has acknowledged carrying out hundreds of strikes in recent years to curtail the influence of its arch-foe Iran and Tehran's Lebanese ally Hezbollah, which are fighting on the side of President Bashar Assad in Syria's war.

"Our policy is clear: we are not prepared to tolerate any aggression against us. We will respond forcefully and aggressively," said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a video released after the incident.



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Regime bombing kills 12 civilians in Syria's northwest
Israel bombs Iranian targets in Syria

Kuwait emir calls for caution amid regional tension

Mon, 2019-05-27 21:04

JEDDAH: Kuwait must be cautious and ready to confront the dangerous tensions in the region, the country's emir said Monday.

Speaking during his annual address to mark the last 10 days of Ramadan, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, referred to the delicate situation in the Arabian Gulf, in clear reference to tensions between Iran on one side and the US and its allies on the other.

"The bitter reality of the region, its dangerous dimensions and consequences, and the developments taking place call upon us to realize the current situations and circumstances, be cautious and ready to confront them in order to protect the safety and security of our dear country," the emir said.

He emphasized the importance of national unity in protecting the country during "this turbulent time."

Sheikh Sabah said Kuwait would stand up against anyone who tries to stir up internal strife in his country.

He also praise the role of the GCC in overcoming regional challenges.

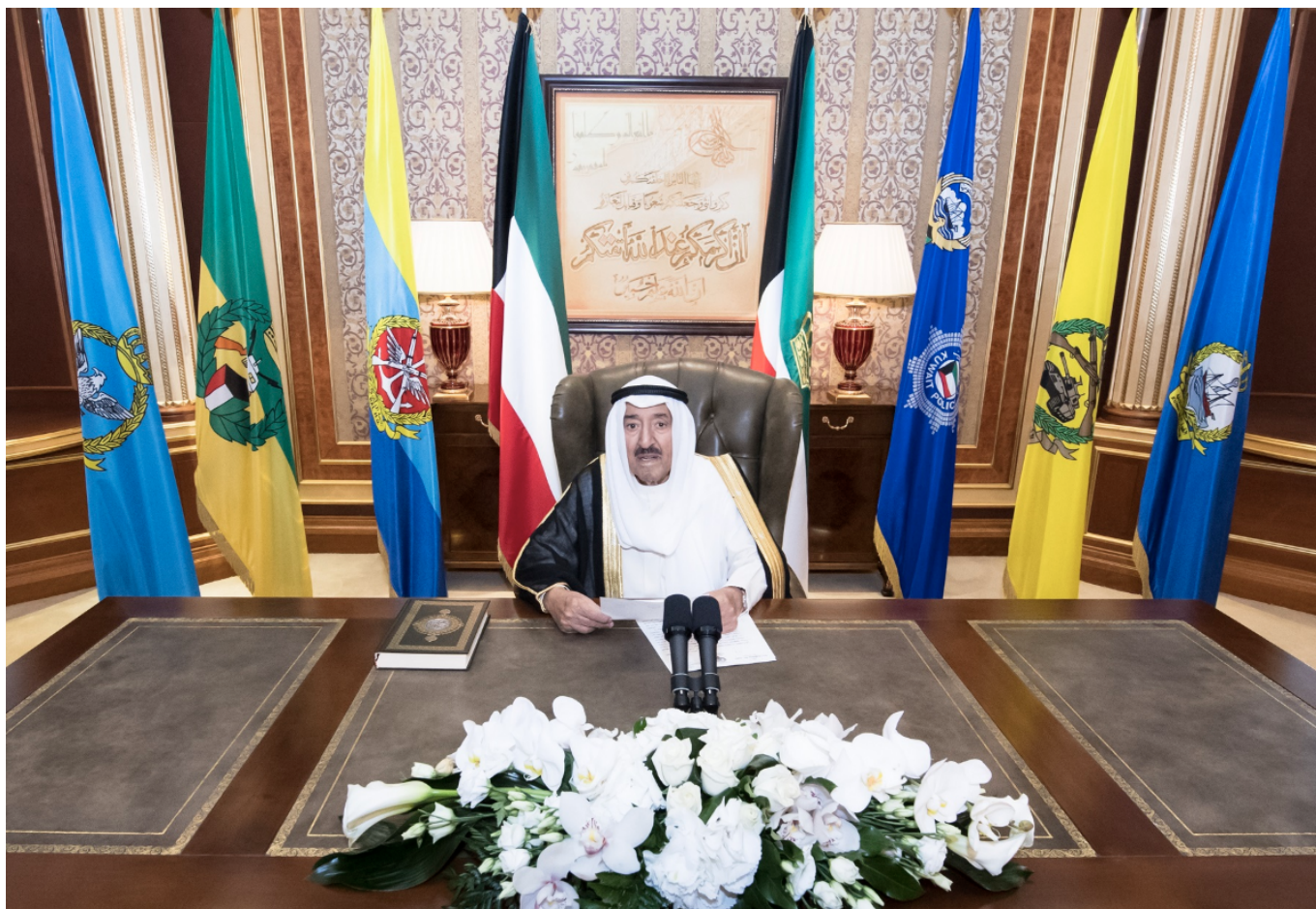
"We know that sticking to our Gulf community and maintaining the privileges we have achieved within the GCC framework is the security that enables us to face such dangers and challenges," he added.

Sheikh Sabah is expected to attend a GCC summit convened by King Salman in Saudi Arabia this week.

The emir also called on the media to play their role consciously and responsibly and denounced the misuse of social media to spread rumors and hatred.

He also highlighted the government's efforts to empower youth and increase their contributions to the state building and society development.

He reiterated that the youth are the true wealth of the nation, and that they have both his attention and that of the government.



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[Iran must stop supporting militias for peace offer to be taken seriously: Expert](#)

Author:

Sun, 2019-05-26 23:42

JEDDAH: Iran needs to dismantle its proxies and end its interventions in Arab affairs before seeking to normalize relations with its Gulf neighbors, a political expert told Arab News on Sunday.

“The Gulf countries have been calling for normal relations with their neighbors for years, but their calls have fallen on deaf ears on the Iranian side,” Hamdan Al-Shehri, a political analyst and international relations scholar, said.

Accusing Tehran of "playing games," Al-Shehri described Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif's suggestion that Iran wanted to improve relations with its Gulf neighbors as worthless "as long as it continues meddling in the affairs of other countries, and fails to halt its evil militias from sabotaging and destabilizing regional security."

Iran has for long pursued a policy of outsourcing its meddling to external militias, which indirectly supports, such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Houthis in Yemen.

Zarif, who is on a two-day visit to Iraq, told a joint news conference in Baghdad with his Iraqi counterpart Mohammed Al-Hakim that Iran wants to build balanced relations with its Gulf Arab neighbors and had proposed signing a non-aggression pact with them.

However, Al-Shehri said that Tehran needs to address three key issues – its nuclear program; its terrorist militias, which have been spreading chaos in the Gulf region and beyond; and its ballistic missile program – before making any such proposals.

"The question is, would Iran be ready to give up all three files? If they want their neighbors to accept them and normalize relations with them, they have to be honest and stop playing games," he said.

Al-Shehri described Zarif's regional tour as an attempt to rally support and send a false message that Iran has friends and allies who would stand by them in their crisis with the US.

"Where were these countries when Iran's terrorist proxies in Yemen, the Houthi militias, launched missiles and drones attacking the holiest Islamic site in Makkah and other Saudi facilities?" Al-Shehri asked.

Zarif said Iran will defend itself against any military or economic aggression, calling on European states to do more to preserve a nuclear agreement his country signed.

"We will defend (ourselves) against any war efforts, whether it be an economic war or a military one, and we will face these efforts with strength," he said.

Strains have increased between Iran and the US following this month's sabotage attack on oil tankers in the Gulf. Washington and other regional allies have concluded that Iran is most likely behind the attacks.

Tehran has distanced itself from the bombings, but the US has sent an aircraft carrier and extra 1,500 troops to the Gulf, sparking concerns over the risk of conflict in the volatile region.



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Iran will defend itself against any aggression: foreign minister Iranian FM meets Iraqi PM as part of regional tour

[Algeria graft prosecutor refers two ex PMs to supreme court](#)

Sun, 2019-05-26 16:07

ALGIERS: An Algerian prosecutor has asked the Supreme Court to investigate two former prime ministers and eight former ministers for alleged corruption, state television reported on Sunday, citing a statement from the prosecution.

Mass protests broke out in Algeria earlier this year demanding the removal of the ruling elite and the prosecution of people demonstrators regard as corrupt.

Most of the 10 politicians named by the public prosecution served in the Cabinet just before President Abdelaziz Bouteflika resigned on April 2 after pressure from protesters and the army.

The two former prime ministers are Ahmed Ouyahia and Abdelmalek Sellal, who was also Bouteflika's election campaign manager, according to the list broadcast by state television.

The former government ministers on the list are Amara Benyounes, Abdelakader Zaalane, Amar Ghoul, Karim Djoudi, Abdessalam Bouchouareb, Boudjemaa Talai, Amar Tou and Abdelkader Bouazghi.

They were in charge of sectors such as trade, transport, public works, finance and industry, transport, high education and agriculture.

The legal action came as Algeria's Constitutional Council said two candidates had registered for the July 4 presidential election.

FASTFACT

The two former prime ministers are Ahmed Ouyahia and Abdelmalek Sellal, who was also Bouteflika's election campaign manager, according to the list broadcast by state television.

The deadline for registration passed at midnight on Saturday.

The Constitutional Council said in a statement that it had received the files of two candidates, Abdelhakim Hamadi and Hamid Touahri, both unknown figures. No major party has nominated a candidate.

The poll is strongly opposed by protesters who reject any vote held under authorities they say are tarnished by corruption from the rule of Bouteflika.

Army chief of staff Lt. Gen. Ahmed Gaed Salah has said major corruption cases would be pursued to try to calm the protests which started on Feb.22.

Bouteflika's youngest brother, Said, and two former intelligence chiefs have been placed in custody by a military judge for "harming the army's authority and plotting against state authority."

At least five prominent businessmen have also been detained pending trial over involvement in corruption cases.

Protesters also want the resignation of interim president Abdelkader Bensalah and Prime Minister Nouredine Beoui, who are considered as part of the ruling elite that has run the country since independence from France in 1962.



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Tens of thousands march to demand change in Algeria