

Bids to annul Erdogan's 2018 election victory rejected

Author:

Mon, 2019-05-13 23:40

ISTANBUL: Turkey's High Election Board (YSK) has rejected bids by opposition parties to annul all votes in the Istanbul local elections, as well as last year's nationwide elections, broadcaster NTV said on Monday.

The YSK last week ordered a re-run of the Istanbul mayoral election, citing irregularities in the appointment of polling station officials after appeals by President Tayyip Erdogan's AK Party (AKP), but did not cancel votes for district administrators, mayors, and municipal councils.

The main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) and the İyi (Good) Party argued that if the mayoral vote – which the CHP won – was canceled then all the other votes in Istanbul, as well as Erdogan's victory in a presidential election last year, should also be annulled because the same flaws took place in those elections.

After weeks of appeals by the AKP and its nationalist MHP ally, the election board ruled last week for a re-run of the Istanbul mayoral election which the CHP's Ekrem Imamoglu won by a narrow margin.

It was the first time in 25 years that the AKP or its predecessors had failed to win control of Istanbul, Turkey's largest city with a budget of close to \$4 billion. Erdogan launched his own political career as Istanbul mayor.



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Turkey's Erdogan calls for Istanbul vote to be re-run
Russia's Putin, Turkey's Erdogan call for Libya cease-fire during telephone call

[Daesh remnants wage hidden war of raids, killings](#)

Author:

Mon, 2019-05-13 22:33

BADOUSH, IRAQ: It was a chilly January evening, and Khadija Abd and her family had just finished supper at their farm when the two men with guns burst into the room.

One wore civilian clothes, the other an army uniform. They said they were from the Iraqi army's 20th Division, which controls the northern Iraqi town of Badoush. In fact, they were Daesh group militants who had come down from the surrounding mountains into Badoush with one thing on their mind: Revenge.

Around 13 more gunmen were waiting outside. The terrorists pulled Khadija's husband and his two brothers into the yard and shot them dead, leaving them in a pool of blood – punishment for providing information to the Iraqi military.

“How can we live after this?” Khadija said. The three brothers were the providers for the entire family. “They left their children, their livestock, their wives, and their elderly father who doesn't know what to do now.”

A year and a half after Daesh was declared defeated in Iraq, the militants still evoke fear in the lands of their former so-called caliphate across northern Iraq.

The terrorists, hiding in caves and mountains, emerge at night to carry out kidnappings, killings and roadside ambushes, aimed at intimidating locals, silencing informants and restoring the extortion rackets that financed Daesh's rise to power six years ago.

It is part of a hidden but relentless fight between the group's remnants waging an insurgency and security forces trying to stamp them out, relying on intelligence operations, raids and searches for sleeper cells among the population.

The militants' ranks number between 5,000 and 7,000 around Iraq, according to an Iraqi intelligence official.

"Although the territory once held by the so-called caliphate is fully liberated, Daesh fighters still exhibit their intention to exert influence and stage a comeback," said Maj. Gen. Chad Franks, deputy commander-operations and intelligence for the US-led coalition.

In towns around the north, Iraqi soldiers knock on doors in the middle of the night, looking for suspects, based on intelligence tips or suspicious movements. They search houses and pull people away for questioning.

In February, Human Rights Watch accused authorities of torturing suspects to extract confessions of belonging to Daesh, an accusation the Interior Ministry has denied. Detainees are pushed by the thousands into what critics call sham trials, with swift verdicts – almost always guilty – based on almost no evidence beyond confessions or unaccountable informants' testimony. The legacy of guilt weighs heavily especially on women and children, who face crushing discrimination because of male relatives seen as supporting Daesh.

AP journalists embedded with a battalion of the 20th Division last month and witnessed several of its raids at Badoush.

Badoush, on the Tigris River just outside the city of Mosul, is a key battleground because it was once one of the most diehard Daesh strongholds.

In the summer of 2014, it was a launching pad for the militants' blitz that overran Mosul and much of northern Iraq. Daesh built a strong financial base by extorting money from the owners of Badoush's many industrial facilities. Security officials estimate two-thirds of its population – which numbered around 25,000 before the war – were at one point members or supporters of the group.

Now the population is divided. Residents who suffered at the hands of Daesh or lost loved ones to the group are suspicious of neighbors they believe still support the militants. Within families, some members belonged to the group and others opposed it.

The Badoush area alone has seen 20 terror attacks, from bombings to targeted killings, since it was retaken from the militants in March 2017, according to the Kurdish Security Council. The militants brag about the attacks in videos that show fighters storming houses and killing purported "apostates" and spies.



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Daesh claims responsibility for Iraq blast that killed 80over 500 foreign
Daesh men 'convicted' in Iraq

[Boat with 8 Syrians capsizes off Lebanese coast; 5 missing](#)

Author:

Associated Press

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Mon, 2019-05-13 10:09

BEIRUT: Lebanon's state-run National News Agency says a fishing boat that was illegally carrying eight Syrian refugees to the Mediterranean island of Cyprus has capsized.

The report says the incident occurred on Monday off the northern Lebanese town of Chekka. It says that Lebanon's navy detained three of the Syrians when they returned to the coast and that the other five are still missing.

Lebanon is host to the highest number of refugees per capita in the world, with about 1 million Syrians – or nearly a quarter of the small Arab country's population.

In September, a child drowned after a boat carrying 39 migrants hoping to reach Cyprus capsized off the northern Lebanese coast.



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Aid groups suspend aid to Syria's embattled northwest
The arts return to northern Syria's former militant bastion

[Libyan coast guard rescues nearly 150 Europe-bound migrants](#)

Author:

Sun, 2019-05-12 23:26

CAIRO: Libya's coast guard says it has rescued nearly 150 Europe-bound migrants, including women and children, off the country's Mediterranean

coast.

Spokesman Ayoub Gassim said Sunday that a rubber boat carrying 96 migrants, including 16 women and four children, was intercepted a day earlier off the city of Zawiya, 50 km west of Tripoli.

Gassim said another boat carrying 51 migrants was intercepted Saturday off the town of Khoms, some 120 km east of Tripoli.

He said the migrants were given humanitarian and medical aid, then taken to refugee camps.

Libya became a major conduit for African migrants and refugees fleeing to Europe after the 2011 uprising that ousted Muammar Qaddafi.

Libyan authorities have stepped up efforts to stem the flow of migrants, with European assistance.

In another development, Spanish authorities said 52 African migrants forced their way into Spain's North African enclave of Melilla from Morocco Sunday by climbing over a towering border fence.

About 100 migrants tried to storm the barbed wire fence at dawn but Spanish and Moroccan security force prevented "around half" from entering Melilla, Spain interior ministry in Melilla said in a statement.

One migrant was taken to a medical center to treat cuts he suffered scaling the fence while four Spanish police officers sustained bruises, it added.

Police arrested one of the migrants for assaulting an officer.

Video images published by local newspaper El Faro de Ceuta showed sweaters and jackets stuck to the razor wire that tops the border fence, left behind by the migrants.

The 52 who managed to enter Melilla were taken to a temporary migrant accommodation center where they were given new clothes.

It was the biggest assault on the border between Melilla and Morocco since October 2018, when some 300 migrants stormed the fence. About 200 migrants managed to get into Melilla that time and one died of a suspected heart attack in the attempt.

Spain's two North African enclaves, Melilla and Ceuta, have the EU's only land borders with Africa.

They are often used as entry points into Europe for African migrants, who either climb over their border fences or try to swim along the coast.



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Libya rescues over 200 Europe-bound migrants off coast
Battle for Libya's Tripoli gives chance to Daesh

[Syria says insurgent shelling kills 6 civilians in northwest](#)

Author:

Sun, 2019-05-12 23:14

DAMASCUS: Fighters fired rockets into a regime-held town in northwestern Syria on Sunday, killing six people, including five children who were playing near a monastery and wounding several others, state media said.

State TV said the shelling just before noon caused widespread material damage to the town of Suqailabiyah. It said the dead also included a 35-year-old woman.

State news agency SANA said regime troops had retaliated by firing shells toward rebels' positions on the southern edge of Idlib province, the last major opposition stronghold in the country.

Al-Qaeda-linked Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham, or HTS, is the main insurgent group in the area.

Priest Maher Haddad told The Associated Press by telephone from Suqailabiyah that a rocket struck near a group of children, instantly killing five and wounding others. He said the woman was killed in a nearby street by a separate rocket.

"The kids went out to play after some days of calm," Haddad said, since the town had not targeted who have been pushed further north by the Syrian army.

The UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitor, also reported that six people were killed, adding that eight others, including six children were wounded.

The Observatory said regime shelling of an opposition-held village to the north killed one person and wounded others.

The rebel enclave has been rocked by a wave of violence since April 30, killing and wounding dozens while forcing some 150,000 people to flee their homes in rebel-held areas.

Syrian troops have been on the offensive under the cover of airstrikes for days, capturing several strategic locations and villages. Sunday's deaths are another blow to a cease-fire reached in September between Russia and Turkey.

Idlib is home to some 3 million people, many of them displaced from other parts of the country

The truce avoided a regime offensive on Idlib.

Turkey's official Anadolu news agency on Sunday reported Turkish military deployments in southeastern Kilis province and southern Hatay province, both bordering Syria. The fresh commando and armored vehicle deployments were to reinforce border units, according to the agency.

The Observatory said that since the latest wave of violence began late last month 297 people have been killed.



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Aid groups suspend aid to Syria's embattled northwest UN council members warn of catastrophe in Syria's Idlib