

Turkey's Erdogan vows to confront opponents inside party after vote loss

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Sat, 2019-04-27 11:30

ISTANBUL: Turkey's President Tayyip Erdogan vowed on Saturday to confront opponents inside his own party weeks after he suffered shock election defeats in the capital Ankara and commercial hub Istanbul.

Erdogan and his supporters have up to now blamed the losses on electoral fraud by unspecified groups and launched a string of legal challenges against the results.

"While we're fighting outside, I have to say, we had people doing us wrong from the inside too," Erdogan said during a speech at an AK Party retreat, without naming any individuals.

"What is going on in which province, in which district, all that information come to us. We know it all ... For the future of this organization, we will call them to account. We're not going to carry them on our backs."

The president did not spell out what actions he would take. Authorities have suspended or sacked 150,000 civil servants and military personnel in recent years, accusing many of them of being involved in a failed 2016 military coup.

More than 77,000 people have been jailed pending trial and widespread arrests still regularly happen.

Initial results of the March 31 local election showed the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) won the mayoralty of Ankara and control of Istanbul – which AKP and its Islamist predecessors have dominate for 25 years.

Erdogan said the party would keep up its legal campaign challenging the results and calling for recounts.

"Until the last moment, we will continue our legal struggle. It is certain that there is a scam here. We have to get the case resolved, so that we can find peace," he said.

"Although we have won the districts, we will question why we lost the big cities," he added. "We need to focus on what to do and how to evaluate this process, especially in the metropolitan cities."



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Turkey's election board rejects objection for 'dismissed voters'

[Several Yemeni experts die in demining accident](#)

Sat, 2019-04-27 13:57

DUBAI: Six Yemeni demining experts died in an accident at a warehouse containing landmines in Taiz on Thursday, the King Salman Humanitarian and Aid Relief Center (KSRelief) reported.

The specialists were working on the center's MASAM project to demine Yemen, which began in June 2018.

The experts were collecting unexploded mines and mine remnants in the

warehouse when the explosion happened.

A driver from the facility received serious injuries and the storeroom was demolished.

KSRelief will release more information on the incident once it becomes available.

Echoing other organizations working in the war troubled Yemen, the center called on the UN and other international organs to have a firm stand against the Houthi violations in Yemen.

The militants' mines killed thousands of Yemenis. UN children's agency reported a Houthi bomb killing two children in Sanaa earlier in April.



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[King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center \(KSRelief\)](#)

Yemen army kills dozens of Houthi militia Saudi Arabia, the UAE, UK and US hold Yemen talks in London

Israel to free two prisoners in return for soldier's remains

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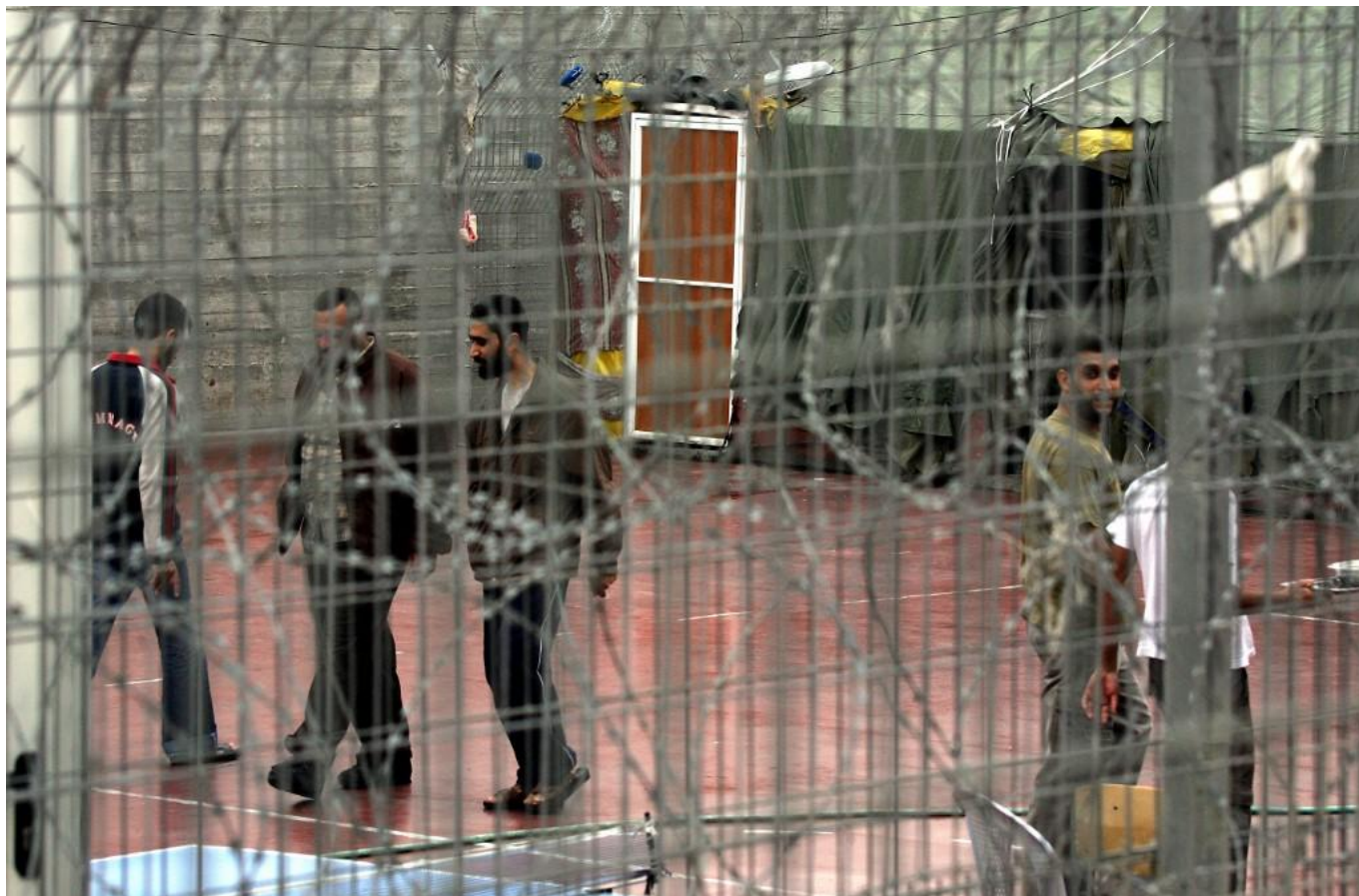
JERUSALEM: Israel will release two prisoners in return for the remains of an Israeli soldier missing since 1982 which were recovered by Russian special forces in Syria, an Israeli official said.

Russia this month handed over the remains and personal effects of Zachary Baumel, who was 21 when he was declared missing in action along with two other soldiers in the Battle of Sultan Yacoub during Israel's invasion of Lebanon.

"Israel has decided to release two prisoners as a goodwill gesture," the Israeli official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said on Saturday. The official did not provide details about the identity of the prisoners and said that the decision to release them was made after Baumel's remains were recovered.

The official was responding to reports by Israeli media that said the prisoners were Syrian. There was no immediate comment from Syrian or Russian authorities.

A spokesman for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declined to comment.



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Jordan condemns Israeli trespassing at Al-Aqsa Mosque
UN force says third tunnel crossed Lebanon-Israel border

[No progress in talks on Syrian constitutional committee](#)

Author:

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Fri, 2019-04-26 12:54

JEDDAH: Two-day talks on Syria concluded on Friday in Astana, Kazakhstan, without notable progress on forming a constitutional committee to drive a political settlement in the war-torn country.

A joint statement by the three cosponsors – Iran, Russia and Turkey – said the meeting had broached the issue of the constitutional committee with the UN special envoy for Syria, Geir Pedersen. Further talks in Geneva would be needed, it added.

Syrian opposition spokesman Yahya Al-Aridi blamed the Assad regime for the stalemate in the talks, telling Arab News: “It doesn’t want a political solution.”

He said: “The regime in particular is obstructing the formation of the constitutional committee in accordance with UN resolution 2254. The regime gets support from Iran in creating hurdles.”

He added: “Russia seems to consider itself a substitute to the UN, when in fact the UN should be the one in charge and the facilitator of negotiations and implementing (resolution) 2254.”

Al-Aridi said the Astana process had a two-fold goal from the start. “The military aspect ... was aborted into something called de-escalation zones, but the regime and its supporters turned them into escalation zones,” he added.

“The humanitarian aspect was to establish confidence-building measures, but the regime didn’t do that either.”

Al-Aridi said the issue of the release of prisoners from the regime’s jails was insisted upon in every Astana round, but the regime failed to act.

“Russia said it tried over 300 kinds of weapons on Syrian soil, which means it’s very much for military action, but in the media they portray themselves as favoring a political solution,” he added. “If there’s any terrorism that needs to be fought, it’s the state terrorism of the regime.”

He said “cunning” Iran, which has “a vicious plan for the region,” is out to destroy the Syrian social fabric with its militias.

Bahia Mardini, a human rights campaigner and founder of Syrian House, an organization dedicated to helping Syrians in the UK, told Arab News: “It’s clear that there’s disagreement between the guarantor countries (Iran, Russia and Turkey) over Syria, and that the Russian-American conflict over Syria is still there.”

She urged the international community “to find a real solution that will consolidate democracy and establish a future for Syria on the basis of international resolutions.”

She added: “We call for an end to the suffering of the Syrians ... and their participation in building and redrawing the future through a political solution that will lead to the implementation of (resolution) 2254, all relevant international resolutions and the Geneva Declaration to restore the unity of Syrian soil and heal wounds.”



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More than 7,000 Syrians quit camp near Jordan border
Syria negotiators reach Kazakhstan for peace talks

[60 Palestinians hurt in Gaza border clashes](#)

Author:

AFP

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Fri, 2019-04-26 17:45

GAZA CITY, Palestinian Territories: At least 60 Palestinians were injured during clashes Friday along Gaza's border, including 36 shot and wounded by Israeli fire, the health ministry in the coastal enclave said.

“60 people were injured by (Israeli) occupation forces” and of these 36 were shot by live fire, ministry spokesman Ashraf Al-Qudra told AFP.

An Israeli army spokeswoman said approximately 7,000 “rioters and demonstrators” had gathered in multiple spots along the heavily-fortified border.

Demonstrators “hurled rocks and a number of explosive devices” toward troops, she said, with forces responding in “accordance with standard procedures.” Palestinians in Gaza have taken part in often violent demonstrations along the Israeli border fence for more than a year, calling on the Jewish state to end its blockade of the territory.

At least 265 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire since the demonstrations began in March 2018, the majority during the border clashes. Two Israeli soldiers have been killed.

Israel accuses Gaza’s rulers Hamas of orchestrating the protests and using them as cover for attacks.



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Israeli tank, aircraft hit Gaza after cross-border shots: army
Palestinian teen killed by Israeli fire in border clashes: Gaza ministry