

Former Turkish PM Davutoglu sharply criticizes Erdogan's AK Party

Author:

Mon, 2019-04-22 21:01

ANKARA: A former prime minister and close ally of President Tayyip Erdogan strongly criticized the ruling AK Party on Monday, blaming policy changes and an alliance with nationalists for its poor performance in Turkey's local elections last month.

In his first major public challenge to Erdogan since leaving office three years ago, Ahmet Davutoglu, an AKP member, slammed the party's economic policies, media restrictions and the damage he said it had done to the separation of powers and to Turkey's institutions.

Davutoglu, a high profile figure in the party, served as prime minister between 2014 and 2016 before falling out with Erdogan, who has ruled Turkey with his AKP for 16 years.

In a serious blow to Erdogan, the AKP lost control of the capital Ankara and Turkey's largest city Istanbul in the March 31 elections. The AKP and its Islamist predecessors had governed the two cities for 25 years.

"The election results show that alliance politics have caused harm to our party, both in terms of voter levels and the party's identity," Davutoglu said in a 15-page statement.

The AKP and the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) formed an alliance before presidential and parliamentary elections in June last year in which Erdogan won the executive presidency but saw the level of support for his party fall.

"Scaring global investors"

There were no signs of a lira reaction to Davutoglu's statement. The currency had weakened in early trade and stood at 5.8350 against the dollar, from a close of 5.8170 on Friday.

Davutoglu said the party's reformist, liberal ethos had been replaced in recent years by a more statist, security-based approach that was driven by concerns about preserving the status quo.

He also said recent economic policy decisions showed a move away from free market principles and that "scaring global investors necessary to the development of the country is a dead-end."

The Turkish economy slipped into recession in the last quarter of 2018 after a currency crisis which has wiped 35 percent off the value of the lira since the start of last year.

"The main reason for the economic crisis is an administration crisis. Trust in the administration vanishes if economic policy decisions are far from reality," Davutoglu said.

He also warned against cronyism in public administration and said that recruitment should be transparent and based on competence and qualifications, not on personal connections.

In recent years there has been repeated media speculation that prominent AKP politicians might break away to establish a new political party, but that has not happened and Davutoglu made no mention of such a prospect.

Instead, he stressed the need for reform within: "I call on our party's executives and relevant bodies to assess all these subjects and our future vision sensibly and with cool heads."



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Turkey's opposition leader attacked at soldier's funeral
Turkey says understands NATO concerns over Russian missile deal

[Israeli troops accused of shooting handcuffed Palestinian](#)

Author:

Mon, 2019-04-22 20:54

BEIT JALA, West Bank: A hospitalized Palestinian teen said Monday he was shot in his thighs by Israeli soldiers while he was handcuffed and blindfolded – the latest in what a leading rights group portrayed as a series of unjustified shootings of Palestinians by Israeli soldiers.

The military said it was investigating last week's incident, which it said took place as Palestinian youths were throwing stones at Israeli soldiers. Osama Hajjahjeh, 16, said he was trying to run from soldiers when he was shot Thursday. He said the incident began after a funeral for a school teacher in

his village of Tekoa, who had been hit by a car driven by an Israeli while walking at a busy intersection.

Hajjahjeh said school was let out early for students to attend the funeral. After the burial, he said he was tackled by a soldier who jumped out of an olive grove and forced him to the ground. He said his hands were cuffed and his eyes covered with a cloth blindfold.

After the arrest, he said he could hear Palestinian youths shouting at the soldiers, while soldiers yelled back in Arabic and Hebrew.

"I got confused" and stood up, he said. "Immediately, I was shot in my right leg. Then I tried to run, and I was shot in my left leg and fell on the ground," he said, speaking from his hospital bed in the West Bank town of Beit Jala south of Jerusalem. Doctors said he is in stable condition.

A photo captured by a local photographer shows soldiers appearing to pursue a fleeing Hajjahjeh with his eyes covered and hands tied behind his back.

The shooting set off a chaotic scene. Soldiers and Palestinians shouted at each other as the teen lay on the ground. One soldier took off the teen's belt and used it as a tourniquet to stop the bleeding.

Amateur video shows a masked soldier screaming and pointing a pistol at a group of anguished Palestinians as the teen lies on the ground. Later, a soldier scuffles with residents as another soldier fires into the air. A soldier and two Palestinian men then carry away the teen to medical care.

In a statement, the military said the teen had been arrested after participating in "massive stone throwing" at Israeli forces.

"The detainee was held at a nearby spot and began running away from the force. The soldiers chased him, during which they fired toward his lower abdomen," it said.

The statement did not say anything about him being blindfolded or cuffed, but said the military offered medical treatment after the shooting and was investigating the event.

Hajjahjeh's father, Ali, said he was thankful a soldier gave his son medical care. But he said his son never should have been shot to begin with.

"Only a sick person would shoot a blindfolded boy," he said.

The Israeli human rights group B'Tselem said the incident was the latest in a series of what it called unjustified shootings on Palestinian teens and young men. It says four Palestinians in their late teens or early twenties have been killed in the West Bank since early March.

The army has challenged the Palestinian witness accounts, but also frequently announces investigations into disputed cases.

B'Tselem has long criticized military investigations, saying they rarely result in punishments and alleging they're used to whitewash abuses by troops.

"Like the previous four cases we investigated, this is an example of Israel's reckless use of lethal fire, and the fact that the human lives of Palestinians count very little in the eyes of the army," said Roy Yellin, a spokesman for the group.



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Arab League pledges \$100 million to Palestinians, rejects Trump's 'deal'
Dozens of Palestinians wounded in Israel border clashes

[Iraq says more than \\$60 mn stolen from Mosul after governor sacked](#)

Author:

AFP

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Mon, 2019-04-22 14:53

BAGHDAD: More than \$60 million dollars in public funds were embezzled by Mosul officials close to the province's sacked governor in the wake of last month's ferry sinking, Iraqi officials said Monday. Iraq's anti-corruption Integrity Commission said officials from the Nineveh province, of which Mosul is the capital, had embezzled a total of \$64 million in public funds. They included nearly \$40 million set aside to rebuild the city, which was ravaged by three years of Daesh group rule followed by months of fierce

fighting to oust the jihadists.

The money was stolen in the aftermath of a tragic ferry sinking in March that left more than 100 people dead and prompted parliament to unanimously fire governor Nawfel Akoub, who has since gone on the run.

In its Monday statement, the Integrity Commission said officials “close to Akoub” had stolen the funds but did not accuse him personally.

It said 14 officials were detained earlier this month after its probe found that “cheques and wire transfers of public funds had been made out to the personal accounts of senior officials.”

Of the missing money, “just six million dollars” were recovered by the government, a commission member told AFP.

Parliament had been investigating accusations of profound corruption among Nineveh officials, and their results came to light amid outrage over the Mother’s Day ferry sinking.

Some officials have been arrested but Akoub remains at large, thought to be hiding out in Irbil, the capital of Iraq’s Kurdish region.

Graft is endemic across Iraq, which ranks among the world’s worst offenders in Transparency International’s annual Corruption Perceptions Index.

Since 2004, a year after the US-led invasion that ousted Saddam Hussein, a total of \$228 billion has vanished into the pockets of shady politicians and businessmen, according to parliament.



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Women's key role in the Sudan protests that toppled Omar Al-Bashir

Sun, 2019-04-21 20:47

DUBAI: It began with protests over the price of bread. But it was an image of Alaa Salah, a young woman dressed in white, standing on a car with her hand pointing up to the sky, that captured the world's attention as the protests led to the toppling of Omar Al-Bashir.

For some women, the revolution was not just about bread – it was about regaining a feeling of safety inside their homes and fighting a regime that oppressed women.

Ihsan Abdulaziz, speaking from her Khartoum home, remembered the knock at her door. It was members of the security forces. They had come to arrest her.

"They didn't even give me time to pack. I put on my abaya and veil and left with them," she told Arab News, recalling the moment she was snatched away from her family.

Abdulaziz, a leader of the new Sudanese women's movement, was arrested on Jan. 5, 2019. She was held for 58 days without charge or explanation.

She described the conditions of Omdurman women's prison.

"The rooms were overcrowded. One of the cells, meant for solitary confinement, had 5 people inside it."

Abdulaziz said they tried to fit two other women into the room, one of whom was believed to be over 75.

The female guards singled out detainees, treating them disrespectfully and delaying the delivery of medicine.

"Our prison was still better than others," Abdulaziz added.

Abdulaziz, who had been detained on three previous occasions, learned that security forces beat up her son so severely that both his hands were in casts. "Even our kids, those of activists, are targeted."

The associate director of Human Rights Watch's Africa division, Jehanne Henry, said that thousands had been arrested and that women were among those being kept in custody without being charged

But the participation of Sudanese women in demonstrations is not new.

"Sudanese women have always been willing and strong to protest," Henry told Arab News.

Salah's white garment and golden earrings are inspired by the outfits that Sudanese women wore during revolutions in the 1960s and 1980s.

Women were active in other revolutions too, such as those in 2011 and 2013.

But there are more women taking to Sudan's streets now.

"These protests have a much wider base, the Sudanese Professionals Association has mobilized so many professions," Henry explained.

Women from all classes, interests, occupations and ages took to the streets this time.

"It is no longer limited to politically active women, all the women were out in the street," Abdulaziz said.

Some would even estimate that almost 60 percent of the protesters were women, she added.

A Sudanese architecture graduate, who is living in the UAE, said most of her female friends and relatives participated in the demonstrations and sit-ins.

"Even my older aunts and grandmother took part in the protests, even those who were not politically engaged," Ebaa Elghali told Arab News.

Women were the most disadvantaged group under Bashir's regime which is why they were actively protesting against it, Elghali added.

Human Rights Watch said that public morality laws, implemented by Bashir, targeted women and curtailed their basic freedoms.

In 2009 Sudanese women started a movement as a protest against these laws.

"They are (the laws) dedicated to control the clothes of Sudanese women, many faced unjust treatment because of it," Sudanese activist Tahani Abbas told Arab News.

"Sometimes they say the clothes are indecent, but they never specify how. You could be fully covered and they still won't like it," Abdulaziz explained.

Although the regime claimed to follow Sharia, several Sudanese women said the government was as far removed from Islam as it could be.

Women faced various violations during the protests, such as "beatings and harassment by national security during arrests," Henry said.

Some women were starting to report incidents of sexual harassment and assault, she added.



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\$7 million cash hoard found in home of Sudan's ousted leader Omar Al-Bashir
Sudan arrests several top members of former ruling party – senior party official

[Khamenei appoints new chief commander for Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps – state TV](#)

Sun, 2019-04-21 18:49

DUBAI: Iran's top authority Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has replaced the chief commander of the elite Revolutionary Guards, state TV reported on Sunday, days after the United States designated the group a foreign terrorist organization.

The TV station did not give a reason for the change when it announced the appointment of Brig. Gen. Hossein Salami to the position.

"The Supreme Leader has appointed Salami as the new commander-in-chief of the Guards, who will replace Mohammad Ali Jafari," it said. Jafari had held the

post since September 2007.

President Donald Trump on April 8 designated the Guards a terrorist organization, in an unprecedented step that drew Iranian condemnation and raised concerns about retaliatory attacks on US forces. The designation took effect on April 15.

The Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) is in charge of Iran's ballistic missile and nuclear programs. Tehran has warned that it has missiles with a range of up to 2,000 km (1,242 miles), putting Israel and US military bases in the region within reach.



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