

# KDP nominates Nechirvan and Masrour Barzani for Iraqi Kurdistan's top posts

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BAGHDAD: Iraq's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) said on Monday it had nominated current premier Nechirvan Barzani to succeed his uncle Masoud Barzani as president of Iraqi Kurdistan, and Masoud Barzani's son Masrour as premier of the regional government.

With 45 of 111 seats, the KDP is the biggest party in the Kurdish assembly after September's regional election but 11 shy of an outright majority, and will have to govern in coalition.

Masrour Barzani is currently Iraqi Kurdistan's security chief. Both Masrour and Nechirvan have occupied senior roles within the KRG throughout the last decade.

Veteran Kurdish leader Masoud Barzani, still the head of the KDP, stepped down after 12 years as regional president in November 2017, less than a month after helming a referendum on Kurdish independence that backfired and triggered a crisis for Iraq's Kurds.

The post has remained vacant ever since. The president's powers were divided between the prime minister, Parliament and the judiciary in a makeshift arrangement, leaving the future of the presidency uncertain.

The semi-autonomous region does not have a formal constitution, having failed to ratify it in Parliament since it was drafted in 2009.

Any future power-sharing arrangement would require a rethinking of presidential powers, which would need to be ratified by Parliament.

"We still don't know what the presidency will look like. Will it become a ceremonial post filled by Parliament?" said Kamal Chomani, a Kurdish political analyst and nonresident fellow at the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy. "In any case, Nechirvan will be weaker than Masrour but will stay powerful enough to control the foreign relations of the KRI. It all depends on how the presidential law will be amended," he said.

Relations with the previous Iraqi administration of Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi were strained by the referendum.

But with a new Iraqi government in place, led by Adel Abdul-Mahdi, Irbil and Baghdad have in recent weeks signalled a willingness to work together.

## HIGHLIGHT

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## [Can Algeria's tough-talking PM pull his country back from the brink again?](#)

Mon, 2018-12-03 23:26

Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika named Ahmed Ouyahia, head of the Rassemblement National Democratique (RND), the second-largest party of Algeria and an ally of the National Liberation Front (FLN), as prime minister on Aug. 17, 2017.

The appointment of Ouyahia, who met Mohammed bin Salman on Monday during the Saudi crown prince's two-day visit to Algeria, followed the departure of Ouyahia's predecessor, Abdelmadjid Tebboune.

Tebboune was sacked after barely three months in office. Although the rumor

mill was busy speculating about the reasons behind the sudden change, for Ouyahia the priority was clear – putting the Algerian economy back on track and continuing the reforms to diversify the economy away from its dependence on hydrocarbon, which still accounts for more than 60 percent of government revenues and half of GDP.

A close ally of Bouteflika, Ouyahia had been the head of his office since May 2014 before being asked to take charge as prime minister for his fourth term in the position that he first occupied more than two decades ago. Though considered to be a man of the establishment, Ouyahia is also known for his radical positions and his ability to stand his ground in the management of sensitive and priority issues, with a hands-on approach towards hard work.

Ouyahia is an old hand at managing economic crises. He was named head of the Liamine Zeroual government in 1995, when the country was faced with one of the harshest economic crises in its history. Ouyahia not only pulled Algeria back from the brink of bankruptcy, but also implemented a strict structural reform plan imposed by the International Monetary Fund as a condition of rescheduling the large external debt of Algeria.

## *Ahmed Ouyahia's five-year plan*

### Algerian prime minister's to-do list



In the three years that he stayed on as prime minister, Ouyahia initiated several other austerity measures, including a cut in subsidies on basic commodities, which were not popular but necessary for preventing an economic meltdown. The measures did go a long way to boost Algeria's fragile treasury. He went on to serve as the prime minister until 1998.

Almost five years later, in 2003, he was back as PM and again faced tough economic decisions. In 2006, he cracked down on striking teachers and refused to discuss any salary increase, boosting his image as the man to go to for handling tough situations.

So when his predecessor, Tebboune, was sacked, the Algerian president turned again to his ally to restore the national economy and bring a sense of order to the country. "He's the right man to handle the situation the country is going through right now. Algeria does not need a complacent head of government, but rather a man who tries to save Algeria vis a vis its economic and security situation. The danger facing the country, in connection with the new world order that is emerging, requires a leader of his stature and who can execute the program that is needed for restoring calm in the economy and the society," said Salima Benhouhou, a housewife and a mother, soon after Ouyahia's appointment as prime minister.

When he took charge, Ouyahia acknowledged the challenges following a sharp decline in the country's revenues and foreign exchange reserves, which had slumped from nearly \$200 billion. The regional security situation, with the civil war in neighboring Libya and civic unrest in Tunisia, also weighed heavily on Algeria. "I hope to live up to this mission and the confidence that the president of the republic has given me to serve the Algerian people," Ouyahia declared soon after his swearing-in ceremony.

Ouyahia lost no time in beginning to clean up the economy. He brought in presidential aides to occupy key ministries such as industry, trade and housing, with the objective of rapid implementation of his economic program. Within a week of taking charge, he held several meetings with directors of public institutions to ensure that the entire government machinery moved in the same direction together.

Ouyahia's priorities include diversification of the national economy, facilitating the administrative processes to make doing business in Algeria easier as well as reforms in the education, higher education and health-care sectors. His roadmap also included mobilization of unconventional domestic financing and concrete actions by the government to promote growth in sectors

such as agriculture, industry and tourism.

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## HIGHLIGHTS

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He has identified challenges as a sharp decline in the country's revenues and foreign exchange reserves, which had slumped from nearly \$200 billion, as well as the regional security situation, with the civil war in neighboring Libya and civic unrest in Tunisia.

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The prime minister has presented a five-year plan to tackle declining forex reserves, rising unemployment and private-sector bankruptcies.

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His plan aims to balance the budget by 2022 and reverse a deficit that ballooned with the fall in global crude oil prices that led to the country's forex reserves slumping from about \$178 billion to about \$100 billion.

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Ouyahia has announced the launch of the biggest industrial project in the country for more than a decade with the development of a \$6 billion phosphate complex in the eastern region of Algeria.

But the government was also reassuring Algerians that its moves were aimed at rationalizing public policy on social justice and national unity. "The government and its social and economic partners must set an example for our people through solidarity, mobilization and unification of ranks so that our

country can invest constructively in the different capacities and potentialities of its children,’’ Bouteflika said recently.

For preparing the new monetary policy and the means for financing of the national economy, the prime minister called a meeting of the heads of public banks. In keeping with the wishes of the president and in view of the dramatic experience that Algeria had with out-of-control external debt in 1980s, Ouyahia also turned his back on using international debt markets to raise finances to help tide over budget and current account deficits.

Within days of taking over, Ouyahia presented a detailed plan for a recalibration of the Algerian economy by tackling declining forex reserves, rising unemployment and private-sector bankruptcies. It included prioritizing domestic production over imports, special incentives for investors and widespread development of economic zones with tax breaks for companies situated there.

Ouyahia’s plan included direct borrowing from the Algerian Central Bank to plug the bulging budgetary deficit, even as the country’s oil revenues have collapsed by nearly 40 percent since the highs of 2016. His five-year plan aims to balance the budget by 2022 and reverse a deficit that ballooned with the fall in global crude oil prices that also led to the country’s forex reserves slumping from about \$178 billion to about \$100 billion.

With domestic debt currently about 20 percent of gross domestic product, Algeria has room to take on additional borrowing, the IMF has said. The government also brought in a regime of strict import controls, thus managing to cut the current account deficit, a key factor in controlling inflation, stabilizing the currency and improving the economic stability of the country.

And Ouyahia continues his efforts to diversify the Algerian economy. Earlier this week, he announced the launch of the biggest industrial project in the country for more than a decade with the development of the phosphate complex in the eastern region of Algeria. The project is the outcome of a tripartite agreement between the state-owned Sonatrach, Algerian business group Asmidal-Manal and the Chinese investment firm Citic.

With an investment of more than \$6 billion, besides fertilizers and other derivatives of phosphate, the complex will produce natural gas and is expected to generate non-hydrocarbon revenues of more than \$2 billion a year by that period. It will also create 3,000 direct and more than 14,000 indirect jobs, an important factor in a country with a large youth population.

With roughly 30 percent of the Algerian population aged between 15 and 29, this group also represents 72 percent of the unemployed, making Ouyahia’s plans look all the more vital for Algeria’s future.



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Trade, investment top Saudi-Algerian forum agenda

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## [Egyptian court orders release of prominent blogger – judicial source](#)

Author:

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Mon, 2018-12-03 17:07

CAIRO: An Egyptian criminal court has ordered the conditional release of prominent blogger and journalist Wael Abbas, a judicial source said on Monday, rejecting an appeal by state security prosecutors to keep him in detention.

Abbas, an award-winning journalist and rights activist, was arrested in March on charges including involvement with an illegal organization and publishing false news.

The source said the precise conditions of his release were not yet known but could include him not being allowed to leave home without police permission, subjecting himself to police supervision and presenting himself every 45 days in court.

“The question is why was he arrested in the first place? He is a prisoner because of his opinions and he has lost seven months of his life,” his lawyer Gamal Eid said.

Eid said his client denied the charges presented by state security prosecutors.

Abbas first became known in activist circles after posting videos showing police brutality. One such video, published in 2006, caused such uproar that it prompted an investigation resulting in a rare conviction of two policemen.



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## [Saudi Arabia's crown prince arrives in Algeria as part of Arab tour](#)

Author:

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Mon, 2018-12-03 01:46



ALGIERS: Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman arrived in Algiers on Sunday for a two-day official visit to Algeria, heading a high-ranking delegation. Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia received the prince at the airport, where an official reception ceremony was held. After that the prime minister accompanied him to his residence.

Algerian-Saudi investments and trade relations, especially in the oil and petrochemical sectors, will be discussed during the two-day visit, the Saudi Press Agency said.

The crown prince arrived in Algeria from Mauritania, where he resumed a tour of Arab countries after attending the G20 summit in Argentina.

In the Mauritanian capital Nouakchott early Sunday, he was welcomed by President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz. The crown prince conveyed King Salman's greetings to the Mauritanian leader, SPA said.

In an extended meeting, they discussed bilateral relations and ways to further development opportunities in the region. Saudi Arabia and Mauritania signed three agreements, and the crown prince announced a directive by the monarch to establish the King Salman Hospital in Nouakchott with a capacity of 300 beds. Dr. Hazza Al-Mutairi, Saudi ambassador to Mauritania, said the crown prince's visit came as a result of the distinguished and strengthening relations between the two countries, which have many areas of mutual interest.

"The Saudi-Mauritanian relations have witnessed a steady growth, encompassing all political, economic, cultural and other fields of bilateral cooperation," he said in a statement to SPA.

Saudi Arabia has been a major provider of economic assistance to Mauritania since the days of King Faisal, who visited the North African country in 1972, 12 years after it gained independence from France.

At last week's G20 Summit in the Argentinian capital Buenos Aires, the crown prince, who headed the Saudi delegation, was greeted by world leaders including Russian President Vladimir Putin, French President Emmanuel Macron, Chinese President Xi Jinping and British Prime Minister Theresa May.

On the way to Argentina, the crown prince stopped in Tunis after visiting Cairo, which was his sixth trip to Egypt and his second as crown prince. He and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi held talks on strengthening bilateral relations and cooperation.

Before that, the crown prince visited Bahrain, where he was received by King Hamad and held talks with Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad.

As part of efforts to expand Saudi-Bahraini cooperation, he inaugurated a pipeline through which 220,000 barrels of oil are expected to flow daily.

The UAE was the crown prince's first stop. In Abu Dhabi, he held talks with UAE leaders on a number of issues, including Middle East security threats and their impact on regional stability.

Saudi Arabia "is assuming a pivotal role in efficiently confronting the challenges besetting the region, and is spearheading efforts aimed at ensuring security, stability and development for the region's peoples, not to mention its good offices to achieve peace and safety across different parts of the world," said Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan.







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## [UAE marks 47th anniversary of 'dream that became reality'](#)

Author:

Mon, 2018-12-03 01:04

DUBAI: UAE leaders and citizens celebrated the birth of their country as a nation on Sunday on the 47th anniversary of a union that was formed between seven emirates.

UAE President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed hailed the establishment of the country in 1971 as a "dream" that became a "bright reality" for the citizens, the nation and the world.

In a statement to 'Nation Shield', the UAE Armed Forces' magazine, Sheikh Khalifa said: "Today, we celebrate the glorious 47th anniversary of the announcement of our Union and the establishment of our country, a dream that became a bright reality for our people, the nation, the region and the world at large."

The Union was a reflection of a "deep desire" held by the citizens and the country's leadership, he added.

Sheikh Khalifa described the establishment of the country as a "groundbreaking" initiative by the UAE's founding fathers, under the leadership of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, said UAE's National Day has gained special momentum this year, as it coincides with the 100th birth anniversary of the founding father.

"If not for Sheikh Zayed, our Union would not have seen the light; nor would our nation have been able to survive the challenges that beset his drive to establish the Union," Sheikh Mohammed said in a statement to the magazine.

2018 was the 'Year of Zayed', which celebrated 100 years of the late Emirati leader's birth. It was an occasion to highlight the extraordinary leader's achievements and showcase his efforts, and insight for the nation.

Also speaking on the occasion, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, said that celebrating National Day is a "message of duty and a renewal of loyalty" to the nation and its founders, in recognition of their efforts to realize the dream of the Union.

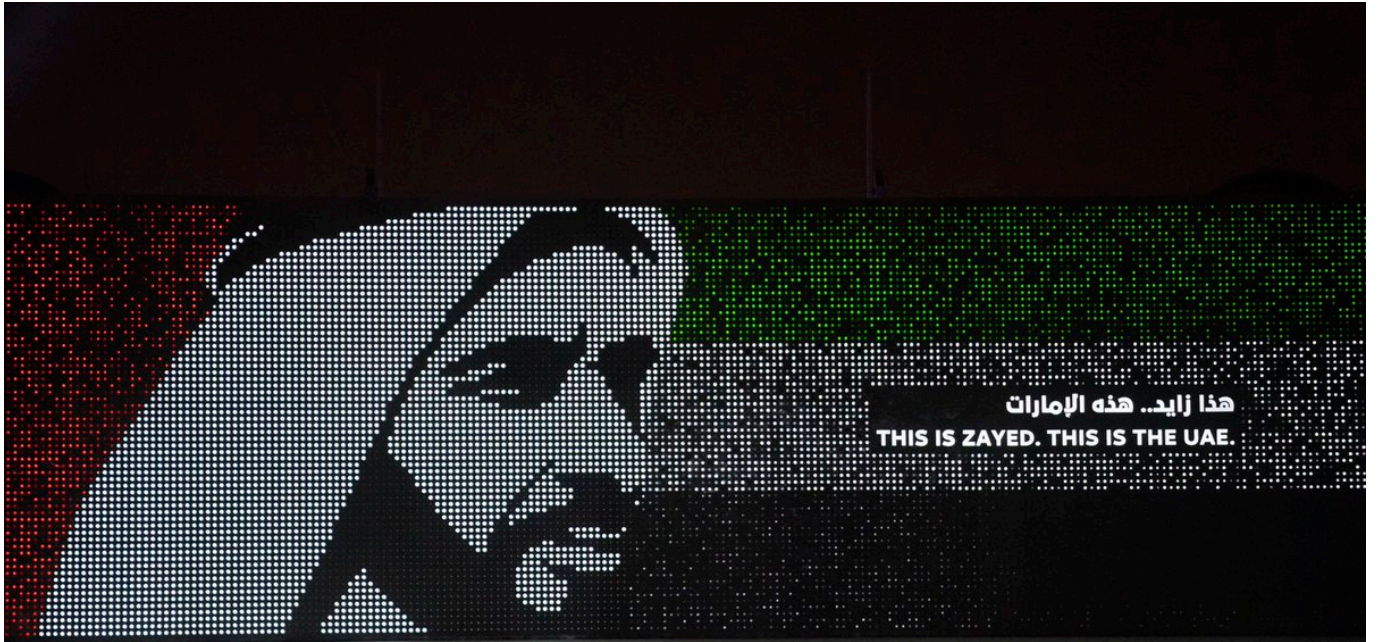
"It is a message of determination to continue working to preserve the achievements of our united nation, strengthen its pillars and always fly its flag high," he said.

He added that the leadership believes that the true wealth of the country lies in its human capital, noting that the UAE is entering the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the age of artificial intelligence, "armed not with money and oil, but rather with educated and qualified Emiratis who possess the skills of the time."

Several events were held across the country to celebrate Emirati tradition and culture, such as Yola and Al Ayala dances, henna, falcon displays, as

well as live traditional music performances by Emirati musicians.

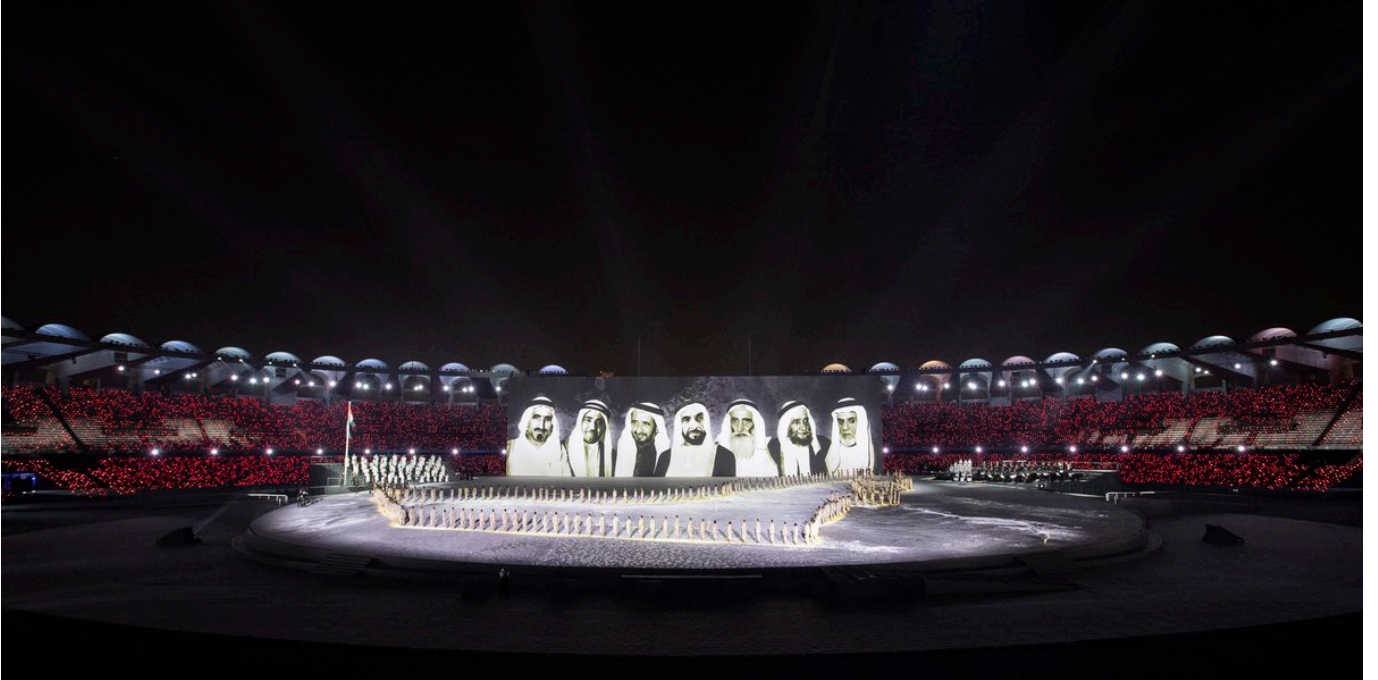






















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UAE President Sheikh Khalifa receives Mohammed bin Zayed at Al Bateen Palace  
UAE passport ranked world's most powerful