

Algeria's FLN wins most seats in parliament, election authority says

Tue, 2021-06-15 20:40

ALGIERS: Algeria's FLN, long the country's biggest political party, won the most seats in Saturday's parliamentary election, the head of the electoral authority said on Tuesday.

Fewer than a third of registered voters took part in the election, which the long dominant establishment had seen as part of its strategy to move beyond two years of mass protests and political turmoil.

The protests that erupted in 2019 demanded the ousting of the ruling elite, an end to corruption and the army's withdrawal from politics. While authorities praised the demonstrations as a moment of national renewal, they also cracked down with arrests.

"The dynamic of peaceful change that was launched (with the protests) is being strengthened," electoral authority head Mohamed Chorfi said, referring to the election.

The FLN's 105 seats were far short of the 204 needed to secure a majority in the 407-seat parliament, with the Islamist MSP winning 64 seats, another former ruling coalition party, the RND, winning 57, and independent candidates taking 78 seats.

However, most of the elected members of parliament are expected to support President Abdelmadjid Tebboune's programme, including economic reforms.

Islamist parties had hoped to benefit from the unrest of the past two years of protests that pushed the veteran president, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, from office and led to the jailing of numerous senior officials.

But the biggest difference from previous elections was the much larger number of independents winning seats in parliament, with Islamists retaining about the same share as previously.

The leaderless "Hirak" mass protest movement boycotted the vote, as it had the 2019 election that installed Tebboune in place of Bouteflika.

Hirak has said any vote that takes place while the current establishment remains in place, and while the army interferes in politics, cannot be fair. While elections before Hirak's rise had higher official turnout figures, they were still often marked by a large number of abstentions.

The make-up of the new parliament is expected to shape the next government, which will face a looming economic crisis with Algeria having spent more than four fifths of its foreign currency reserves since 2013.



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Tue, 2021-06-15 19:30

CAIRO: Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani on Tuesday held talks with Egypt's Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry, who visited Doha to deliver a message from Egypt's President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi.

The Qatari news agency reported: "The emir received a written message from the president of Egypt on enhancing relations between the two countries and means of strengthening bilateral relations in a way that serves the interests of the two brotherly countries and peoples."

Shoukry arrived in Doha on Sunday carrying El-Sisi's message on the positive

developments in Egyptian-Qatari relations following the AlUla Declaration.

The declaration “strengthens the bonds of friendship and brotherhood among our countries and peoples in order to serve their aspirations,” Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman told the GCC Summit when the AlUla Declaration was signed on Jan. 5.

El-Sisi said in his letter that Egypt looks forward to taking more measures during the upcoming period to enhance bilateral cooperation in a way that serves the interests of both peoples and countries, Egyptian Foreign Ministry spokesman Ahmed Hafez said.

Shoukry also held talks with Qatar’s Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani as they discussed the re-activation of bilateral cooperation and means of settling all the outstanding issues between both countries.

Hafez said the meeting also covered the most prominent challenges facing the Arab countries and the region.

Both ministers also discussed the Arab League meeting held on Tuesday about the most prominent regional issues and ways to deal with external interventions harmful to Arab national security, Hafez said.

They highlighted the importance of stressing Arab solidarity with Egypt and Sudan during a session scheduled to be held on the issue of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, he said.

Shoukry will attend the meeting, following a request from Egypt and Sudan.



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Shoukry visits Qatar to convey message from El-SisiEgypt welcomes Qatar invite

[Dubai authorities say cracking down on owners of illegal wildlife](#)

Author:

AFP

ID:

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Tue, 2021-06-15 19:24

DUBAI: Dubai authorities said Tuesday a joint task force was cracking down on

the illegal possession of dangerous animals in the Gulf emirate, where owning exotic wildlife remains popular in some circles.

The joint task force of Dubai police and municipal authorities “has responded to many cases of violation during the past weeks,” a police statement said. Authorities are working “around the clock to curb violators and confiscate wild and dangerous animals to keep them away from residential areas,” it said, urging members of the public to report and hand over such animals. In mid-May, Dubai police said a hunt was underway for a wild animal on the loose in a residential neighborhood, after reports of an escaped big cat. A video of what appeared to be a big black cat circulated on social media groups, and residents of The Springs community were warned to “exercise all necessary caution.”

Local media later reported that animal turned out to be a domestic cat. A 2016 federal law prohibits people “from owning, possessing, trading or breeding dangerous animals,” with a maximum penalty of six months in prison and/or a 500,000 dirham (\$136,000) fine, according to the statement. Despite the penalties, private zoos are not uncommon in the United Arab Emirates.



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Saudi's 'humane' pet project helping animals beat the heat
Dubai Police arrest international drug lord over smuggling operations across Europe

Lebanese woman assaulted by bodyguards after shaming lawmaker Gebran Bassil in public

Mon, 2021-06-14 21:54

BEIRUT: A video of a brawl between a Lebanese woman and Head of Free Patriotic Movement Gebran Bassil's bodyguards after she publicly told him 'shame on you' went viral on Sunday.

The woman was having lunch with friends in a newly-opened restaurant at Al Batroun, the birthplace of Bassil, Lebanese President's son-in-law and a strong political ally of Iran-backed party Hezbollah, when the altercation happened.

Once the woman, identified by media as Yasmine Al-Masri, saw Bassil at the restaurant she yelled at him saying the Arabic for "shame on you."

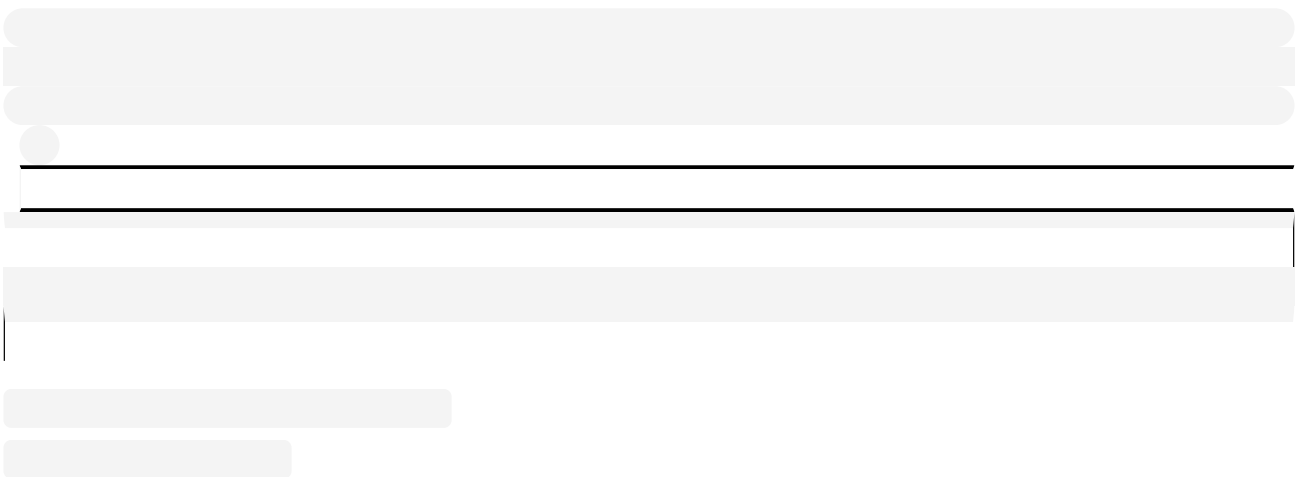
She is believed to have been provoked by his audacity showing up in public as if he is not one of the major instigators and those responsible for the country's political deadlock, economic collapse and corruption.

It was reported in different media outlets that Bassil's entourage instantly rushed toward Al-Masri, whacked her brutally and pinned her down to the floor. Meanwhile as the bodyguards were violently silencing and preventing her from shouting, Bassil made his way hurriedly to his car.

Arab News contacted the restaurant where the incident happened.



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A post shared by thawramap (@thawramap)

"The incident happened around lunchtime. She yelled at lawmaker Bassil and told him what means 'shame on you' for what you've been doing to the people... she reacted like any other independent citizen would do as to how dare he provocatively show his face in public," a waiter told Arab News. He declined to give his name due to the sensitivity of the issue and fear of losing his job.

In the video that Al-Masri recorded using her mobile phone, the footage showed the entourage escorting Bassil to his waiting car while her voice could be heard heatedly arguing with one of the bodyguards who walked toward her and battered her hand. The video footage was clearly flipped upside down after Al-Masri was attacked by the bodyguard and her phone got broken.

Revealing what happened, Al-Masri told MTV channel she yelled at Bassil once he entered the restaurant by telling him 'tfeh 3lek' [shame on you] maintaining that it is not a curse. "That is the least I could tell him. His bodyguard told me to keep my mouth shut and assaulted me. I stood up after I fell down due to the assault, grabbed my phone and followed the entourage wanting to film what they did," she told the MTV stressing that her friend called others for help because she was brutally attacked.

Towards Sunday afternoon the video showing the incident snowballed on social media especially Twitter and Instagram.

Bassil's media office claimed that he and his family were about to ride their car when a woman used foul language against him.

His entourage responded 'naturally, peacefully and modernly' to stop her from cursing, according to the media statement that confirmed the woman wasn't beaten.

Bassil told Free Patriotic Movement supporters and members that 'the era of leaving swearwords unanswered is over' and to respond accordingly.

In response to that, popular TV host Ghada Eid tweeted saying 'the era of leaving corruption unfought is over'.

Following the incident, a hashtag with Al-Masri's phrase [tfeh 3lek] became trending in Lebanon.

A twitter user called Hassan said 'This is the best trending topic in Lebanon this year so far'

Mariana tweeted 'By showing violent behavior, bullies try to hide their own weakness.'

Another user tweeted about Bassil saying 'Small Man with a Giant Ego'.

Samer Al Khoury tweeted 'so lovely how you [Bassil] always trend when it's an insult or corruption what a disgrace you are'.

International Lebanese artist Elissa said on twitter 'every hand that beats a woman should be broken'.



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Lebanon's Bassil rejects US sanctions as unjust and politically motivated
Lebanese FM asks US for Bassil sanction files

[UK MPs debate Palestinian statehood, sanctions against Israel](#)

Author:

Mon, 2021-06-14 22:11

LONDON: British MPs on Monday debated implementing two petitions that call for economic sanctions against Israel and for the UK government to recognize the state of Palestine.

The petitions garnered over 100,000 signatures each, which according to British law means they must be considered for debate in Parliament.

Politicians from both sides of the aisle urged the government to push forward the two-state solution by recognizing the state of Palestine, but the majority of MPs that took part in the debate rejected the idea of sanctions against Israel.

Chairing the debate, Labour's Katherine McKinnell said: "I share the deeply held concerns for the plight of the Palestinian people. Colleagues who have visited the region will know that the desire of the Palestinians to live in dignity and in peace in a state of their own is unmistakable."

"Their aspiration for self-determination is one that we should wholeheartedly support. It's right for the Palestinian people, and it's right for the Israeli people."

She added: "However, I don't believe that sweeping sanctions of the kind proposed by the second petition would bring the prospect of a two-state solution any closer."

That petition, which currently has over 386,000 signatures, said: "The government should introduce sanctions against Israel, including blocking all trade, and in particular arms."

It added that Israel's "disproportionate treatment of Palestinians and settlements that are regarded by the international community as illegal are an affront to civilised society."

James Cleverly, the UK's minister for the Middle East and North Africa, reiterated the government's position on economic sanctions against Israel, saying: "While we don't hesitate to express disagreement with Israel whenever we feel it necessary, we're firmly opposed to boycotts or sanctions against Israel."

Cleverly also rejected the second petition's demand – that Britain immediately recognize a sovereign Palestinian state.

"There have, of course, been many calls over the years for recognition of Palestinian statehood," he said.

"The UK government position is clear: The UK will recognize a Palestinian state at a time when it best serves the object of peace. Bilateral recognition in itself cannot and will not end the occupation," he added.

"The UK government continues to believe that without a negotiated peace agreement, the occupation and the problems that come with it will continue."

Cleverly did, however, criticize Israel's continued assaults on Palestinian homes in the occupied territories.

"The UK position on evictions, demolitions and settlements is longstanding, is public, and has been communicated directly to the government of Israel. That is: We oppose these actions," he said.

Steve Baker, a Conservative MP, said he had made a "mistake" by deprioritizing the Israeli-Palestinian issue during a period of relative calm.

"The problem, of course, is that the conflict hadn't gone away and has since returned with a ferocity," he added.

Baker urged the government to actively pursue a two-state solution, a policy that he and other MPs pointed out has been endorsed by the government without ever being actively pursued.

“I voted to recognize the state of Palestine,” he said. “I think if we’re serious about a two-state solution, it’s important that this Parliament and parliaments elsewhere, governments elsewhere, recognize the state of Palestine.”

Labour’s Naz Shah said she had a message for Israel’s new Prime Minister Naftali Bennett: “Those who support you in the Knesset (Parliament), the mood music is changing, the world is waking up to Israel’s actions, and all those who want to see lasting peace in the region know that to achieve such peace we must end the occupation, injustice and oppression. This starts with recognizing a viable Palestinian state.”

She warned Bennett: “We won’t be silent in pushing for Israel to be tried in the International Criminal Court for war crimes if any more Palestinian blood is unjustly spilled under a perverted interpretation of a right to self-defense.”



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UK MPs to hold vote on recognizing Palestine UK MPs ‘cautiously optimistic’ over bid to reverse planned foreign aid cuts