

Abbas decrees a minimum of seven seats for Christian Palestinians

Author:

Sun, 2021-02-21 22:05

AMMAN: Mahmoud Abbas signed a presidential decree Sunday guaranteeing a minimum of seven parliamentary seats to Palestinians of the Christian faith. Palestinians in the occupied territories are expected to choose 132 legislators based on proportional representation.

Former Bethlehem Mayor Vera Baboun told Arab News that the new legislative council needs to mirror Palestinian society's diversity so as to include a plurality of Palestinians, saying: "The upcoming elected council needs to reflect the widest national experience and representation of all of our society including women and Palestinian Christians."

Ramzi Khoury, head of the Presidential Higher Committee for Churches Affairs, welcomed the decision, saying this is the first time the quota is open-ended.

"The fact that the decree calls for a minimum of seven members are welcomed because it gives opportunities for Palestinians of all walks of life to compete with the opportunity of more individuals being elected than the minimum quota," he told Arab News.

Jerusalem's Orthodox Archbishop of Sebastia Atallah Hanna told Arab News that Palestinians welcome this decision.

"We wish generally for the upcoming Palestinian Legislative Council to bring in new blood and we hope that they are chosen based on qualifications and abilities."

Nashat Filmon, director of the Palestinian Bible Society, said it is good to have a guaranteed representation that reflects the Palestinian Christian presence in the cradle of Christianity.

"I would like the representatives to the Palestinian Legislative Council to focus on the living stones, the Christians of Palestine, and not just the physical stones that represent the history of Christianity in Palestine," he told Arab News.

Ibrahim Daebes, a former Christian school principal and a leading columnist for Al Quds daily, told Arab News that it is imperative that the new representatives act to curtail hate speech.

"Palestinian Christians are facing personal and religious persecution from all corners and it is important for the newly-elected council to draft legislation that can put a stop to radical elements within our society who spew hate speech and religious bigotry at fellow Palestinians," he said.

Bernard Sabella, former member of the Palestinian Legislative Council,

welcomed the decision of the President. "This is an excellent decision because our experience is that the Palestinian electorate votes on the basis of geography, not nationality," he said.

Sabella added that previous experience which was not successful "requires us to have a new vision and a holistic plan that addresses our needs. We need our representatives to represent their nation and not a religion."

He added: "We are at a political crossroads and we can't live with the mindset of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. While I respect ideologies, we need to revive international support for the Palestinian cause and to stop the rhetoric that fails to face the local and international realities. What we need instead is to look to improve our steadfastness on the ground and to work for a state that will help us in this effort to stay put on our land."



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Rivals' accord paves way for Palestine coalition

UAE officials visit SAMI's stand at IDEX 2021

Author:

Zaynab Khojji

ID:

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Sun, 2021-02-21 21:02

LONDON: The UAE's ministers of interior and foreign affairs paid a visit on Sunday to the Saudi Arabian Military Industries (SAMI) stand at the International Defense Exhibition and Conference (IDEX) taking place in Abu Dhabi.

Sheikh Saif bin Zayed, who is also deputy prime minister, and Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed, visited the Saudi company that is owned by the Kingdom's Public Investment Fund (PIF).

The ministers were accompanied by the governor of the General Authority for Military Industries (GAMI), Ahmed bin Abdul Aziz Al-Ohali, who is leading the Saudi delegation at the exhibition and the Kingdom's ambassador to the UAE Turki bin Abdullah Al-Dakhil

The delegation was received by the CEO of Saudi Arabian Military Industries (SAMI) Walid Abukhaled and other executives.

The dignitaries were briefed on SAMI's efforts to advance localization of the Kingdom's military industry, and the company's pursuit of innovation in defense production to ensure Saudi Arabia's sustainability and self-sufficiency in the sector.

IDEX runs between Sunday and Thursday this week.



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Yemeni prisoner exchange talks ended with no agreement – UN envoy

Sun, 2021-02-21 21:04

LONDON: A round of Yemeni prisoner exchange talks ended on Sunday with no agreement reached between warring parties, said UN envoy Martin Griffiths. "Although the parties did not agree to releases during this round of talks, they committed to keep discussing the parameters of a future expanded release operation," Griffiths said.

During the talks, held in the Jordanian capital, Amman, they discussed strategies and possibilities to fulfill their commitments under the Stockholm Agreement.

Yemen's internationally recognized government and the Iran-backed Houthi militia agreed to the UN-brokered agreement back in December 2018, which included the release of thousands of prisoners and detainees, in addition to a cease-fire in the strategic port city of Hodeidah and setting up humanitarian corridors.

The Supervisory Committee on the Implementation of the Prisoners and Detainees Exchange Agreement resumed their fifth meeting in Jordan last month with the aim of releasing 300 prisoners on both sides.

"I am disappointed that this round of talks did not amount to what we saw in Switzerland last September which resulted in the historic release of 1,056 detainees" Griffiths said.

He also urged the parties to "continue their discussions and consultations, conclude the implementation of what they agreed to and expand the arrangements to release more detainees soon."

In January, Griffiths had called on the parties to immediately free all vulnerable detainees, and arbitrarily detained civilians.

"I reiterate my call for the unconditional release of all sick, wounded, elderly and children detainees as well as detained civilians, including women and journalists," he said on Sunday.

Yemen was plunged into civil war when the Iran-backed Houthi militia seized control of Sanaa from the internationally recognized government in late 2014.



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[Algeria names new energy minister in government reshuffle](#)

Sun, 2021-02-21 20:56

ALGIERS: Algeria named a new energy minister in a government reshuffle on Sunday, the presidency said on Sunday. Mohamed Arkab, a former mining minister, replaced Abdelmadjid Attar, it said in a statement.

Arkab had been energy minister from April 2019 to June 2020 when he was replaced by Attar in a reshuffle by President Abdelmadjid Tebboune.

OPEC member Algeria has been seeking to attract more foreign investors after a fall in oil and gas output, causing a drop in energy export earnings which account for 60 percent of the state budget and 94 percent of total export revenues.

The government early last year approved a new energy law offering attractive terms to investors, including tax incentives.

The coronavirus has further negatively impacted the state finances with lower global oil prices forcing the government to cut spending and delay some planned investment projects.

The state energy firm halved planned investment spending to \$7 billion in 2020 as the government sought to limit the economic effects of a lockdown.

Most ministers kept their jobs in Sunday's reshuffle including those in charge of finance, trade and agriculture.



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Algeria's president calls for dissolution of parliament, elections
Algeria frees first democracy activists after presidential pardons

[El-Sisi calls for African constitutional rules](#)

Author:

Sun, 2021-02-21 20:43

CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi has called for collective action to lay down common constitutional rules for African countries.

In a speech during a virtual preparatory meeting of Egypt's Supreme Constitutional Court ahead of the fifth African Constitutional Conference, he asked participants to discuss the challenges facing the continent, and to work collectively to set joint constitutional rules.

“The status quo requires us to think collectively in dealing with emerging challenges” such as the coronavirus pandemic “from a legal and constitutional perspective,” as well as “traditional challenges” such as terrorism, “as an obstacle to development and stability,” he said.



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