

# Turkish Court Rejects Appeal Against Referendum Results

ANKARA (Dispatches) – Turkey's highest administrative court has declined to hear an appeal by the main opposition party against the acceptance of unstamped ballots in the recent referendum on expanding President Tayyip Erdogan's powers.

On Tuesday, the Council of State, which handles complaints and appeals against state and public institutions, said it had no jurisdiction over the case.

According to the state-run Anadolu news agency, the court's decision was taken on a majority of votes, but the Council of State was not immediately available for comment.

In the April 16 referendum, the "Yes" campaign won over 51 percent of the vote, while the "No" campaign gained nearly 49 percent.

The Republican People's Party's (CHP) lawyer Atilla Kart formally submitted the petition with the Council of State on Friday afternoon over the last-minute decision by the High Electoral Board (YSK) to accept unstamped ballots as valid.

The news comes after Turkey's highest electoral authority, the YSK, rejected an appeal, which had been made by the main opposition parties over allegations of vote-rigging.

Earlier, CHP's deputy leader, Bulent Tezcan, said the party would file a case urging the annulment of the YSK's decision to allow the rule

change.

The developments come as the European Union has warned that the bloc could redefine the entire status of its relations with Turkey in light of recent developments in the country and amid growing disputes between the two sides.

"The time has come for a thorough assessment of EU-Turkey relations and perhaps redefinition," European Union Enlargement Commissioner Johannes Hahn said Monday, warning that a redefinition of ties could take place following a recent referendum in Turkey that granted President Erdogan extra powers.

Turkey has been an EU membership candidate since 1987 but the bid has stalled over the years mainly due to issues of democracy and human rights. Relations began to deteriorate last year when Turkey launched a massive crackdown on those alleged to have played a role in the last year coup attempt.

The EU has censured the large-scale imprisonment and dismissals of people following July 15, 2016 putsch against Erdogan.

Turkey has defended the crackdown while accusing some EU states of supporting outlawed Turkish elements. The EU has also criticized the April 16 referendum, which boosts the president's powers. Erdogan has censured the way the Europeans



Supporters of the "No" votes protest against the results of Turkey's referendum on presidential powers in Istanbul on April 17, 2017.

had banned his government officials from campaigning for the referendum for Turkish expats in European countries.

Turkey has filed an official lawsuit against a former French diplomat, accusing him of inciting an act of assassination against President Erdogan after the results of a recent constitutional referendum tipped the power scale in favor of the Turkish leader.

Erdogan's lawyer made the complaint against Philippe Moreau Defarges on Monday, calling for an investigation into remarks by the former diplomat who had earlier said that all legal paths to challenge Erdogan after the April 16 referendum

had been shut off and that the only two options left for Turkey were "civil war" or "assassination."

In a four-page petition to the Ankara Public Prosecutor's Office, Huseyin Aydin accused Defarges of "attempting assassination and assault," saying that the comments were not a simple expression of opinion, but were "clearly instigating the crime in question."

"In light of the terrorist groups which have been hosted by many European countries and all the incidents urging assassination of our president that took place there, it is clear that the suspect's remarks are far from a simple opinion, but are in fact an incitement," Erdogan's lawyer said.

## Candidates...

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spiritual and material civilization. Because, Islam can stop the transgressions of the oppressive modern materialistic civilization, hence they target Islam."

The Leader said, "We the Muslims have two main duties: one is that we should introduce real Islam to non-Muslims; the other is about ourselves. We should understand the reasons behind the animosity that the arrogant world powers practice against Islam."

## Ya'aloon...

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a media blackout or military censorship, reported Tikun Olam, a Seattle-based liberal blog dedicated to outing "the excesses of the Israeli national security state," which also reported Ya'aloon's remarks.

In the midst of complaining about the alleged Daesh threat to Tel Aviv and the world, Netanyahu conveniently forgets that Israel "enjoys a tacit alliance with ISIS in Syria," said New York-born Dr. Richard Silverstein, who runs the blog. "It is an alliance of convenience to be sure," he added.

According to him, Ya'aloon has been speaking more candidly about the inner workings of the regime since falling out with Netanyahu and being replaced by successor Avigdor Lieberman.

"But he did reveal how closely tied Israel is to ISIS in Syria," wrote the blogger, who has also documented Israeli collaboration with Al-Nusra Front, Al-Qaeda's Syria branch, which has rebranded itself.

In June 2015, the blog published a story reporting on the occupying regime's interventions in the foreign-backed militancy in Syria in favor of anti-Damascus militants.

It said Tel Aviv and Al-Nusra had forged an alliance, featuring the former's building camps for terrorists and their families in Israel-held territory, holding regular meetings with terrorist commanders, and providing military and other critical supplies to them.

The report incorporated a video showing the Zionist regime's provision of medical assistance to the terrorists who had been wounded in Syria.

It also cited an incident in which locals had intercepted one Israeli ambulance carrying two wounded Takfiris, forcing the medics to flee and beating up one of the terrorists to death. The other was also seriously injured when the regime's forces intervened to save him.

## Muslims...

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aims to prevent state or local law enforcement from sharing information with federal immigration agents that could lead to the deportation of undocumented California residents. Democratic lawmaker Kevin de Leon, a long-time advocate for Latino and undocumented immigrants' rights in the state, introduced the bill.

Chiu also referred to a muddy chapter of American history to draw a comparison with the possible outcome of a Muslim registry.

"Some 75 years ago, the Japanese community was under attack... Now, if Donald Trump has declared war on the Muslim community, he has declared war on all of us," Chiu told an audience in front of the capitol.

"From my perspective, if Donald Trump is saying that he is going after the Muslim community, it is our responsibility, as legislators, to say: 'Mr Trump, you're gonna have to come through us,'" he said.

Taking the stage after Chiu, California's Secretary of State Alex Padilla stressed the legal tug of war taking place right now between California and the federal government, even referring to the state and its residents as the "resistance".

"Our civil rights are under attack by the President of the United States. ... Here in California we have lived the times where certain communities are scapegoats," Padilla said.

Since early in the morning, activists and concerned residents from all over the state were able to talk with their legislators. Shukria Hakim, who lives in the Bay Area, travelled with other fellow Muslims to support SB 31, which she believes is crucial to keep American values alive.

"Being able to be in the capitol and to express my ideas, makes me feel more American than ever," Hakim told MEE. "And it is this feeling that we have to preserve, that we are Muslims but we are also Americans and, in this country, we will not tolerate abuse against any religion."

This is Hakim's second year attending the rally, but her 15-year-old granddaughter participated for the first time. "A possible Muslim registry really concerns me and I felt we

need to fight back, to jump into action, so that's why I also brought my granddaughter along. We don't want history to repeat itself, like what happened with the Japanese internment camps during WWII."

The speakers stressed urgency because of the current political climate and the perceived threats coming from the administration against Muslims and immigrants. "Action Trumps Fear," the event's title, spoke volumes about the general mood.

The council also advocated for two other pieces of legislation dealing with civil rights; AB 158, to establish more accurate reporting of hate crimes, including Islamophobia and AB2845, known as A Safe Place to Learn, which is aimed at preventing school bullying due to religion or ethnicity.

These four bills are very popular measures in the Senate, across the aisle, but they still need to be taken to the house committees for voting. AB 31 was passed in the Senate with a majority vote, with only four Republican senators abstaining, a rare victory these days in such a polarized political climate.

"We've had many Republicans approach us to tell us that they are supporting us, because they support freedom of religion, regardless of which political party is bringing the bill forth," Casillas said.

## Takfiri...

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Gwadar have the potential to bring about positive developments in the region.

The speaker of Pakistan's National Assembly, for his part, said his country needed to use Iran's capacities in the energy sector, particularly for the transfer of gas, and also expressed Islamabad's readiness to complete the pipeline project.

Sadiq also warned of the spread of terrorist groups, particularly Taliban and Daesh, in the region and urged collective cooperation to counter them.

Peace and stability in the region would be beneficial to all countries, the Pakistani parliamentarian pointed out.

Sadiq was on an official visit to Tehran at the invitation of Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani. He held talks with Foreign Minister Muhammad Javad Zarif and his Iranian counterpart Ali Larijani on Saturday.

## No More...

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give the candidates live air time to debate their programs or criticize their rivals.

Three other candidates are Rouhani's deputy Is'haq Jahangiri, member of the Expediency Council Mostafa Mirsalim and former vice president and minister Mostafa Hashemi-Taba.

Some 55 million Iranians are eligible to vote for a new president in what is expected to be a close race. The two major factions in the elections are Reformists which support Rouhani and Principlists backing Raeisi.

## Salehi...

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on January 16, 2016, after the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) confirmed that Iran was ready to implement the program to reduce its nuclear potential.

However, the United States imposed new sanctions against Iran in February 2017 after Tehran carried out a medium-range ballistic missile test in late January.

Salehi said many of the other parties to the deal have declared that they would not be supporting unilateral U.S. action concerning the multilateral deal.

Delegations from the parties to the JCPOA are in Vienna for a regular meeting on the deal. On Tuesday, the parties were holding the seventh meeting of the Iran-P5+1 Joint Commission, which reviews progress on the deal and potential concerns by individual parties.

Salehi said the EU had allocated \$5 million for the enhancement of nuclear safety in Iran.

He said the country had reached an agreement with Russia on bilateral cooperation in building two nuclear reactors in Iran and added that talks were also to be held with China on the construction of two 100-megawatt power stations in Iran.

Two nuclear plants, he said, would be starting their operations on the ground, adding that a maximum of 10,000 staff members would be recruited in the facilities.

Salehi also said that the potential exports of electricity produced at the 1000-megawatt Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant, which is located in Iran's south, would award the country some \$700 million annually.

If the nuclear industry maintains its current pace of progress, the country's nuclear organization would attain budgetary self-reliance over the next five or six years, he said.

# Zionist Troops Destroy Bedouin Village Once Again



The Zionist regime has wrecked the Bedouin village of Araqeeb in the Negev region of southern parts of the occupied territories once again as the Tel Aviv regime presses ahead with its land expropriation policies.

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – Zionist troops have wrecked the Bedouin village of Araqeeb in the Negev region of southern parts of the occupied territories once again as the Tel Aviv regime presses ahead with its land expropriation policies and settlement construction activities to uproot Palestinians.

The regime's bulldozers entered

the community, located 8 kilometers (five miles) north of Beer-sheba, on Tuesday morning and leveled lands as well as makeshift structures built in the area.

The occupying regime's bulldozers, escorted by groups of Zionist troops, have frequently raided Araqeeb and detained several Bedouins.

The first demolition of al-Araqeeb took place on June 27, 2010, and the village has been ruined 112 times ever since.

The last wrecking of al-Araqeeb occurred on April 5, when the regime's bulldozers tore down several houses.

Rights groups argue that the demolition of al-Araqeeb and other Bedouin villages is an attempt by the occupying regime to uproot indigenous Palestinians from the Negev region and confiscate more land for the expansion of settlements.

In another development, Zionist troops shot and injured a Palestinian woman, whom they alleged to have attempted a stabbing attack against a Zionist police officer near a checkpoint between the occupied West Bank and al-Quds.

Police spokeswoman Luba al-Samri claimed that the Palestinian woman, 39, who was waiting to be inspected at the Qalandiya checkpoint, attacked a female police and injured her slightly on Monday.

She said police opened fire on

the Palestinian woman, who was taken into custody to be interrogated by the troops.

Furthermore, Zionist troops shot and blinded a Palestinian woman in East al-Quds amid ongoing tensions between protesters and Zionist troops in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The Zionist troops raided al-Issawiya neighborhood late last night, and opened fire indiscriminately. A 52-year-old woman, identified as Fatima Mahmoud Obeid, was struck in the left eye with a rubber-coated steel bullet, Muhammad Abu al-Hummus, a local official, said on Sunday.

Fatima's husband, Rajab, said his wife had been sitting with their daughter and son-in-law on their balcony, when he heard her screaming shrilly.

The injured woman was taken to Hadassah Medical Center in al-Quds, where doctors said Fatima had lost sight in her left eye, and would require a surgery for fractures in her skull caused by the gunshot.

## To Repel Revolt

# Saudi Reinstates Allowances to State Employees

RIYADH (Dispatches) – Saudi Arabia has restored financial allowances to civil servants and military personnel in an attempt to thwart possible unrest after calls for protests spread across the kingdom.

King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud issued a royal decree, restoring "all allowances, financial benefits, and bonuses" that were cut back in September in the face of slumping oil prices and rising military expenditures.

Saudi Arabia, once known for its lavish public spending, has been hard hit by low oil prices and a costly military operation against its southern neighbor Yemen.

It has spent billions of dollars on weapons bought from the kingdom's Western allies for a military campaign which has cost the lives of more than 10,000 Yemeni people.

King Salman's decree added a two-month salary bonus for forces fighting in the kingdom's war on Yemen.

The decision came following calls for demonstrations in four Saudi cities over the weekend.

Under the Twitter hashtag "April 21 movement", Saudis circulated statements last week calling for the reinstatement of the financial benefits, an end to the sale of shares of state oil giant Aramco, a constitutional monarchy and

the restoration of the powers of the religious police.

The news comes as a human rights watchdog group has lashed out at the United Nations for appointment of Saudi Arabia as a member of a committee on gender equality, despite Riyadh's massive discrimination against women.

"Saudi discrimination against women is gross and systematic in law and in practice," said the executive director of the human rights group UN Watch, Hillel Neuer, in a statement.

"Why did the UN choose the world's leading promoter of gender inequality to sit on its gender equality commission," he said in a statement. "Electing Saudi Arabia to protect women's rights is like making an arsonist into the town fire chief," he later tweeted.

On Wednesday, the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) elected 13 members, including Saudi Arabia, to four-year terms on the Commission on the Status of Women, which is exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Out of 144 on the Global Gender Gap Index, Saudi Arabia was ranked 141 in 2016.

In recent years, the Al Saud regime has come under intense pressure by rights groups for mistreating women.