

Iraqi Parl't Votes Against Kurdish Independence Referendum

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – The Iraqi parliament has voted to oppose a referendum on the independence of Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan region.

The majority of Iraqi lawmakers voted against the referendum — planned by Kurdistan Regional Government — during a parliament session on Tuesday.

The vote prompted Kurdish lawmakers to quit the parliament floor.

Iraqi Parliament Speaker Salim al-Jabouri said the vote made it incumbent on the government to “take all steps to protect the unity of Iraq and open a serious dialog” with Kurdish officials.

Prior to the vote, MP Ammar Toma had warned that the “unconstitutional” referendum would cause security and societal problems in Iraq and push the country into a state of chaos.

The Kurdish referendum is scheduled for September 25, but the central government in Baghdad is opposed to the vote.

Regional players like Iran and Turkey have also voiced concern about the planned referendum, arguing that it could create further instability in the region.

The provincial council in Iraq's ethnically mixed and oil-rich northern province of Kirkuk voted to take part in late next month's Kurdish independence referendum irrespective of Baghdad government's strong opposition to the planned vote.

On Tuesday, 22 of the 24 present councilors in the 41-member Kirkuk council voted in favor of holding the referendum.



The file photo shows a view of the Iraqi parliament in session in Baghdad.

Speaking to journalists afterwards, Kirkuk governor Najm Eddine Karim described the vote as a “historic event.”

Meanwhile, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi described the vote by Kirkuk provincial council as a wrong move, adding that the planned referendum is illegal and worthless.

Iraqi government spokesman Saad al-Hadhithi also lambasted the vote as “illegal and

unconstitutional.”

“Provinces that don't belong to the semi-autonomous region (of Kurdistan) can't impose decisions without the federal government's approval, and Kirkuk is one of these regions,” he pointed out.

The Turkish Foreign Ministry has also denounced Kirkuk provincial council's decision as “a serious violation of the Iraqi constitution.”

Turkey Issues Arrest Warrants for Scores for Alleged Coup Links



The file photo shows Turkish Gendarmerie staff escorting suspects in the July 2016 attempted coup.

ANKARA (Dispatches) – Turkish authorities have issued arrest warrants for 63 individuals, including former staff of the country's National Intelligence Agency (MIT), for their alleged links to a U.S.-based dissident accused of leading last year's failed coup.

Based on the orders, police launched operations to make arrests in 21 provinces throughout Turkey, the state-run Anadolu news agency reported on Tuesday.

The development comes as a number of Ankara's Western allies and human rights agencies have expressed concerns over the post-coup crackdown on suspected dissidents, saying the 2016 coup attempt is being used as a pretext by the government to quash

opposition across the nation.

Turkish officials insist that opposition cleric Fethullah Gulen, who has lived in the U.S. state of Pennsylvania since 1999, was the mastermind of the unsuccessful coup attempt in July 2016.

Gulen has fiercely denied any involvement in the coup.

Over 50,000 people have so far been jailed pending trial for suspected ties to Gulen's movement, while nearly 150,000 individuals have also been fired or suspended from jobs in the public and private sectors in the purge.

Earlier this month, Turkey said nearly one-third of the country's judicial staff have been affiliated to the Gulen movement.

UAE Soldier, Military Pilot Killed in Yemen War

ABU DHABI (Dispatches) – A soldier and a pilot of the United Arab Emirates taking part in the Saudi-led war on Yemen have been killed in two separate incidents, the Emirati military says.

First Sergeant Nasser Gharib al-Mazrouei “died of wounds” he suffered whilst fighting in Yemen, the UAE military said in a statement carried by the country's official WAM news agency.

The news agency said hours later that pilot Sultan al-Naqbi had been “killed by a technical malfunction” on his plane.

The report did not mention the exact location of the incident.

Meanwhile, WAM said a soldier died Monday of wounds he earlier suffered in a separate incident.

Latest figures show that over 100 Emirati troops have been killed in the Saudi-led war on Yemen.

The UAE is one of Saudi Arabia's main partners in the military aggression against the impoverished Arab nation.

Human Rights Watch has recently lashed out at the Saudi-led coalition for its refusal to provide information on its role in the massive unlawful airstrikes against Yemen in an attempt to avoid international legal liability.

According to a Friday report by HRW, the current and former members of the coalition have refused to reply to the rights group's correspondence in 2017, which urged them to release the results of their investigations into the unlawful airstrikes in Yemen.

The report provided detailed witness accounts of several unlawful airstrikes by the coalition which killed and wounded a massive number of civilians.

The coalition includes Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Sudan. Qatar withdrew from the coalition in June amid a diplomatic rift with Riyadh, Manama, and Abu Dhabi.

Zionist Regime Forced to 'Postpone' 1st Africa Summit

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – The Zionist regime has had to indefinitely postpone a summit it had planned with African countries following a boycott by a number of those states.

The so-called Africa-Israel Summit, a first of its kind, had been due to take place in Togo's capital, Lome, on October 23-27. The Zionist regime's officials had reportedly planned to discuss with African leaders ways to enhance cooperation in the fields of “technology, development, and security.”

In a statement, the occupying regime's Foreign Ministry announced the postponement of the event without providing an alternative

date.

“At the request of the president of Togo [Faure Gnassingbe] and following a joint consultation with the prime minister (Benjamin Netanyahu), it was decided to postpone the convening of the Israel-Africa Summit, scheduled to take place in October in Lome,” the statement read.

The delay came amid reports that Sudan, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Mauritania had decided to boycott the gathering.

South African Ambassador to Lebanon and Syria Sean Benfeldt said last month that his country would not take part in the summit, which he said would be a step by Tel Aviv to

normalize ties between Africa and a regime of “occupation.”

He also denounced “Israel's inhumane blockade of the Gaza Strip, stressing the need for practical solutions to the humanitarian suffering of the population in the besieged [Palestinian] territory.”

In an attempt to improve relations with African states, the Zionist premier went on a tour of East African countries — namely Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, and Ethiopia — in July 2016.

He also attended a meeting of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Liberia in June 2017.

Rolingya...

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“The solution is for Muslim governments to act. We are not saying they should send troops there, but impose political and economic pressure,” Ayatollah Khamenei said.

The Leader called on the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to convene “for this specific purpose and to discuss what measures can be taken for these Muslims.”

The Iranian Red Crescent has prepared an aid package for the Rohingya but is awaiting permission from Myanmar for its delivery, the Mizan Online news agency reported.

Ayatollah Khamenei said Iran has to be bold in making its stance known.

“The world today is the world of oppression, and the Islamic Republic has to maintain for itself the honor of speaking out against oppression anywhere in the world, whether in territories occupied by Zionists, or in Bahrain, or Yemen, or Myanmar.”

Millions...

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have been completely different,” said Bob Lutz, a 62-year-old business owner.

About 15 million people in Florida were without power, however, and Governor Rick Scott said the island chain known as the Keys had suffered widespread damage.

“It's horrible what we saw,” Scott said after flying over the island chain aboard a Coast Guard helicopter. He said the water, electricity and sewage systems in the Keys were non-operational, and that trailer parks had been “overturned.”

“We now go through the much longer phase, which is the recovery phase,” said Miami Mayor Carlos Gimenez. “And believe me, folks, some of this is going to take a while, especially power restoration.”

Most Keys residents evacuated from the low-lying tourist archipelago, known for its fishing, scuba diving and boating, before Irma struck.

The storm felled trees and left debris and vehicles strewn across the streets. But concrete homes appeared to have withstood the powerful gusts.

Authorities were allowing residents and business owners in the upper part of the Keys to begin returning on Tuesday.

“Returning residents should consider that there are limited services. Most areas are still without power and water. Cell service is spotty. And most gas stations are still closed,” Monroe County authorities said in a Facebook post.

Heavy rain was a problem: Florida's northeastern city of Jacksonville, population 880,000, ordered urgent evacuations amid record flooding along the St Johns River.

Flooding was also reported in Charleston, South Carolina.

Irma had triggered evacuations for more than six million people to flee to safety, one of the biggest evacuations in U.S. history.

Before reaching the United States Irma tore through a string of Caribbean islands, going from tiny Barbuda on Wednesday to the tropical paradises of Saint Barthelemy and Saint Martin, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

About 400 exhausted and traumatized hurricane survivors landed in France and the Netherlands on Monday aboard military planes.

Both the French and Dutch governments have been criticized for delaying their emergency response, and especially over the handling of looting on Saint Barthelemy and Saint Martin, the latter an island with both French and Dutch sectors.

Cuban officials said Irma was the deadliest hurricane to strike the island since Dennis in 2005, adding that three-quarters of the population was without power.

“This is a big warning already, when you know that climate change is getting more and more cruel,” said Francisco Garcia, coach of Cuba's national karate team, whose home was damaged by Irma.

Afghans...

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pains to avoid cultural insensitivities, there have been several other examples where the forces, most of which come from non-Muslim cultures, have caused offence.

In a previous incident in 2012, when copies of the Qur'an were burned, a number of people died in the following protests. So far, demonstrations have been on a much smaller scale but some protesters say they might continue.

“Apologies on their own will never cure any wound,” said Mehrabuddin, another protester, who like many Afghans, goes by one name. “If the Americans repeat such an insult in future we will keep up our demonstrations and, if needed, attack Bagram base,” he said.

Last week, the Taliban claimed a suicide attack near the entrance to Bagram which it said had been launched in retaliation against the leaflets.

Tens...

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since he came into office -- was in the Caribbean on Tuesday visiting French islands hit by hurricane Irma last week.

“What is going to be a surprise is when he ends up giving ground,” hard-left leader Jean-Luc Melenchon told reporters as he joined a protest in the southern port of Marseille on Tuesday.

“This country doesn't want the liberal world... France isn't Britain,” he added.

The CGT plans to follow Tuesday's actions with a second protest day on September 21, with another two days later called by far-left firebrand Melenchon.

The centrist president, who swept to power in May on promises to reinvigorate the economy, has used executive orders to fast-track the changes.

They are to take effect later this month even before being ratified by parliament, where Macron's Republic on the Move party has a large majority.

The new law will give small company bosses in particular more freedom to negotiate working conditions directly with their employees rather than being subject to industry-wide agreements.

Compensation for unfair dismissal will be capped, a move that has particularly angered unions, along with steps to make it easier for foreign-based companies to lay off staff in struggling French operations.