

Turkey Goes to Most Crucial Polls in Decades

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) – President Tayyip Erdogan and his main challenger, Muharrem Ince, made a final push for support at rival rallies in Istanbul, before presidential and parliamentary elections widely viewed as the most crucial in Turkey for decades.

The winner of Sunday’s presidential contest will acquire sweeping new executive powers under a constitutional overhaul backed by Erdogan and endorsed last year by a narrow majority of Turks in a referendum.

Erdogan, who has dominated Turkish politics for 15 years, first as prime minister and since 2014 as president, praised the executive presidency that comes into force after the election.

“God willing, Turkey will start flying with this system... With this system, we will achieve what others cannot imagine,” he told tens of thousands of supporters at a rally in Istanbul’s Esenyurt district, the first of five planned for Saturday.

Erdogan, 64, also promised to deliver more of the big infrastructure projects that have characterized his time in power and helped him make the most popular - if also the most divisive - leader of modern Turkish history.

But with Turkey’s economic woes mounting, partly due to the lira currency’s sharp decline, Erdogan and his ruling, Islamist-rooted AK Party, are facing an unexpectedly strong challenge from a revitalized opposition.

Ince, a former teacher and the presidential candidate of the main opposition party, the secularist Republican People’s Party (CHP), has proved highly effective on the campaign trail,



Muharrem Ince, presidential candidate of Turkey’s main opposition Republican People’s Party, takes a pictures as he addresses an election rally in Diyarbakir, Turkey, Monday, June 11, 2018.

drawing huge crowds, especially in the big cities.

On Saturday police said at least one million people had turned out in Istanbul’s Maltepe district to hear Ince promise to reverse - if he wins the presidency - what he sees as Turkey’s turn towards more authoritarian rule under Erdogan.

Ince also repeated his accusation - made by other opposition politicians too - of political bias by Turkey’s state media, which has given Erdogan and the AK Party heavy coverage while often neglecting to broadcast opposition rallies.

“There are 5 million people in Maltepe right now but none of the TV channels can show it,” he said. That figure could not be independently verified, though images circulating on social media showed vast crowds of people assembled to hear Ince speak.

“Let this immorality be an example to the world,” said Ince, who said he had held 107 rallies around Turkey in the 51 days since his candidacy was announced.

Braving a summer thunderstorm, Ince’s supporters, in festive mood, sang anthems and waved red and white Turkish flags.

Zionist Troops Shoot Palestinian Fishermen

GAZA STRIP (Dispatches) – Palestinian officials say Zionist naval forces have opened fire on several Palestinian fishing boats off the coast of the besieged Gaza Strip, and arrested three.

Nizar Ayyash, the secretary of the Gaza fishermen’s syndicate, said in a statement that Zionist troops targeted the Palestinian boats as they were fishing close to al-Sudaniyya area, north of Gaza City, on Saturday morning.

Ayyash added that Zionist marines then boarded a boat and arrested three fishermen, identified as Ahmed Kamel al-Anqah, Mahmoud Kamel al-Anqah and Mohammed Mahmoud al-Sultan. The three men are local residents of Beit Lahia city.

The Zionist troops did not take away the boat as it had been severely damaged by direct fire.

The development came after more than 200 unarmed Palestinian protesters were wounded

by Zionist troops in the besieged Gaza Strip along the border separating the impoverished enclave and the occupied territories.

According to a report by the Gaza Ministry of Health, 206 demonstrators, including at least eight minors, sustained injuries as a result of inhaling tear gas fired by Zionist troops in the blockaded sliver on Friday.

Reports said the troops fired large quantities of tear gas canisters and live bullets east of Gaza City to disperse some 7,000 protesters who were rallying for what had been officially designated as “Friday of the Wounded”, paying tribute to those who have been wounded since the beginning of the Great March of Return demonstrations.

At least 133 Palestinians, including 14 children, have been killed by Zionist troops since the Return rallies began in the Gaza Strip on March 30. About 14,600 Pales-

tinians also sustained injuries, of them 300 are currently in a critical condition. Of those wounded, at least 3,900 have been injured by live bullets and another 500 by rubber-coated steel bullets, while more than 6,500 suffered from excessive tear gas inhalation.

The Gaza clashes reached their peak on May 14, the eve of the 70th anniversary of Nakba Day (the Day of Catastrophe), when the regime forcibly drove more than 760,000 Palestinians - now estimated to number nearly five million with their descendants – out of their homes.

In another development, the regime’s military has threatened to demolish more than 50 Palestinian homes in the northern part of the West Bank as the Tel Aviv regime continues with its land expropriation policies in the occupied territories and violation of international law.

Local Palestinian media reports

said that homes would be demolished by regime forces in Beit Dajan village, which is located east of Nablus for lacking Israeli construction permits.

Nasir Abu Jaish, mayor of the village confirmed that Israeli army handed notices to local citizens informing them that at least 51 homes would be demolished in 60 days for lacking Israeli construction permits.

The homes are located in the so-called area C of the West Bank, which constitutes about 61 percent of the territory and is under full Israeli military control.

Mohammed Abu Jaish, a local resident whose family has lived in the area for generations said, “We received a notice to demolish the house a few weeks ago, claiming that it was located on land allocated to military activities, although it is a private property.”

He added that the same fate threatens his sisters and cousins.

Trump... (Continued From Page One)

although his defense secretary, James Mattis, told reporters a day earlier that he wasn’t aware that North Korea had taken any steps yet toward denuclearization, and that detailed negotiations have not yet begun.

returned from North Korea at the border village of Panmunjom, South Korea. Photograph: Ahn Young-joon/AP

The U.S. military said on Saturday it was moving “assets” to an air base near Seoul and to the border with North Korea, to prepare for the return by Pyongyang of the remains of U.S. soldiers missing since the Korean war ended in an armistice in 1953.

But a U.S. Forces Korea spokesman, Col Chad Carroll, denied a report by the South Korean Yonhap news agency that U.S. military vehicles carrying more than 200 caskets were planning to cross into North Korea.

North Korea agreed to send home U.S. war remains during the June 11 summit in Singapore between Kim and Trump. At a rally in Minnesota this week, Trump claimed North Korea had already returned the remains of 200 troops.

“We got back our great fallen heroes, the remains sent back today, already 200 got sent back,” Trump told a crowd in Duluth. There was no official confirmation or denial of the president’s claim.

U.S. officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said on Tuesday North Korea would soon hand over a “sizeable number” of remains to United Nations Command in South Korea. The remains would be transferred to Hickam Air Force Base in Hawaii, the officials said.

On Saturday, Carroll said in an email to the Associated Press that the U.S.-led UN Command was moving “assets” to an air base in Pyeongtaek, south of Seoul, and to the Joint Security Area at the border. Plans were “still preliminary”, he said.

Earlier, Yonhap cited an unnamed source as saying that about 30 U.S. military vehicles carrying 215 caskets were expected to cross into the North on Saturday afternoon. Carroll called that report “completely false”.

U.S. Forces Korea later said it had moved 100 wooden coffins to the inter-Korean border on Saturday to prepare for North Korea’s returning of the remains of American soldiers who have been missing since the 1950-53 Korean War.

About 7,700 U.S. military personnel remain unaccounted for from the Korean war, U.S. military data show. According to the Pentagon, North Korean officials have indicated in the past they have the remains of as many as 200 U.S. troops. More than 36,500 U.S. troops died in the conflict, which lasted from 1950 to 1953.

Between 1996 and 2005, joint U.S.-North Korea military search teams conducted 33 recovery operations that collected 229 sets of American remains.

UN... (Continued From Page One)

which led to the unblocking of other frozen funds.

To the dismay of the other world powers, U.S. President Donald Trump has since walked away from the nuclear deal, and the United States in 2017 raised objections to the court’s hearing of the case.

The four days of public audiences are expected to focus on whether the ICJ judges can take up the case under the strict rules governing their procedures. Set up in 1946, the ICJ rules in disputes between states on the basis of existing treaties and international law.

Iran argues that the U.S. is breaking the terms of the 1955 Treaty of Amity signed with the then regime of the Shah long before he was ousted in the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The treaty governs economic ties and consular rights.

Iran is also demanding that the United States “make full reparations to Iran for the violation of its international legal obligations in an amount to be determined by the court at a subsequent stage of the proceedings.”

Iran’s frozen assets have long been subject to a witch hunt by the Americans who have used Washington’s animosity toward the Islamic Republic to easily win lawsuits against the country in U.S. courts.

Last month, a federal judge in New York ordered the Islamic Republic to pay \$6 billion to the alleged families of the September 11, 2001 attacks even though a state investigation has found no link between Tehran and those who carried out the bombings.

The order also made the families eligible to collect from a fund of seized Iranian assets.

Thousands... (Continued From Page One)

is still to define exactly what it wants from Britain’s future relationship with the continent, particularly in the area of customs regulation.

Trade minister Liam Fox, an arch eurosceptic, insisted that the prime minister was still prepared to walk away from the talks if no satisfactory deal was reached.

“The prime minister has always said no deal is better than a bad deal,” Fox told the BBC in an interview aired on Saturday.

“It is essential as we enter the next phase of the negotiations that the EU understands that and believes it... I think our negotiating partners would not be wise if they thought our PM was bluffing.”

Johnson, who was the most prominent face in the campaign to leave the EU, wrote that the British people “just want us to get on with it”.

“They don’t want a half-hearted Brexit,” he wrote.

“They don’t want some sort of hopeless compromise, some perpetual push me-pull you arrangement in which we stay half-in and half-out in a political no man’s land.

“Two years ago the people of this country recorded a verdict about themselves -- that they had the guts to believe in Britain. They were right and will be proved right in the decades ahead,” he added.

However, aviation giant Airbus warned on Friday it could pull out of Britain if it leaves the EU without a deal, while carmaker BMW also warned that uncertainty was affecting the investment climate.

The march against Brexit is part of a “summer of action” planned by campaign groups to put pressure on political leaders to hold a vote on the final deal.

Despite Driving Ban Removal

Saudi Guardianship System ‘Enslaves’ Women

RIYADH (Press TV) – A Saudi activist has warned that women in the kingdom are still “enslaved” through Riyadh’s male guardianship system as the country gears up to lift the decades-long driving ban on women on June 24.

In a Friday phone interview with Reuters from Sydney, Australia, Manal al-Sharif said Saudi women’s campaign is not over as long as supervision of a male guardian, whose permission is needed for marriage or travel abroad, is still needed.

“Imagine your son becomes your guardian,” she said.

“No matter my capabilities as a woman, I am still enslaved to somebody else. Freedom for me is to live with dignity, and if my dignity and freedom is controlled by a man, I will never be free,” Sharif pointed out.

The activist, who hit world headlines in 2011 when she was detained for shooting a video of herself driving in Saudi Arabia, has now launched a new campaign, #Miles4Freedom, urging women across the world to log their names, existing or new car mileage and location on a map as of June 24, when Saudi women will be officially allowed to drive.

Sharif says when the campaign gets one million logged miles, she will send an open petition to Saudi King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed.

“Instead of collecting signatures, it is a creative way to use the symbol of driving that women are still enslaved even if they are driving,” Sharif said. The activist underlined the need for the release of those still detained, noting, “While people are celebrating on Sunday, we should not

forget the people who fought for lifting this ban are in jail.”

Saudi activists have expressed solidarity with three women’s rights activists detained in May, along with at least 14 other campaigners and supporters.

After the arrests, Sharif scrapped her plan to return to Saudi Arabia to drive legally for the first time on the same road where she had been detained.

The activist pointed to death threats and a call telling her to keep silence. However, she has refused to back down and expressed hope to raise global awareness about the Saudi guardianship system.

“I am so happy I want to be there. I know Saudi Arabia will never be the same again. Women will have easy access to transportation and that means they will be more part of the workforce,” Sharif said.

“Women driving is just the first step - we have a long way to go,” she said.

Earlier this month, a UN report blasted the Riyadh regime for persecuting those exercising free speech, saying reports of the kingdom’s so-called liberalization efforts are “completely wide of the mark.”

Mohammed bin Salman was appointed the first in line to the Saudi throne by his father last June.

Since then, he has engaged in a string of radical economic and social projects in a bid to portray himself as “reformist.” But those projects have been widely seen as being more about consolidating his personal power rather than bringing about real change in Saudi Arabia.