



Turkey's Opposition to Announce Presidential Candidate in February

ISTANBUL (Reuters) – Turkey's six-party opposition alliance is set to announce in February their presidential candidate to challenge President Tayyip Erdogan's 20-year rule in elections set for May, an opposition party official said on Friday. Turkey is heading towards one of the most consequential votes in the century-long history of the modern republic and Erdogan signaled on Wednesday that the presidential and parliament elections would be on May 14, a month ahead of schedule. "The name of the (six-party opposition's) presidential candidate will probably be declared sometime in February," Unal Cevikoz, an adviser of the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu, told reporters.

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# Zionist Troops Kill More Palestinians During Raid on Refugee Camp

West Bank (Dispatches) – **Zionist troops have shot dead two Palestinians during a raid on the Jenin refugee camp in the northern West Bank, as tensions continue to escalate across the occupied territories.**

Palestinian media outlets reported that Israeli military forces stormed the camp on Thursday morning, triggering violent confrontations with local residents.

The two victims were identified by Palestinian media as 58-year-old Jawad Bawatqa and 26-year-old Adham Jabarin.

Bawatqa was a teacher who was shot by a Zionist sniper and succumbed to his injuries.

Jabarin was also one of the commanders of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, a coalition of West Bank-based Palestinian armed groups.

The latest deaths bring the number of Palestinians killed by Zionists so far in 2023 to 17, including four children.

Zionist troops launch raids on various cities of the occupied West Bank almost on a daily basis under the pretext of detaining what it calls "wanted" Palestinians. The raids usually lead to violent confrontations with residents.

In another development, dozens of Zionist settlers stormed the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in occupied East Al-Quds, in yet another provocative move against Palestinian worshippers.

Eyewitnesses told Ma'an news agency that the raid by the radical settlers was carried out under heavy protection from the occupying regime's troops. They said



**Palestinian women mourn for schoolteacher Jawad Bawaqna, 57, foreground and Adham Jabareen, 28, during their funeral in the in the West Bank city of Jenin, Thursday, Jan. 19, 2023.**

the settlers raised the occupying regime's flags and performed provocative dances inside the vicinity.

The occupation troops also deployed soldiers inside and around the mosque to secure the settlers' intrusions, said the eyewitnesses.

Zionist troops also attacked scores of Palestinians, including young men, in the mosque's courtyards through the Bab al-Amoud area and the Old City. They tried to force the Palestinians to leave the site to allow the colonizers to tour it, leading to protests.

Palestinian resistance movement Hamas called upon Palestinians from all walks of life to mobilize en masse, increase their presence at the mosque's compound, and protect the sacred site against recurrent incursions by settlers.

"We hail the Palestinian people in occupied Palestinian territories and across the West Bank who stand

steadfast against the Israeli occupation violations and crimes," it said in a statement.

Hamas also called on the Arab and Muslim Ummah, along with the free people of the world, to "support the steadfastness of the Palestinian people and work toward protecting them against the Israeli occupation's violations."

### Prisoner Released After 40 Years

Palestinian prisoner Maher Younis has been released after forty years in the Zionist regime's jails for resistance against occupation forces.

Maher, 65, along with several others including his cousin, Karim Younis, was put behind bars in 1983 on charges of capturing and killing a Zionist trooper three years earlier.

Maher was initially sentenced

to death, but his sentence was reduced to 40 years in jail. He was ultimately released on Thursday, two weeks after Karim.

In his hometown of Arara, Maher was warmly welcomed despite the regime's decision to ban any gathering around his house. His mother showered him with petals and adorned him with a traditional white gown, a necklace of red flowers, and a ring, which belonged to his father, who died in 2008.

"The best gift is to see our people walk on the path of reconciliation, and to live in freedom, as there was hope, after 40 years, to live in the homeland freely," he said.

"The attempts of the [Zionist] occupation and its policy of diverting our joy will not succeed. Although there is a policy of arrogance, they will not prevent our joy. Palestine is implanted in our hearts and its flag is drawn in the hearts, and any attempts to remove it from us will not succeed," added the former prisoner.

Despite the release of the two cousins, the Zionist regime is holding 23 Palestinians who have been imprisoned since before the signing of the Oslo accords between the Palestinians and Israel in 1993, which called for the release of all Palestinian prisoners.

The Palestinian Prisoner's Society (PPS) said in a statement that Mohammad al-Tous, who has been incarcerated since 1985, has become the longest-serving Palestinian freedom fighter in the regime's jails after the release of Karim and Maher.

## Russia: Evidence Shows U.S. Secretly Sponsoring Daesh in Afghanistan



**Zamir Kabulov, Russian presidential envoy to Afghanistan, says the U.S. is seeking to secretly sponsor Daesh.**

MOSCOW (RIA Novosti/Bloomberg) – **There is evidence that the United States is trying to establish ties with the opponents of the current authorities of Afghanistan and secretly sponsor the Daesh terrorist organization, Russian special presidential envoy for Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov said on Friday.**

"Yes, there is such data, they [the U.S. authorities] do it not for good, but for harm, because they really want to avenge their shameful military-political defeat in Afghanistan and, in retaliation, they do everything so that peace is not established in this long-suffering land, but even worse is that, in addition to contacts with the armed opposition in Afghanistan, the Anglo-Saxons secretly sponsor the Daesh," Kabulov told Russian broadcaster, RIA Novosti reported.

Since the Taliban return to power in Afghanistan in mid-August, militants have allegedly carried out several terrorist attacks across the country, including at the Kabul airport in August in which more than 180 people were killed, and on a Shia mosque in Kunduz in October that resulted in more than 150 people being killed.

The United States withdrew

from Afghanistan in the specified time-frame, but did so haphazardly, causing chaos at the Kabul airport, with Afghans desperately attempting to make it out of the country, and 13 American soldiers killed in a bombing perpetrated by a local branch of the Daesh terror group.

The Taliban government has not been recognized by the international community, although some countries, including Russia and China, are holding diplomatic meetings with representatives of the movement to rectify the humanitarian situation in the country.

According to the UN, Daesh attacks have resulted in around 700 deaths since the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan.

Afghan Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi has told a United Nations official that Taliban leaders are angry over U.S. sanctions. "Afghanistan has been sanctioned, the banking system has been sanctioned, and our businessmen are facing serious difficulties. They can't even transfer money abroad to import food and fuel," Muttaqi told UN Deputy Secretary General Amina Mohammed in Kabul Wednesday. "What action has the UN taken that I can pass on to my leaders and people?"

## Trio of Suicide Drones Strike U.S. Base in Syria

BEIRUT (AP/Xinhua) – **Three suicide drones attacked a U.S. base in eastern Syria on Friday, wounding two militants, the U.S. military said. No Americans were hurt in the attack.**

It was not clear who was behind the drone attack. Sleeper cells of the Daesh terrorist group are active in the area.

Two of the drones were shot down and the third struck the compound at al-Tanf base where

the borders of Syria, Iraq and Jordan meet, the U.S. military said.

The military said the drone that struck the building wounded two members of the so-called Syrian Free Army, who received medical treatment.

Opposition to U.S. military presence in Syria is at its highest. There are roughly 900 U.S. troops in Syria, including in the north and the farther south and

east of the country.

The Syrian Foreign Ministry on Thursday said the United States is funding smearing campaigns against the Syrian state.

In a statement, the ministry said the United States is spending millions of dollars on suspicious media outlets, aiming at distorting the image of the Syrian state, Xinhua news agency reported.

"Such policies reflect the insis-

tence on continuing to mislead local, regional and international public opinion, and exposes the continuation of the U.S. attack targeting Syria's sovereignty and interference in its internal affairs," the ministry said.

It noted that funding media campaigns against the Syrian state aims to cover the crimes of the United States in Syria and its theft of Syrian treasures and natural resources.

## Ticketless Fans, Organizers Blamed for Deadly Stadium Stampede in Iraq

BASRA (Al Jazeera) – **Family members of one of the football fans killed in the stampede at a stadium in southern Iraq ahead of the final have blamed ticketless fans and organizers for the deaths of at least four people.**

Thousands of fans without tickets had gathered outside Basra International Stadium on Thursday ahead of the final between the hosts and Oman. According to witnesses, pushing and shoving in the surging crowd led to the stampede, which also injured dozens of people.

Hamza Adnan Ahmed, a 25-year-old from Baghdad, was one of those who died on Thursday. His family told Al Jazeera that Ahmed, an engineer, had come to Basra with his brother to attend all the matches.

"My family and I were shocked to hear of my brother's death," another of Ahmed's brothers who was in Baghdad at the time of the incident

told Al Jazeera.

"The last time he called us was on Wednesday night, and he told us that he was so happy to be in Basra for the final. He said he was looking forward to celebrating in the stadium and experiencing the atmosphere in the city. Unfortunately, he was unable to do any of that.

"My other brother who was accompanying him survived, but Ahmed was not able to push himself out of the crowd.

"I blame the ticketless fans who tried to force their way into the stadium [for this tragedy]. I blame the government and the organizers who failed to avoid this tragedy, I blame the Ministry of Youth and Sport. All of them share the responsibility for what happened and for my brother's death."

Al Jazeera was unable to reach Basra's health office or the Iraqi Football Association for com-

ment.

Zayn Kareem, a 24-year-old Basra resident, was caught up in the stampede but managed to get out of it.

"The crowd pushed each other to gain entry. I was about to die. I had a ticket but was unable to go in. I went back home and watched it with my family," Kareem told Al Jazeera.

"It was a really messy day, but thankfully, I survived," said the football fan, who also blamed fans who had arrived without tickets for the crush.

"The Basra government opened another stadium for the fans to go and watch the match on big screens," Kareem said. "There were big screens on Basra's main streets too, and they should've watched it at other places."

Mustafa Qadir, 31, also of Basra, described the scene as something he "will never be able to forget".

## Barcelona Moves to Cancel Sister City Agreement With Tel Aviv

MADRID (Middle East Eye) – **The Spanish city of Barcelona will decide whether to end its twin city relationship with Tel Aviv next month over "crimes that Israel commits against the Palestinian people", according to Israeli media.**

Hundreds of pro-Palestinian protesters gathered in front of Barcelona City Hall earlier this week, urging politicians to cut ties with the occupied city.

The protest comes amid a growing campaign by activists, resulting in an official petition run via Barcelona City Hall that gathered more than 4,000 signatures urging the municipality to cut ties with the occupying regime and its twin city of Tel Aviv.

The petition urged authorities to "denounce the crime of apartheid against the Palestinian people and, accordingly, to adopt the relevant procedures to suspend institutional relations with Israel, including the Barce-

lona - Gaza - Tel Aviv friendship and cooperation agreement".

The campaign also called for a "motion to encourage Barcelona City Council and the Municipal Government to strengthen cooperation with Palestinian and international organizations, including Israeli ones, that work to put an end to the violation of the human rights of the Palestinian population".

Barcelona, Tel Aviv and Gaza City signed a friendship and cooperation agreement in 1998. Pro-Palestinian activists have called for Barcelona's relationship with Gaza City to continue.

The proposal was initiated by the Spanish city's leftist mayor, Ada Colau, who is working alongside other pro-Palestinian groups to end the long-standing agreement.

In 2015, Amsterdam dropped proposals to become a sister city with Tel Aviv over concerns about the human rights situation in the occupied territories.