

Tunisia presidential hopefuls line up for September polls

Author:

AFP

ID:

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Fri, 2019-08-02 11:23

TUNIS: Presidential hopefuls in Tunisia began registering their candidacies on Friday for snap September polls called after the death of 92-year-old leader Beji Caid Essebsi.

Eight would-be candidates, including media magnate Nabil Karoui, submitted their papers to the North African country's electoral commission.

Prime Minister Youssef Chahed has not yet officially registered, although his party said on Wednesday he would stand in the polls.

Originally scheduled for November, the vote was brought forward to September 15 following Essebsi's death in late July.

Karoui was charged with money laundering this month after stating his intention to stand in the polls.

He was nearly removed from the race in June when the parliament passed an amended electoral code that would bar any electoral candidate who handed out "favors in cash or in kind" in the year before the vote.

But Essebsi neither rejected nor enacted the bill, leaving the door open for Karoui to run.

The media mogul was an active supporter of Essebsi's election in 2014 and has become the prime minister's fiercest rival.

Chahed, who studied agricultural engineering, entered politics after the 2011 uprising which ousted autocratic president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.

Launched at the start of the year, his Tahia Tounes has become the second largest party in parliament, behind Islamist-inspired Ennahdha.

Longtime Ben Ali opponent and head of Tunisia's Democratic Current party Mohamed Abbou also submitted his candidacy on Friday.

He was joined by Abir Moussi, the only women so far running in the polls.

She heads a party formed from the remnants of Ben Ali's ruling party and has called for the exclusion of Islamists, including Ennahdha.

Presidential hopefuls have until August 9 to register, with the commission set to provide a final list of candidates on August 31.

The campaigns are scheduled to run from September 2 to September 13, with the preliminary results announced two days after the polls.

A date for the second round of presidential elections has not yet been decided, but the electoral commission said it would be held no later than November 3.



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[Beji Caid Essebsi](#)

[Youssef Chahed](#)

[Nabil Karoui](#)

Tunisia prime minister to run for president following Essebsi's death
Tunisia bids farewell to president Essebsi at state funeral

[Yemen's Daesh affiliate claims Aden police station attack](#)

Author:

AP

ID:

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Fri, 2019-08-02 10:11

SANAA: Daesh's affiliate in Yemen has claimed responsibility for a deadly attack on a police station in the southern city of Aden the previous day. That attack killed 11 people and involved suicide bombers using a car, a bus and motorcycles laden with explosives that targeted a police station in the

city's Omar al-Mokhtar neighborhood during a morning police roll-call. It was one of two major attacks in Aden on Thursday that killed a total of 51 people. The other attack involved a ballistic missile fired by Yemen's Houthi militants at a military parade and killed at least 40 troops.



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Al-Qaeda attack kills 19 soldiers in south Yemen: security officials
Tehran blamed for Yemen carnage after scores die in parade attack

[**Airstrikes halt in Syria's Idlib as**](#)

truce goes into effect

Author:

AP

ID:

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Fri, 2019-08-02 07:41

BEIRUT: Opposition activists said airstrikes have stopped in northwestern Syria after a truce went into effect there, seeking to reduce violence in the wake of a three-month government offensive.

Syrian state media quoted an unnamed military official as saying the conditional cease-fire went into effect at midnight Thursday.

The reports say the rebels will have to retreat 20 kilometers from demilitarized areas around the stronghold agreed to in a cease-fire deal reached last September.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights says the province of Idlib is witnessing "cautious calm" on Friday as warplanes stopped flying over the province.

Ahmad Sheikho of the opposition's Syrian Civil Defense, also known as White Helmet, says that since midnight "there are no warplanes in the air" but that artillery shelling continued.



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First group of Lebanese, Syrian, Palestinian pilgrims leave Beirut for Hajj
Syrian regime gains ground in opposition bastion

Syrian regime gains ground in opposition bastion

Author:

Thu, 2019-08-01 22:48

BEIRUT: Syrian regime forces have gained some ground in the country's last opposition bastion during a Russian-backed offensive that aid agencies warn is growing bloodier.

The wave of violence in northwest Syria since late April has killed more than 400 civilians and forced more than 440,000 to flee toward the Turkish border, the UN said last week.

Syria's army seized a handful of villages, fields and hills in the Hama countryside in the past two days, a military media unit for Lebanon's Hezbollah, which fights alongside Damascus, said on Thursday.

The region – including Idlib province and parts of nearby Hama – is part of the last major stronghold of armed opposition to Syria's Bashar Assad, who has vowed to reclaim all of Syria, though his side has not made major advances in this latest assault.

In rare public comments, the Syrian army's political chief pledged to seize Idlib if Russia, Assad's key ally, does not reach a diplomatic solution with Turkey, long an opposition backer.

Airstrikes by the Syrian regime and its allies have hit schools, hospitals, markets and bakeries, UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet said last week. She denounced the "apparent international indifference" to the mounting civilian casualties.

Bombing has escalated in the last four weeks, killing and wounding more people than at any time this year, the nonprofit Doctors Without Borders said on Wednesday night.

At least 33 children were killed since the end of June, more than during all of 2018, the charity Save the Children said last week. "Bodies, some torn into pieces or burned beyond recognition, are still being recovered from the rubble," it said.

Maj. Gen. Hasan Hasan, head of the Syrian Army's political bureau, said on Thursday that the military path to eliminate "terrorism" in the north is ongoing.

He told the pro-regime Al-Watan newspaper that it would be good if Moscow or Tehran could find a solution through talks with Ankara, which has Turkish forces stationed in the northwest.

“But at the same time, when matters reach a dead end, then the Syria Arab Army which cleansed all these vast areas ... will not stop at all, neither at Idlib nor at any area,” he said.

The dominant force in Idlib is Tahrir Al-Sham, formerly the Nusra Front, and factions backed by Turkey also have a presence in the region.

The regime has described its operations as responses to militant violations and has denied targeting civilians during the eight-year war.

Idlib falls within a “de-escalation zone” agreed on last year.



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Syrian regime, Russian forces kill over 40 civilians in Idlib province:
MonitorUN experts: Daesh aims for resurgence in Iraq, Syria

[Egypt calls for Palestinian state during Kushner visit](#)

Author:

Associated Press

ID:

1564671370480079700

Thu, 2019-08-01 14:44

CAIRO: Egypt's president has reiterated his support for the creation of a Palestinian state during talks with White House envoy Jared Kushner. Kushner is visiting the region to rally support for the administration's efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. President Donald Trump's administration has not endorsed a two-state solution, which has long been seen internationally as the only viable path to peace.

Egypt issued a statement Thursday saying President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi told Kushner that Egypt supports efforts aimed at resolving the conflict "on the basis of a two-state solution and the creation of Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital."

Kushner, Trump's son-in-law, is promoting the economic component of a yet-unreleased peace plan.

The Palestinians have cut ties with the White House, saying Trump's policies are unfairly biased toward Israel.



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White House's Kushner to finalize Palestinian economic plan on Middle East tour