

# Jordan parliamentary elections due for Nov. 10

Author:

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AMMAN: Jordan is moving to hold elections for the House of Representatives, according to a Royal Court statement issued on Wednesday.

Ali Khawaldeh, director-general of the Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs, told Arab News the elections will likely take place on Nov. 10. The Independent Election Commission is expected to recommend a date for the elections in the coming days.

Amer Bani Amer, director-general of Rased, a Jordanian NGO that monitors elections and government activities, told Arab News the current political atmosphere is ripe for a different kind of parliament.

"The robust governmental anti-corruption activities, as well as effective anti-COVID-19 policies, mean that Jordanians are likely to elect a different kind of parliament," he said.

Amer said the effectiveness and success of a younger parliament will encourage the majority of Jordanians, who are young, to vote for younger candidates.

Samar Muhareb, CEO of the Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development Society, told Arab News that events in Jordan make her pessimistic about the state of democracy in the country.

"Democracy is not only elections, it is the rule of law, freedom of expression and assembly, separation of powers, and an independent judiciary and robust civil society. The crackdown on the teachers' union, and the absence of freedom of unions and expression doesn't bode well for democratic change," Muhareb said.

She expressed concern that money will continue to play a role in elections, with the wealthy entering parliament regardless of their abilities. Muhareb added that the role of civil society in Jordan needs to be evaluated.

"They make a cosmetic intervention at the time of elections without real involvement in building a democratic and inclusive society that is ready to make real change," she said.

Rami Adwan, who promotes political participation among women and youth, told Arab News that many young political activists think the space for civil society is narrowing.

"At present I am not optimistic that elections could produce a different parliament unless the youth realize that they must act to change those who will be in charge of setting their future," he said.

Musa Shteivi, a professor of sociology at Jordan University, told Arab News that the decision to hold elections on time is important.

“The decision of His Majesty to hold elections on time sends a positive message internally and externally that Jordan is stable,” he said. He added that despite the Independent Election Commission restoring trust to the electoral process, Jordan’s weak party system means a strong parliament is unlikely.

Layla Nafaa, a veteran women’s rights activist, told Arab News that efforts to increase the women’s quota from 12 to 17 percent have failed.

“Our only hope for more women in parliament now is for more women to run for office and for women and men to be more involved in the electoral process and choose women, rather than follow tradition and other reasons to choose men,” she said.



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Jordan elections to

be held in September Jordan to reopen to 'low risk' countries in August

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# Yemenis optimistic as sides accept Saudi plan to implement Riyadh Agreement

Wed, 2020-07-29 21:25

AL-MUKALLA: Yemenis on Wednesday expressed cautious optimism after the government and separatists accepted a Saudi-brokered proposal to accelerate the implementation of the Riyadh Agreement.

Leading figures also praised the Kingdom for its pivotal role in sponsoring and mediating tough talks between the two sides that had led to the formation of a new government and the ending of hostilities in southern Yemen.

In a tweet, Abdulmalik Al-Mekhlafi, Yemen's former deputy prime minister and an adviser to the country's president, described the news as representing the start of a "new phase" in bringing peace to the war-torn nation.

Yemen's President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi issued presidential decrees mandating incumbent Prime Minister Maeen Abdulmalik Saeed to form a new government and for the appointment of a new governor and security director for Aden province.

The separatist Southern Transitional Council (STC) reciprocated by abandoning its controversial self-rule declaration and pledging its adherence to the terms of the new proposal, including allowing the new government to resume duties from Aden.

The Yemeni government said it would comply with the Riyadh Agreement and its related implementation mechanism, including halting military operations in Abyan.

"The government appreciates the efforts of brothers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and their support for the implementation of the agreement that aims at establishing security and stability, preserving the unity of Yemen, and pushing the wheel of development," said government spokesperson Rajeh Badi in a brief statement carried by the official Saba news agency.

Ali Al-Katheri, a senior STC member who took part in the discussions in Riyadh, told Arab News that the Kingdom's diplomatic efforts over recent months had paved the way for the success of talks. He said the agreement would help unify military efforts against the Iranian-backed Houthis and return stability to Aden and other southern provinces.

"We look forward to more efforts by brothers in the Kingdom and the UAE to move toward achieving the urgent implementation of the provisions of the Riyadh Agreement and uniting the efforts of all parties in confronting the Houthi militia and terrorist groups," Al-Katheri added.

Since early 2018, Aden, the interim capital of Yemen, has been the scene of

sporadic battles between the two sides that have damaged the city's infrastructure and paralyzed government bodies.

Aden residents were hopeful that implementation of the Riyadh Agreement would lead to a revival of government institutions, the paying of salaries, and the restoration of public services such as electricity.

"People have been greatly affected, first by the war with the Houthis, and later by the war between the government and the STC," Fatehi Ben Lazerq, editor of popular Yemeni news site Aden Al-Ghad, told Arab News.

"There is no option other than a political settlement that would bring back the situation to normal. The situation was not that great before the beginning of hostilities between the government and STC, but things got worse after the war between them," Ben Lazerq said.

When the separatists announced self-rule in April and expelled the government from Aden and other southern provinces, the government mounted a military offensive in Abyan aimed at recapturing Aden. Dozens of people were killed in heavy fighting that blocked the main road linking Abyan with other provinces and damaged power and water lines.

Shouqra and neighboring Sheikh Salem became the main battlegrounds, and residents there on Wednesday expressed delight over the Saudi-brokered peace proposal.

"The first thing they should do is withdraw military forces from Shouqra and fix electricity and water supplies," said Hassan Salem, a resident of Shouqra. He added that some areas had been without electricity and water since the beginning of the government's military offensive in May. "I was very happy when I heard the news about the agreement."

Under the proposal, Yemeni government forces and separatists will pull out of contested areas in Abyan and move military units and equipment from Aden.



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Opposing sides in Yemen accept Saudi proposal to implement Riyadh agreement  
Riyadh Agreement on Yemen must be implemented: UN Security Council  
P5 ambassadors

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## [US sanctions target Syrian president's son, Syrian army unit](#)

Wed, 2020-07-29 17:52

WASHINGTON: The United States on Wednesday imposed fresh sanctions aimed at depriving the Syrian government of funds, and warned that Washington would blacklist anyone doing business with President Bashar Al-Assad's government until he supports a negotiated end to the country's nearly decade-long war. Among the 14 blacklisted Wednesday were Assad's son, Hafez, a Syrian businessman and nine entities a senior US official accused of helping to fund the Syrian government's "campaign of terror", as well as the Syrian Arab Army's First Division unit, among others.

"The steady drumbeat of designations on persons and entities that support the Assad regime will continue until the regime and its associates cease obstructing a peaceful political resolution of the conflict" as called for by

the UN Security Council, a senior US official told reporters. The sanctions, imposed under the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act and other measures, come as the Syrian leader grapples with a deepening economic crisis after a decade of war.

It marks the second round of sanctions imposed by the Washington under the Caesar Act, which aims to deter “bad actors who continue to aid and finance the Assad regime’s atrocities against the Syrian people while simply enriching themselves.”

“It is time for Assad’s needless, brutal war to end. This, above all, is what our sanctions campaign is meant to bring about,” US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in a statement.

Already, US and European Union sanctions have frozen the assets of the Syrian state and hundreds of companies and individuals. Washington has banned American exports to and investment in Syria, as well as transactions involving oil and hydrocarbon products.

The new sanctions cover many more sectors, and they can freeze assets of anyone dealing with Syria, regardless of nationality. The measure also targets those dealing with entities from Russia and Iran, Assad’s main backers.

Syrian authorities blame Western sanctions for widespread hardship among ordinary residents, where the currency collapse has led to soaring prices and people struggling to afford food and basic supplies.



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Syrian tycoon says front companies used to dodge sanctions as rift with Assad widens  
UN Security Council credibility at stake on Syria sanctions talk - France

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## [Banksy painting raises millions for Palestinian children's hospital](#)

Author:

Wed, 2020-07-29 14:30

LONDON: A triptych by British artist Banksy of the Mediterranean Sea depicting the European refugee crisis has sold for more than £2.2 million (\$2.9 million) at auction in London.

The three-paneled work, "Mediterranean Sea View 2017," was put up for sale at Sotheby's auction house on July 29, where it was initially expected to fetch £1.2 million for a children's hospital in the West Bank, the Bethlehem Arab Society for Rehabilitation.

The money raised will be put toward an acute stroke unit and children's rehabilitation equipment.

The work was based on three romantic-period oil paintings of the sea, and depicted life jackets, oars and other detritus on the shore from abandoned refugee boats – a comment on the mass movement of people from the Middle East and North Africa to Europe due to a series of ongoing natural and man-made events, including the wars in Iraq, Syria and Libya.

"In 'Mediterranean Sea View 2017,' Banksy corrupts three found oil paintings with his own witty re-workings to create something that, while posing as a 19th-century seascape, spotlights one of the burning issues of the 21st century," said Alex Branczik, Sotheby's head of contemporary art for Europe.

"This triptych hangs in Sotheby's galleries alongside works by some of history's greatest landscape painters, including Bellotto, Van Goyen and Turner. Banksy's work, however, stands alone for its potent political message."

Banksy, who keeps his true identity a well-guarded secret, rose to international prominence on the back of graffiti art with strong themes of

political and social commentary.

In recent years, the twin issues of the Mediterranean migration crisis and the Israel-Palestine conflict have played a major role in his work.

In 2015, he created an interactive work in the form of dystopian theme park "Dismaland," in the British town of Weston-super-Mare, featuring refugee boats and anarchist themes.

He also opened the Walled-Off Hotel in Bethlehem in 2017, a play on the name of the famous Waldorf hotel chain.

The Walled-Off Hotel boasts the "worst view of any hotel in the world," located next to Israel's barrier wall in the West Bank.

Guests can experience just 25 minutes of direct sunlight per day. "Mediterranean Sea View 2017" had previously hung in the hotel.

In "The Son of a Migrant from Syria," daubed on a wall in a French migrant camp dubbed "The Jungle" in the port of Calais in 2015, Banksy showed the deceased billionaire founder of tech giant Apple, Steve Jobs, as a refugee, carrying nothing but a sack of belongings and an early Apple computer. Jobs's biological father Abdulfattah Jandali was from the Syrian city of Homs.

Banksy's most recent work involved spraying a train carriage on the London Underground with messages about COVID-19.

Controversy was caused when it emerged that it was removed as part of routine cleaning by the network's operator, Transport for London.



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Banksy painting raises millions for Palestinian children's hospital  
Banksy art to materialise in Vienna with a little Saudi help

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## [Extremists try to block honor for music legend Umm Kulthum](#)

Wed, 2020-07-29 02:43

JEDDAH: Right-wing extremists in Israel are trying to block the renaming of a street in honor of the late Egyptian music legend Umm Kulthum.

Authorities in Haifa – Israel's third largest city, about 10 percent of whose 300,000 residents are Arab – want to draw attention to its diversity.

City councillor Raja Zaatreh said honoring Umm Kulthum was an appropriate way of recognizing the "presence and roots" of Israel's Arab community, which regularly faces discrimination. Haifa was "a model of coexistence between Arabs and Jews," council leader Einat Kalisch-Rotem said.

But opponents of the honor, led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's

notoriously divisive son Yair, are determined to block it. He said the proposal was “shameful and crazy.”

Right-wing Likud party Knesset member Ariel Kallner said he was saddened by Haifa’s decision to honor a woman “who called for the destruction of the Jewish state.”

Commentator Eldad Beck attacked the plan “to commemorate one of the biggest and most influential enemies of Israel, who wanted to annihilate the state.”

Umm Kulthum, who died aged 76 in 1975, performed in Haifa in the 1930s. She was hugely popular in the Middle East and worldwide – among her fans were Bob Dylan and Beyonce – and not least in Israel itself.

Israeli musician Ariel Cohen said many Jews with Arab roots “grew up with Umm Kulthum,” and one of her most famous songs, Enta Omri, was translated into Hebrew.

Cohen said it was true that Umm Kulthum sang patriotic songs during conflicts between Egypt and Israel in the 1960s and 1970s, but, “it is natural for singers to sing patriotic songs in times of war.”

He added: “Umm Kulthum is not an enemy.”



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Bringing Umm Kulthum to London is my gift to her, says Saudi musical producer Umm Kulthum returns virtually for Tantora show in Al-Ula