

US House of Representatives recognizes 'Armenian genocide'

Author:

Wed, 2019-10-30 01:16

WASHINGTON: The US House of Representatives took the historic step Tuesday of passing a resolution officially recognizing the "Armenian genocide," a move sure to anger Turkey amid already-heightened tensions with Washington. Cheers and applause erupted when the chamber voted 405 to 11 in support of the resolution "affirming the United States record on the Armenian Genocide," a first for the US Congress where similar measures have been introduced but never reached the floor for a vote.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said she was honored to join her colleagues "in solemn remembrance of one of the great atrocities of the 20th century: the systematic murder of more than 1.5 million Armenian men, women and children by the Ottoman Empire."

The Armenians say the mass killings of their people from 1915 to 1917 amounted to genocide, a claim recognized by some 30 countries. Turkey strongly denies the accusation of genocide.



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Why the Armenian Genocide won't be forgotten
Turkey condemns French declaration of Armenian genocide commemoration day

[Jordan recalls envoy to Israel to protest detention of two citizens](#)

Author:

Reuters

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Tue, 2019-10-29 20:32

AMMAN:Jordan recalled its ambassador to Israel for consultations in protest at Israel's refusal to heed its demands to release two citizens it said were illegally detained for months without charges, the kingdom's foreign minister said on Tuesday.

Ayman Safadi said in a tweet he held the Israeli government responsible for the lives of Hiba Labadi and Abdul Rahman Miri whose "health conditions have severely deteriorated," adding this was a first "step." He did not elaborate.



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Jordan's king calls for investment in country's youth Saudi King receives King of Jordan, Indian PM Modi

Egypt, Ethiopia to meet in Washington over Nile dam

Author:

AFP

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Tue, 2019-10-29 20:30

CAIRO: Egypt's foreign minister confirmed Tuesday that his country would take part in mediated talks in Washington next month over a controversial dam Ethiopia is building on the Nile.

Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia "will meet in the United States on 6 November... to break the deadlock in the ongoing negotiations regarding the Renaissance Dam," Sameh Shoukry said at a press conference held with his German counterpart Heiko Maas.

Addis Ababa insists its \$4 billion hydro-electric barrage is necessary to provide the country with much-needed electricity.

But Egypt fears the structure could drastically stem the flow of the Nile, on which it depends for around 90 percent of its water supply.

After calling for international mediation to break the stalemate in nine-year talks, Cairo accepted a US invitation to meet earlier in the month, but no date was set.

Shoukry noted Tuesday that US officials would be present at the talks acting as "intermediaries that can draw divergent viewpoints closer together...to bring about a fair and just agreement."

A US official said earlier this month that President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi had asked US President Donald Trump to get involved in the dispute when they met in September on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

Trump agreed to reach out to Ethiopia and offered the "good offices" of Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin to mediate, the official said on condition of anonymity.

Ethiopia and Egypt's leaders met on the sidelines of Russia's Africa summit on Thursday to discuss a contentious dam project on the River Nile, a diplomat said.

Russia, which was hosting an Africa Summit in its Black Sea resort of Sochi in an attempt to revive its Soviet-era influence on the continent, has said it is ready to play a role in resolving the conflict.

Last week, Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed told parliament that "no force can stop Ethiopia from building the dam."

Abiy, who won this year's Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to heal tensions with neighboring Eritrea, emphasised however that negotiations would be the best way to resolve the issue.

The Nile is a lifeline supplying both water and electricity to the 10 countries it traverses.

Its main tributaries, the White and Blue Niles, converge in Sudanese capital Khartoum before flowing north through Egypt to drain into the Mediterranean Sea.

Analysts fear the three Nile basin countries could be drawn into a conflict if the dispute is not resolved before the dam begins operating.



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Egypt says accepts US invite to meet on Nile dam dispute
Egypt to press for outside mediator in Ethiopia dam dispute

Cleric Al-Sadr urges rivals to help oust Iraq's prime minister

Author:

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Tue, 2019-10-29 15:13

NAJAF: The Iraqi cleric Muqtada Al-Sadr joined thousands of demonstrators in the holy city of Najaf on Tuesday amid a spiralling political crisis sparked by deadly anti-government protests.

At least 240 people have died and 8,000 been wounded since demonstrations broke out on Oct. 1 over unemployment and corruption, before evolving into calls for the government to quit.

Al-Sadr has spearheaded demands for Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi's resignation and early parliamentary elections.

He later called on his biggest political rival to work with him on ousting the country's prime minister, Adel Abdul-Mahdi. Al-Sadr, who leads parliament's largest bloc, asked Hadi Al-Amiri, leader of the second-largest, to help him introduce a vote of no confidence.

On Tuesday, Al-Sadr was spotted by an AFP correspondent amid thousands of anti-government demonstrators in his native Najaf, a holy city in southern Iraq.

He was seen in a white car in the city just after airport sources told AFP he had landed from neighboring Iran.

Al-Sadr himself is one of the current government's two main sponsors, after his Sairoon bloc won the largest share of parliament's 329 seats in a vote last year.

But he tweeted in support of an initial six-day wave of protests that rocked the country early this month and resumed last week.

Demonstrators have so far been unimpressed by premier Abdul-Mahdi's laundry list of reforms, which includes hiring drives and more social welfare.

Instead, they have increasingly pushed for early elections, a new government and a reworked constitution.

After failing to meet several times, parliament on Monday agreed to explore early polls and constitutional amendments, summoning Abdel Mahdi for questioning.

They reiterated their demand Tuesday, calling on him to appear at parliament headquarters "immediately."

In footage aired on local media, MPs from the largest bloc of Sairoon – tied to Al-Sadr – could be heard chanting, "At once! At once!"

The parliament is deeply divided, with Al-Sadr backing protests while second-largest bloc Fatah – the political branch of the Hashed Al-Shaabi paramilitary force – backs the government.

Several Hashed offices have been torched in recent days in southern Iraq in what observers say is likely an escalation of the rivalry between Al-Sadr and

the Hashed.

Abdul-Mahdi has urged Al-Sadr to agree with Fatah chief Hadi Al-Ameri on a way forward.

"If the goal of elections is to change the government, then there is a shorter way: for you to agree with Mr. Ameri to form a new government," the premier wrote in a public letter to the cleric on Tuesday.

"Once this agreement is reached, the prime minister can submit his resignation and the new government can receive its orders in days, if not hours," said Abdel Mahdi.

He dismissed the idea of bringing forward polls, saying, "But the fate of early elections would be unknown. Will its results be definitive?"

The chaotic protest movement is unprecedented in Iraq, both because of its apparently independent nature and the ensuing violence.

The first wave of protests starting October 1 left 157 people dead, mostly protesters in Baghdad, according to a government probe which acknowledged "excessive force" was used.

A second wave starting Thursday has left at least 83 dead.

Overnight, at least one protester was killed in the Shiite holy city of Karbala, said the Iraqi Human Rights Commission.

The city's forensics chief told AFP a 24-year-old had been shot in the head, but the governor and security forces said it was "categorically false" anyone had died.

Rallies escalated on Tuesday, with trade unions representing teachers, lawyers and dentists all declaring strikes lasting several days.

In Iraq's southern cities of Hilla, Diwaniyah, Kut and Nasiriyah, most government offices remained closed on Tuesday for lack of staff.

Students gathered in those cities for their third day of demonstrations, ignoring orders by the higher education minister to return to class.

In the capital, protesters were massing on a key bridge linking their main gathering place in Tahrir Square to the Green Zone, where government offices and foreign embassies are based.

They managed to breach a first barrier set up by security forces, who have been holding back demonstrators there in recent days with volleys of tear gas.

Many had spent the night in tents or abandoned buildings in Tahrir in defiance of a curfew declared by the army.

"Their curfew changed nothing," 30-year-old protester Duaa said on Tuesday morning.

"Did the government think we would stay at home? No way."

About 60 percent of Iraq's 40-million population is under the age of 25.

But youth unemployment stands at 25 percent, while one in five people live below the poverty line, despite the vast oil wealth of OPEC's second-largest crude producer.

"We don't want this government any more. We want a transitional government and constitutional change," another female protester said.

"I'm a teacher, I have a salary, I have a house – but the young unemployed people are my brothers and relatives, too."



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Masked men attack protesters in Iraq's Karbala, killing 18 Iraqi PM Abdul-Mahdi refuses to resign over deadly protests

[Pullout of Kurdish forces in northern Syria complete: Moscow](#)

Author:

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Tue, 2019-10-29 15:13

MOSCOW: Russia said Tuesday that Kurdish forces in northern Syria had withdrawn from areas along Turkey's border as planned under a deal between Moscow and Ankara.

"The withdrawal of armed units from territory where a security corridor

should be created has been completed ahead of time,” Russian news agencies quoted Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu as saying on a visit to Armenia. “Syrian border guards and our military police have been deployed there,” Shoigu told his Armenian counterpart Davit Tonoyan. A deadline for the withdrawal had been set at 6:00 p.m. local time (1500 GMT) on Tuesday.

Last week Russia and Turkey signed a deal for Russian military police and Syrian border guards to “facilitate the removal” of Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG) from within 30 kilometers (18 miles) of the border. The Turkey-Russia agreement was reached after marathon talks between President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and President Vladimir Putin in the Black Sea resort of Sochi.



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