

# Syria's Kurds protest exclusion from constitutional committee

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AFP

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QAMISHLI: Hundreds of Kurds demonstrated in northeast Syria on Wednesday in protest at their minority community's "exclusion" from a United Nations-backed committee tasked with drafting a new constitution for the war-devastated country.

Carrying placards, demonstrators gathered in front of UN offices in the Kurdish-majority city of Qamishli.

"It's our right to participate in the drafting of the constitution," read one sign.

The United Nations on September 23 announced the long-awaited formation of the committee to include 150 members, split evenly between Syria's government, the opposition and Syrian civil society.

Individual Kurdish representatives linked to the Syrian opposition or civil society groups are part of the constitutional committee.

But the Kurdish administration in northeast Syria that controls nearly 30 percent of the country has said its exclusion was "unjust."

Talaat Younes, a Kurdish administration official, stressed the need to include "all components of Syrian society."

Around him, men and women carried portraits of Kurdish fighters who had died battling the Daesh group in Syria.

Syria's Kurds led the US-backed fight against IS in northern and eastern Syria, expelling the jihadist group from their last major redoubt in the country in March.

"Our military force has achieved significant success. We must have representatives on this committee," said Hashem Shawish, one of the protesters.

Long marginalized, Syria's Kurds have largely stayed out of Syria's eight-year civil war, instead setting up their own institutions in areas under their control.

They have been sidelined from UN-led peace talks as well as a parallel Russian-backed negotiation track, mainly due to objections by Turkey, which considers them to be terrorists.

The war in Syria has killed more than 370,000 people and displaced millions since erupting in 2011 with the repression of anti-government protests.



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## [Jailed Tunisia presidential candidate to remain in prison](#)

Author:

Associated Press

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1569950369023721800

Tue, 2019-10-01 17:11

TUNIS: A Tunisian court has ordered that jailed presidential candidate Nabil Karoui stay in prison as he competes in the country's presidential runoff. One of Karoui's lawyers, Ined Ben Halima, told The Associated Press that a

Tunis court on Tuesday rejected the candidate's appeal to be released. The runoff vote is being held on Oct. 13.

The 56-year-old Karoui, co-owner of the private TV station Nessma TV, is facing off against 61-year-old conservative law professor Kais Saied to become the North African nation's next leader.

Karoui was jailed on Aug. 23 pending an investigation into alleged money laundering and tax evasion charges. He was allowed to remain in the race because he has not been convicted. He says the charges are politically motivated.

The election was held early due to the death in office in July of President Beji Caid Essebsi.



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[Libya's coast guard intercepts 31](#)

# Europe-bound migrants

Author:

Associated Press

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1569948361933487800

Tue, 2019-10-01 16:16

CAIRO: Libya's coast guard says it has intercepted around three dozen Europe-bound migrants off the country's Mediterranean coast.

Tuesday's statement by spokesman Ayoub Gassim says the rubber boat with 31 African migrants was stopped on Sunday off the western city of Sabratha. Sabratha is one of the biggest launching points for migrants making the dangerous voyage across the Mediterranean Sea.

Gassim says the migrants were taken to a detention center in the western town of Zawiya.

He also said the coast guard arrested 15 Tunisian fishermen allegedly for illegal fishing in Libya's waters. There was no immediate comment from Tunisia's authorities.

Libya slid into chaos after the 2011 uprising that toppled and killed Muammar Qaddafi. It has emerged as a major transit point for migrants fleeing war and poverty to Europe.



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# [Iran convicts 4 on espionage charges](#)

Author:

AFP

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1569944286862976600

Tue, 2019-10-01 14:18

TEHRAN: Iran's judiciary on Tuesday announced it had convicted four people on charges of spying for the United States or Britain, sentencing one of them to death.

"Last week, a person accused of espionage for an American (intelligence) service was sentenced to death by a revolutionary court," judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Esmaili told a press conference.

Esmaili did not name the accused but said the identity would be revealed if the verdict is confirmed by the supreme court.

The spokesman also did disclose the names of the other three, each sentenced to 10 years in prison.

Ali Nafariyeh and Mohammad-Ali Babapour were convicted of spying for the US and fined \$55,000, the amount they were allegedly paid for collaborating with Washington.

Mohammad Amin-Nassab was found guilty of spying for Britain.

Tehran announced in July it had dismantled a CIA spy ring, arresting 17 suspects and sentencing some of them to death.

Iranian authorities said the arrests were carried out between March 2018 and March 2019.

US President Donald Trump dismissed the claim as "totally false."

In mid-September, Iran charged three detained Australians with spying, after the reported arrest of a travel-blogging couple and an academic.



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CBS interview: Saudi Crown Prince talks Khashoggi, Yemen, Iran and women rights

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## [Jordan's striking teachers reject government call to return to work](#)

Author:

Reuters

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1569941446192607100

Tue, 2019-10-01 12:31

AMMAN: Tens of thousands of Jordanian teachers on Tuesday defied a government call to end their four-week nationwide strike over pay, in a deepening crisis that threatens to further strain the heavily indebted country's state finances.

The powerful Jordanian Teachers' Syndicate on Saturday rejected as "bread

crumbs" modest pay increases offered by Prime Minister Omar Al-Razzaz in a bid to end the strike, which is already the longest by state employees in decades.

The strike comes as Jordan struggles to implement tough IMF-backed fiscal reforms.

Only a quarter of Jordan's 4,000 public schools opened on Tuesday and a fraction of its 1.5 million or so students turned up for lessons, in what economists said was a blow to the Razzaz government, which came to power in 2018 after street protests over IMF-backed austerity measures.

Scuffles broke out in several schools between parents and striking teachers, according to two witnesses, and state media reported that many teachers had prevented pupils from entering classrooms, asking them instead to go home. Many parents are not sending their children to school out of solidarity with the striking teachers.

The teachers' union, which has 100,000 members, is demanding a 50% pay hike. Razzaz says pay increases that took effect this month averaging \$35 per month were the most Jordan could afford.

His government has said teachers could lose their jobs over what it describes as an illegal action.

The teachers, whose average salary is around 450 dinars (\$630) per month, say they have fallen behind others in a bloated public sector plagued by corruption and mismanagement.

Salaries eat up much of the \$13 billion state budget in a country which has one of the world's highest levels of government spending relative to the size of its economy.

The government fears that new pay demands by other public sector employees, including doctors, and pension increases for retired soldiers would wreck efforts to restore fiscal prudence as a basis for a sustained economic recovery.

The fiscal plan agreed with the International Monetary Fund aims to cut Jordan's public debt of \$40 billion, equivalent to 95 percent of GDP.



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