

# Palestinian local elections might give a small boost to Fatah

Mon, 2021-12-13 00:12

AMMAN: Saturday's Palestinian local council elections produced a much higher turnout than they did in 2017, according to the head of the Elections Commission Hanna Naser.

Naser told the media on Sunday that 66 percent of eligible voters (405,687) cast their vote in elections for local councils in C areas.

Local elections for the major cities in A and B areas are scheduled to be held on March 26, 2022.

Independent lists (mostly family/tribal oriented) won 71 percent of the vote, while party lists won 29 percent, he said.

In the 2017 elections, only 53 percent of the electorate voted in local council elections.

Naser added that all complaints that were filed were investigated and dismissed as they would not have changed the results in any location.

Rima Nazzal, a member of the secretariat of the General Union of Palestinian Women and an elections expert, told Arab News that the elections gave Fatah a boost that will help them.

"Although the separation of election dates is contrary to the law, the poll results most likely will give Fatah a boost that will help it overcome the loss of support that occurred due to the cancellation of the legislative elections last April 30."

Nazzal said that Fatah, the Palestinian national movement, won 123 out of the 162 uncontested council lists.

In other lists, it is hard to determine politically who won because most rural communities run local candidates that are not necessarily affiliated or loyal to any particular political movement.

Suheir Ismael Farraj, director of the Bethlehem-based Women and Media Development, also known as TAM, told Arab News that the local council elections were largely tribal in nature.

"In most communities, the winners belong to large family tribes rather than political movements."

Farraj conceded that in many communities the same person who is a tribal leader is also connected to one of the Palestinian factions.

"For example, in my home village of Khader, the head of the winning list is a

tribal leader from the Musa family and he is also connected to the left-wing Fida party. Had he run just on the left-wing party, he would have lost,” she said.

While Fatah fielded by far the largest number of lists, the Democratic Front had 25 lists, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine had six lists, the left-wing People’s Party had five lists and the Palestinian Struggle faction fielded a mere two lists.

According to the head of the Elections Commission, the next stage of local elections will begin with voter registration on Jan. 8, 2022. Electoral lists will be accepted starting Feb. 8, and elections for 66 city councils in areas A and B in the West Bank as well as all 25 councils in Gaza will take place on Feb. 26.

It is not clear yet if Hamas, which is in control of the security situation in Gaza, will agree to hold elections.

Nazzal also told Arab News that she does not expect that women will occupy much more than 20 percent of the allotted seats even though women made up 26 percent of the lists that were presented for the elections.

Palestinian law stipulates that at least 20 percent of any council must be made up of women.



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## Turkish lira collapse piles misery on northern Syria

Author:

Mon, 2021-12-13 01:28

AL-BAB: Mohammed Al-Debek, a schoolteacher in northern Syria, is on strike: The currency devaluation in neighboring Turkey has slashed the value of his salary by two-thirds.

His town of Al-Bab lies in a northern area of war-torn Syria that in recent years has turned into a de facto Turkish protectorate.

Because the Turkish lira is now the main currency in the area, its recent nose-dive has heaped further pain on the people living there.

"My salary in 2017 was worth \$160, but today it is worth \$50, a fraction of its value," the 33-year-old said outside the washed-out yellow walls of his school.

"It's barely enough to pay the rent."

Ankara does not only have military control of the border region, but most of the products available on the markets and even the mobile phone operator are also Turkish.

Areas of northern Syria run by Turkish-backed opposition groups switched to the lira as the main currency last year, replacing the massively devalued Syrian pound.

The lira has lost 45 percent of its value against the dollar this year alone and Debek's purchasing power has plummeted, as has everybody else's in the region.

"After the collapse of the lira, I was forced to look for a second job after school," he said.

His new afternoon job in a bookshop earns him another \$40 but that still leaves him short of the \$200 he says he needs to make ends meet.

Turkey directly administers several districts of northern Syria and, to seal its presence in the area, has invested heavily in education, health and other sectors.

The region's economic fate is inextricably tied to Turkey's and the lira's

sharp fall in recent weeks piled more misery on an enclave whose inhabitants are already scarred by war.

A recent UN report on the humanitarian situation cited estimates that “97 percent of the population, even those that are in employment, are living in extreme poverty.”

Inflation is soaring just as fast as it is in neighboring Turkey, with basic food items such as bread selling at record prices and purchasing power at its lowest ever.

And when the price of a bag of flatbread stops rising, locals say, the amount of bread inside goes down.

Ahmed Abu Obeida, an official with the region’s chamber of commerce who also owns a company importing food products from Turkey, acknowledged that consumption had slumped.

“The demand for basic materials has decreased, and the citizens in general cannot afford basic things such as their daily needs in food, medicine and heating,” he said.

Hanaa Al-Yasbu, a 36-year-old woman who was widowed in an air strike five years ago and has since been living in a camp for war-displaced people, is one of them.

She usually earns around 20 Turkish lira a day by harvesting wheat and potatoes, enough to keep her five children warm and fed.

With her daily income now worth just a dollar and a half, Hanaa has to venture into the countryside to find firewood.

“I dream that I have about 50 lira a day to buy food for my children to feed them, so they do not sleep hungry,” she said.



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## [Four killed in shooting at Palestinian camp in Lebanon, Hamas says](#)

Author:

Mon, 2021-12-13 01:21

GAZA: Four people were killed and others were injured in a shooting on Sunday in the Palestinian camp of Burj Al-Shemali in Lebanon, two officials of the Palestinian group Hamas told Reuters, and they blamed rival movement Fatah for the bloodshed.

The shootings took place during the funeral of a Hamas supporter who was killed in an explosion on Friday night in the camp in the southern Lebanese port city of Tyre.

“Fatah gunmen deliberately opened fire against people taking part in the funeral march,” one Hamas official said, asking not to be named.

There was no immediate response from the office of the Palestinian ambassador in Lebanon to a Reuters request for comment about the Hamas allegation.

Fatah controls the Palestinian Authority that exercises limited self-rule in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Palestinian Authority officials in the West Bank, contacted for comment by Reuters, said they were checking the reports.

Earlier on Sunday, Lebanese state media said two people were killed and seven were injured in a dispute that erupted in the Burj Al-Shemali camp.

Hamas said in a statement on Saturday that the blast on Friday night was caused by an electrical fault.



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## [Israeli PM arrives in UAE for first](#)

# visit

Sun, 2021-12-12 18:32

ABU DHABI: Israel's prime minister arrived in the UAE today on an official visit, Emirates News Agency (WAM) reported.

Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, welcomed Naftali Bennett upon his arrival at the Presidential Terminal at Abu Dhabi International Airport.

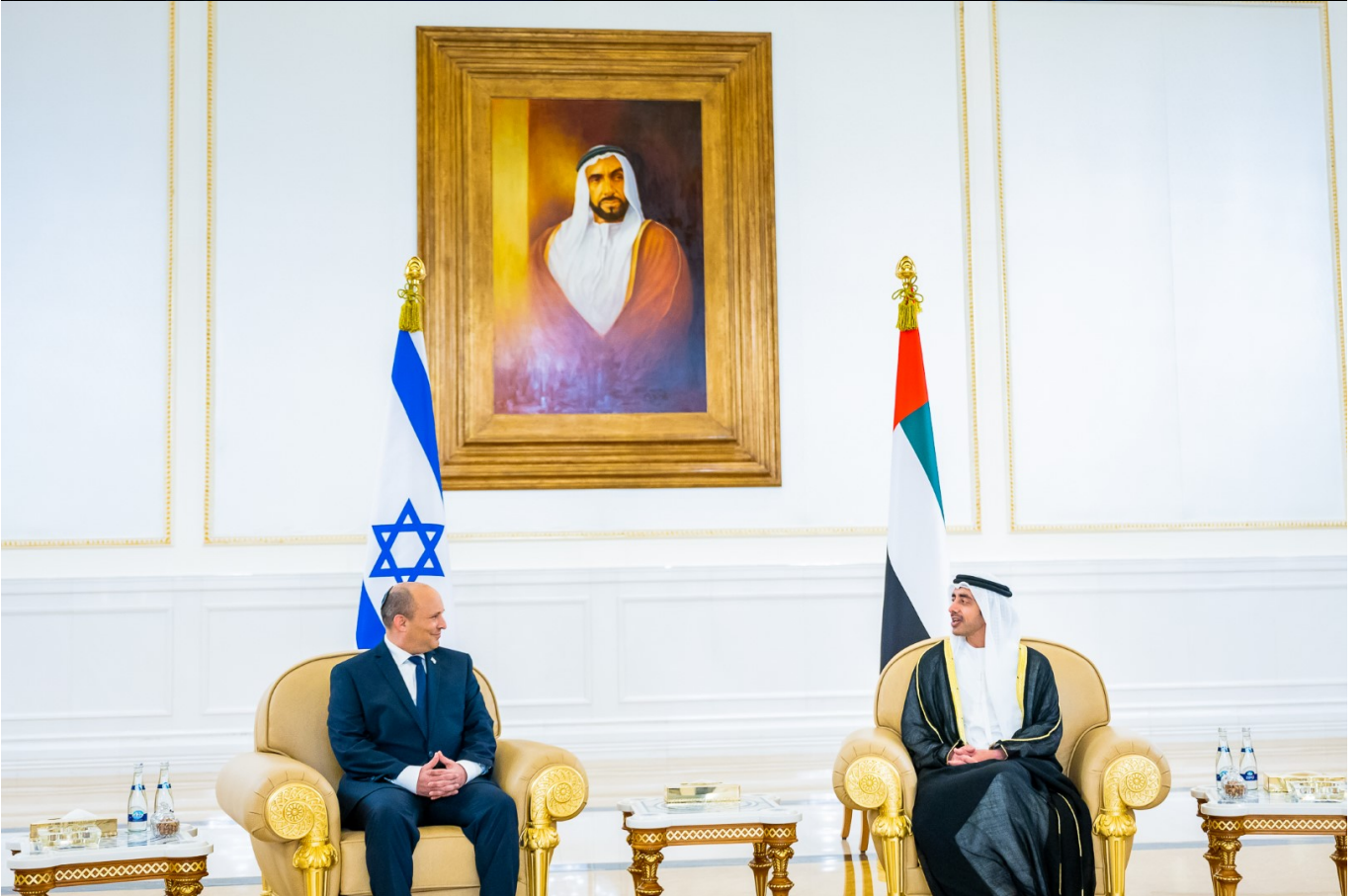
In attendance as well during the Israeli premier's arrival were Mohamed Mahmoud Al Khaja, UAE Ambassador to Israel, and Amir Hayek, Israel's ambassador to the UAE.

Bennett's visit comes after the UAE and Israel signed an agreement, known as the Abraham Accords, to normalize ties between the two countries in August 2020.

In March, the UAE established a \$10 billion fund to invest in strategic sectors in Israel, WAM reported on Thursday.

In February, Mohammed Mahmoud Al-Khaja was sworn in as UAE's ambassador to Israel, a month after the cabinet approved the setting up of an embassy in Tel Aviv.

Israel opened its first embassy in the Gulf in June, nine months after the historic deal between the countries.



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## [G7 says Iran must stop nuclear escalation](#)

Sun, 2021-12-12 17:08

LIVERPOOL: The G7 on Sunday said time was running out for Iran to agree a deal to curb its nuclear ambitions.

Foreign ministers from the world's richest nations held a two-day meeting in Liverpool, northwest England, seeking to present a strong, united front against global threats.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss, from G7 host Britain, said resumed talks in Vienna were the Islamic Republic's "last chance to come to the negotiating table with a serious resolution."

"There is still time for Iran to come and agree this deal," she told a news conference.

The final communique from the talks said "must stop its nuclear escalation and seize the opportunity to conclude a deal, while this is still possible."

Negotiations restarted on Thursday to try to revive the 2015 deal between Iran and world powers, which the United States withdrew from under Donald Trump in 2018.

Iran claims it only wants to develop a civilian capability but Western powers say its stockpile of enriched uranium goes well beyond that, and could be used to develop a nuclear weapon.

US President Joe Biden has said he is ready to return to the agreement and Iranian officials maintain they are serious about committing to the talks.

But Tehran has been accused of backsliding on progress made earlier this year and playing for time.

Truss's comments are the first time a signatory to the original deal has given an ultimatum for the talks.



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