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Ramadan Mubarak From An-Nour Newspaper

Palestinians Have Been Abandoned by Their Leaders

Both Israel and the Palestinian Authority are Undermining Democracy. Only a New Generation can Bring Real Change.

BY ALAA TARTIR



Palestinian supporters of activist Issa Amro, who was released on bail by a Palestinian court earlier on September 10, 2017 following his prior arrest on September 4, take part in a protest in the West Bank city of Hebron.

When the Trump administration decided to relocate the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem, a critical juncture in the Palestinian people's struggle for freedom, the Palestinian Authority leadership failed to respond in any meaningful way. It also failed to prevent the murder of civilians in Gaza and instead continued its punitive policies toward the 2 million besieged Palestinians living in the strip including by withholding public servants' salaries. After waiting for 22 years since its last meeting, the Palestinian National Council convened recently in Ramallah to choose the executive committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and its chairman. The four-day meeting that took place between April 30 and May 3 was a painful reminder of how Palestinian democracy is being undermined by Palestinian leaders. Palestinian democracy is being undermined by Palestinian leaders.

The meeting ended with the announcement of a new Palestinian leadership based on patronage and narrow factional politics. The so-called elections missed the most crucial element in any functioning political system: the people, who were dismissed, marginalized, and silenced in a dreadful illustration of the growing disconnect between the political elites and those they govern. Though this is not a particularly new phenomenon, the level of the leadership's arrogance was astonishing. In addition to the Israeli military occupation of Palestinian territory, Palestinians suffer from the absence of legitimate leadership and the lack of accountable and inclusive political structures and democratic, effective, and transparent governance. All of this prevents Palestinians from confronting the multiple levels of oppression and repression they face.

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The End of the Iran Deal Could Destabilize Iraq

What U.S.-Iranian Rivalry Means for Baghdad

By James Fromson and Steven Simon

Last month, Iraq held its first round of parliamentary elections since the defeat of the Islamic State (ISIS). In a surprising result, the main victor was the influential Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, whose Sairoon Alliance, a coalition between Sadr's own party and the Iraqi Communist Party, defeated coalitions led by the incumbent prime minister and U.S. favorite, Haider al-Abadi (who finished third), and the Iranian-backed Hadi al-Ameri (who finished second). Sadr's victory comes as a relief to neither Iran nor the United States, both of which Sadr targeted in his populist electoral campaign, which promised, like that of every other party, to rid the country of corruption and foreign influence. Iran's ally, Ameri, came in second, but his party is short on allies with which to form a government. And Abadi's unexpectedly poor third-place finish was a disappointment to Washington, although there is still a chance that he will join with Sadr in the government formation process and even stay on as prime minister. For the United States, there is reason for cautious optimism in these results. The new prime minister, whoever that turns out to be, is unlikely to be an Iranian puppet, even if he looks to Iran as an ally. The election, moreover, was fought not along sectarian lines—Sadr's coalition included some Sunnis as well as his own Shiite base—but on issues such as corruption, and it came at a time when the Iraqi state (or at least parts of it, such as the army) is enjoying broad legitimacy for the first time in years.

Yet there are also grounds for pessimism. Sectarianism as a driver of politics was subdued, but by vote rigging and profit seeking on a vast scale—a sour turn reflected in the low turnout. Furthermore, Iraq's progress in recent years was a product not merely of internal

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