

# Indonesians protest against Trump's Beit-ul-Moqaddas decision

Tens of thousands of Indonesian Muslims took to the streets in the country's capital Jakarta, denouncing US President Donald Trump's decision to recognize Beit-ul-Moqaddas as Israel's "capital."

Some 80,000 protesters — by police estimates — marched from the main mosque in the Indonesian capital to a square in front of the US Embassy on Sunday, calling on Washington to retract the controversial decision, Press TV reported.

The rally was organized by the Indonesia Ulema Council, the country's top Muslim clerical body, and supported by the government as well as various Muslim groups and Islamic organizations.

Dressed mostly in white, the protesters chanted "God is greatest," waved Palestinian flags, and held up banners that read, "Peace, love and free Palestine."

An Indonesian police spokesman said 20,000 police and members of the military had been deployed in the area to ensure security. Police also held back the protesters behind coils of barbed wire outside the US Embassy in Jakarta.

"We are here with all of our Indonesian Muslim brothers. We convey our aspiration to our brothers in Palestine. I hope that they will have their freedom and Allah give them power and patience so that they can get their independence just like ours," a protester said.

Indonesia's religious affairs minister and Jakarta's governor were also among those at the protest site.

Reading from a petition due to be handed to the US ambassador in Indonesia, Anwar Abbas, who is the secretary general of the Indonesian Ulema Council, called on all Indonesians to stop buying American products until Trump revokes his decision.

"We urge all countries to reject the unilateral and illegal decision of President Donald Trump to make Jerusalem Israel's capital," Abbas told the crowd.

Trump announced that his administration would recognize Beit-ul-Moqaddas as Israel's "capital" and relocate the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Beit-ul-Moqaddas on December 6.

That announcement was only welcomed by Israel. Saudi Arabia's response was also conspicuously muted. Demonstrations were held in occupied Palestinian territories, Iran, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, Algeria, Iraq, Morocco, and other Muslim countries.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) convened an emergency meeting to call on all Muslim nations to respond by pressing the world for the recognition of East Beit-ul-Moqaddas as the capital of a Palestinian state.

Israel annexed East Beit-ul-Moqaddas after it occupied the Palestinian territories of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Syrian Golan Heights during the Six-Day War of 1967. That annexation has never been recognized by the international community.

## At least 14 Afghan policemen killed in Taliban attack

At least 14 policemen were killed in a Taliban attack on two security check posts in Lashkargah, capital of the Helmand province, on Saturday night, local security sources said.



tolonews.com

The attack took place at about 1 a.m. local time. After the Taliban terrorists attacked check posts in PD7 and PD8 of Lashkargah city, clashes continued for more than an hour, according to the sources, tolonews.com reported.

Hayatullah Hayat, the provincial governor, confirmed the attack and said: "Eleven policemen were killed and two others were wounded."

He did not provide further details. The Taliban have not yet commented on the attack.



A protester holds a sign during a rally to condemn US President Donald Trump's decision to recognize Beit-ul-Moqaddas as Israel's capital at Monas, the national monument, in Jakarta, Indonesia, on December 17, 2017. REU

## votes in bitterly divisive presidential election

Voters across Chile began casting ballots in a tight presidential runoff Sunday morning, choosing between a center-left candidate and a billionaire former president, and deciding whether to reverse years of economic and political overhauls.

The election pits Alejandro Guillier, 64, a journalist and sociologist of the center-left coalition New Majority, against former President Sebastián Piñera, 68, the rightist Chile Vamos. Mr. Guillier favors continuing the changes put in place by the current president, Michelle Bachelet, while Mr. Piñera hopes to roll them back, nytimes.com reported.

Chile's presidential election is the first in a series that will alter the political trajectory of Latin America. Voters in Mexico, Brazil, Colombia and Paraguay will elect presidents in 2018.

"Chile is helping kick off a year of important elections throughout the region, and many of the divides seen there will be repeated in their own way in the races to come," said Shannon K. O'Neil, a Latin America expert at the Council on Foreign Relations. "Today's election pits not just the left versus right for the presidency, but also reflects a lighter version of the insider-outsider drama that is developing in Colombia, Mexi-

Ms. Bachelet also set in motion overhauls to replace the Pinochet-era Constitution and change the private pension system.

"Bachelet unlocked the constraints put in place during dictatorship and the years of transition," said Roxana Pey, a spokeswoman and coordinator for Mr. Guillier. "Her reforms have made Chile more democratic and fair, and have inaugurated a new political period in our country, in which people have more rights and participation in decision-making." Guillier will continue this legacy.

But much of this, according to the Piñera camp, has scared off



A voting station is seen in Santiago, Chile, on Sunday. The country is choosing between two candidates for president: Alejandro Guillier and former President Sebastián Piñera.

The two candidates were neck and neck in recent opinion polls, a somewhat surprising turn of events given the results of the first round of the election, on Nov. 19. Mr. Piñera obtained 36 percent of votes that day, compared with 22 percent for Mr. Guillier; 20 percent for Beatriz Sánchez, of the leftist coalition Frente Amplio that was founded early this year; and 8 percent for José Antonio Kast, a far-right champion of the Pinochet dictatorship.

The top two contenders in the first round, when turnout was below 50 percent, were eligible for the runoff. They have spent the past few weeks trying to reach out to voters on extreme ends of the political spectrum, in addition to voters closer to the center.

co and Brazil." Although Mr. Guillier did not include all of Frente Amplio's demands in his platform, many of the coalition's top leaders have said they would vote for him to prevent a conservative, pro-business Piñera presidency that would roll back what they see as social gains over the past few years.

Under Ms. Bachelet's leadership, taxes on large corporations were raised to finance free higher education for low-income students; abortion in some circumstances was legalized; union rights were strengthened; and a new electoral system allowed minority parties and independent politicians greater representation in Congress.

investors and sent Chile's economy on a downward spiral. Mr. Piñera has called the government "irresponsible and incompetent" for multiplying the public debt, and he has promised to reverse some of these changes and to jump-start the economy by reducing state bureaucracy, offering incentives to investors, reducing taxes on corporate earnings and spending more on infrastructure projects.

But Mr. Piñera has also hardened his line to cater to the far-right followers of Mr. Kast. He has vowed to halt the same-sex marriage bill Ms. Bachelet introduced, and wants to improve conditions for military officers imprisoned for crimes against humanity.

## German analyst: Saudi Arabia's foreign policy disastrous

By Hossein Ziaee

Saudi Arabia's foreign policy is disastrous, said Stefan Buchen, a German analyst, in a televised interview on Wednesday.

Over the past five years, Saudi Arabia's diplomacy has been full of failures, he added, speaking to One, a digital television channel operated by the German public broadcaster ARD.

Enumerating the dire consequences of the Arab state's policies and moves in Syria, Yemen, Lebanon and Qatar, Buchen said, "A careful study of Saudi Arabia's diplomacy in the Middle East easily shows that the balance sheet of the country's foreign policy in the region has been catastrophic.

Citing Saudi Arabia's defeat in Syria's war, the most crucial event in the Middle East, as an example of the country's unsuccessful policies in the region, he said not only did Riyadh fail to topple Bashar al-Assad's government, it also deprived itself of the opportunity to develop its relations with and expand its influence in Syria.

"This comes as Riyadh has also failed to achieve any of its goals in Yemen after waging war against its poverty-stricken southern neighbor."

He cited the murder of the ex-Yemeni president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, who had recently stressed renewal of relations with Riyadh, as another clear sign of Saudi Arabia's weakness and failure in Yemen. The German analyst said Saudi Arabia's fiasco against Qatar and the fact that none of Riyadh's preconditions for normalization of ties with Doha were fulfilled by its eastern neighbor are two clear evidences of Al Saud regime's great intra-family failure.

He added that Riyadh's failed diplomacy in Lebanon and the resignation of Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri are among the other links of the continuing chain of the Saudi Kingdom's successive defeats in the Middle East.

Buchen said many maintain that Iran and Saudi Arabia are each other's rivals in the Middle East, whereas the latter is not formidable enough to be deemed the former's opponent.

Tehran's level in different areas is far higher than that of Riyadh, he added.

## Saudi airstrike targets Yemen wedding ceremony, kills 12 women

A Saudi airstrike killed a dozen women in the northern Yemeni province of Ma'rib, the country's Al-Masrah TV said Sunday.

The airstrike targeted a wedding procession in the Qaramesh region on Saturday, it said.



RT

Locals said the women were simply returning on foot from the wedding when they were targeted. Several other women, who were riding in a car, escaped the attacks, Press TV reported.

"The aggressor committed a heinous crime by targeting ordinary women who were returning from a wedding," said the father of two of the slain women, using a term widely used by the Yemenis to refer to Saudi Arabia.

The deaths are the latest from more than two years of Saudi Arabia's devastating military campaign against Yemen. Well above 12,000, including many women and children, have been killed in Saudi airstrikes while millions remain displaced in a dire humanitarian situation.

The military intervention was launched in March 2015 as part of a Saudi plan to reinstate a former president and crush the ruling Houthis An-sarullah movement.

Rights groups and governments have repeatedly lambasted Saudi Arabia for its indiscriminate targeting of civilians in Yemen, saying many of those killed in the airstrikes are ordinary people with no links to groups opposed to Riyadh. They have documented numerous cases where Saudi warplanes have deliberately dropped bombs on public gatherings, including on weddings. Riyadh simply ignores any criticism after such attacks and calls them a mistake.

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