

A WORLD IN MOTION



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President Erdogan has secured a new term in office, this time with sweeping new powers, which has caused joy for some and concern for others.

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THE NUMBERS

TURKEY ELECTIONS



64

Mr Erdogan's age



2002

The year in which Mr Erdogan's AK Party was founded



30.8%

The percentage of votes won by Mr Erdogan's closest rival, Muharrem Ince (of the main opposition party, the Republican People's Party)



14

The number of elections Mr Erdogan has taken part in and won (legislative polls, referenda, local elections and presidential votes)

ERDOGAN WINS NEW EXECUTIVE POWERS



By *Cherolyn Amery*

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was proclaimed the winner early Monday [25 June] of a landmark election that ushers in a government system granting the president sweeping new powers and which critics say will cement what they call a one-man rule. The presidential vote and a parliamentary election, both held more than a year early, completed NATO-member Turkey's transition from a parliamentary system to a presidential one, a process started with a voter referendum last year. "The nation has entrusted to me the responsibility of the presidency and the executive duty," Mr Erdogan said in televised remarks from Istanbul after a near-complete count carried by the state-run Anadolu news agency gave him the majority needed to avoid a runoff. (*Associated Press*)

Landmark elections

Turkey's elections on 24 June were historic in a number of ways. Firstly, they ushered in Mr Erdogan's new season of leadership as "executive president", making him Turkey's most powerful leader since Kemal Ataturk, the nation's 'founding father'. Secondly, it was the first time that presidential and parliamentary elections were held at the same time. And thirdly, it was the best showing of the opposition (described by the *Economist* as "increasingly galvanised") in recent years, despite their loss.

Mr Erdogan's significantly increased powers mean that he is now able to abolish the office of prime minister, to directly appoint top officials (including vice-presidents and senior cabinet ministers), to

appoint senior judges and intervene in the legal system, to dissolve parliament, to issue executive decrees and to impose a state of emergency when he deems it necessary. According to the president, the new executive powers will bring confidence, strength and stability to the country, and will allow him to deal with the current economic challenges, as well as to defeat Kurdish rebels (a decades-long 'thorn in the side' for Turkey's government).

Support and criticism

Mr Erdogan, who has been in power for more than 15 years (as both prime minister and president), leads what is a deeply divided country. The *Economist* describes the division as follows: "On one side there are conservative Muslims and nationalists, for whom [Mr Erdogan] remains a symbol of prosperity, religious freedom and national pride. On the other stand secularists, liberals, and the Kurds of the south-east, who see him as a corrupt and repressive despot."

Supporters credit the president with improving Turkey's economy, loosening restraints on religion and raising Islam's profile in the secular public sphere, overseeing an infrastructure building programme that helped to modernise Turkey, and adopting a "more assertive" foreign policy that "commands respect on the international stage" (*Aljazeera*).

But in the eyes of opponents as well as Western allies, the president's new powers do away with 'necessary checks and balances', and critics warn that Mr Erdogan is "taking Turkey on a dangerous path to authoritarianism reminiscent of the Ottoman Sultans" (*Aljazeera*). Turkey, under Mr Erdogan's leadership, has long faced criticism for various human rights violations that escalated after a failed coup attempt in July 2016 – in the wake of the uprising, there were widespread arrests, detentions and firings in a harsh crackdown that drew international outcry.

Not all-powerful

Despite the elections being viewed as highly unfair (Mr Erdogan and his ruling Justice and

NEWS HEADLINES



Long-time foes **Eritrea** and **Ethiopia** “opened the door of peace” after the first high-level visit in nearly two decades, raising hopes for an end to one of Africa’s most intractable military stand-offs. In a highly symbolic move, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed said Ethiopian Airlines would restart flights to Eritrea for the first time since 1998 when conflict erupted between the two nations over their disputed border, with diplomatic relations broken off ever since.



The **UAE** announced it had halted the offensive it is backing against Houthi rebels in **Yemen’s** port city of Hodeida to give a chance to UN diplomatic efforts. UAE Foreign Minister Anwar Gargash said the pause was aimed at pursuing negotiations for an unconditional rebel withdrawal from the port but warned that full military action could resume. The offensive has raised fears of further suffering and deprivation in a country already deeply shaken by years of war between the Iran-backed Houthis and the Gulf-backed government.



Syrian opposition said talks with Russia aimed at a ceasefire in southern Syria had failed. The Syrian Negotiations Commission said Syria refused that Syrian regime forces and Iran-backed fighters withdraw from captured areas.

Development Party, or AKP, dominated the media coverage of the campaigning and restricted freedoms of assembly and expression), the opposition was stronger and more united than in the past and limited Mr Erdogan’s win to just under 53%.

Also significant was the fact that the AKP did not win a majority in parliament, which still has a role to play despite Mr Erdogan’s increased powers. AKP support dropped almost 7% in these elections, and in order to form a government, they will have to partner with the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP). According to Ian Bremmer (writing for *TIME Magazine*), the leader of the MHP, Devlet Bahceli, is a “hardcore nationalist” who is likely to attempt to push his own agenda: a stronger approach to Kurdish separatists (and more finances focused on that endeavour), more action in Syria, and harsher criticism of the European Union and the United States (key NATO allies of Turkey). This could add to Mr Erdogan’s current challenges of economic problems, internal security issues, and shifting foreign policy.

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

According to the *Economist*, Mr Erdogan views future-Turkey as “a synthesis of Islamic nationalism and Ottoman nostalgia” (referring to the old Ottoman Empire, of which Turkey was the heart). Elizabeth Kendal, religious liberty analyst and advocate, echoes this, saying that the president “aspires to be a great Islamic leader, reminiscent of an Ottoman Sultan or Caliph”.

Due to Turkey’s strategic positioning between Europe and Asia (and with both Muslim and Western influences), many are attempting to determine the geopolitical repercussions of Turkey’s new season of leadership – what it will mean for NATO relations and NATO’s role in the region, for Turkey’s alliance with the US and its recent leanings towards Russia, and for developments in the Syrian conflict. As Turkey has long been a hub for Christian mission activities in the region, mission leaders will also be considering the future of this key ‘gateway’ nation.

Kendal, meanwhile, recently highlighted the increasing vulnerability of Christians within Turkey, pointing to “government-sponsored anti-Christian and anti-ethnic-religious-minority hate speech [that] has escalated to extreme levels... in the media, but also in the school curriculum” in recent years. While the local Church (made up of Greeks, Armenians and Assyrians, together with convert Kurds and Turks) may be small and seemingly insignificant in the wider picture of national changes, the Lord has a role for them to play in Turkey’s shifting future, and they need prayer for strength, boldness and wisdom.

PRAY > For God to work out His will in the new season of Turkish leadership > For the future of Turkey’s geopolitical relationships to be beneficial for the region > For the minority Turkish Church to be strengthened, protected and emboldened

MEDITERRANEAN MIGRANTS IN EU STANDOFF



By **Andrew Richards**

Almost 350 migrants were stranded on two boats in the Mediterranean, including a Danish cargo ship, as a standoff between nearby European countries deepened on Sunday [June 24]. The boats include German rescue ship, *Lifeline*, which picked up 234 people and 17 crew members off the coast of Libya; and a cargo ship operated by Danish transportation company *Maersk*, which picked up another 113 migrants off the coast of Libya. Both boats were barred from docking at nearby Italy and Malta, as the countries urged other European nations to take in the stranded migrants. (CNN)

Rescue and refusal in the Mediterranean

In April 2015, a boat carrying 850 African migrants capsized during its voyage across the Mediterranean Sea. Of the men, woman and mostly unoccupied children who were fleeing

war, religious persecution or poverty, only 28 were rescued. Five months later, a three-year-old Syrian boy, Alan Kurdi, washed up on the coast of Turkey and images of his body quickly spread throughout the world, bringing the plight of migrants crossing the Mediterranean into the international spotlight.

As a result, NGOs and religious organisations launched various rescue operations, including large vessels dedicated to picking up migrants adrift at sea and taking them to safety in Europe where they could apply for asylum. The *Aquarius* is one example of such rescue ships – it saved 629 migrants from possible death, and is also the reason why the plight of migrants has once again been highlighted. On 10 June, the *Aquarius* was refused docking entry in Italy, inciting a flurry of debate among European Union members as to their stance on migrants.

Risking all for a new life

According to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), more than 8,260 people drowned trying to cross the Mediterranean from Africa to Europe between 2016 and 2017 in the hope of a new life. Sadly, the “new life” people are risking their lives for is mostly a lie made up by smugglers who ask exorbitant prices for a “safe voyage” to Europe. Migrants are loaded into overcrowded boats with the last passenger given a five-minute tutorial on how to use the outboard motor, with a general direction in which to steer the boat.

NEWS HEADLINES



German Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives settled a row over migration that threatened to topple her fragile governing coalition after talks with her rebellious interior minister led him to drop his threat to resign. Horst Seehofer, leader of Bavaria's Christian Social Union, said he would remain in his post after a deal with Merkel's Christian Democrats that he said would stem illegal immigration. The deal, which brought Merkel's government to the brink of collapse just three months after it was formed, keeps her in office.



The US military has promised once again to keep **Gulf** waterways open to oil tankers as the Iranian president appeared to renew threats to close off the region. Captain Bill Urban, a spokesman for the US military's Central Command, said that US sailors and its regional allies "stand ready to ensure the freedom of navigation and the free flow of commerce wherever international law allows".



Egypt's top appeals court has overturned a verdict that placed more than 1,500 people on a national terror list, including former president Mohamed Morsi, who was deposed in 2013. The Court of Cassation returned the case back to a lower court for reconsideration. The move was in response to a number of appeal cases filed by defendants, many of whom belong to the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood organisation.

With humanitarian ships regularly picking up drifting migrants and saving those who hang on to lifejackets in freezing water, many are asking why migrants risk their lives when European countries, especially those bordering the Mediterranean Sea, are closing their borders.

From the perspective of a typical migrant, the fact that more than 100,000 migrants make it to Europe each year (an average of 270 a day) is enough encouragement to make the move. Between 2016 and 2017, more than 535,000 African migrants reached European shores.

Conflict within Europe

Many anti-migrant far-right groups propose addressing the problem of illegal migrants/refugees in Africa itself, by setting up control centres in countries like Libya and Morocco that can stop people before they attempt the dangerous Mediterranean crossing to Europe.

Supporters of German Chancellor Angela Merkel (known for her 'open door' policy for asylum seekers) say that if all European Union countries take their share of incoming migrants, the challenge of caring for them would be more balanced and not burdensome to any one country. Those countries who oppose Ms Merkel's policies claim higher-than-usual crime rates attributed to refugees from the Middle East and illegal migrants from Africa. In a recent press conference, Ms Merkel debunked such allegations, stating that although many refugees are responsible for crime, the annual crime rate has decreased in Germany, a country that has taken in more than one million refugees over the past five years.

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

What most people in the West see on television and read in newspapers are stories and pictures of soaked African migrants and refugees in orange lifejackets who have reached the shores of Europe after a desperate attempt at crossing

the Mediterranean. The far-right see a wave of potential troublemakers. But the West rarely reads about the horrors of gasping for air while trying to stay afloat and being pushed under by others who also fled starvation, persecution and war and now face the same death they had run from.

Thomas Albinson, Ambassador for Refugees, Displaced and Stateless People at the World Evangelical Alliance, offers a perspective on the kind of response required from Christians:

"As Christians, we need to avoid falling prey to those trying to manipulate public opinion by inciting fear. When we picture the women, children and men coming across the sea, we must not envision them as potential terrorists and criminals. The truth is that the majority are seeking refuge from terrorists, violence, war and persecution. They are the threatened ones. Christians carry a divine mandate to love the alien and to welcome the stranger. Our response to human desperation and migration is not to be fear, but love. The default posture of our hearts is to be open, not closed. Jesus laid out some of the marks that identify those who are of His kingdom in Matthew 25:35-36. 'For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat, I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited Me in, I needed clothes and you clothed Me, I was sick, and you looked after Me, I was in prison and you came to visit Me.' As uncomfortable as it may make us today, His words make for a good description of the people trying to reach Europe's shores."

The Mediterranean Sea has, in recent years, become a 'reflecting pool' for the Christian West.

PRAY > For wisdom and compassion for EU leaders as they make decisions regarding migrants > For migrants seeking hope to find it in Christ > For European Christians to reach out to migrants with Christ's love

ESCALATING CONFLICT IN CAMEROON



By Conrad Bornman

Anglophone separatists in Cameroon have killed 81 members of the security forces and more than 100 civilians in their months-long campaign for independence, according to a government report obtained by AFP on Wednesday [20 June]. Seventy-four soldiers and seven police have been killed by separatists since clashes erupted in the two regions in late 2017, it said. It added that more than 100 civilians had been killed "over the past 12 months," and at least 120 schools – a

favourite target of the radicals – had been torched. The document also calls for an emergency humanitarian aid plan worth \$21m, funded from "the state budget, an appeal to national solidarity and contributions from international partners". (AFP)

Ongoing English-French violence

Cameroon, situated in Central Africa, is another mineral-rich African country on the verge of a full-scale civil war. On the surface, the two main reasons for the escalating violence are the growing political crisis in the nation's English-speaking region, and a presidential election scheduled for October 2018.

While the Anglophone (English-speaking) separatists are responsible for much of the violence, the mostly French-speaking government has also received widespread international criticism for its crackdown in the English-speaking region, and for "unlawful killings, destruction of private

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INcontext Team Details



Contact:

General - Mike:

Mobile - 0828657380

mike@incontextministries.org

AWIM - Andrew:

andrew@incontextministries.org

Communication & Prayer - Donnelly:

donnely@incontextministries.org

Seminars - Eric:

eric@incontextministries.org

Events - Hanlie:

hanlie@incontextministries.org

Projects - Gustav:

gustav@incontextministries.org

Travel /IT- Stefan:

stefan@incontextministries.org

Book orders - Beatrice:

lom@incontextministries.org



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property, arbitrary arrests and torture" since late 2017 by security forces (according to a report by Amnesty International).

Push for secession

Tensions between English-speaking Cameroonians and the French-speaking majority and government stretch back to the end of colonial rule, nearly 60 years ago. At the heart of the tension is the Anglophones' desire to form their own independent state, Ambazonia, and they stepped up their campaign for independence in 2016.

Today's Cameroon was created in 1961, when a British colony and a French colony were united into one country. Since the 1990s, the Anglophone region has pushed for secession as they felt marginalised by the government, which is dominated by Francophones (French speakers).

According to the *New York Times*, the Anglophone separatist movement was, for a long time, driven by activists outside the country, who had fled during protests in earlier decades. But the push for independence escalated in late 2016 when lawyers and teachers began to object to judges and teachers lacking English-speaking skills being appointed in Anglophone regions.

Peaceful protests turned violent

What started as peaceful protests turned violent when President Paul Biya deployed troops to the Anglophone regions and blocked internet access. Government forces reportedly opened fire on protesters and looted and burned down villages. In response to the government aggression (and arbitrary arrests, torture, unlawful killings and destruction of property by the Cameroonian military), an armed separatist movement emerged and started kidnapping government officials and killing soldiers.

As a result of the waves of violence, more than 20,000 people have fled to neighbouring Nigeria, and an estimated 160,000 are displaced within Cameroon. Nigeria, in turn, has its own refugee crisis as the Boko Haram insurgency (a campaign by Islamic jihadists) has displaced nearly 2.2 million people in the Lake Chad Basin.

Upcoming presidential elections

Mr Biya, one of the Africa's longest serving heads of state and so-called 'presidents for life', has been

in office since the early 1980s. Under his rule, Cameroon has seen economic improvement and a shift from being a one-party state towards multi-party politics. There has, however, been widespread issues of corruption, and some democratic gains have eroded. While in power, Mr Biya has centralised power to French-speaking areas, and in November 2017, he labelled the Anglophone separatists as "terrorists".

It remains to be seen whether Mr Biya is going to seek re-election in the October presidential elections (he is 85 years old and is dealing with health challenges), but regardless of who runs for office, the escalating violence is likely to play a major role in the election process.

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Across the language and cultural divisions of Cameroon, Christianity is the most practised religion, followed by Islam. Today, members of the Catholic Church make up about 39.2% of the total population, making it the largest Christian group in Cameroon and one of the country's strongest institutions.

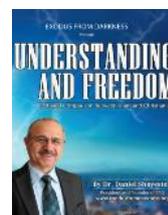
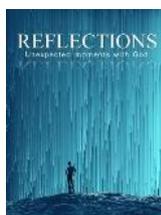
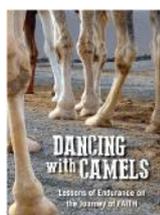
However, the divisions between Anglophone and Francophone clergy prevent it from playing a constructive role in the current violence. If the broader Christian Church were to bridge the divides, Church leaders could play a key role in mediation and peacemaking. The International Crisis Group writes: "As violence appears set to escalate, particularly ahead of Cameroon's 2018 presidential election, potential mediators and peacemakers are few. The Church should overcome its divisions, position itself as a neutral arbiter and help resolve an increasingly deadly and worrisome crisis."

As an international Church community, the Body of Christ should continue to pray for Cameroonian brothers and sisters that are faced with violence and despair, for the growing number of refugees and displaced people in central Africa, and for local believers to be active in seeking reconciliation across barriers.

PRAY > For an end to the violence and conflict in Cameroon > For Cameroonian leadership to make decisions for the good of all citizens > For the result of the upcoming elections to be according to God's will

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