



CONTROVERSIAL TURKISH CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM RESULTS

17 April 2017

This was the result of Constitutional Referendum on April 16, 2017 in Turkey:

'Yes': %51,4 / 'No': %48,6 and turnout exceeded 80%

These results are highly controversial. We are going to contest at least 37 per cent of the ballot boxes over suspicious vote tampering.

Indeed, we expected this.

To show you naysayers' huge concerns about the unfair conditions and very likely election fraud, I would like to share with you my responses to the questions of one of the international news outlets yesterday before polls were closed :

*"As the OSCE interim report confirms, the referendum process took place under very unfair conditions. It was an unfair campaign because naysayers, **opponents were called terrorists**, have faced threats, violence, arbitrary detentions, disproportionate TV airtime. Moreover **the referendum was held without presence of free media** and under a state of emergency imposed after the July 15, 2016 coup attempt. We estimate that the government's influence extended reached to 90 percent of the Turkish media. Pro-government media has a broadcasting policy that completely ignores and blocks the opposition.*



In this referendum, we decide our country's destiny. It is a fact that this referendum will be a choice between a parliamentary democracy and one-man rule in other words choice between saying goodbye to democracy in all its surviving manifestations or giving Turkey another chance to reinstate its secular democracy.

According to the recent non-partisan polls, the rate of naysayers was at about 53-56 percent. Concerns of electoral fraud and government meddling are very serious in this referendum than ever before in the previous elections. Fraud allegations in the referendum with **claims of irregularities, ballot-stuffing, voter intimidation** across Turkey are widely reported. Independent and party affiliated tens of thousands of ballot box observers have volunteered across the country to monitor the voting process. The voters are also mobilized to observe the vote counting process in their voting stations. They will all work to deter voter fraud in the referendum. This high mobilisation level was very promising and it says us a lot about the citizens' lack of trust in the government. The government shouldn't pretend that this is normal in a democratic country."

Despite all these obstacles, the “naysayers had a very strong performance during the tense and unfair campaign period.

As CHP President, Main Opposition Leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu said in his statement last night, “it is a fact that this referendum took place under highly undemocratic conditions and Turkish High Electoral Board's last night's decision made this referendum even more controversial”.

Here is how:

"The ballot for Turkey's referendum was remarkably simple. A thin piece of paper no longer and wider than a bar of chocolate, it contained only two choices: Evet (Yes) on the white side of the ballot or Hayir (No) on the brown side of the ballot. Voters were given an ink stamp and instructed to mark the side of their choice.

Each official ballot was to be stamped with an official seal before being handed to voters. The seal, as one might expect, is meant to signify that the vote cast was valid. But Turkey's High Election Board (YSK) , on Sunday, **just as the polls were closing, changed the rule requiring each ballot to be stamped with a seal.** Instead, questionable ballots with no official seal were to be considered valid unless there was proof that they were fraudulent. In past elections, those votes would have been invalid.

Speaking at a news conference, CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu questioned whether the YSK has the authority to make changes to election law." (1) YSK cancelled local elections in 2 districts in 2014 due to unsealed ballots.

(1) Excerpted from Washington Post story "Here's why Turkish opposition parties are contesting the referendum results"

(2) In this section, we excerpted parts in the quotation marks from Euronews live referendum blog.

(3) We would like to thank CHP EU Volunteer Team Member, European Union expert Mr Umur Akansel for their valuable contributions to this publication.



Please watch the videos below for our official statement:



[Click to watch "CHP to Contest Allegedly Manipulated Referendum Results", Euronews coverage](#)

[Watch: Turkey's Main Opposition Leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu's press conference on the referendum results and unfair conditions](#)

CHP Deputy Chairman, Bulent Tezcan said this picture undermines the legitimacy of the referendum:

“The High Electoral Board has changed the rules after the voting started. There is a clear clause in electoral law saying unstamped ballots must be considered invalid.”

We estimate the number of ballot papers having been included in the count despite being unstamped are around two million – that amounts to between three to four percent of the votes and could have had a major bearing on the result. The party has denounced this and other alleged violations of the electoral process.

HDP has also announced that the party will also contest the results. “Irrespective of the ‘yes’ or ‘no’ victory, we will object to two thirds of the ballots. The information we have received indicates a 3 to 4 percent manipulation,” the HDP announced through their official Twitter account on late April 16.

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Former Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) lawmaker Meral Akşener, who renegaded from her party months ahead of the vote to be able to campaign for the “No” vote, also criticized the YSK decisions.

“About the voting papers without the YSK seals; it is a scandal! It is a scandal that the YSK has announced that they will deem to be valid. Two of our lawmaker friends are making the necessary appeals,” Akşener said in a televised interview on private broadcaster Fox TV late April 16.

"YSK (High Election Council) is committing a crime at the moment, YSK members will be tried one by one. This would ruin Turkey as a whole. Don't do this. Don't be afraid of the citizens." said Ümit Özdağ and Yusuf Halaçoğlu, independent deputies (former MHP).

“The referendum result is a clear sign that a societal agreement could not be reach. Our co-chairs being jailed, the referendum being held under a state of emergency, and other oppressive measures cast a shadow and legitimacy problem over the vote” HDP spokesman Osman Baydemir said.

Here's a summary of the main events from the Turkish constitutional referendum night: (2)

- Video of 'secret no voters' in Turkey goes viral on social media
- Pro-gov't mob attacks naysayer columnist while voting
- Many cases of irregularities reported across the country.
- Turkey's CHP and HDP call on their polling officers to 'not leave site 'till the last minute'.
- District executives from CHP were attacked and beaten at polling site.
- Election fraud examples: Voting officials and community chiefs have been found to have let people vote openly in Urfa. / A person seen in a video stamping ballot papers with a 'yes' vote.
- Suspicious electrical power outage in different cities occurred during the vote counting process.
- CHP and HDP's ballot box observers were attacked by AKP constituents and AKP's polling officers.

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- Voting on the referendum ended at 5 pm across Turkey.
- Europe Elects reported that if the trend continues, "No" will win by 4 points (40% counted).
- The three largest cities – Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir – voted “NO” against the proposed constitutional amendments.
- "The head of Turkey's elections board (YSK) has confirmed the referendum with majority of “YES” votes to expand presidential powers.
- Erdogan declared victory earlier on in the evening saying in a press conference that "according to unofficial results, approximately 25 million voted and constitutional changes were accepted with a margin of 1.3 million."
- Naysayers, opposition parties have contested the results: the CHP is planning on contesting at least 2.5 million votes, and the HDP said it would oppose to two-thirds of ballots cast due to vote “manipulation”.
- The leader of the CHP, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, has criticised the election board (YSK) for deciding to accept ballot papers that did not bear the board's official stamp; also announced that CHP will contest the results and are demanding a recount.
- High Election Board (YSK) Head Sadi Guven defended the decision saying that the envelopes were accepted because it was not the fault of the voters.
- Protesters accusing Erdogan of “being a thief” took to the streets in response to the referendum result." (2)
- Thousands are on the streets of Istanbul chanting "down with tyranny long live liberty"
- 'NO' result at the ballot box in Edirne prison, where HDP co-Chair Demirtaş and Abdullah Zeydan voted.
- Citizens react to #TurkeyReferendum results with empty pots and pans by banging in Istanbul.

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- Videos circulating on internet of people pre-stamping "Yes" votes and placing them in envelopes increasing concern of wide scale voter fraud.

What next:

The referendum

- CHP is going to officially challenge at least 37 per cent of the ballot boxes. The process starts from district electoral boards and could go all the way up to the Constitutional Court and then to the ECHR.
- Last night protesting citizens saying " *'No' is not over, it is only beginning* " called out to meet at 7 pm today (April 17) in Kadıköy, district of İstanbul.
- The official referendum results are expected to be in 11-12 days.
- The final assessment of the OSCE/ODIHR International Observation Mission in regards alleged irregularities in the referendum is awaited.

Turkey

- The Turkish Parliament, which has been on recess since March 21 because of the referendum will open back on April 18 at 3 pm.
- Erdoğan said he would immediately discuss reinstating the death penalty in talks with the prime minister and the nationalist opposition leader, Devlet Bahçeli. The president said he would take the issue to referendum if necessary.
- Turkey abolished the death penalty in 2004 as a part of reforms to facilitate Turkey's accession to the European Union, although the death penalty has not been used since 1984. President Erdoğan said that he would immediately discuss reinstating the death penalty with the government and the MHP leadership while addressing a crowd in İstanbul following the unofficial referendum results announced.

Based on the facts and evidence, the international community's non-recognition of the referendum results is likely.

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"Turkey will review its relationship with European Union after the constitutional reform referendum" President Erdoğan says in an interview with pro-government media last weekend. My response to this was "Anti-Turkish, anti-migrant, anti-EU circles and anti-democrats in Europe are very much looking forward to it. Congrats for your common agenda".

I believe that this signifies the importance of the leading role of European progressives in engaging better with Turkish society on the country's European perspective and showing once more that we are against populists and anti-democrats both in the EU and Turkey. Your solidarity with naysayers, progressive, democrat Turks means a lot to us at these extraordinarily challenging times.

Please don't forget that extraordinary times require extraordinary efforts. This is the effort for our common future in Europe, this is the effort keep European dream alive both in Turkey and in the EU.

I thought that the video message on this MEP Miltos Kyrkos and I created is still valid and please find it [here](#). Our call from both shores of Aegean sea to the European leaders was published following the unfortunate "freeze of EU negotiations with Turkey" decision of the European Parliament. It is a proven fact that it did not help anything other than enhancing the power of anti-democrats and anti-European sentiments in the country. Moreover, this position of the EU made progressive Turks even more isolated and abandoned.

Thank you for your solidarity,

Kader Sevinç

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