

# Berlin says Russia set to expel German diplomats, teachers, cultural staff



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Russia will start expelling German diplomats, teachers and employees of German cultural institutions next month, the German Foreign Office said Saturday – a move that will further enhance tensions between the two countries that have already had very fraught ties since Russia launched its “military operation” in Ukraine early last year. The German Foreign Ministry sharply criticized Russia’s move, calling the upcoming expulsions a “unilateral, unjustified and incomprehensible decision,” AP reported. The expulsion will affect several hundred German state employees, including teachers and staff of the Goethe Institute, which promotes German culture and language abroad, daily Sueddeutsche Zeitung reported. The expulsion comes in

response to the reduction of the presence of Russian intelligence services in Germany earlier this year. “The Russian Foreign Ministry had made public in April its decision to introduce a cap on the number of staff at our missions abroad and at German intermediary organizations in Russia,” a German Foreign Office spokesperson said, on condition of anonymity in line with government policy. The expulsions will lead to “a major cut in all areas of our presence in Russia,” the spokesperson added. Germany did not announce any concrete response to Russia’s expulsions, which are expected to begin next week, but the Foreign Office said that “with regard to the upper limit on the Russian presence in Germany, the German government will ensure that there is a real balance in practice as well.”

## UN backs Sudan envoy as army seeks to bolster ranks



● AFP

United Nations chief Antonio Guterres said he was “shocked” by a letter from Sudanese army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, reported-

ly requesting the replacement of special envoy Volker Perthes amid a brutal war with paramilitaries. Guterres “is proud of

the work done by Volker Perthes and reaffirms his full confidence in his Special Representative,” a statement from UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said late Friday, AFP reported. “The Secretary-General is shocked by the letter he received from General Al-Burhan,” currently at war with his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who commands the powerful paramilitary Rapid Support Forces. The rival forces are currently in the fifth day of a one-week ceasefire brokered

by the US and Saudi Arabia, during which they have repeatedly accused each other of truce violations. Neither the army nor the UN have released official copies of Burhan’s letter, which reportedly requested the dismissal of Perthes as Guterres’ envoy to Sudan. It is the latest in a series of moves by Burhan, who last week officially sacked Daglo as his deputy in the ruling sovereign council, pooled headline military supporters into his inner circle and is now seeking to reinforce army ranks.

Sudan’s Defence Ministry on Friday called on “army pensioners... as well as all those capable of bearing arms” to head to their nearest military command unit and “arm themselves in order to protect themselves,” their families and their neighbours. A statement later in the day walked back the call to just army “reservists” and “pensioners”. Perthes and the UN mission in Sudan have been the target of several protests by thousands of military and supporters who have repeatedly accused Perthes of “foreign intervention” and demanded his dismissal. Similar protests have taken place in the eastern city of

Port Sudan since the war started on April 15. The fighting across Sudan has killed more than 1,800 people, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project. The United Nations says more than a million people have been displaced within Sudan, in addition to 300,000 who have fled to neighbouring countries. Perthes is currently in New York, where he briefed the Security Council on the situation in Sudan earlier this week. There is no information on when he is due back in Sudan, where authorities have not given out visas to foreign nationals since the war started.

## Turkey at crossroads of destiny



By Zohreh Qannadi  
Staff writer

In the embrace of anticipation, Turkey today stands poised at the crossroads of destiny, as in the second round of the presidential election, incumbent President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and opposition leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu face off in a battle that will capture the attention of the entire nation. Today, there will be a runoff vote between Erdogan and Kilicdaroglu after neither candidate received at least 50% of the vote from Turkey’s 64 million eligible voters in an earlier round on May 14. The first round finished with Erdogan receiving 49.5% of the vote, while Kilicdaroglu garnered 44.9%. The race is characterized by intense campaigning, televised debates and rallies, as both candidates sought to rally support and convince voters of their vision for the country’s future.

Heading the People’s Alliance, Erdogan is known for his strong leadership and conservative policies. He emphasizes his achievements in economic development and national security. Erdogan appeals to his supporters by highlighting his commitment to preserving Turkey’s cultural and religious values, promising to continue implementing policies that would enhance the country’s global standing. On the other hand, Kilicdaroglu, at the head of the Nation Alliance, positions himself as a champion of democratic reforms and social justice. The leader of the Republican People’s Party (CHP) criticizes Erdogan’s government for alleged authoritarian tendencies and pledges to prioritize human rights, freedom of speech, and equality if elected president. According to analysts, after two decades in power, Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP) ap-

pear to have the upper hand heading into a presidential election runoff today. Erdogan’s right-wing political bloc has also secured a majority in separate parliamentary elections. Just days before the runoff, Sinan Ogan, who placed third in the first-round vote, endorsed him. Erdogan has repeatedly sailed to re-election, but he faces mounting challenges despite his significant strengths. The political opposition was a significant challenge for Erdogan. The country’s six-party opposition coalition challenges his two-decade rule. The government’s failure in tackling the crisis caused by the February earthquake, as well as several economic challenges including high inflation, a weak currency, its fierce foreign policy, and the restriction of civil liberties are the most important criticisms directed at his performance. The Turkish opposition



has also been growing in strength and influence in recent years, with several parties and movements emerging to challenge the ruling party’s dominance. These opposition groups have been able to gain significant support from Turkish citizens. Blaming the president’s economic policies, the opposition has promised the return of trust and normal conditions. But they preferred to talk only about who brought the situation in the country to this point and turned the election into a referendum on the government, without explaining what their own power will look like. The election also presented a rare opportunity for

the opposition to challenge Erdogan and his AKP amid the political fallout from the recent deadly earthquakes that killed more than 45,000 people and prompted accusations of a lackluster government response. Kilicdaroglu, focusing on Erdogan’s costly foreign policy and, especially, Turkey’s proximity to Russia and its distance from the West, has promised closer relations with Western countries. He has even accused the Russian president of meddling in Turkey’s elections in recent days. Kilicdaroglu’s secular party has always been inclined towards the West. Erdogan on Thursday defied forecasts of his po-

litical demise in Turkey’s elections, rallying voters with a potent mix of religious conservatism and nationalism that looks set to propel his rule into a third decade. Critics also say he has increasingly polarized the nation during his 20-year rule, including in this election campaign. But he argued the contrary ahead of today’s vote, saying that his opponents were “poisoning political discourse”. The election ultimately has become a referendum on the direction Turkey will take in the coming years, with voters weighing the merits of stability and continuity versus the desire for change and a more inclusive society.

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Don’t lecture us on nuclear deployments, Russia tells US



REUTERS – Russia on Saturday dismissed criticism from U.S. President Joe Biden over Moscow’s plan to deploy tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus, saying Washington had for decades deployed just such nuclear weapons in Europe. Russia said on Thursday it was pushing ahead with the first deployment of such weapons outside its borders since the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union and Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said the weapons were already on the move.

#### Bahraini protesters condemn normalization with Zionists



Bahrain Mirror – Diraz village in Bahrain witnessed a mass protest after Friday Prayer condemning the state’s arrest of Sheikh Mohammad Sanqour. Protestors held photos of Sheikh Sanqour and chanted slogans condemning his arrest and normalization with Zionists.

#### Serbian Army to remain at high alert near border



AFP – Serbia’s army remained on the “highest level of alert” near the border with Kosovo, the Balkan country’s presidency said Saturday, a day after clashes broke out between ethnic Serbs and Kosovo police. On Friday, special units of Kosovo’s police fired tear gas as Serbs protested the installation of ethnic Albanian mayors elected in April, after a controversial vote in four northern Kosovo towns that are mainly populated by Serbs.