

Pezeshkian vs. Jalili in July 5 runoff



on Friday. According to Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi, the campaign for the two candidates in the second phase will begin today and will continue until 8 a.m. on Thursday, July 4. The second round of the elections will also be the scene of serious competition between Iran's two main factions, the Reformists and the Conservatives. Qalibaf said in a statement that he would support Jalili in the second round. The election race, especially the election debates in the second phase, is expected to be much more serious than the first round. Each candidate along

Pezeshkian and Reformists hope to convince more people to come to the polls in the second round. They believe that the increase in the number of voters, especially the undecided ones, who did not participate in the first round, will benefit Pezeshkian. Despite having criteria for a competitive election, the turnout was not as high as expected and was even lower than predictions made before elections. According to the Interior Ministry, out of 60 million eligible voters, 24 million cast their ballots, resulting in a 40% turnout. This means that the turnout rate has been lower than the previous presidential election, which saw nearly 49% turnout.

Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi announced that all the necessary measures have been taken for holding the run-off election and officials in the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting has declared preparedness for broadcasting candidates' campaigns. Iran is now left in a state of limbo over who to choose for president until Friday, with the return of a percentage of those who did not participate in the first round to the polls being the winning ticket for the Reformist heart surgeon-cum-politician, or funneling Qalibaf's votes into Jalili's ballot box in favor of the Conservative candidate.

Iranians cast their votes at a polling station in Tehran during the presidential election on June 28, 2024.

● MARZIEH SOLEIMANI/IRNA

Iran's 14th presidential election headed to a runoff after neither of the four candidates secured more than 50 percent of the vote in the Friday's election. According to Iran's electoral law, the winner must secure at least 50 percent the total votes. Otherwise, the second round will be held a week later with the two candidates who garnered the most ballots. In the second round, the candidate who manages to obtain the most votes will become the country's president.

Iran's presidential race began with six candidates approved by the Guardian Council, but Alireza Zakani, the current mayor of Tehran and Amir Hosein Ghazizadeh Hashemi withdrew from the race on the eve of the election day. The contenders include Conservative parliamentary speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf and former nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili. Also running were the sole Reformist, Masoud Pezeshkian, and a fourth candidate, former interior minister Mostafa

42,6%	10,415,991	Masoud Pezeshkian
38,8%	9,473,298	Saeed Jalili
13,8%	3,383,340	Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf
0,8%	206,397	Mostafa Pourmohammadi
24,535,185		Total votes

Pourmohammadi. Voting began at 8 a.m. Friday and continued until 12 midnight. According to the Interior Ministry, 24,535,185 people participated in the elections. Final results showed that Pezeshkian, a candidate supported by Reformists and Moderates, secured a

narrow lead over Jalili. Pezeshkian received 10,415,991 votes while Jalili gained 9,473,298. Qalibaf garnered 3,383,340 votes and Pourmohammadi had only 206,397 votes. Therefore, Pezeshkian and Jalili went to the second round which will be held

with their supporters will do their utmost to win this important race. In fact, the two candidates pursue different political, economic, cultural and foreign policy approaches, and the differences may make the second round more sensitive. Jalili hopes that people who supported Qalibaf in the first round, would vote in favor of him in the second round, although some experts believe that parts of Qalibaf's votes will eventually go to Pezeshkian. On the other hand,

US has sent Israel thousands of 2,000-pound bombs since Oct. 7

The Biden administration has sent to Israel large numbers of munitions, including more than 10,000 highly destructive 2,000-pound bombs and thousands of Hellfire missiles, since the start of the war in Gaza, said two US officials briefed on an updated list of weapons shipments. Between the war's start last October and recent days, the United States has transferred at least

14,000 of the MK-84 2,000-pound bombs, 6,500 500-pound bombs, 3,000 Hellfire precision-guided air-to-ground missiles, 1,000 bunker-buster bombs, 2,600 air-dropped small-diameter bombs, and other munitions, according to the officials, who were not authorized to speak publicly. While the officials didn't give a timeline for the shipments, the totals sug-

gest there has been no significant drop-off in US military support for its ally, despite international calls to limit weapons supplies and a recent administration decision to pause a shipment of powerful bombs. Experts said the contents of the shipments appear consistent with what Israel would need to replenish supplies used in this eight-month intense military campaign in Gaza,



● AFP

which it launched after the Oct. 7 attack by Palestinian Hamas resistance movement. "While these numbers could be expended relatively quickly in a major conflict, this list clearly reflects a substantial level of support from the United States for our Israeli allies," said Tom Karako, a weapons expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, adding that the listed munitions were the type Israel would use in its fight against Hamas or in a potential conflict with Hezbollah. The delivery numbers, which have not been pre-

viously reported, provide the most up-to-date and extensive tally of munitions shipped to Israel since the Gaza war began. Israel and Hezbollah have been trading fire since the start of the Gaza war, and concern is rising that an all-out war could break out between the two sides. The shipments are part of a bigger list of weapons sent to Israel since the Gaza conflict began, one of the US officials said. A senior Biden administration official on Wednesday told reporters that Washington has since Oct. 7 sent \$6.5 billion worth of security assistance to Israel.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in recent weeks claimed that Washington was withholding weapons, a suggestion US officials have repeatedly denied even though they acknowledged some "bottlenecks". The Biden administration has paused one shipment of the 2,000-pound bomb, citing concern over the impact it could have in densely populated areas in Gaza, but US officials insist that all other arms deliveries continue as normal. One 2,000-pound bomb can rip through thick concrete and metal, creating a wide blast radius.

Israel's Western backers to blame for another crisis in region: Iran



● AFP

International Desk

Iran's acting foreign minister said regional nations and the Resistance Front are ready more than any other time to counter Israel's acts of aggression, warning that Western supporters of the regime would be responsible for another crisis in the region. Iran believes that the disastrous impacts of the possible expansion of conflicts in the region are a result of irresponsible behavior of the regime's supporters in the United States and the West, Ali Bagheri Kani said in a message posted on his X account on Saturday.

His comments came as tensions between Israel and Lebanon over the regime's brutal onslaught in the besieged Gaza Strip have escalated in recent weeks.

Hezbollah and Israel have been exchanging deadly fire since early October last year, shortly after the regime launched a genocidal aggression against Gaza following a surprise operation by the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas.

Such exchanges have intensified this month, alongside bellicose rhetoric from both sides. Israel's military said plans for an offensive in Lebanon had been "approved and validated," prompting Hezbollah to respond that none of Israel would be spared in a full-blown conflict.

Moreover, Iran's permanent mission to the United Nations has dismissed Israel's threats of launching a war on Lebanon as "psychological warfare", stressing that all options, including full involvement of all resistance groups in the Middle East, are on the table in case of such military aggression.

"Albeit Iran deems as psychological warfare the Zionist regime's propaganda about intending to attack Lebanon, should it embark on full-scale military aggression, an annihilating war will ensue. All options, incl. the full involvement of all Resistance Fronts, are on the table," the mission said in a post published on its official X account on Saturday.

Germany has also asked Iran to help prevent further escalation in the region.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock made the plea in a Friday telephone conversation with Bagheri Kani. "Further escalation must be prevented at all costs, and Iran must also contribute to this," she told Iran's acting foreign minister, according to a German foreign ministry post on X.

On Wednesday, the German top diplomat said there was a need for world powers to chip in towards dialing down the regional tensions.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

