



The Second Government: Benabderrahmane's prospects for stabilizing Algeria

Future Briefs

Issue 563, 19 Jul 2021

The formation of the new Algerian government led by Ayman Benabderrahmane, former minister of finance, was announced on July 7, following his consultations with President Abdelmadjid Tebboune and the political parties which won the recent parliamentary elections. The new cabinet is made up of 34 ministers, including 17 new ministers, who joined those who retained their positions in the former government.

Significant indications

The formation of the new government headed by Benabderrahmane reveals significant political features, outlined below:

1- The 'Second Government': the new government is the second of its kind to be formed during the tenure of current president Abdelmadjid Tebboune who took office in December 2019. It replaces the former government headed by Abdeaziz Djerad, which resigned following the early parliamentary elections held on June 12 upon a decision by the president.

2- Technocratic cabinet: the new composition of the new government is largely technocratic, where its members were jointly selected by the president and the prime minister-designate. The great majority of the new ministers do not belong to the political parties, who emerged as winners in June snap legislative elections. Only eight portfolios were

given to four political parties. These are frontrunner National Liberation Front, which was the biggest winner and gained 3 portfolios: Ministry of Fishing and Fishery Productions, headed by Hicham Sofiane Salawatchi; Ministry of Tourism and Craft Industry (Yacine Hammadi) and Ministry of Environment (Samia Moualfi).

From the National Rally for Democracy, Wafa Chaalal, was appointed as Minister of Culture and Arts, and Abderezak Sebgag as Minister of Youth and Sports. The Future Front gained the Ministry of Relations with Parliament, to be led by Basma Azouar, and the Ministry of Energy Transition and Renewable Energy, to be led by Ben Attou Ziane.

The share of the National Construction Movement was only the Ministry of Vocational Training and Education, which will be headed by the party's member Yacine Merabi.

The Second Government: Benabderrahmane's prospects for stabilizing Algeria. Future Briefs, Issue 563, 19 Jul 2021, Abu Dhabi, Future for Advanced Research & Studies.



3- Absence of quota-based allocation of cabinet posts:

the so-called sovereign ministries were assigned to technocrats. Of those, the Ministry of Finance, was retained by Prime Minister Benabderrahmane himself, while President Tebboune retained his post as Minister of Defense, as per a tradition in effect since the 1990s. Kamal Beldjoud, and Mohamed Arkab were also retained as Minister of Interior, Local Authorities and National Planning, and Minister of Energy and Mining, respectively.

The role of Minister of Foreign Affairs and National Community Abroad, was assigned to veteran diplomat Ramtane Lamamra, for the third time in his government career. Lamamra, who previously held this position two times under former president Abdelaziz Bouteflika, was selected for this government based on his extensive diplomatic experience, well-balanced personality, in addition to his good relations with many countries with which he came into contact during his diplomatic career over the past years.

4- Exclusion of former foreign ministers: former Foreign Minister Sabri Boukadoum was excluded from the new cabinet despite his closeness to President Tebboune, which indicates the president's desire for using the extensive experience of the new minister Lamamra to further bolster Algeria's regional and international influence as well as its approach to regional crises, of which the Libyan crisis stand out.

5- Containment of popular movement: Minister of Justice Belkacem Zeghmami was removed in a step that was, perhaps, aimed at calming and containing criticism from popular movement forces that accused the former minister of prosecuting and making political accusations against the movement's leaders and activists and also arresting tens of them. His actions caused a rift in the relationship between President Tebboune and the movement.

Removing Zeghmami may contribute to the success of Tebboune's endeavors to contain the movement and making sure no weekly rallies or protests will be organized in the coming period, which can ensure the country's political stability can be maintained.

6- Diminishing the role of the Muslim Brotherhood: the National Construction Movement is participating in the new government as it gained

the Ministry of Vocational Training and Education. Yet, the Movement of Society for Peace refused to take a seat in the new cabinet because President Tabboune stipulated that parties willing to take part in the new cabinet should implement his own electoral manifesto. The President also required a limited quota of ministerial portfolios for each party participating in the new government.

Plans by the Movement of Society for Peace to form a political government were rejected by the Presidency. The rejection shocked the Muslim Brotherhood, which cozied up to President Tebboune to get as many ministerial portfolios as possible in addition to the position of Speaker of the Parliament. But the result was that the Movement remained within the opposition camp, after the parliament elected Ibrahim Boughali, an independent lawmaker, to the post of speaker. Boughali received 295 votes while the Movement of Society for Peace's candidate Ahmed Sadouk received only 87 votes.

7- Limited participation by women: only four women were selected to head four out of 34 ministries (12 per cent). They are Samia Moulafi of the National Liberation Front for the Ministry of Environment; Basma Azouar of the Future Front for the Ministry of Relations with Parliament; Kaouthar Krikou, independent, for the Ministry of National Solidarity, Family and Women's Issues; and Wafa Chaalal for the Ministry of Culture and Arts.

It is worth noting that these four ministries are not sovereign ones.

8- Reconstruction of some ministries: a new ministry for Digitization and Statistics was developed, which will be headed by Hocine Charhabil, while the post of Secretary of State to the Minister of Youth and Sports, which was filled by former champion judoka Salima Souakri, was abolished.

Popular and partisan criticism

However, the new government has received several criticisms such as:

1- Accusing the government of replicating the former regime: the Movement of Society for Peace criticized the new government as being a replica of the former political system of president Abdelaziz Bouteflika. It also believes that the composition of the new government means that the counter-revolution succeeded in bringing the former regime's



leaders back to lead the political landscape. This was specially evidenced in the selection of Ramtane Lamamra to lead the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and National Community Abroad.

Additionally, the composition of the new government does not reflect the outcome of the recent parliamentary elections. That is, those loyal to President Tebboune and those who served in the Bouteflika regime, were appointed as ministers. The Movement of Society for Peace expects the new government to fail in resolving the economic crisis because, in its view, it enjoys no popular backing.

The forces of the popular movement agree with the Movement of Society for Peace that the new government is only an extension of Bouteflika's regime. A number of the ministers of the new government, especially Prime Minister Benabderrahmanethe and Foreign Minister Lamamra, previously headed leading ministries under Bouteflika. This runs contrary to the demands set forth by the revolutionary movement that ousted the former regime to bring about radical change to the former political system. According to the popular movement, the former regime's prominent figures are still leading the country's political landscape.

The composition of the new government sends a message from the current political system to the popular movement that it is still in control of politics in the country and that it will not respond to the movement's demands for radical change. This means the coming period is likely to witness actions

by the popular movement including organization of protests and rallies to express opposition to the new government and its policies as well as to demand the release of all members of the movement from prison.

2- Movement of Society for Peace's rejection of Speaker of the Parliament: the movement rejected the way the new speaker of the Council of the Nation, the upper house of the Parliament, selected independent lawmaker Ibrahim Boughali to the post of speaker. It even described him as 'candidate of the existing authority' and said that he will cause further disappointment to the Algerians after a new loyal bloc inside the Parliament was formed from the National Liberation Front, the Democratic National Rally, the Future Front and the National Construction Movement (Muslim Brotherhood).

To conclude, the composition of the new government reveals that President Tebboune is bent on relying on technocrats, along with limited participation by political parties. This is driven by his desire to carry out his policies and efforts to bolster his legitimacy in the country and achieve political stability in the coming period. Overall, several challenges await the new government at home. The most prominent of these challenges are the current economic crisis, the organization of local elections before the end of the year, as well as how to deal with the forces of the popular movement.

ABOUT FARAS

Future for Advanced Research and Studies (FARAS) is an independent think tank founded on April 4, 2014 in Abu Dhabi, U.A.E. FARAS seeks to enrich public dialogue, support decision-making and enhance academic research pertaining to future trends that currently constitute a real problem in the Middle East region. In light of instability and unpredictability, the overarching goal of FARAS is to help ward off future shocks regarding these developments.

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