

# Multi-racial Fiji

## Bavadra's Dream Comes True

The dream of the late Timoci Bavadra of a multi-racial Fiji for which he launched the Fiji Labour Party in the 1980s providing a common platform for the indigenous Fijians and the Fiji-Indians was at last realised in the just concluded parliamentary election. The ruling Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanu (SDL) of Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase emerged with a wafer-thin majority of 36 seats in the 71-member Parliament against 31 seats won by the Fiji Labour Party. The United People's Party, an electoral ally of FLP, won two seats and the remaining two seats went to independents. The SDL had formed a pre-election 'grand alliance' of about a dozen ethnic Fijian parties. None of them could win a single seat. While there were 18 parties and 69 independents in the fray, only three parties and two independents could make it to the new Parliament. Qarase grabbed both the independents by offering them ministerial berths.

### On communal line

An interesting development of election 2006 is the gradual emergence of a two-party system in Fiji in spite of having a plethora of parties. Another development is the near total polarisation of voters on communal lines. About 80.3 per cent of ethnic Fijians voted for the SDL which could attract only 1.3 per cent of Fiji-Indian votes. While 82.7 per cent of Fiji-Indians voted for FLP, it was able to garner 6.3 per cent of ethnic Fijian votes as well. Jokapeci Koroi, president, and Poseci Bune, vice-president, of the FLP are ethnic Fijians, and Mahendra Pal Chaudhry, former Prime Minister, its general secretary. Its founder-leader, Bavadra, conceived it as a multi-racial party and it was voted to power in 1987 at its very first attempt. His Cabinet was equally multi-racial. Unfortunately, his Labour government was overthrown in a military coup by an obscure army colonel trained at Indian Army's Staff College at Wellington in the Nilgiris, Siveni Rabuka, who imposed military dictatorship in Fiji. Democracy was restored in 1999 and the FLP was again voted to power. Chaudhry

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### Sam Rajappa

became the first Fiji-Indian Prime Minister. He too was deposed in a civilian coup in 2000 and the military restored democracy. In the following election in 2001, the newly formed SDL was voted to power and Qarase became the Prime Minister. The SDL is a party exclusively of ethnic Fijians



and his government in the last five years was the most pro-ethnic Fijian ones the country has witnessed since independence in 1970.

The people of Fiji cannot be blamed for voting on communal lines. The country's electoral system is racially divisive. Indigenous Fijians are provided 23 communal seats in Parliament, Fiji-Indians 19 seats, Europeans, Chinese and other communities listed as general voters three seats and Rotumans, people of an isolated island in the Fiji Archipelago one seat. The remaining 25 are classified as open seats for which all communities can vote. The open seats invariably decide the winner. In the polarised voting of the present election, the SDL won all the 23 Fiji communal seats and the FLP all the 19 Fiji-Indian seats. The UPP won two of the three general seats and the third went to an independent.

Chaudhry contested the Ba open seat and polled 10,709 votes against his nearest SDL rival's 2,737 votes. Determined to keep Chaudhry out of the new Parliament, the SDL fielded two candidates against him: Jale Baba, the party's official spokesman, to cut into indigenous Fijian votes, and Fiaz Ali to cut into Fiji-Indian votes. They bit the dust. Similarly, the SDL fielded Seni Litua, Mohammed Shariff and Ulai Baya against Poseci Bune, vice-president of the FLP, for the Labasa open seat. Bune trounced them all.

But for the National Federation Party, the original political arm of Fiji-Indians cutting into communal vo-

tes, the FLP would have fared much better in the open seats. In the event it won 12 of the 25 seats against the SDL's 13. The SDL itself was surprised by its victory in Cunningham and Suva open seats. It may be recalled that the NFP was voted to power in the second general election

FLP. So he opted out of joining the government and gave Qarase a list of 12 FLP MPs to choose from for the nine Cabinet posts. Qarase asserted the Prime Minister's prerogative in allotting subjects to the chosen ministers which was not to the satisfaction of all. Agriculture, Environment, Energy and Mineral Resources, Health, Labour, Employment Opportunities and Productivity, Commerce and Industry, and Local Government and Urban Affairs were the subjects offered to the FLP. Chaudhry recommended Felix Anthony, a veteran trade unionist, for the Labour portfolio but Qarase allotted him Employment Opportunities and Productivity, which he declined to accept.

### Without opposition

His portfolio was given to Ragho Nand, another FLP MP. The SDL inducted 15 Cabinet ministers and 12 ministers of state, making it the largest Council of Ministers Fiji had ever seen. Every other MP is a minister. The FLPs decision to join the Qarase government has created a piquant situation. For the first time, Fiji will be without an opposition worth its name. Under the 1997 Constitution, the Opposition Leader enjoys enormous powers, second only to the Prime Minister. The Senate, Fiji's Upper House, consists of 32 members of whom 14 are appointed by the President on the advice of the Bose Levu Vakaturga (Great Council of Chiefs), nine on the advice of the Prime Minister, eight on the advice of the Leader of Opposition and one on the advice of the Council of Rotuma. Chaudhry, unable to get his favourite Finance has thrown his hat in the ring for the post of Leader of Opposition. If he succeeds in getting it, the FLP would be cast in a dichotomous role, unheard of in any parliamentary democracy. For example, will Chaudhry be able to oppose policies and programmes initiated by FLP Ministers? With the two independents joining the government, 69 of the 71 MPs would be occupying treasury benches, leaving the opposition with only two seats won by the UPP. Mick Beddoes, leader of the UPP, has said he would accept the post of Leader of Opposition if offered. Qarase has referred the matter to the President, Ratu Josefa Iloilo, whose decision is awaited with bated breath.

# Haitians flock to polling booths

A victory for democracy, says United Nations special envoy Juan Valdes

**PORT-AU-PRINCE (HAITI):** Haitians jammed polling stations on Tuesday as U.N. peacekeepers fanned out to guard the country's first presidential election in nearly six years, a vote widely viewed as a key step in steering this bloodied, impoverished nation away from collapse.

Clutching newly minted voter ID cards, about 1,000 persons lined up before dawn at a polling station in the Port-au-Prince area of Delmas, waiting for electoral officials to open the doors.

Polls opened at 6 a.m. EDT, but voting was delayed at several polling stations in the capital, said David Wimhurst, a U.N. spokesman.

## Mobilised for change

Outside a polling station in the downtown slum of Bel-Air, hundreds of waiting voters snaked along rutted, trash-strewn streets. "Haitians are mobilised for change. That's why there's so many people in the street this morning," said Jean Joseph (44), as he went to cast his ballot.

U.N. special envoy to Haiti Juan Gabriel Valdes said he was happy to see long lines during a tour of a polling station in Bel-Air. "It's a victory for democracy, a victory for Haiti," Mr. Valdes said. "It's calm and people are lining up to exercise their right to vote."

Minutes later, however, a scuffle broke out at the station, when voters began shouting, pushing and shoving to keep their position in line. Several fainted and were carried out.

Authorities urged Haitians to



**REACHING REMOTE AREAS:** Uruguayan peacekeepers provide security to election materials being transported on mules in Archaie, Haiti, on Monday. — PHOTO: AP

vote in large numbers under the protection of thousands of U.N. peacekeepers, saying Tuesday's election was important in reversing Haiti's cycle of despair.

"Haiti's future depends on this vote," said Jacques Bernard, director general of the electoral council. "Good elections are the only solution to saving our nation."

Poll workers were slow to open the doors at some stations,

waits were long and, someone stole a batch of ballots, but there were no reports of major violence, Mr. Wimhurst said. "So it's going well far."

Helicopters, truck and even mules ferried election supplies into remote corners of the Caribbean nation, which has never seen democracy fully take root. Only one elected President, Rene Preval, has served out his term in office, from 1996 to 2001.

Mr. Preval, a 63-year-old agronomist, is now the front-runner, according to opinion polls. Other top contenders among the 33 candidates are Charles Henri Baker (50), whose family runs factories in the assembly-for-export industry, and Leslie Manigat (75), who was President for five months in 1988 until the army ousted him when he tried to shake up its high command.

Also running are a former rebel in the insurgency that forced President Jean-Bertrand Aristide from office in February 2004 and a former army officer accused in the death of a Haitian journalist. If no candidate wins a majority, a March 19 runoff would be held between the top two candidates.

Hundreds of candidates are also running for 129 parliamentary seats. — AP

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## Security for Haiti

Tuesday, January 24, 2006; A16

FIRST LADY Laura Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice both traveled to Liberia to mark the inauguration last week of a democratically elected president, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, who has given that devastated West African country hope for recovery from years of war and anarchy. In a show of support for the United Nations peacekeepers who remain vital to preserving security, two U.S. Navy warships made an appearance off the Liberian coast. Yet, much closer to home -- 600 miles from Florida -- the Bush administration continues to deny critical security support to another failed state, Haiti.

With U.N. help, Haiti is trying to hold its own democratic election to replace the interim government that has been in power for nearly two years. But the vote, scheduled for Feb. 7, already has been postponed four times because of organizational problems and Haiti's mounting anarchy; there's no guarantee it will go forward even now. Much of the countryside and capital continues to be controlled by armed gangs -- some loyal to exiled former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, some to his opponents in a deeply polarized society, and some to drug traffickers and other criminals. The drug traffic, in which Haiti acts as a transshipment point for cocaine on its way from South America to the United States, goes virtually unchecked. Kidnappings occur at the rate of 10 per day.

The Brazilian-led U.N. force of 7,200, made up of troops from Latin America as well as such unlikely friends of Haiti as Jordan and Sri Lanka, has never seriously attempted to restore order or disarm the gunmen. Earlier this month its commander committed suicide. It is expected to provide security for the elections but lacks the manpower, professionalism and logistical support to do so. The danger of violence is great: Among the more than 30 candidates for president are two alleged drug traffickers; an insurgent leader; and a former president, Rene Preval, who is bitterly opposed by the same coalition that forced Mr. Aristide from office.


The United States has been the guarantor of Haiti's security for nearly a century, repeatedly dispatching troops to restore order. Two years ago a Marine force entered the country to escort Mr. Aristide into exile. Yet, though it has endorsed and partially funded the election process, the Bush administration refuses to make even the smallest contribution to security. Last year Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld rejected a proposal to provide a small rapid-reaction force to back up the disarmament of the gangs. Now the Pentagon has rejected a U.N. petition for a temporary supply of helicopters to assist in the elections. Though Ms. Rice and other senior officials have visited Haiti to sing the praises of democracy, the administration is unwilling to commit even five helicopters to such tasks as securing the transport of ballot boxes.

It's true that U.S. military forces are spread thin because of the demands of Iraq and Afghanistan. But the administration's refusal to spare even a handful of helicopters or a few hundred Marines for Haiti makes

little sense when instability there is sure to raise the flow of refugees and drugs toward Florida. Haiti has a slim chance to follow Liberia in establishing a legitimate government that can begin to restore order with the help of foreign troops and donors. But if the United States isn't willing to provide military backup in the Caribbean as well as in West Africa, its success is unlikely.

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January 24, 2006

## **Fear and Death Ensnare U.N.'s Soldiers in Haiti**

By GINGER THOMPSON

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, Jan. 21 - Nearly 20 months after the United Nations arrived to stabilize the hemisphere's poorest country and avert a civil war, there is still no cease-fire in this violent city on the sea.

Blasts from tanks and machine guns go on for hours almost every day around Cité Soleil, a steamy slum of concrete hovels and canals of raw sewage at the capital's northern edge. No one knows for sure how many civilians have been killed inside because the bodies of the slum-dwellers and local gangsters rarely make it to morgues.

But last Tuesday, two Jordanian soldiers were shot to death in skirmishes with local gangs, and another was seriously wounded. It was the third fatal strike against United Nations personnel since December, a month when relations between the international peacekeeping mission and local people worsened.

The violence has raised demands in capitals from Brasilia to Washington to Ottawa for an explanation of what has gone wrong with Haiti's transition to democracy. What is clear is that the \$584 million a year mission has failed to bring peace to Haiti, and the caretaker government has failed to bring elections.

The interim government, appointed with the support of the United States after the downfall of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in March 2004, postponed the first round of new elections to Feb. 7 from Jan. 8, the fourth delay in four months. A second round is scheduled for March.

Uncertainty remains among the highest level organizers of the elections about whether a fair vote is possible in the corrupt and deeply polarized political atmosphere here.

The postponement has led to finger-pointing all around. The interim government blames the international community for the delays, saying it failed to deliver voter cards and train enough poll workers. The United Nations blames the interim government, accusing its leaders of stalling in fear of losing power.

Cité Soleil is among the most desperate corners of a desperately poor country. Fifty-five percent of Haiti's 8.5 million people live on less than a dollar a day, according to United Nations estimates.

The continuing insecurity has not helped. Just after the United Nations mission finally reached its full complement of 9,000 troops and police officers in December, incidents of kidnappings increased to more than 14 a day, bringing protests by this country's middle and working classes for the peacekeepers to get serious about fighting street gangs, or get out of Haiti.

"They need to do better than what is going on to make a dent in the fear that is affecting a million people in the Port-au-Prince area," said Andy Apaid, a wealthy Haitian businessmen who runs textile factories

outside Cité Soleil. "We don't want them to kill anyone. But we want them to do strategic operations to get the criminals out."

Indeed, everyone here seems to have a finger on the trigger.

The nervous Jordanian soldiers assigned to patrol the streets of Cité Soleil rarely get out of their tanks to speak to the people they are assigned to protect.

"Go away!" the soldiers shouted one day last week in English at a woman who only spoke Creole, and who was pleading for help to find her missing husband. "We cannot tell you anything."

Neighborhood gunmen, who call themselves militants, hide from the soldiers among men and women too afraid to report crime.

"We are here to accompany the people in peace," said 24-year-old William Baptiste, who calls himself Tiblan. "The problem is the United Nations is trying to annihilate us. Times are critical. We have to be ready, and willing to die."

Ambassador Juan Gabriel Valdés, the chief of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, known as Minustah, acknowledged the uphill battle in an interview. "This is a ghetto," he said of Cité Soleil, "where gangs, which are not different from the gangs found in Central America, have managed to isolate the area from state control. And in a place where the state is as weak as here, you cannot ask Minustah to perform the role of the state."

But he and several other United Nations officials, as well as two high-ranking Western diplomats, rejected assertions that the mission had failed. They charge that Haiti's tiny elite, along with interim Prime Minister Gérard Latortue, have orchestrated a campaign to undermine the mission and delay the elections, because the Haitian leadership is nervous about what opinion polls indicate are likely to be the results.

Prime Minister Latortue refused repeated requests for an interview, but he has said that after Feb. 7, his government would not begin any new initiatives, only fulfill necessary administrative duties until the new president is sworn in. "If he could, my boss would leave tomorrow," said a spokesman for Mr. Latortue, Jean-Junior Joseph. "There is no joy in leading this country."

A recent poll sponsored by the United States government indicated that the leading candidate is former President René Préval, considered a protégé of Mr. Aristide. The Aristide government was undone by a protest movement, led by people like the businessman Mr. Apaid, a revolt by former soldiers and police officers and American pressure.

"They thought they could get rid of one government and have the country to themselves and their friends," a United Nations official said, asking not to be identified out of fear that his comments could hurt his position in Haiti. "But Préval has come and ruined the party."

Maj. Gen. Eduardo Aldunate, deputy force commander for the United Nations troops, agreed that kidnapping was a serious problem, but not one that justified delaying elections.

He has taken charge of the mission since, in another setback, the commander of the United Nations troops here, Gen. Urano Teixeira de Matta Bacellar, was found dead in his hotel room just after New Year's from what officials have described as a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

General Aldunate said that while violence continues to plague much of the capital, there are few serious incidents in the rest of the country. He conceded that Cité Soleil was under the control of street gangs loyal to Mr. Aristide. He said the gangs use kidnapping as a way to make money and to attack the rich and middle classes they feel are responsible for forcing Mr. Aristide into exile.

Critics say that the Jordanian forces are, culturally, a bad fit in the slum and have been unable to mix with the local population as their Brazilian counterparts have managed to do elsewhere.

When the Brazilians first said they would lead the mission here, it was seen as an opportunity for Latin American nations to step up and fill a gap that the United States, after supporting Mr. Aristide's departure, was reluctant to fill.

But the Brazilian effort here has been plagued by many of the same problems that have faced peacekeepers in other conflicted corners of the globe, namely, a lack of money and political backing, and questions over use of lethal force.

Not least among the reasons that it has been hard to attack the gangs in Cité Soleil, said Mr. Valdés, the diplomatic chief of the mission, is that the area is flush with weapons.

Mr. Valdés said the gang members have used money and intimidation to enlist a broad network of support among residents here. Most kidnapping victims, he said, are brought to the homes of average families in Cité Soleil and held there. If the families cooperate with the gangs, Mr. Valdés said, they eat. If they don't, they die.

Disarming anyone has been all but impossible. "I have always said that this mission is completely different from any other mission of the United Nations in that sense because disarmament is not a collective problem," he said. "We are not facing armies, irregular armies or guerrilla groups. We are facing individuals who are armed, and who do not want to lose their weapons, either to defend themselves, or to attack others, or simply to eat."

In response to mounting criticism against the United Nations work in Cité Soleil, Mr. Valdés said, troops would increase patrols and implement stricter controls at checkpoints. But he and ranking military leaders of the mission said soldiers would not move to occupy Cité Soleil because of the risk of "collateral damage," the killing of innocent men, women and children.

"What would happen with a massive operation?" asked Maj. Gen. Eduardo Aldunate, the deputy commander. "Maybe we would catch some bandits, but for sure many innocent people will die.

"Our role is not to kill innocent people," he added. "It is to help them."

Innocent people are dying all the time. Last August, the international aid group Doctors Without Borders reopened Sainte Catherine Hospital in Cité Soleil. The hospital had been closed for a year. Dr. Loris De Filippi, head of the medical unit, said that the numbers of gunshot victims treated at the hospital had been steadily declining but peaked again in December, as elections neared. Things only got worse, he said, after the New Year.

In the first 10 days of this year, doctors treated more than 47 gunshot victims, half of them women and children. One recent patient was hit by a bullet as she slept in bed.

"It's appropriate," said Dr. De Filippi, "to describe what's going on out there as war."

It certainly looked and sounded like war last Tuesday. Gunfire erupted just before 8 a.m. when a Jordanian battalion started work on fortifying a guard post at a main entrance to Cité Soleil.

"They don't care about how much they are firing or shooting rounds," Brig. Gen. Mahmoud al-Husban said of the gunmen. "In the beginning they used to fire three or four shots in maybe one hour, but now they are firing hundreds and sometimes a thousand."

Indeed gunfire crackled through the air until well past noon, leaving two soldiers dead. Capt. Tariq Abed Alfatta Aljaafreh, 30, was engaged to be married at the end of his six-month assignment here. Sgt. Jalal Rabi Merei, also 30, was a husband and father of two.

Their bodies were sent home Friday, after a ceremony of somber prayers and defiant speeches. Not a single representative of Haiti's interim government was there. Still, the speakers took the opportunity to send a message.

General Aldunate said the United Nations mission would not be forced to surrender its work by the "tiny elite that does not want to understand our mission."

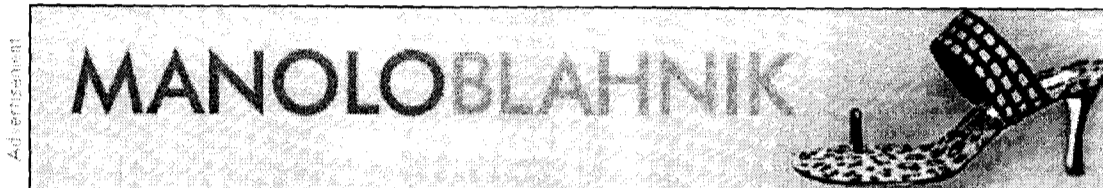
Col. Mohammed Sabayleh, the dead soldiers' commanding officer, also spoke. "We remain committed to preserving peace against those who have lost the taste for it," he said. "These bodies you see before you are proof of our honesty, and our determination."



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# Hamas Sweeps Palestinian Elections, Complicating Peace Efforts in Mideast

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By Scott Wilson  
Washington Post Foreign Service  
Friday, January 27, 2006; Page A01

RAMALLAH, West Bank, Jan. 26 -- The radical Islamic movement Hamas won a large majority in the new Palestinian parliament, according to official election results announced Thursday, trouncing the governing Fatah party in a contest that could dramatically reshape the Palestinians' relations with Israel and the rest of the world.

In Wednesday's voting, Hamas claimed 76 of the 132 parliamentary seats, giving the party at war with Israel the right to form the next cabinet under the Palestinian Authority's president, Mahmoud Abbas, the leader of Fatah.

Fatah, which has dominated the legislature since the previous elections a decade ago and the Palestinian cause for far longer, won 43 seats. A collection of nationalist, leftist and independent parties claimed the rest.

Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia, another Fatah leader, resigned his post along with his cabinet early Thursday, as reports of Hamas's victory began to circulate. Although the cabinet would have been required to step aside even if Fatah had retained its majority, Qureia



Hamas supporters celebrate outside the Palestinian Legislative Council in Ramallah, where some also scuffled with loyalists of rival Fatah. (By Kevin Frayer -- Associated Press)

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acknowledged in submitting his resignation that Hamas had earned the right to form the next cabinet.

"This is the choice of the people," Qureia, a member of the party's discredited old guard who did not run for reelection, told reporters here. "It should be respected."

Abbas, on the other hand, will continue to serve the four-year presidential term he won in an election a year ago, shortly after the death of his predecessor, Yasser Arafat, the founder of Fatah. Abbas will maintain the broad power to create national policy and control the security services, though he needs parliamentary approval for his budget and legislative proposals. He will also shape peace policy with Israel as head of the Palestine Liberation Organization, which does not include Hamas.

The arrival of Hamas, formally known as the Islamic Resistance Movement, in the Palestinian Authority as a nearly equal partner will severely complicate Abbas's efforts to begin negotiations with Israel under the U.S.-backed peace plan known as the "road map." Hamas, which emerged in 1987 during the first Palestinian uprising as an offshoot of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, favors the creation of a Palestinian nation on land that now includes Israel rather than the road map's two-state solution.



The Washington Post

**PHOTOS**



**Palestinian Elections**  
Palestinians went to the polls Wednesday to choose a 132-member Palestinian Legislative Council in their first parliamentary elections in a decade.

**AUDIO**

**Post's Wilson on Palestinian Elections**  
The Washington Post's Scott Wilson reports on the Palestinian Elections from the West Bank.

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**FRIDAY, JAN. 27, AT NOON ET**

**Hamas Gains Power in Palestinian Election**  
Washington Post staff writer Scott Wilson, who is based in Jerusalem, discusses the significance of Hamas's win in the Palestinian elections, its significance for Arab-Israeli relations and the prospects for peace in the region.

The election results stunned U.S. and Israeli officials, who have repeatedly stated that they would not work with a Palestinian Authority that included Hamas, which both countries and the European Union have designated as a terrorist organization. In Washington, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said that a party could not "have one foot in politics and the other in terror. Our position on Hamas has therefore not changed."

Javier Solana, the European Union's foreign policy chief, said in a statement that the Palestinian people had "voted democratically and peacefully." But, he added, "these results may confront us with an entirely new situation which will need to be analyzed" at a meeting of European foreign ministers next week.

Jubilant Hamas leaders reiterated Thursday that they had no plans to pursue peace talks or disarm the party's armed wing, a condition Israel has set for beginning negotiations under the road map. The plan, which calls for the creation of an independent Palestinian state by the end of 2005, has been frozen during recent years of violence.

Here in Ramallah, a Fatah stronghold where Hamas won every parliamentary seat except the one reserved for a Christian, dozens of activists from both parties clashed in front of the Palestinian Legislative Council, as the parliament is formally known.

PALESTINIAN ELECTIONS

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MULTIMEDIA

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Palestinians vote in their first parliamentary elections in a decade.



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The dispute started when a Hamas supporter hung the party's emerald-green banner above the entrance in place of the national flag. Fatah activists arrived and tore down the banner, which bears the Islamic axiom, "There is no God but God, and Muhammad is his prophet." The fight that ensued was broken up by police officers, who fired warning shots into the air.

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