



Erdogan loses majority with most votes counted

Description

TURKEY: The gap in Türkiye's presidential election between the incumbent, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and his pro-Western opponent, Kemal Kilicdaroglu, has narrowed with most of the votes counted, according to state media reports.

With more than 98% of the ballot boxes opened and tallied, Erdogan's initially comfortable lead has fallen to 49.35% – just below the 50% majority needed to avoid a runoff, according to Anadolu. His main opposition rival, Kilicdaroglu, has 45%, while Sinan Ogan is a distant third with 5.2%.

Turnout was high at almost 89% in Türkiye and over 50% for those registered to vote abroad. While the majority of the domestic votes are already counted, most of the ballots cast outside of the country are yet to be tallied. The breakdown may also change depending on how the election body deals with the votes cast for Muharrem Ince, who had withdrawn from the race but nevertheless received around 0.5%.

The Supreme Election Council has yet to finalize the count and announce official results, but if no candidate wins at least half of the vote, a run-off will be held on May 28. The head of the election body, Ahmet Yener, dismissed accusations from the opposition that it was delaying the results, saying on Sunday night that the data is being entered into the system and shared with political parties *“instantaneously.”*

The election is widely seen as a referendum on Erdogan, who has ruled Türkiye as president since 2014, and was prime minister for 11 years before becoming head of state. After defeating an attempted coup in 2016, the president has pursued a path of relative geopolitical independence, positioning Türkiye as a major regional power, steering away from integration with the EU and fostering close ties with Moscow – which has not changed, even amid the conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

Kilicdaroglu, however, has taken more of a pro-Western approach, vowing to implement judicial and human rights reforms demanded by the EU, and align with the sanctions on Russia if he wins. The 74-year-old secularist and former civil servant also promised to roll back the powers of his office and return Türkiye to a parliamentary system with a prime minister in charge.

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