

Türkiye election: Is this the beginning of the end for strongman Recep Erdoğan?

Türkiye's main opposition party has emerged from a nationwide local vote as a serious challenger to veteran President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.



Opposition supporters celebrated en masse after municipal election results dealt a major blow to Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (left) and his party.
Source: Getty / Adem Altan

KEY POINTS

- Türkiye's municipal election results have dealt a major blow to Erdoğan and his ruling party.
- Voters were especially concerned with a weak Turkish lira and inflation hovering at nearly 70 per cent.
- Political analysts say this is the biggest upset for Erdoğan since he took power in 2002.

Turkish citizens dealt President Tayyip Erdoğan and his party their biggest electoral blow on Sunday in a nationwide local vote that reasserted the opposition as a political force and reinforced Istanbul mayor Ekram Imamoglu as the president's chief rival.

Opposition supporters filled an Istanbul square to celebrate the re-election of Imamoglu as mayor.

Tens of thousands of people lit torches and waved Turkish flags after partial local election results showed that support for the government had weakened in the wake of nearly 70 per cent inflation and the crumbling of the Turkish currency against the dollar.

[READ MORE](#)



After a 20-month delay, Türkiye approves Sweden's NATO membership bid

It marked the worst defeat for Erdoğan and his AK Party (AKP) in their more than two decades in power, and could signal a change in the country's divided political landscape.

Erdoğan called it a "turning point" in a post-midnight address.

"Turkish people have opened their eyes and voted for those candidates who think about Türkiye's economy, the youth's education and future," university student Ege Ersoz, 19, told AFP at the Sarachane square .

"This is only the beginning. It's the first time AKP lost this much. God willing, this will go on in the coming elections," he said, referring to Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party.



Opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) supporters celebrate outside the main municipality building following municipal elections across Türkiye, in Istanbul on 31 March 2024. Source: Getty / Ozan Kose

"We dealt the biggest blow to the AKP in this election. I hope we will see the AKP completely lose in Türkiye and removed from power."

Mert Arslanalp, assistant professor of political science at Istanbul's Bogazici University, said it was Erdoğan's "severest election defeat" since coming to national power in 2002.

"Imamoglu demonstrated he could reach across the deep socio-political divisions that define Türkiye's opposition electorate even without their institutional support," he said.

"This makes him the most politically competitive rival to Erdoğan's regime."

[READ MORE](#)



Australia's 'Facebook gangster' Hakan Ayik arrested in Türkiye after decade on the run

'A new spring day'

Arzu Uluocak, 47, said the election results amounted to a protest by voters against the country's deteriorating economic situation.

"People slammed it in the face of the government in this election," she said. "Every day prices are soaring, people are in dire straits."

And for Esra Palasoglu, this was just the beginning now that voters had "woken up".

"This is what we call democracy," she said.

[READ MORE](#)

The world is in a 'super election' year. This is what it means for Australia

"Beautiful days are near," said 20-year-old student Gurkay Gunes, wrapped in a Turkish flag. "Türkiye will be more beautiful when the opposition take control of the entire Türkiye," he added.

Imamoglu, his voice hoarse and visibly tired after a long, intense campaign, nevertheless sounded upbeat.

"A new era has started in Istanbul. There will be no partisanship.

"Tomorrow is a new spring day for our country," he said.

"We will inhale the air of peace, democracy and unity."



Recommended for you

Europe is in 'a new era' of war. Is Australia ready?

WAR

This country just announced free contraception for women, but not everyone is keen

GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

Trump, Biden or 'literally anybody else'? A US man has launched a bizarre election bid

2024 UNITED STATES PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

A measles warning has been issued. Here's how to protect yourself

DISEASE CONTROL

Your student loan debt could be about to increase by hundreds of dollars

ECONOMY

Lizzo says 'I quit' in emotional Instagram post

SINGERS

Ukraine is bracing for a major Russian assault. Here's how that could play out

UKRAINE CONFLICT

Do you wear blue light glasses? This is how effective they really are

EYE HEALTH