

## International

# Karzai's rival to demand anti-poll fraud measures

**Safeguards need to be beefed up, says Abdullah**

**Majority of polling officials removed from watchdog**

**Jon Boone Kabul**

Abdullah Abdullah, the challenger to Afghanistan's president Hamid Karzai, said yesterday he hoped a second round of voting in the presidential election could go ahead, but warned he would announce conditions to prevent a repeat of the fraud that hit the first vote in August.

Abdullah, a former foreign minister who will be facing off against Karzai after

a fraud investigation cut the Afghan president's share of votes to below the 50% needed for outright victory, said measures would have to be taken to ensure a more credible vote.

Speaking at his house in Kabul, he said: "Some people lost their fingers in the last round of elections [so] this is a serious issue, and in order to prepare the ground for transparency and fairness we have certain recommendations as well as conditions that ... we will come up with soon."

Abdullah's comments came as the UN said 200 out of 380 district election officials from the government-appointed Independent Election Commission had been sacked following evidence of vote-rigging.

"More than half of the district field co-ordinators are being replaced to pre-

vent any attempted fraud or because there have been complaints made against them by candidates and observers," said Aleem Siddique, a spokesman for the UN mission in Afghanistan, according to Reuters.

Karzai agreed yesterday to a runoff vote following intense international pressure in the wake of a UN-backed investigation that stripped him of almost 1 million votes he won in August.

Abdullah said that while all preparations were being made to ensure the runoff, scheduled for 7 November, goes ahead, the logistics may prove impossible. The cutting off of large parts of the mountainous north of the country by heavy snow is just one potential problem confronting a second round of voting.

Other issues include whether or not polling stations would open in areas so

insecure that it is impossible to monitor fraud.

Abdullah said no voters should be disenfranchised because of insecurity, but warned that there were "certain sad realities" that could make it impossible to stop the Taliban from intimidating voters.

"How to overcome this is for our security institutions and the international forces," he said. British commanders are among those bracing themselves for a resurgence of Taliban attacks in the run-up to the second round.

Britain sent 700 extra troops in the summer to beef up security in Helmand. Many were engaged in Panther's Claw, an operation designed to clear a populated and strategic area in which 23 British troops were killed.

British officials estimate that in Babaji,

which witnessed the fiercest fighting, just 150 people voted in the first round on 20 August out of a population of 55,000. In the nearby district of Nad Ali with a population of an estimated 60,000 people, 600 voted. In Kajaki 300 voted out of 55,000.

Because of the difficulties of ensuring security and preventing fraud, many western diplomats hope a runoff can be avoided if Karzai and Abdullah can strike a deal. But Karzai has publicly said he is not interested in coalition government, and yesterday Abdullah said he was "not under any pressure from any sides" to come to an arrangement with the president.

**g Matt Duss** What the election fraud means for US policy  
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## Wine-lovers raise glass to legendary Paris cellar's €1m sale

**Jason Burke Paris**

It is one of Europe's oldest restaurants, a Paris landmark with a renowned wine cellar of nearly half a million bottles dating back centuries. Now, to clear space and to raise €1m (£902,000) for renovation and investment, a selection from the cellar of La Tour D'Argent is going under the hammer for the first time.

A glass of pre-revolution cognac after your dinner? A magnum of 1983 Château Pétrus to go with the Sunday roast? A 1919 port for Christmas? If you have just won the lottery - the Pétrus is expected to go for about £1,000 and the 1788 Clos du Griffier cognac for at least £2,500 - then these and 18,000 other bottles could be yours.

Not all the bottles for sale in the December auction are so expensive. "There are wines which should go for €10 or €15,"



**Four bottles of 1875 Armagnac Vieux, covered with black fungus, which were unearthed from the restaurant's labyrinthine cellar**

David Ridgeway, the restaurant's sommelier, said. "Every one has come from our cellar, has only made one journey in its lifetime and has been handpicked."

Ridgeway, who has worked for the restaurant for 28 years, said the cellar was full. Much of the wine was bought 20 years ago, when diners were offered a selection of top bordeaux and burgundies and little else. Since then, tastes have diversified and new regions and producers have been added to the restaurant's wine list, which now extends to about 15,000 individual references. Some "trimming" was necessary, said Ridgeway, who wants to diver-



**La Tour d'Argent is cleaning out its vast wine cellar and putting 18,000 bottles up for auction Photograph: Christophe Ena/AP**

sify further and add some recent vintages from 2005 and 2009.

But the cash generated will also be welcome. Founded in 1582, the restaurant, whose famous fifth-floor dining room looks out over Notre-Dame, has seen better times. Having lost one Michelin star in 1996 and another three years ago, it is now down to its last star. The night of the loss saw Le Figaro's restaurant critic, François Simon - parodied in the film *Ratatouille* - write one of his most famous reviews,

dismissing the restaurant's cooking, and its signature dish, canard au sang Tour d'Argent, as "dated, melancholic, timorous, disarming". The economic crisis has not helped. "All the luxury sector has been hit hard and we haven't been spared," André Terrail, the owner, said.

La Tour D'Argent has seen worse. The restaurant was looted and forced to close during the French revolution in 1789 and in June 1940 the best wines in its cellar were walled in to save them from being

drunk by the occupying German forces.

Those who will be running the sale expect interest from overseas. "With a legendary cellar like this it's probable that we'll see Russians and Chinese among the prospective buyers," said Alexis Velliet, chief auctioneer at Piasa.

Ridgeway hopes that the bottles sold will be drunk, even the 1788 cognac. "That's what it is there for," he said. "I would rather people enjoyed it, rather than collecting wine for the sake of it."

## Polanski may agree to face justice in US, says lawyer

**Matthew Weaver and agencies**

The film director Roman Polanski may decide to face justice in the US to avoid lengthy extradition procedures in Switzerland, one of his lawyers said yesterday.

"If the procedure drags on, it is not impossible that Roman Polanski could choose to go and explain himself in the United States, where there are some arguments in his favour," Georges Kiejman told France's Europe1 radio.

Since the director's arrest last month, Polanski's lawyers have failed to secure his release. On Tuesday Switzerland's top criminal court rejected his appeal to be freed from prison, citing a "high" risk that he would try to flee.

It was also revealed yesterday that Polanski was arrested in Zurich after a tip-off by Swiss officials to the US authorities. Until now it had been assumed that the US had prompted the Swiss police to make the arrest in its long-running efforts to track him down after he fled justice following his admission to the statutory rape of a 13-year-old in 1977.

But emails from the Swiss justice office show that it alerted the US office of international affairs (OIA). The Swiss also sent an urgent fax stating that Polanski was expected in Zurich to receive a film award

**Roman Polanski was arrested after a tip-off by Swiss officials to the US, emails from Switzerland's justice office show**



- as the website of the city's film festival had already announced.

The emails, released to the Associated Press, show that on 22 September Swiss officials asked the US if it wanted him arrested. The officials also alerted the Los Angeles district attorney's office, which immediately began drafting an arrest warrant. Polanski was arrested four days later.

A spokesman for Switzerland's justice ministry, Folco Galli, said the emails showed the Swiss authorities had acted correctly by asking their US counterparts if Polanski's arrest warrant was still valid.

The new details again raise the question of why Switzerland decided to go after the director now, even though the 76-year-old was a frequent visitor.

In one of the released emails, the US appears confident that Polanski would not be released. A message, sent by the OIA a day before his arrest, said: "The default in Switzerland is that a fugitive will be detained until s/he is either extradited or determined by the Swiss federal supreme court to be non-extraditable."

Laura Sweeney, a US department of justice spokeswoman, said: "We don't comment on matters of extradition unless and until an individual is on US soil."

Polanski was accused of plying a teenager with champagne and drugs during a modelling shoot, before raping her.

He was initially indicted on six counts, including rape by use of drugs, child molesting and sodomy. Polanski pleaded guilty to the lesser charge of unlawful sexual intercourse and fled in 1978 amid a legal dispute over his sentence. He has 10 days to appeal to Switzerland's supreme court against Tuesday's decision.



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**ECHORD**

### 1st Call for Experiment Proposals

- Deadline: December 1st 2009, at 17:00 (Brussels time)

This call for experiment proposals is related to the EU-funded Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) project ECHORD (European Clearing House for Open Robotics Development, Grant Agreement Number 231143).

The aim of ECHORD is to strengthen the knowledge transfer between scientific research and industry in robotics and to stimulate their cooperation. In the context of ECHORD, small-scale projects, so-called "experiments", will be conducted, which will use state-of-the-art robotic equipment. The research community, enterprises and robot manufacturers are asked to submit experiment proposals.

Three scenarios for likely future robot use have been defined to outline the scope of the research work to be performed in the experiments: human-robot co-worker, hyper-flexible cells, and the cognitive factory. The focus of the first call for experiment proposals is on the first scenario, the human-robot co-worker.

More information including the full call text can be found on the web site [www.echord.info](http://www.echord.info)



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