

## International

# Ghana's president re-elected as opposition rejects results

## Akufo-Addo receives 51.59%; opposition leader 47.36%

**ACCRA:** Ghana's President Nana Akufo-Addo has won a second term in office, the electoral commission announced Wednesday, a result his rival John Mahama's party said it would appeal. The West African country is known for its stable democracy, but tensions rose over Monday's presidential and legislative vote after Mahama claimed to have won a parliamentary majority and warned Akufo-Addo against stealing the vote.

In the presidential race, Akufo-Addo received 51.59 percent of the vote, beating opposition leader and former president Mahama's 47.36 percent, the electoral commission said. The announcement was greeted with chanting and dancing by a crowd of supporters in the seaside capital Accra. But the opposition has called the election "flawed." "Overwhelming evidence available makes it impossible for us to accept this spurious and hurried conclusion," Haruna Iddrisu, a member of parliament for the National Democratic Congress (NDC) party said at a press conference.

"We intend to take decisive and concrete steps, both with the presidential and parliamentary results, to overturn this brazen and shameless attack on our democracy." In a victory speech on Wednesday, the president-elect leader of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) addressed his jubilant supporters, calling for peace. "Now is the time, irrespective of political affiliations, to unite, join hands and stand shoulder to shoulder," 76-year-old Akufo-Addo said. Ob-

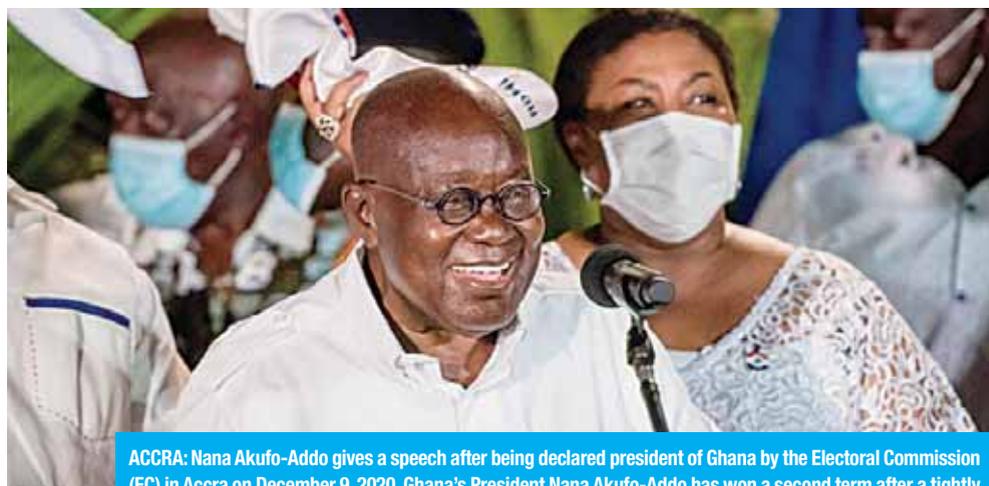
servers viewed polling as generally free and fair but police said five people were killed and 19 injured in election-related violence.

The political climate soured late Tuesday when Mahama accused his rival of showing "credentials that are very undemocratic". Mahama, 62, charged that Akufo-Addo had harnessed the military in a bid to sway the outcome, a claim the government said was false. "You cannot use the military to try and overturn some of the results in constituencies that we have won. We will resist any attempts to subvert the sovereign will of the Ghanaian people," the former president said. Mahama - who has twice before lost to Akufo-Addo by a narrow margin, the last time in 2016 - has yet to comment on the results. The full count of the 275 parliamentary seats has not been announced and are expected to be very close.

### 'Prosperous and progressive'

Ghana has recorded high levels of growth during Akufo-Addo's first term as he worked to diversify an economy largely dependent on cocoa exports and more recently oil and gold. On education in particular, he is considered to have done well, which matters in a country where 18- to 35-year-olds account for more than half of all eligible voters.

But while Ghana has made large strides in recent years, many still live in extreme poverty with scarce access to clean water or electricity. "There



**ACCRA:** Nana Akufo-Addo gives a speech after being declared president of Ghana by the Electoral Commission (EC) in Accra on December 9, 2020. Ghana's President Nana Akufo-Addo has won a second term after a tightly contested presidential election. —AFP

could be a tendency for an incumbent, who has just secured a second term, to take it easy and relax," Akufo-Addo. "I am of a different character. I give you my word that I will continue to work very hard to build a prosperous and progressive Ghana, for which we yearn." Former Ghanaian president John Kufuor was one of the first to congratulate Akufo-Addo, saying on Twitter: "you deserve it."

Ghana has had seven peaceful transitions of

power since the return of democracy more than 30 years ago, as post-electoral grievances have always been pursued through the courts — a rarity in the troubled region. Hoping to retain that reputation, Akufo-Addo and Mahama on Friday signed a symbolic peace pact, which the 15-nation regional bloc ECOWAS urged "all political parties and their leadership to respect." —AFP

## 'Organized crime' hit in German police raids

**BERLIN:** Several hundred police carried out raids in Berlin and Hamburg yesterday targeting organized crime, the authorities said in a statement. "More than 500 police officers are currently executing 27 search warrants and three arrest warrants in Berlin and Hamburg," the Berlin public prosecutor's office said on Twitter. The raids began at 6 am and were aimed at two so-called "family clans" suspected of illegal property transactions, according to a report in the Tagesspiegel newspaper.

In Berlin, officers searched sites in the Charlottenburg, Mitte and Spandau districts, the newspaper said. Connections to the biker scene are also being investigated, it said. The raids led to "traffic disruptions throughout the city" yesterday morning, the Berlin state transport ministry said. Media reports named the Arab Abu-Chaker clan and the Turkish Surer clan as the targets of the raids. Berlin in particular has seen several large operations targeting family clans in recent months. In November, more than 1,600 police officers carried out major raids against a family known as the Remmo clan over a spectacular jewelry heist in the city of Dresden a year ago. Three members of the family were arrested over the crime, in which more than a dozen pieces of diamond-encrusted jewelry were snatched from a state museum. The family of Arab origin is notorious for ties to organized crime and its members were in February convicted in another high-profile museum break-in in central Berlin. —AFP

## Tailor of Tigray mends Ethiopian refugees' clothes and hearts

**UM RAQUBA, Sudan:** Thousands of people fled war in Ethiopia with nothing but the clothes on their backs. Now in Um Raquba camp in neighboring Sudan, dozens of destitute refugees from the fighting in the northern Tigray region flock each day to Omar Ibrahim's makeshift tailor shop. Using a foot-powered sewing machine he rents from a local villager, Ibrahim helps fellow refugees recover from the horrors of war and forced flight - by making them new garments and mending the holes in their old ones. "I came here a month ago" from the Tigray town of Humera, Ibrahim tells AFP as he sews a new red and white cotton dress. "I had nothing with me, and nothing to do. Sitting idly would never have helped improve my situation, so I decided to do the only thing I know: sewing."

### 'Came here with nothing'

Ibrahim explains that he struck a deal with a Sudanese villager in Um Raquba. In return for the use of the rusty sewing machine, he hands half of his profits to its owner. "Now, I am happier than when I arrived," says the 25-year-old tailor, who owned a shop in Humera equipped with three sewing machines. In his hometown, he specialized in making clothes for women.

In Um Raquba camp, a sprawling refugee settlement that the UN says currently houses some 13,000 refugees, he mends and sews new clothes for men, women and children.

"When I give people new clothes to wear, they feel happy, because they came here with nothing," says Ibrahim, who keeps a tailor's white measuring tape around his shoulders. Despite the pain and loss he has suffered, he remains driven by a belief in self-reliance and the importance of serving his community. "When you do good things for people, you receive good things from the world," he says.

### 'One people'

Some 49,000 Ethiopians have fled into Sudan since Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's government launched a deadly offensive against the Tigray region's ruling party on November 4. Living in a string of camps dotted along Sudan's border with Ethiopia, most of the refugees must rely on aid to survive. Many simply do not have the means to pay Ibrahim for his services, so he charges according to their means. "If they can afford to pay me, I charge them. But if they don't have any money I help them free of charge," he says. "We are all one people."

As he uses the pedal to power his sewing machine, Ibrahim describes his final days in Humera. "There was so much bombing, and there were many dead we couldn't bury," says the tailor. Now, in Um Raquba, he worries for his elderly parents who decided to stay behind in Humera. His work as a tailor helps him both to earn a living and to fight his sadness. "I am no better than anyone else. I have to work to earn a living. Thank God I am alive. I saw so many dead bodies," he says.

### 'He helps people'

Ibrahim's attention turns to Salam, a 25-year-old mother of three who arrives at the shop with a pair of jeans for her nine-year-old son Emmanuel that needs mending. The shop's entrance is through a curtain made from an old grey cloth. Like many of the shelters the refugees live in, the ceilings and walls are built from plastic sheeting and brush. With her younger son Eyoub strapped to her back in a cotton scarf, Salam tells AFP that the jeans are her eldest son's only trousers. —AFP