

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Abedin, Huma <AbedinH@state.gov>
Sent: Saturday, April 16, 2011 3:33 PM
To: H
Subject: Fw: Turkey's Erdogan pledges new constitution (AP)

From: OpsNewsTicker@state.gov [mailto:OpsNewsTicker@state.gov]
Sent: Saturday, April 16, 2011 11:49 AM
To: NEWS-Mahogany
Cc: SES-O_OS; SES-O_SWO
Subject: Turkey's Erdogan pledges new constitution (AP)

ANKARA (AP) - Turkey's prime minister says his government will write a new constitution that will strengthen democracy and freedoms, if re-elected in June.

Turkey's current constitution, introduced under military rule in 1982, has clauses that restrict some political rights and freedoms, including free speech or minority rights.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Saturday the new constitution would "support democracy and freedoms." He was introducing his ruling, Islam-based party's manifesto before the June 12 elections.

Opinion polls show Erdogan's party is the front-runner in the elections, although it is not clear if it would gain sufficient seats in parliament to change the constitution alone.

The pro-secular opposition party fears a constitution by Erdogan's party may erode Turkey's secular system.

NewsTickers alert senior Department officials to breaking news. This item appears as it did in its original publication and does not contain analysis or commentary by Department sources.