Beat: Politics

Scotland's first minister Humza Yousaf resignation speech

Yousaf's resignation speech in full

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USPA NEWS - Speaking at his official residence in Bute House in Edinburgh on Monday afternoon, Yousaf said he could not carry on as Scotland's leader.

Yousaf's resignation speech in full
"Last week, I stood here to announce the ending of the cooperation agreement between the SNP and the Greens, the Bute House Agreement, and that the SNP would seek to govern as a minority government.

"I made that decision as leader of the SNP as I believed ending the Bute House Agreement was the right one for the party I lead and I still do believe that to be the case.

"But most importantly I believe it was the right decision for the country.

"My hope was to continue working with the Greens in a less formal arrangement as the SNP moved into a new phase of minority government.

"Unfortunately ending the Bute House Agreement in the manner that I did I clearly underestimated the level of hurt and upset that caused our Green colleagues

"For a senior government to be able to govern effectively, trust when working with the opposition is clearly fundamental.

"And while a route through this week's motion of no-confidence was absolutely possible, I am not willing to trade my values and principles, or do deals with whomever, simply for retaining power.

"Therefore, spending the weekend reflecting on what is best for my party, for the government and for the country I lead, I've concluded that repairing our relationship across the political divide can only be done with someone else at the helm.

"I have therefore informed the SNP's national secretary of my intention to stand down as party leader and ask that it commences an SNP leadership contest for my replacement as soon as possible.
"In order to ensure a smooth and orderly transition it is my intention to continue as First Minister until my successor has been elected but as particularly as parliament will be debating some incredibly important legislation in the coming days and the coming weeks.

"I cannot tell you what an honour it is being First Minister of the country I love, of the country I am raising my family in and the only country I will ever call home.

"As a young boy born and raised in Scotland, I could never have dreamt that one day I would have the privilege of leading my country.

"People who looked like me were not in positions of political influence, let alone leading government when I was younger.

"We now live in a UK that has a British-Hundu Prime Minister, a Muslim mayor of London, a black Welsh First Minister and for a little while longer a Scots Asian First Minister of this country.

"So to those who decry that multiculturalism has failed across the UK, I would suggest that the evidence is quite to the contrary and that is something we should all celebrate.

"I've had the honour of serving in government for almost 12 years in a variety of roles.

"Whatever position I've held during my time in politics, I've always been guided by my values.

“As First Minister, I’m incredibly proud to have a fair tax system – the most progressive in the UK – that those who earn the most contribute the most.

“And it will always be my core belief that in a country as rich as ours, wealth must be far more evenly distributed.

“I’ve no doubt at all that whoever takes over from me will continue the Scottish government’s drive to reduce child poverty.

“I’m proud that through our actions an estimated 100,000 children are expected to be lifted out of poverty this year.

“I also hope that as a country we can be really proud of the strides that we have made to tackle inequality, prejudice and discrimination but let’s also acknowledge that far too often in our country hatred continues to rear its ugly head.

“In a world where every issue seems to descend into a toxic culture war, it is often the most marginalised in our society that bears the brunt.

“As politicians of all political parties, we are afforded the privilege to have a platform.

“Each and every one of us must resist the temptation of populism at the expense of minorities, particularly in a general election year.

“I’ve often said that as a minority myself my rights don’t exist in a vacuum, they’re only protected when the rights of everyone are protected.

“And from the backbenches of the Scottish Parliament, I will continue to champion the voices and the rights of those who are not heard.

“Be that at home or indeed overseas such as those suffering, and who continue to suffer the most horrific humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza as the world watches on.

“Let me say to my SNP family, I will always be with you, I will always campaign alongside you.

“We have had setbacks in our movement but we have overcome them and we will do so again.

“Independence feels frustratingly close and believe me no one, no one, feels that frustration more than the leader of the SNP.

“But the last few miles of a marathon are always the hardest and we have won this race as a team and will now prepare to pass the baton to a successor who I am absolutely certain will lead us over the finish line.

“And I will tell you today what I will say to that successor: first ministers get to meet countless inspirational people from communities across Scotland working to make life better for those around them.

“First ministers get to see first hand many of the exciting industries and businesses that power Scotland’s future.

“And whenever first ministers set foot beyond Scotland’s shores, no matter where they go in Europe or across the world, they encounter friends and admirers of our nation.

“If only every person in Scotland could be afforded the opportunity of being first minister for just one day.

“On that very next day, it’s my belief that they would vote for independence with both their head and their heart.

“For MSPs of all political persuations, next week is a crucial milestone as we mark 25 years of devolution.

“We have an electoral system that is designed for no political party to have an overall majority.

“Devolution founding fathers and mothers rightly in their wisdom believed that no one loses out on sharing wisdom, sharing council,

sharing ideas.

“But the converse is also true and that is why I would make an appeal to colleagues across the political spectrum that while government must of course act in good faith, so much their opposition and be prepared to collaborate with us, not just oppose for opposition’s sake.

“The only people who suffer as a result of such an impasse is the people we serve.

“Politics and politicians, not unreasonably I’m afraid, have often been maligned.

“However I truly believe that when we get it right, and we often do, we are a force for good that can transform people’s lives for the better.

“To my colleagues and opposition, regardless of political party, I genuinely do wish you well.

“I bear no ill will and certainly bear no grudge against anyone.

“Politics can be a brutal business. It takes its toll on your physical and mental health, your family suffer alongside you.

“I am in absolute debt to my wonderful wife, my beautiful children and my wider family for putting up with me over the years.

“I’m afraid you’ll be seeing a lot more of me from now.

“You are truly everything to me.

“And of course as you can tell I’m sad that my time as First Minister is ending but I am so grateful and so blessed for having the opportunity that is afforded to so few to lead my country and who could ask for a better country to lead than Scotland.”

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