

Algeria supreme court places former industry minister in custody over alleged corruption – State tv

Wed, 2019-07-10 18:36

ALGIERS: Algeria's supreme court on Wednesday placed former industry minister Youcef Yousfi in custody over alleged corruption, state television reported. Yousfi became the latest senior official to be detained in anti-graft investigations since protests broke out earlier this year demanding the prosecution of people seen by demonstrators as corrupt and the removal of the ruling elite.

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UN and Syria 'close' to agreeing constitutional committee

Wed, 2019-07-10 16:58

DAMASCUS: The United Nations is close to agreement with Syria on setting up a constitutional committee, a long-awaited step in a stalled peace process, the UN Syria envoy said on Wednesday.

"I believe we have made a very solid progress and we are very close to have agreement on establishing the constitutional committee," Gerd Pedersen told reporters after meeting Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Al-Moualem.

The United Nations wants to convene the committee as a next step in efforts to find a political solution to end the war in Syria, but there has been no agreement so far on who should be on it.

A Syrian Foreign Ministry statement said significant progress had been made in the talks, but also reiterated its previous stance that the constitutional committee should be a purely Syrian affair.

Pedersen also called for a return to stability in Idlib province, where a government offensive has targeted the last major rebel stronghold, and said a truce there agreed last year between Russia and Turkey should come back into force.

Russia is along with Iran the main supporter of President Bashar al-Assad, who now controls most of the country, while Turkey backs some of the rebel groups in Idlib and adjacent areas.



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[France's top envoy to hold key talks with Iran](#)

Author:

Tue, 2019-07-09 22:51

PARIS: A French envoy was in Tehran on Tuesday to boost European efforts to save the 2015 nuclear deal, after Iran warned Europe against retaliatory measures for breaching a uranium enrichment cap.

The accord between Tehran and world powers promised sanctions relief, economic benefits and an end to international isolation of the country in return for stringent curbs on its nuclear program. It has been more than a year after President Donald Trump pulled the US out of the agreement.

According to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), tasked with inspections, while Iran consistently lived up to its commitments under the deal until recently it is now in breach of two of them.

French President Emmanuel Macron sent his top diplomatic adviser, Emmanuel Bonne, to Tehran after Iran announced on Monday it had passed 4.5 percent uranium enrichment – above the 3.7 percent limit under the agreement.

Bonne is “to piece together a de-escalation” strategy, the French presidency’s office said.

After the US withdrew in May 2018 and reimposed stinging sanctions on Iran, especially on its banking and oil sectors, the future of the accord became uncertain.

As the Iranian economy went into free-fall, Tehran demanded that the other parties to the deal, especially France, Germany and Britain, deliver the promised economic benefits and help it bypass US sanctions. However, it gradually became clear that this was no simple task.

In May, a year after Trump’s withdrawal, President Hassan Rouhani said that Iran would roll back its commitments under the deal in stages every 60 days

in an effort to force the other parties to deliver on their side of the bargain.

As tensions rose the US dispatched a naval carrier, bombers and extra troops to the region to counter perceived threats from Iran.

Last month, Trump said he had called off a retaliatory military strike against Iran at the last minute after Tehran shot down a US drone that it said had crossed into its airspace, a claim denied by Washington.

The IAEA confirmed on Monday that Iran had enriched uranium to a level above the deal's cap of 3.67 percent, though the 4.5-percent level reported by Tehran is still far below the 90 percent necessary for military purposes.

The UN nuclear watchdog confirmed this month that Iran has exceeded a 300-km limit on enriched uranium reserves, another cap that was imposed by the deal.

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu cautioned Iran on Tuesday that it is within range of Israeli airstrikes, citing what he described as Iranian threats to destroy Israel.

"Iran recently has been threatening Israel's destruction," Netanyahu said at an Israeli air force base, where he viewed a squadron of advanced US-built F-35 warplanes.

"It should remember that these planes can reach anywhere in the Middle East, including Iran, and certainly Syria," he said in a YouTube video clip filmed at the base, with an F-35 in the background.



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Europeans take first step to punish Iran over nuclear pact breachesEU calls on Iran to reverse uranium enrichment and uphold nuclear deal

Iraqi PM warns disrupting Hormuz oil route would be 'major obstacle' to Iraq's economy

Author:

Reuters

ID:

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Tue, 2019-07-09 17:12

BAGHDAD: Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi said on Tuesday any disruption to oil exports through the Hormuz Strait will be a "major obstacle" for his country's economy.

His government was studying contingency plans to deal with possible disruptions, including looking at alternative routes for oil exports, Abdul Mahdi told reporters at his weekly press conference.

On Monday, Bloomberg reported that a BP oil tanker had turned around before reaching Iraq's main oil terminal to load its cargo and was anchored off the coast of Saudi Arabia. The British company were weary of sending the ship through the Strait of Hormuz because of the threat from Iran to retaliate to the seizing of an Iranian ship off Gibraltar last week by UK forces.



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British oil tanker anchors off Saudi Arabian coast amid fears of Iranian retaliation

[President Donald Trump and the Emir of Qatar hold talks at White House](#)

Author:

Tue, 2019-07-09 19:51

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump met the Emir of Qatar at the White House Tuesday.

Trump and Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani are scheduled to participate in an afternoon of meetings that will include a working lunch and the signing of a deal to purchase Boeing jets.

Trump said Qatar is investing heavily in the US, buying military equipment

and commercial planes.

The White House has said their talks are expected to focus on security cooperation, counterterrorism issues and other developments in the region.



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