

Turkey criticized for indictment of 108 people over 2014 protests

Author:

Fri, 2021-01-08 23:16

ANKARA: The controversial indictment of 108 people, including Selahattin Demirtas and Figen Yuksekdag, former co-chairs of the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), over their involvement in the 2014 street protests was approved on Tuesday by Ankara Heavy Penal Court.

Demirtas and Yuksekdag, who face trial on several other charges, have been behind bars for over four years.

The 3,530-page-long indictment accused the defendants of homicide and of undermining state authority and territorial integrity, seeking life sentences for 38 of them.

The first trial will be held on April 25.

In October 2014, large crowds flooded the streets in Turkey's mainly Kurdish southeast region to protest against Ankara's inaction in defending Syrians during Daesh's siege of Syrian Kurdish town of Kobani, just across the border.

When the demonstrations became violent, 37 people were killed, and Ankara blamed the HDP for triggering the violence.

This latest indictment is seen as a new attempt by the government to restrain the HDP and further corner it over its links with the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

However, the imprisonment of Demirtas has been harshly criticized by European institutions such as the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) which on Dec. 22 called for Demirtas' release.

"This is the 3,530-page indictment announced after six years and after the ECHR decision! It is based on newspaper articles, comments and predictions of anonymous witnesses, as well as tweets from a fake account that was opened in the name of Demirtas. Lots of copy and paste. Honestly, I expected a more successful 'Counter Move' setup!" tweeted Demirtas' lawyer, Mahsuni Karaman.

The ECHR considers his detention had "the ulterior purpose of stifling pluralism and limiting freedom of political debate" without any substantial evidence about the terrorism charges that he is accused of. According to the European court, his continued detention is a serious "violation of his rights."

However, ECHR decisions, despite being binding, are often flouted in Turkey, with the rulers in Ankara accusing the top European court of being one-sided and having a double standard.

Erdogan recently called Demirtas a “terrorist with the blood of dozens of people on his hands.”

“The indictment is another attempt to flout the ECHR judgment ordering Demirtas’ release,” Emma Sinclair-Webb, director of Human Rights Watch Turkey, told Arab News. “However, Demirtas is already on trial on the basis of the same evidence so it doesn’t work to simply change the charge and try him a second time on the same bogus evidence in an effort to keep him locked up.”

Since the March 2019 local elections, dozens of HDP municipality mayors have been replaced by government-appointed trustees over the protests.

Last October, the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and its nationalistic ally MHP yet again rejected the HDP’s demand for a proper investigation of the 2014 protests.

According to Sinclair-Webb, the European court’s judgment made that very point and ordered the immediate release of Demirtas.

“Turkey must implement that European court judgment immediately,” she said.

While the government bloc accuses HDP of inflaming violence, the Kurdish party claims that it was doing its best to prevent bloodshed at that time.



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[Egypt-based equestrians make it a mission to stamp out animal cruelty](#)

Fri, 2021-01-08 23:55

CAIRO: When Jill Barton and her husband first came to Cairo seven years ago to volunteer at a horse and donkey sanctuary, they had little inkling they would end up moving to Egypt permanently to care for rescued animals.

Originally from Australia, Barton and her husband Warren share a great love of horses. It is perhaps no surprise, then, that during a visit to Egypt in December 2013, the couple were moved by the suffering of the local horses and donkeys put to work in deprived rural areas.

The owners of these animals often cannot afford veterinary care, nor do they have the luxury of giving the animals time off to recover.

There are an estimated three million working horses and donkeys in Egypt used for transport, agriculture and tourism. According to Barton, many of them are the descendants of Australian "war horses" left behind after the First World War.

In mid-2014, Barton and her husband sold up their family home in Australia and almost all of their possessions before moving to Abu Sir on the outskirts of Cairo. They rented a property with nearby stables in close proximity to the region's famous archaeological sites, where horseback riding is popular.



Abused horses and donkeys in Egypt find a champion in Egypt Equine Aid.
(Supplied)

There, the couple established Egypt Equine Aid (EEA), a non-profit organization that rescues horses, donkeys and mules from maltreatment and gives them a better life. Horses and donkeys are particularly vulnerable to abuse, often overworked and with few facilities to guard their welfare.

“Treating sick animals at the local farms has a strong impact on the family businesses and animal welfare,” said Muriel Sacks, EEA’s veterinary technical director, who is originally from Switzerland.

EEA provides medical treatment to sick and injured animals on a non-profit basis. Arrangements are available for finding a new home (rehoming) for animals whose owners can no longer look after them. EEA also provides training for veterinarians and schemes for local workers in farriery (equine hoof care), medical care and equestrian skills.

“Local owners of donkeys and horses are shown how to treat, feed and work their (helpers) in the most sustainable way to keep them strong and healthy,” Sacks said.

The organization currently employs four veterinarians, four assistants and eight support staff, including grooms and administrators. It also has its own farrier team, trained by EEA, to work in the community.

FASTFACT

Egypt Equine Aid (EEA) rescues horses, donkeys and mules from maltreatment and gives them a better life.

“By offering jobs and education, we provide young men and women of the local community with an opportunity to have a reliable salary and strengthen the workforce,” Sacks said.

While initially self-funded, EEA has since received grants from the Australian Embassy in Cairo and is recognized among an international community of supporters and horse-lovers who send donations.

“We rely on our social media pages and other media to spread the word about our work,” Sacks said.

Now Barton and her team are looking to expand the reach of their project. Their future plans include increasing the capacity of the existing hospital to treat more animals.

In the mid- to long-term, they look forward to building a whole new hospital and fitting it with advanced technologies for specialist diagnostics, prolonged general anesthetics (medications that cause anesthesia) and more complex surgical procedures.

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A Lebanese nonprofit strives to give women a stronger voice
Egypt's animal rights activists tackle pet shops of horror

[Big explosion heard in Aden, Yemen](#)

Thu, 2021-01-07 23:30

ADEN: A loud explosion was heard in the Yemeni city of Aden on Thursday evening, residents and a security source told Reuters.

The explosion took place just outside a central prison in the southern port city, they added.

The security source said the explosion happened in an empty area and damaged a wall.

There were no immediate reports of deaths or injuries.

Pictures posted on social media showed a plume of smoke that appeared to rise from area outside the prison.

After Yemen government officials, backed by Saudi Arabia, arrived in Aden on Dec. 30 at least 22 people were killed in attacks. Saudi-led coalition warplanes then struck areas in Yemen's Houthi-held capital Sanaa the next day.



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Yemeni leader slams Iran's 'blatant' meddling

[How the coronavirus crisis disrupted the global urban order](#)

Thu, 2021-01-07 22:13

DUBAI: History is full of examples of mighty cities brought to their knees by deadly disease outbreaks. While COVID-19's global toll is miniscule compared with the ravages of, say, the Black Death during the Middle Ages, the sheer scale of urbanization and the interconnectedness of today's modern economy amplified the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. How the different cities adapted to the latest contagion may very well determine their resilience and longevity.

Without a doubt, the COVID-19 crisis has shaken up the existing global urban order and thrown the reputation of several Western cities into question. Yet in many ways, the pandemic has merely accelerated a long-established eastward trend.

In its 2020 Global Cities Index report titled “New priorities for a new world,” management consultancy Kearney examined how the pandemic has impacted urban life and economic competitiveness of the world’s metropolises. This year’s study included data from 151 cities – up from 130 surveyed in 2019 – reflecting the growing importance of urban spaces in the Middle East, China and Central Asia.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the findings of the 2020 report are very different from previous years, as cities continue to limit entry to visitors, cancel events and festivals, and restrict the free movement and social mixing of their citizens in the hope of containing successive waves of the virus and its latest mutations.

LEADING CITIES OF THE WORLD

The 2020 Global Cities Outlook leaders according to Kearney

GLOBAL CITY OUTLOOK LEADERS BY DIMENSIONS

Personal well-being Nagoya	Economics Abu Dhabi	Innovation Beijing	Governance Stockholm
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GLOBAL CITIES OUTLOOK LEADERS BY METRIC

Stability and security Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka	Infrastructure Dubai, Abu Dhabi	Parents per capita Minneapolis	Quality of bureaucracy Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver
Healthcare evolution Moscow	GDP per capita Abu Dhabi	Private investments Toronto	Ease of doing business Almaty, Nur-Sultan
GINI coefficient index Prague	FDI infow London	University-sponsored incubators Prague	Transparency Vienna
Environmental performance Luxembourg			

ARAB NEWS

Source: Kearney 2020 Global Cities Report

Kearney’s Global Cities Outlook (GCO) suggests that although some well-established contenders have maintained their ranking over the course of the year, others have witnessed a notable change of fortunes – for better or worse.

London, for instance maintained its high ranking in 2020 despite the British capital’s repeated lockdowns and the economic uncertainties of Brexit. Meanwhile, for many rising cities, particularly those in China and the Middle East, it appears that long-term investment in governance and economic infrastructure is starting to pay off as they rapidly close the gap with their American and European peers.

One example is Abu Dhabi, which has risen to 7th place on the index, 13 notches above its 20th ranking in 2019, overtaking Stockholm, Amsterdam and Dublin. The city also topped the economics metric in infrastructure, which,

as the report states, was “thanks to its openness to the private sector and robust engagement in public-private partnerships.” This boosted per capita gross domestic product (GDP) and foreign direct investment.

Dubai also has cause to celebrate, climbing 14 points in the index to rank 18th, up from 34th in 2019 and 41st in 2018. Meanwhile in Asia, Singapore dropped a notch to 3rd whereas Tokyo climbed two ranks to 4th. Although they have not emerged unscarred by the pandemic, these Eastern powerhouses are primed for significant growth in the coming years.

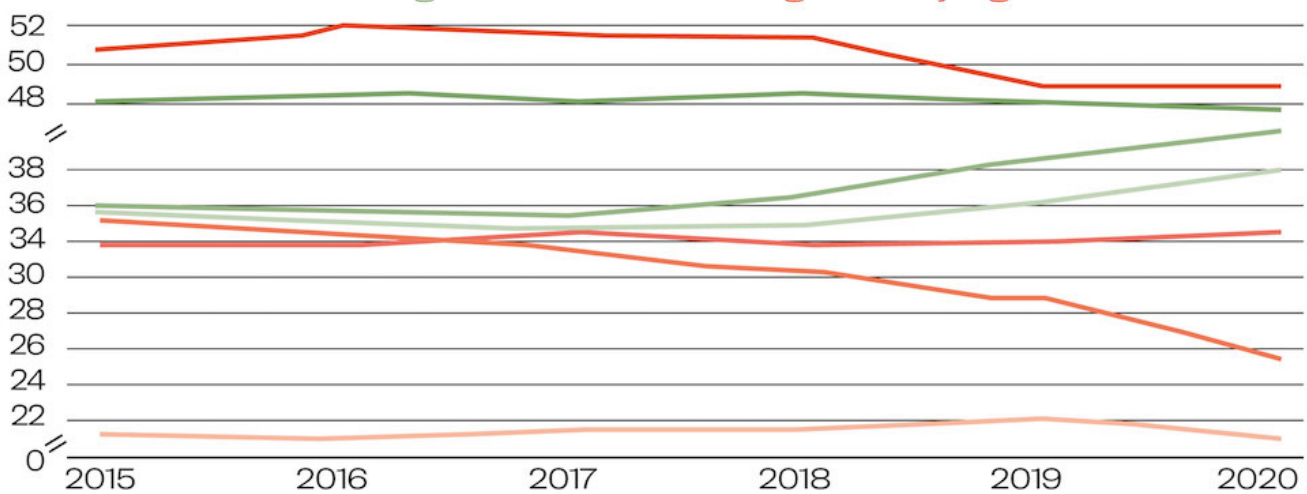
HOW MAJOR CITIES FARE BY REGION

North America remains the world's leading region in overall outlook

■ North America ■ Europe ■ China ■ Middle East

■ Asia Pacific ■ Latin America ■ Africa

Outlook regional score trend Average score by region



ARAB NEWS

Source: Kearney 2020 Global Cities Report

Dr. Parag Khanna, managing partner at FutureMap, a consultancy firm analyzing trends in globalization, says the world can be divided into two categories now. “The places that shifted together and are going to figure out how to move ahead and those that have not been successful at sticking to a plan,” he told Arab News.

“Countries such as the UAE, Kazakhstan and Singapore are all countries that are going to come out of the pandemic not necessarily better tomorrow but in the hierarchy of countries that had a plan and are going to stabilize a profit in the years ahead.”

Kearney’s analysis suggests that in order to emerge stronger and more resilient from the current crisis, city leaders have been forced to reimagine what comes next.

Its study covers four dimensions – personal well-being, economics, innovation and governance – which are key determinants of a city’s ability to attract talented human capital, generate economic growth, increase competitiveness and ensure stability and security.



An aerial view shows King Abdullah Finance City and the northern ring road which remains empty due to the COVID-19 pandemic, on the first day of the Eid al-Fitr feast marking the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, in the Saudi capital Riyadh, on May 24, 2020. (AFP/File Photo)

It stresses the need for “urban value creation,” meaning that in order to remain relevant and competitive in a post-pandemic world, “global cities will need to deepen their focus on creating public value – that is, value centered on the common good across all sectors and segments of society.”

Other top priorities are promoting “global city connectedness” – meaning the international flow of goods, ideas and people – and “the transformation of urban space” – placing the onus on urban leaders “to address the many challenges tied to physical space that have been so starkly revealed by the pandemic.”

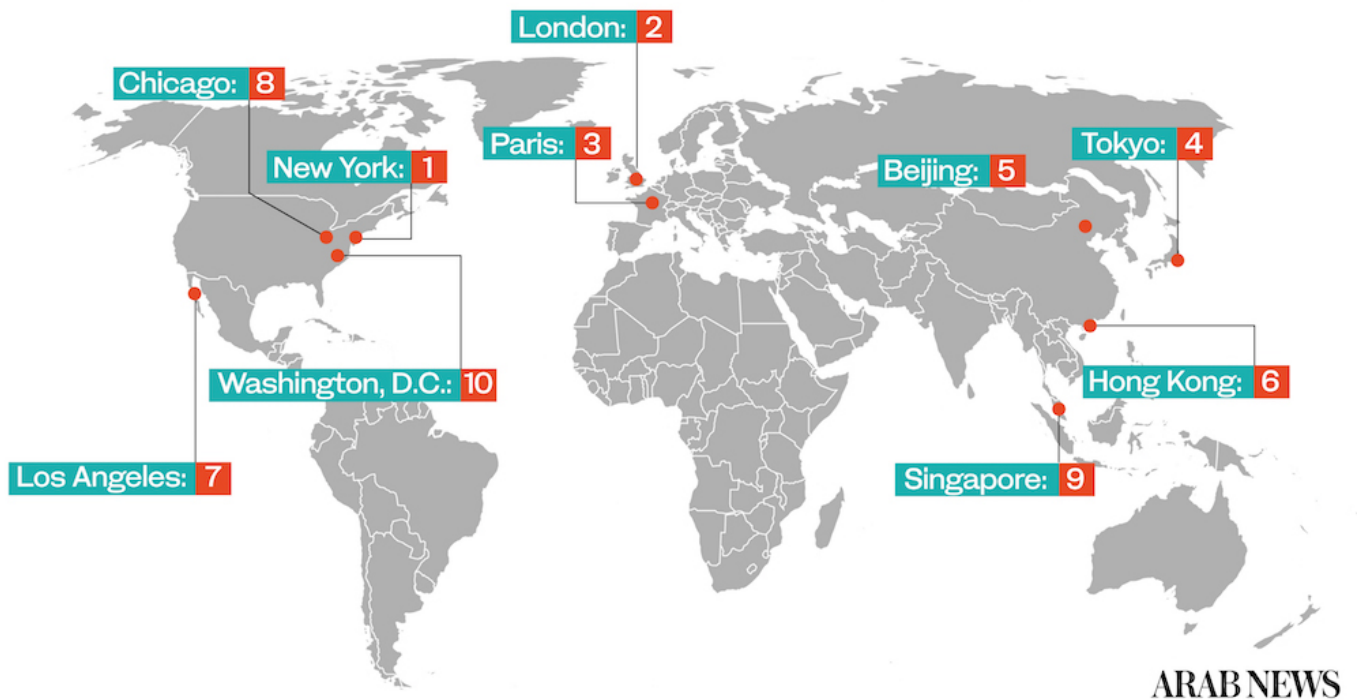
Khanna says the coronavirus crisis has shown that some countries need to slow down and re-evaluate. “It is more important now to fix the cities that you have than to build new cities that you don’t necessarily know if you are going to need in the future,” he said.

“When you are looking at cities now you need to ask yourself the following: Which cities are stable and successful? In what cities are people recongregating? Which cities are going to attract young talented people who could now be anywhere in the world because of remote work? And could Dubai or Riyadh or Tel Aviv or Istanbul or Muscat be that place?”

A case in point is NEOM in Saudi Arabia. Before the pandemic struck, the world watched expectantly as Saudi Arabia outlined its plans for the

futuristic smart city located in the northwest Tabuk province.

TOP 10 GLOBAL CITIES OUTLOOK (2020)



With the global public-health crisis expected to catalyze the digital transformation of different sectors, “NEOM has an unprecedented opportunity to become the first health technology capital of the world, and a global hub for innovation and cooperation in health and wellness technology,” wrote Roxana Mohammadian-Molina, chief strategy officer at London-based financial technology company Blend Network, in a commentary for Arab News in July last year.

As for the Saudi capital, Afshin Molavi, senior fellow at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, said: “Riyadh is making many of the right moves, particularly in its upgrading of transport infrastructure and the expansion of entertainment offerings.

“If it continues to move in this direction, I could envision Riyadh landing on most of the top regional urban indexes over the next few years.”

The pandemic does appear to have accelerated a trend that has long been in evidence – the shift of business eastward, with major economic centers opening in China, Southeast Asia and the Middle East.

The continued rise and apparent pre-eminence of the East during this challenging period may also have something to do with planning, allocation of resources and leadership.

TOP 10 GLOBAL CITIES INDEX (2020)



“The rise of the East has nothing to do with the fall of the West,” said Khanna. “The global economic pie was growing for centuries and certainly for decades during the entire post-Cold War era.

“The rise of the East began the second the atomic bombs were dropped in 1945 because that’s when Japan started to reinvent itself as a peaceful country. Japan then took exactly 30 years – from 1945 until 1975 – to become the world’s second largest economy.”

Khanna says many countries in the East have withstood the harsh punishment of the coronavirus pandemic thanks in part to sound socio-economic planning. “This reinforces the Asia-centricity of the coming era,” he said.

During this time of global fragmentation, there has also been a noticeable resurgence in economic activity along regional lines. “You don’t have de-globalization but an enhancement in regional cooperation,” said Khanna.

“It’s not an accident that reconciliation with Qatar is happening more now or the normalization of relations between the Israel-UAE or the recent Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) – the big trade agreement that has just gone ahead in the midst of a pandemic, because Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Thais and Koreans realize that for the foreseeable future, they are going to trade a lot more with each other rather than across the vast oceans.”

Small wonder then, as the Kearney report concludes, the cities that are emerging on top are the ones that have long been innovating for the future, that have stuck to sound plans, and those that have strengthened their regional ties for the bumpy road ahead.

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How the coronavirus crisis has shifted priorities for Arab citiesAs coronavirus steals jobs, urban Kenyans look to their rural families

[Egypt's Copts celebrate Christmas at home](#)

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Thu, 2021-01-07 22:07

CAIRO: Millions of Egypt's Copts have been forced to watch Christmas Mass from their homes amid strict precautionary measures to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

Coptic Orthodox churches celebrated Christmas on Wednesday night, but a ban on public attendance at religious festivals meant that Egypt's streets failed to witness the usual celebrations.

The church also adopted stringent preventive measures to ensure the safety of worshippers after many priests became infected with the virus.

The latest curbs follow a dramatic rise in cases amid end-of-year festivals, which led to a ban on public attendance at Mass and limits on the number of religious officials performing ceremonies.

Pope Tawadros II, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the Saint Mark Episcopate, presided over the Christmas Mass from the Monastery of Saint Pishoy in Wadi El Natrun, Beheira Governorate, while the Evangelical Church organized its own official Christmas celebration with prayers.

Coptic satellite channels and Egyptian TV broadcast the Mass live, giving Copts the chance to witness the event from home following the cancelation of the Easter Day celebrations last April.

However, the usual well-wishers' reception was dropped, public attendance was halted at all churches in Cairo and Alexandria, and the role of priests limited elsewhere.

Several monasteries canceled visits, while prayers were restricted to monks. Coptic church cemeteries also prohibited visits during Christmas.

A number of Coptic monasteries, including the Monastery of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Assiut Governorate in Upper Egypt, closed their doors to visitors. The Monastery of Saint Anthony in the Red Sea mountains said that it will refuse visitors until further notice.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi congratulated Pope Tawadros II and the entire Egyptian population on the occasion of Christmas.

"I enjoy being present at the celebration in the cathedral every year to congratulate the Coptic brothers, but the coronavirus prevented us from attending the Christmas Mass this year," El-Sisi said.





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[Christmas 2020](#)

Egypt sees 13 percent surge in oil, gas finds
Qatari finance minister inaugurates hotel in Egypt