

Over 546 purged Turkish officials move case to top rights court

Author:

Mon, 2019-06-03 22:15

STRASBOURG: Over 500 Turkish judges and prosecutors have applied to have cases heard at Europe's top rights court after they were caught up in the crackdown after the failed 2016 coup bid, the court said on Monday.

The Strasbourg-based European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) said it had notified Turkey of applications from 546 judges and prosecutors protesting their provisional detention orders.

Those who applied were suspended, detained and then arrested in pre-trial detention on charges of being members of the group of US-based Muslim scholar Fethullah Gulen.

Gulen is accused by Turkey of leading a terror group behind the failed July 15, 2016 coup that aimed to unseat President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Gulen denies the charges.

The legal professionals lodged unsuccessful appeals with the Turkish constitutional court and the criminal proceedings against them are still ongoing, the ECHR said.

The plaintiffs have based their applications in particular on article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights concerning their right to liberty and security.

The hugely controversial crackdown that followed the coup bid has led to a vast backlog of Turkish cases at the ECHR as applicants run out of legal options in Turkey.

Turkey is a member of the Council of Europe (CoE), the pan-European rights body of which the ECHR is part.

The CoE has expressed concern in the past that the court is being swamped by Turkish cases.

The ECHR said it had informed Turkey of the 546 applications on May 17 and Ankara can now give its observations in writing. The court will then decide if the cases are admissible and give rulings in the coming months.

ECHR rulings have frequently angered Turkey, causing strains for its membership within the CoE, notably in November last year when it called on Ankara to release jailed Kurdish leader Selahattin Demirtas.



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Turkish minister says ECHR has no jurisdiction over referendumTurkey, EU find common ground in counterterrorism

[Libyan Coast Guard intercepts Europe-bound migrant boat](#)

Author:

Mon, 2019-06-03 22:06

BENGAZI, THE HAGUE: Libya's Coast Guard on Monday said it has intercepted a rubber boat carrying dozens of Europe-bound migrants, including women and children, off the country's Mediterranean coast.

Ayoub Gassim, a Libyan official, said that 85 migrants – among them five women and five children – were given humanitarian and medical aid, then taken to a refugee camp.

He said the boat was caught off the coast of the town of Khoms, 120 km (75 miles) east of the capital, Tripoli. After being picked up, the migrants were

returned to Khoms.

Libya became a major conduit for African migrants and refugees fleeing to Europe after the 2011 uprising that ousted and later killed longtime ruler Muammar Qaddafi.

Libyan authorities have stepped up efforts to stem the flow of migrants, with European assistance.

'Prosecute top EU officials'

Top EU and member states' officials should be prosecuted for crimes against humanity over the drowning of thousands of migrants in the Mediterranean Sea, international lawyers said on Monday.

The Paris-based lawyers presented the International Criminal Court with a detailed 245-page file, which they said was handed to chief prosecutor Fatou Bensouda's office.

The information provides "enough evidence implicating the EU and member states' officials and agents with crimes against humanity committed in pursuant to EU migration policies in the Mediterranean and Libya" since 2014, they said.

The lawyers alleged that in order to keep Europe's borders safe, the EU resorted to a "deterrence-based migration policy, intended to sacrifice the lives of migrants in distress at sea." The sole objective was to "dissuade others in similar situation from seeking safe haven in Europe," they said in their filing, of which a copy was handed to AFP.

When the policy failed because of rescue work by NGOs, the EU adopted a second strategy by employing the Libyan Coast Guard to intercept and send migrants back to camps in Libya.



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electricians battle to keep the lights on

[Lebanon electricity reform plans stalled by court appeal](#)

Author:

Mon, 2019-06-03 21:49

BEIRUT: Lebanon's constitutional court ruled on Monday to halt part of a power sector reform plan that seeks to reduce state subsidies which have led to one of the world's heaviest public debt burdens.

Lebanon's decades-old electricity crisis has pushed it to the brink of financial ruin. Power cuts have long hobbled the economy and subsidies helped rack up public debt equivalent to 150 percent of gross domestic product (GDP).

Steps toward fixing the power sector are seen as a critical test of the government's will to launch reforms which would help Lebanon unlock billions

of dollars of foreign support pledged last year.

The Lebanese government approved a reform plan in April that aims to boost generation capacity, reduce losses in transmission and eventually raise consumer electricity tariffs.

The court accepted an appeal on Monday regarding a key part of the plan, a move that stops the tendering process for the construction of six new power plants, state news agency NNA said.

“The goal of the appeal is for us to forbid violating the laws when it comes to awarding contracts,” Sami Gemayel, one of 10 lawmakers who appealed the plan, tweeted.

The MPs have questioned the legality of the plan, which would allow the cabinet to give licenses for power plants instead of a regulatory body that has not been set up.

Last month, Lebanon’s government agreed a 2019 budget – which has been sent to parliament for debate and approval – to bring its public finances under control, but it faces an uphill struggle to restore investor confidence.



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Lebanon draft budget won't deliver significant change to debt trajectory:
Moody's Lebanon to seek more cuts in 2020 budget targeting power subsidy

Qatar condemned after backtracking on Makkah summits declaration

Sun, 2019-06-02 22:33

JEDDAH: Qatar on Sunday said it rejected the final declaration of Arab and GCC summits held in Makkah last week, despite originally endorsing the statement.

Doha could not support the communique because it contradicted Qatar's foreign policy, the Qatari foreign minister said.

Saudi Arabia's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Adel Al Jubeir, accused Qatar of distorting the facts, while the UAE and Bahrain said Doha had gone back on what had been agreed at the meetings.

Qatar has been boycotted by Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and other Arab countries since June 2017 over its support for extremist groups and for its close relations with Iran.

Despite the breakdown in relations, King Salman invited Qatar to attend emergency meetings of the GCC and Arab League last week in Makkah. The meetings were called in response to an increase in tensions with Iran.

The communique released Friday strongly condemned Iran for destabilizing the region and said Tehran "posed a direct and serious threat."

"The statements of the Gulf and Arab summits were ready in advance and we were not consulted on them," Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani told Al-Araby broadcaster. "Qatar has reservations on the Arab and Gulf summits because some of their terms are contrary to Doha's foreign policy."

Anwar Gargash, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, said Qatar's change of position pointed to weakness and a lack of credibility.

Bahrain's Foreign Minister, Sheikh Khalid Al-Khalifa, said the move demonstrated the weakness of Qatar's relations with its neighbors.



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Makkah summit slams US embassy move to Jerusalem: statement 'Criminal' Iran condemned at Makkah summit

[Iran sentences journalist to two years in jail](#)

Author:

Sun, 2019-06-02 18:36

TEHRAN: Iran's judiciary on Sunday sentenced a journalist to two years in jail for "spreading misinformation" and "insulting" the country's supreme leader and authorities, his lawyer told state media.

Masoud Kazemi was also banned from "media activities" for two years, the

lawyer Ali Mojtahedzadeh said, quoted by the official news agency IRNA. The report did not specify the cause of the charges against Kazemi. State-run Iran newspaper reported on May 23 that he had been arrested the day before.

The journalist was a reporter for the reformist daily Shargh and also the editor-in-chief of Seda-ye Parsi monthly magazine, the semi-official ISNA news agency reported.

Before the trial, the court set bail at 10 billion rials (about \$74,000 at the current open market rate) in the case over charges of “conspiring against national security,” the lawyer said.

“Fortunately this charge was dropped during the trial... (and) considering the current charges in the indictment we hope the bail is reduced and he can be freed,” Mojtahedzadeh added.

Another journalist, Pouyan Khoshhal, was arrested in October over “insults” against Imam Hussein, one of the most revered religious figures in the Shiite Islamic republic.

And in August journalist Mir Mohammad Mir-Esmaili was sentenced to 10 years in prison over insulting Imam Reza.



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US suspends funding for Iran Twitter account that trolled critics Iran willing to talk if other sides 'show respect', not ordered to negotiate: Rouhani