

Hardline Egyptian preacher receives 5-year sentence for court siege case

Author:

Sat, 2019-05-04 20:41

CAIRO: Hardline Egyptian preacher and politician Hazem Salah Abu Ismail's five-year sentence for his involvement in besieging a court in Nasr City in 2012 has been upheld by the country's top appeals court.

A Cairo court sentenced Abu Ismail and five others in January 2017 to five years in prison over the case, but they appealed against their sentences.

Abu Ismail was jailed for inciting and participating in violent demonstrations at Nasr City court in northeast Cairo in December 2012 demanding the release of one of his supporters, who had been arrested in possession of an automatic weapon, according to the police.

He and his supporters blocked the court's entrance, barring anyone from entering or exiting, including prosecutors who were inside. The defendants used threats and violence against the prosecutors to try to coerce them into releasing the supporter, the prosecution said.

Earlier in 2012, Abu Ismail was disqualified from the presidential race that eventually brought Mohammed Mursi of the Muslim Brotherhood to power in June that year. Reports had emerged that Abu Ismail's late mother held a US passport, meaning he was not eligible to run for the presidency.

Abu Ismail was arrested in July 2013, two days after Mursi was ousted following mass protests against his rule, and is currently serving a seven-year sentence for falsifying his candidacy application for the 2012 presidential race.



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Egypt court upholds prison term for former anti-graft chief
Egyptian policeman sentenced to death for killing Christian father and son

[Said Bouteflika, brother of former Algerian president, two former intelligence chiefs arrested](#)

Sat, 2019-05-04 20:12

ALGIERS: Algerian police have arrested Said Bouteflika, the youngest brother of former president Abdelaziz Bouteflika, and two former intelligence chiefs, Generals Bachir Athmane Tartag and Mohamed Mediene, security sources said on Saturday.

No more details were available, and there was no immediate comment from police. The sources were confirming an earlier report from Ennahar TV. Said Bouteflika, who served as a top adviser to the presidency for more than

a decade, acted as Algeria's de facto ruler after his brother suffered a stroke in 2013 which left him in a wheelchair.

Massive ongoing protests calling for a radical change to Bouteflika's regime pushed the ailing president to resign on April 2, but demonstrators continue to demand the removal of all those linked to the former administration.

"The arrest of Said is definitely the peak in the dismantling of Bouteflika's system," a top political source told Reuters on Saturday.

Army chief of staff Ahmed Gaed Salah has promised to rid the country of corrupt politicians, oligarchs and military officials in order to restore confidence among the people.

Last month Salah accused a former intelligence chief of trying to undermine the transition, in a clear reference to Mediene, dubbed "Algeria's God" because many saw him as the country's real authority.

"I send to this person a final warning," Salah said at that time.

Bouteflika had fired Mediene in 2015 in an attempt to weaken the intelligence services, but he is still seen as one of the most powerful figures in Algeria.

Protesters are also calling for the resignation of interim president Abdelkader Bensalah, who is due to serve until an election on July 4, and Prime Minister Nouredine Bedoui.

On Friday, hundreds of thousands of protesters rallied peacefully in Algiers, chanting "we will not shut up!."

The army remains the most powerful institution in Algeria, having swayed politics from the shadows for decades. It has so far patiently monitored the mostly peaceful protests.

Last week Lt. Gen. Salah, who helped push Bouteflika out after having him declared unfit for office, said several big corruption cases would come to light in a crackdown on graft.

Several oligarchs, including Algeria's richest man Issad Rebrab, are behind bars with investigations ongoing.



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Protesters hit Algerian capital to keep up pressure for change
Algeria army chief calls for 'dialogue' with protesters

[Sudan faces fuel crisis and worsening cash crunch](#)

Author:

Sat, 2019-05-04 19:14

KHARTOUM: Sudan is facing a pre-Ramadan fuel crisis and a worsening cash crunch less than a month after president Omar Al-Bashir was ousted following protests sparked by bread and fuel shortages.

Cars queued at almost every petrol station in Khartoum on Saturday as motorists waited for fuel for several hours. Soldiers manned the stations to ensure order.

The crisis, along with a cash shortage and electricity outages, pose challenges to the country's ruling Transitional Military Council (TMC), set up after generals deposed Bashir and arrested him on April 11.

The TMC is locked in a standoff with the opposition over who will control a proposed joint civilian-military body to oversee the country until elections

can be held. Protests have continued in a bid to push the council to cede power to civilians.

At least a dozen ATMs in a commercial area in central Khartoum had no cash, and dozens of people lined up at those still dispensing money. A Reuters witness counted 88 customers in one line on a main road in central Khartoum. Queues had previously been shorter and more ATMs held cash.

"I am searching since the morning for an ATM to withdraw cash from," said Ahmed Yassin, 52. "I have been standing in line for three hours and I must withdraw so that I can buy Ramadan needs for my family."

One banking employee, who declined to be named, said most ATMs held no cash. Most Sudanese employees get paid near the beginning of the month, and consumer spending often increases during the Islamic month of Ramadan, likely to begin on May 6, contributing to the liquidity crisis.

The maximum daily withdrawal has long been set at 2,000 Sudanese pounds (\$45). Some have set up several bank accounts to try to circumvent the limit. Most residential areas in the capital experience near-daily electricity outages for hours. The increasing blackouts occurred as Khartoum's temperatures soar to highs of 45 Celsius.

Bashir's government had run up enormous budget deficits by subsidising fuel, bread and other products. To cover the deficit, it expanded the money supply. But that served to debase the currency, causing inflation to rise and the value of the Sudanese pound against other currencies to plummet – in turn pushing up the cost of subsidies and widening the deficit even further. Attempts to raise bread and fuel prices to reduce the cost of subsidies sparked the protests that led to the military's overthrow of Bashir last month.



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Sudanese take aim at 'deep state' left by Bashir
Sudan protesters tone down demands in standoff with military

[US renews Iran sanctions waivers for nuclear work](#)

Author:

Fri, 2019-05-03 23:30

WASHINGTON: The Trump administration on Friday renewed five of seven sanctions waivers that allow Russia and European nations to conduct civilian nuclear cooperation with Iran, even as the US steps up the pressure on Tehran, a senior US official said.

The waivers, which were due to expire Saturday, are being extended for between 45 days and 90 days, shorter periods than had been granted in the past. But they will permit work at several Iranian nuclear sites to continue without US penalties. Under the terms of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, Russia and several European nations help to maintain the facilities and are engaged in converting equipment there for exclusively civilian use.

Facilities included in the waiver extensions include the Bushehr nuclear power plant, the Fordow enrichment facility, the Arak nuclear complex and the Tehran Research Reactor, the official said.

The official, who was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity, said the other two waivers – one that allowed Iran to store heavy water in Oman and the other that allowed Russia to process Iranian uranium – are not being renewed.

President Donald Trump withdrew the US from the Iran nuclear deal last year, reimposed sanctions that had been eased in November and has steadily ramped up pressure on Iran in the months since.

Last month, his administration announced it would no longer renew sanctions exemptions that allowed China, India, Japan, Turkey and South Korea to continue importing Iranian oil. Those waivers expired Friday, although it was not immediately clear whether the administration would impose sanctions on some or all of those countries if they take delivery of previously purchased oil.

Some hard-liners on Iran in Congress and outside the administration have called for the elimination of all sanctions waivers, including for civilian nuclear cooperation, in order for the administration to make good on its "maximum pressure" campaign.

Supporters of the Iran deal say the cooperation waivers are important to maintain because they give the outside world additional eyes on what Iran is doing in its nuclear facilities.



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Oil dips on soaring US supply, but Iran sanctions still support crudeUS
ambassador urges Britain to ditch support for Iran nuclear deal

[OIC Islamic summit in Saudi Arabia to be held during last 10 days of Ramadan](#)

Fri, 2019-05-03 23:17

JEDDAH: The ordinary Islamic Summit is expected to be held in Makkah at the end of the holy month of Ramadan, Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper reported. Leaders and heads of states of 57 countries from the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) will attend the summit, except for Syria, whose membership has been suspended.

The summit, which sources said would be held during the last ten days of Ramadan, is expected to discuss a series of key issues, with the Palestinian cause at the forefront.

The Makkah statement is also set to include several major points that serve the best interest of the Islamic countries, while stressing the importance of OIC member states' commitment to reinforcing unity and solidarity.

The 14th summit comes three years after the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers held an urgent meeting to discuss the ballistic missiles targeting the holy city of Makkah.

The 13th meeting took place in Istanbul in April 2016 and resulted in 50 states, which attended the meeting, addressing the UN and demanding necessary international procedures that guarantee the aggression by the Iranian-backed Houthi militia does not happen again.

The OIC is the second biggest international governmental organization after the UN, with membership of 57 states from four continents. It represents the Islamic world and seeks to protect its interests.



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How an Arab took Makkah's first photosMobily first to test 5G near Makkah's Grand Mosque