

Turkey jails Kurdish politician's wife over typo in medical form

Author:

Fri, 2021-11-12 22:55

The wife of a Kurdish politician in Turkey has been handed a two-and-a-half-year jail sentence over a typo in a medical report related to a miscarriage she had.

The case has been denounced as an "appalling" example of political persecution by an EU official.

A Diyarbakir court sentenced Başak Demirtaş, who is a teacher, and her doctor on Thursday for submitting a falsified medical report, a Kurdish news agency reported.

The case relates to hospital admissions and two surgeries that Demirtaş had following a miscarriage in 2015. Her legal team said she was charged with fraud because a doctor's note requesting five days of medical leave was issued during an appointment on Dec. 11, but was erroneously dated Dec. 14, four days later.

She later took unpaid leave for months to recover from the incident.

Demirtaş's husband, Selahattin Demirtaş, is the former leader of the pluralist, pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party, and is one of the high-profile political prisoners jailed in Turkey during the president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's crackdown on opposition movements.

Nacho Sánchez Amor, the European parliament's rapporteur on Turkey, wrote on Twitter: "The sentence of (Başak Demirtaş) to 2.5 years of prison for a mere clerical error concerning a medical record is appalling and seems beyond common sense. It just looks so political. It gives the measure of the worrying state of the Turkish judiciary."

Demirtaş's lawyers said that although the Diyarbakır court board ruled that the hospital record book showing the dates she attended should be submitted as evidence to show that a mistake was made, the court handed down the sentence without looking at it.

"While the truth is apparent, sentencing Başak Demirtaş as a result of such a trial is openly unlawful and grossly unfair ... It is the product of a mentality of collective punishment," Demirtaş' team said.

"In spite of this situation, we will keep on waging our legal struggle. We still believe that the ruling will be overturned by the (appeals court) and justice will be served."

Selahattin Demirtaş was jailed when his party won enough seats in the 2015 general election to destroy Erdogan's majority. He faces more than 100

charges, the majority of which are terrorism-related.

He denies all allegations against him.

The EU has been embroiled in a long-running dispute with Turkey over its failure to abide by European Court of Human Rights rulings, many of which pertain to political prisoners.

The court of human rights ordered Demirtaş's immediate release last year, ruling that his detention goes against "the very core of the concept of a democratic society."



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Kurd leader Demirtas urges world to denounce Turkey's 'unjust war' Europe's top human rights court orders immediate Turkish release of jailed Kurdish leader Demirtas

[Lifeless Lebanon lurches into new](#)

turmoil amid worsening economic crises

Author:

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1636742070688480900

Fri, 2021-11-12 21:39

BEIRUT: Lebanon continued its freefall into economic turmoil on Friday, with the medical, fuel, and food crises worsening and no political initiative being taken to overcome the deteriorating situation.

The value of the Lebanese pound dropped to record lows, trading at 23,000 Lebanese pounds to the dollar on the black market.

This crash was at least partly due to a speech given by Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah on Thursday evening, in which he reaffirmed his hostile positions toward Saudi Arabia and called on the Lebanese to have "patience," offering no solutions to their mounting problems.

Fuel prices suddenly shot up on Friday. The price of a 20-liter gasoline canister ranged between 310,800 and 319,600 Lebanese pounds, the price of a diesel canister reached 311,000 pounds, and gas cylinders were selling for 266,000 pounds.

The average price of fuel is now equivalent to half of the minimum wage.

Gas station owners reported an approximately 50 percent "decline in the sale of fuel."

Meanwhile, Economy Minister Amin Salam on Thursday decided to reduce the weight of a bundle of bread while maintaining its current price, which is the highest it has ever reached.

A 1,050-gram bundle is now sold for 9,500 Lebanese pounds.

The Ministry of Economy attributed this to "the high prices of flour, diesel and other materials."

Olivier de Schutter, the UN special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, issued a statement following a 12-day mission to study poverty in Lebanon, a copy of which Arab News obtained from the UN office in Beirut.

"The Lebanese authorities' destruction of the national currency, political deadlock, and reinforcement of long-standing inequalities have plunged the country into abject poverty," he said in the report.

"Lebanon is not a failed state yet, but it is a failing state, with a government failing its population," he added.

"The destruction of the Lebanese pound has devastated lives and impoverished millions."

De Schutter described the crisis in Lebanon as “manufactured.”

He added: “While the population is trying to survive day-to-day, the government wastes precious time evading accountability and scapegoating refugees from the comfort of their offices.

“This outrageous level of inequality is furthered by a tax system that rewards the banking sector, encourages tax evasion and concentrates wealth in the hands of the few. In the meantime, the population is subject to regressive taxes that hit the poorest most.

“This is a human-made disaster that was long in the making.”

De Schutter expressed his concern that the “political leadership seems unwilling to see the relationship between tax reform and poverty alleviation and underestimates the benefits of social protection systems for rebuilding the economy, especially in times of crisis.

“Unfortunately, I heard no credible poverty alleviation plan from the government that does not rely on international donors and non-governmental organizations. Dependence on international aid is not sustainable and in fact it weakens state institutions.”

The UN expert added: “The question is what political leaders spent the resources on.

“For decades, Lebanon ignored the need for social policies, including strong welfare programmes and public service infrastructure, and instead focused on unproductive sectors like banking, continuously expanding public debt and devoting those resources to debt servicing.”

He added: “Lebanon has an opportunity to rethink its economic model. Continuing to incentivize a failed model based on rentierism, inequality, and sectarianism will only sink the population further into destitution.”

He warned that the international community would not take Lebanese reforms seriously “until a credible plan is proposed for how to transform the economy, address inequality, ensure tax justice, and prevent further political stalemates,” warning that the donor community was running out of patience with the Lebanese government.

“After losing \$240 million to the scam of arbitrary and unfavorable exchange rates, they need to see that the government is serious about transparency and accountability, and a rights-based approach can guide the government’s efforts in this process.”

De Schutter told Reuters: “Lebanon’s officials are living in fantasy land. This does not bode well for the country’s future.”

Prime Minister Najib Mikati’s government, formed in September, is yet to convene amid an ongoing political dispute.

Meanwhile, the reserve in hard currencies at the Central Bank is shrinking to

such an extent that it is no longer possible to support medicines for chronic diseases. This decline in economic capacity comes after the Central Bank lifted support for regular medicines.

The crisis has now affected patients suffering from severe and chronic diseases, especially cancer patients, who lack access to life-saving medicines.

Economist Dr. Louis Hobeika told Arab News: "The state's revenues have vanished. The customs dollar, which is still priced according to the official exchange rate, is no longer logical, and it must be gradually raised, not immediately raised to the exchange rate on the Central Bank's official platform."

He added: "Politicians knew that we were on the verge of such a crisis three years ago, but they did not do anything and waited for solutions from abroad, and this did not happen."

The economist added: "The reserves dried up, and the Central Bank says that it has only \$13 billion, but it could be less."

Hobeika said that the Ministry of Economy's issuance of a new price for fuel coming just two days after another price was issued – which included an increase of 2,000 Lebanese pounds – indicates the extent of the crisis.

After meeting with Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, Information Minister George Kordahi reiterated on Friday that he does not intend to resign from the government "without guarantees" – a position that Hobeika believes will "worsen Lebanon's economic crisis after its political crisis with the Gulf."

Hobeika added: "We have not yet seen the results of the economic boycott of Lebanon. We now fear for the fate of the Lebanese working in the Gulf, but what if the crisis affects transfers to universities, charities and civil society organizations? What if Gulf Air traffic stops? Won't Lebanon suffocate? Patience will not do any good then."

Despite growing pressures, it appears unlikely that the Lebanese will take to the streets to renew their protests. This popular reluctance to express anger "is way more than mere frustration, it is a loss of purpose," Hobeika said.

"Citizens are stuck in a hellish, vicious cycle."



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'No magic wand' to resolve Lebanon's economic crisis In a country with no electricity, Miss Internet Lebanon is crowned

[Lack of contact from Iran govt 'astonishing': UN nuclear watchdog](#)

Author:

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1636737807968186900

Fri, 2021-11-12 16:27

VIENNA: The head of the UN nuclear watchdog said Friday it was "astonishing" that he has had no contact with the new Iranian government over several important outstanding issues since it took office.

Rafael Grossi, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), had been hoping to visit Iran before the next meeting of the IAEA's Board of Governors starts on November 22 but made clear on Friday that he was

disappointed that no invitation had yet been forthcoming.

Grossi's latest comments come as diplomats prepare for international talks in Vienna to restart later this month on the restoration of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

In parallel with those efforts, the IAEA has been trying to resolve several other issues with Iran, including restrictions on some of its inspections activities imposed earlier this year.

Grossi visited Tehran in September where he clinched a deal over access to surveillance equipment at Iran's nuclear facilities but had hoped to return soon afterwards to have further discussions with the government of ultraconservative President Ebrahim Raisi, who took office in August.

"I have not had any contact with this government... that has been there for more than five months," Grossi told reporters, adding that the only exceptions had been "technical conversations" with Iran's new atomic energy chief Mohamed Eslami.

"This is astonishing and I am saying it openly because I'm saying it to them," Grossi said.

"There's a long list of things we need to discuss," he said.

Days after Grossi's September visit to Tehran, the IAEA complained that contrary to the agreement struck there it had been denied "indispensable" access to a centrifuge component manufacturing workshop where it needed to service equipment.

Another long-standing issue between the IAEA and Iran relates to questions the agency has about the previous presence of nuclear material at undeclared sites in the country.

The agency has said in numerous reports that Iran's explanations about the material have not been satisfactory.

Discussions on those issues at the Board of Governors meeting could lead to a resolution critical of Iran.

On November 29, just a week after the start of that meeting, diplomats are due to convene for the talks on the 2015 deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan Of Action (JCPOA).

Those talks have been suspended since June.

The JCPOA began disintegrating in 2018, when the United States unilaterally pulled out under President Donald Trump and began imposing crippling sanctions on Iran, including a unilateral ban on its oil exports.

In response, Iran began in 2019 disregarding strict curbs on its nuclear activities under the JCPOA.

Trump's successor Joe Biden says he hopes to return to the agreement but progress toward reviving the deal has been slow.



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UK urges Iran to back plan to revive nuclear deal
Iran's Raisi warns West against 'excessive' nuclear demands

[Israeli appeals court upholds ruling to return kidnapped boy to Italy](#)

Author:

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1636666185631718400

Thu, 2021-11-11 00:32

JERUSALEM: An Israeli court on Thursday upheld a ruling to return to Italy a six-year-old boy, the sole survivor of an Italian cable car disaster who was kidnapped to Israel by his grandfather, Israel's Justice Ministry said. Eitan Biran's maternal grandfather had appealed against a Tel Aviv family

court's decision last month to send the boy back to his paternal aunt in Italy, in a cross-border custody battle.

The child had been living with the aunt since his parents, younger brother and 11 other people died when a gondola plunged to the ground in northern Italy in May.

In September, while visiting Eitan, his maternal grandfather, without the aunt's consent, drove him to Switzerland and chartered a private jet onward to Israel.

The aunt petitioned the family court for his return to Italy. The court found that the grandfather's actions amounted to kidnapping under the Hague Convention on the return of abducted children.

The grandfather appealed against the ruling to a Tel Aviv district court, which the Justice Ministry said upheld the family court's decision.

"We order the minor be returned to Italy within 15 days," the district court said in a ruling released by the ministry. The court stayed implementation of the order for a week to enable the grandfather to appeal to Israel's Supreme Court.

"Although the appellant took the minor away illegally, his misdeeds should not come at his grandson's expense, and the minor should be allowed to meet with his grandfather, even in Italy," the court said.

Lawyers for the grandfather said they will consider an appeal to the Supreme Court, after studying the ruling.



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Israeli grandfather says he saved, not kidnapped, grandson in Italy
Israeli court hears custody fight over cable car survivor, 6

[Libyan political impasse threatens election as global powers meet on crisis](#)

Author:

Fri, 2021-11-12 00:28

PARIS: As political wrangling threatens to derail Libya's proposed election, international powers see little choice but to start the vote as planned on Dec. 24 despite the risk of unravelling a year-long peace process.

Despite the lack of any agreement six weeks before the election on rules governing the vote or who can run, major states preparing to meet on Friday believe there is momentum behind the poll, diplomats say.

Western states are preparing to strengthen international backing for the election at a conference in Paris on Friday and want agreement on warning any potential spoilers that they could face sanctions.

Libya's election was set through a U.N.-backed roadmap adopted last year that also established an interim unity government to take over from rival administrations in east and west that had been warring for years.

The peace process is seen as a chance to end the decade of instability and warfare triggered by the 2011 NATO-backed uprising that ousted Muammar Gaddafi and has since drawn in regional powers in a threat to wider Mediterranean stability.

However, with no clear agreement on the legal basis for the election, major factions may reject the vote, and analysts warn that even those who take part may seek to use any ambiguities or disputes to justify subsequent grabs for power.

"A postponement in itself is not less dangerous than maintaining the Dec. 24 date regardless of the risks. It all depends on how things are negotiated," Jalel Harchaoui of the Global Initiative Against Transnational Crime said. The likely candidacy of Khalifa Haftar, the commander of eastern-based forces who led a destructive assault on Tripoli in 2019-20 and who wields control in swathes of Libya, has angered many in the capital and western regions. They say no vote in areas he holds can be fair.

Some other Libyans, including powerful figures in the east, want to prevent the candidacy of Abdulhamid Dbeibah, who vowed he would not stand for election when he was appointed as interim prime minister in March. His critics accuse him of using state cash for populist policies he can use to win votes.

Other probable candidates include Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, son of the former dictator, and Aguila Saleh, speaker of a parliament that the election is intended to replace, and who issued a voting law that many Libyans see as self-serving.

Diplomats say they believe an election that includes all major figures is needed and that international monitoring of polls could help to prevent or to reveal fraud or the intimidation, suppression or manipulation of voters.

The most visible obstacle is the dispute over Saleh's voting law, which was issued during a session that several parliament members later said lacked a proper vote or quorum.

Instead of setting both the presidential and parliamentary elections on Dec. 24 as stipulated in the U.N.'s roadmap, it said the parliamentary vote would take place at a later date along with a second round of the presidential vote.

Saleh's law also said candidates already holding office must temporarily step down three months before the election. Both Saleh and Haftar have done so. Dbeibah has not.

Armed factions based in Tripoli have rejected the law. So has the High State Council, a body enshrined in a 2015 political agreement.

However, the state elections commission has already moved forward with the process of registering candidates and issuing voter cards. It has said a first round of the presidential election will take place on Dec. 24 with a second round, and a parliamentary election, within 52 days of that.



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Egyptian foreign minister discusses Libyan elections, Sudan at media

briefingLibyan elections must be held on time, says Egyptian president