

Turkey: Admiral crackdown 'could signal end of Ankara's Eurasianist shift,' says expert

Tue, 2021-04-06 21:23

ANKARA: Turkey's latest arrest wave targeting former admirals who signed a critical night-time declaration has stirred debate over whether the crackdown is a result of the country's "Eurasianist shift."

On Monday, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan accused 104 former navy commanders of trying to stage a "political coup" through an open letter that criticized the government's new 45 kilometer-long artificial waterway, dubbed Kanal Istanbul, and its immediate impact on the 1936 Montreux Convention that regulates the traffic of warships in the Istanbul strait.

Among the signatories, the most notable name was Cem Gurdeniz, the mastermind of Turkey's controversial maximalist maritime doctrine, known as Blue Homeland.

Gurdeniz, who has been held in police custody since Monday, is a well-known member of the prominent Eurasianist faction within the Turkish military. The group advocates an anti-Western strategy, and stronger relations with Russia and China.

Dr. Berk Esen, a political scientist from Sabanci University in Istanbul, said that the admirals' statement came at a critical juncture when the Erdogan administration is recalibrating its position in the international arena.

"Over the last few years, the Turkish government has sought closer ties with authoritarian regimes like Russia and Qatar to draw support for its revisionist steps in the wider region," he told Arab News.

In response to Western criticism against undemocratic Turkish politics, Esen said that some Turkish government officials have gathered support from retired officers and analysts belonging to the Eurasianist faction.

For several years, the Eurasianist movement has pushed Turkey's leadership toward a rapprochement with Russia and China. It has been rumored that the faction has acquired significant clout in the government, letting it shape the direction of Turkey's foreign and security policies.

The predominant ideology of the Eurasianists, who originated in the Turkish far-left, is based on an anti-Western foreign policy coupled with ultra-nationalism in the domestic sphere.

They advocate for leaving NATO and abandoning the EU candidacy process in favor of membership of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

According to Esen, the anti-Western policy of the Turkish government may soon come to an end, judging from reports of an agreement between Turkey and the EU.

“To strengthen this trend, Erdogan is seeking to curry favors from the Biden administration by supporting the recent US offensive against Russia. The admirals’ statement came against the backdrop of this shifting geopolitical situation,” he said.

The latest Russian troop movements in zones bordering eastern Ukraine have enraged the Biden administration, leading the US State Department to demand that Moscow explain the reported “provocations.”

However, Russia sees the the proposed Kanal Istanbul project as a threat because it would provide NATO members with free access to the Black Sea and Crimean peninsula, including the strategic port of Sevastopol, which Moscow annexed in 2014.

Therefore, the group of admirals fear that the new canal could anger Russia, as Turkey might break from the Montreux Convention that governs the transit of naval vessels during times of peace and war.

The length of stay and tonnage of warships from non-Black Sea naval forces are restricted by the convention. They cannot stay in the region for more than 21 days, while there is a maximum vessel weight limit of 45,000 tons.

However, in a televised speech on Monday, Erdogan said that the government is not considering a withdrawal from the convention, adding: “But if the need emerges in the future, we could revise every convention to help our country get better.”

According to Esen, although not all the signatories to the letter subscribe to the Blue Homeland doctrine, the admirals are likely worried that Erdogan will use the Montreux Convention as a bargaining chip with the US, which has for decades tried to undermine the agreement in order to gain access to the Black Sea.

“After seeking a tacit alliance with the Eurasianists for the last couple of years, Erdogan may have gotten a convenient excuse to eliminate the retired officers affiliated with the Blue Homeland doctrine as he considers strengthening ties with the US,” Berk said.

Meanwhile, the Chinese embassy in Ankara condemned the capital’s mayor Mansur Yavas and Good Party leader Meral Aksener for penning messages commemorating the massacre of Uighurs by the Chinese military in 1990.

“China reserves the right to proportionately respond,” the embassy tweeted, adding: “The Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region is an integral part of Chinese territory. This is an internationally accepted and indisputable fact.”

Turkey’s opposition has long criticized the government for remaining silent on China’s oppression of Uighur Muslims.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Turkey](#)

[Turkish Admirals](#)

New turmoil in Turkey as veteran navy chiefs held EU chiefs express deep concerns on human rights in Turkey to Erdogan

[Housemaid arrested in Lebanon for \\$50,000 cash theft amid dollar shortage](#)

Author:

Tue, 2021-04-06 19:25

BEIRUT: Lebanese police arrested a housemaid accused of stealing \$50,000 in cash from her employer in a case that highlights the country's desperate dollar shortage.

The theft is believed to be one of the largest cash robberies since the deepening economic crisis destroyed the value of the Lebanese pound and led to banks blocking dollar withdrawals.

The Cameroonian housemaid, who worked for a Lebanese employer in Beirut's Achrafieh district, admitted stealing the money and running away on March 17, the Internal Security Forces [ISF] said.

"The amount of dollars in cash is one of the biggest, if not the biggest that has ever been stolen since the economic and dollar shortage crisis hit Lebanon in 2019," a senior ISF officer told Arab News.

The case has also shone a light on the plight of domestic workers in Lebanon amid the economic collapse.

Most maids go to work in Lebanon so they can send dollars to their families. In October 2019, the Lebanese Central Bank banned the withdrawal or transfer of previously deposited dollars in a bid to avoid a run on the banks. As a result, dollars became increasingly scarce.

The crisis led to many Lebanese withdrawing money from their bank accounts and hiding cash savings in their homes.

Some experts have estimated that as much as \$3 billion of cash has been stashed away inside properties.

The ISF officer said there had been plenty of dollar cash thefts since 2019 but that the latest was one of the biggest.

Identifying the Cameroonian suspect as 33-year-old E.Y., the ISF said police confiscated more than \$4,000 of cash and 6 million Lebanese pounds, three telegraphic transfer receipts to her home country worth \$6,000 and a new smart phone.

"She was the primary suspect since she went missing instantly after her employer reported to the police," the statement said.

She was traced to Tripoli in northern Lebanon, where she was arrested.

During questioning, she admitted that she kept part of the money hidden in a flat that she rented in Al-Bwar area outside Beirut.

She confessed that she gave \$12,700 to her two friends who were also arrested. They told officers they had transferred part of the money to their families in Cameroon.

"The suspects were referred to the General Prosecution to be forwarded for trial," the statement said.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[#Lebanon](#)

[dollar shortage](#)

[Lebanon's Internal Security Forces \(ISF\)](#)

Off-duty soldier shoots two men dead in southern Lebanon outside pub
Syrian man admits killing Lebanese father after refusing marriage to his daughter

Sudanese cabinet votes to repeal 1958 Israel boycott law – statement

Tue, 2021-04-06 17:58

KHARTOUM: Sudan's cabinet approved a bill Tuesday abolishing a 1958 law on boycotting Israel, after Khartoum and the Jewish state struck a deal to normalize ties.

"The council of ministers approved a bill repealing the 1958 boycott of Israel law," it said in a statement.

It also emphasised "Sudan's firm position on the establishment of a Palestinian state within the framework of a two-state solution."

The 1958 law was in line with the policies of Arab nations at the time toward Israel.

Penalties for those who violated its stipulations, such as trading with Israelis, included up to 10 years in jail and a hefty fine.

But the political landscape has changed as Sudan, along with Gulf countries and Morocco, have built bridges with the Jewish state in deals mediated by the administration of former US president Donald Trump.

Sudan agreed to normalize ties with Israel in October last year, in a quid pro quo for Washington removing the country from its "state sponsors of terrorism" blacklist months later.

Khartoum maintained a rigid anti-Israel stance during the three-decade Islamist rule of former president Omar Al-Bashir, who was ousted amid mass protests in April 2019.

A post-Bashir transitional government has been pushing for re-integration with the international community and to rebuild the country's economy after decades of US sanctions and internal conflict.

The bill will be presented for final approval from the country's ruling Sovereign Council, made up of military and civilian figures, before it is passed into law.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Sudan](#)

[Abraham Accords](#)

[Israel](#)

Egypt-Sudan air drills 'do not target a specific country,' say military chiefs
Dam discussion deadlock requires coordination, say Egyptian and Sudanese leaders

[Restoring nuclear agreement with Iran will not happen immediately – Russian diplomat](#)

Tue, 2021-04-06 17:52

VIENNA: A Russian diplomat participating in talks to save the Iran nuclear deal said Tuesday's meeting had been "successful," though their salvage efforts will take time.

"The Joint Commission meeting of JCPOA was successful... The restoration of JCPOA will not happen immediately. It will take some time. How long? Nobody knows," Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia's Vienna-based envoy to international organizations, wrote on Twitter, referring to the pact by its acronym.

Talks aimed at salvaging the deal between Iran and world powers are taking place in Austria's capital, with the US joining indirectly for the first time since President Joe Biden's arrival in the White House. The US withdrew from the pact in 2018.



Main category:
[Middle-East](#)

[Houthi security chief accused of rape and torture in Yemen dies from COVID-19](#)

Author:
Tue, 2021-04-06 00:16

RIYADH: A Houthi security official in Yemen who had been sanctioned for torture, sexual violence, and cruel treatment of women has died from COVID-19.

Sultan Zabin, director of the militia's shadowy Criminal Investigation Department in Sanaa, was sanctioned by the US Treasury late last year and the UN Security Council earlier this year.

Houthi-run Saba News Agency said the official died "from an incurable

disease.” Al Arabiya reported that he died from COVID-19. A Security Council resolution in February said Zabin was directly or through his authority responsible for using multiple places of detention including police stations, prisons and detention centers for human rights abuses. The US Treasury sanctioned Zabin in December along with several other officials from the Iran-backed group. Zabin had “direct involvement in acts of rape, physical abuse, and arbitrary arrest and detention of women as part of a policy to inhibit or otherwise prevent political activities by women who have opposed the policies of the Houthis,” the Treasury said.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Sultan Zabin](#)

[Houthi](#)

[Yemen](#)

[UN Security Council](#)

[US Treasury Department](#)

[sanctions](#)

[COVID-19](#)

[Coronavirus](#)

UN hits back at Houthi threat over time bomb Yemen oil tanker
UN Security Council sanctions top Houthi security official for rape and torture