

Qatar Files Complaint to UN Over UAE ‘Airspace Violation’

DOHA (Dispatches) – Qatar has lodged a complaint with the United Nations about what it calls a violation of its airspace last month by a United Arab Emirates fighter jet, warning that Doha reserves the right to defend its skies and borders under international law.

The Qatar News Agency (QNA) said Friday that the country’s UN envoy, Sheikha Alia Ahmed bin Saif Al Thani, sent a message to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and the Security Council’s president regarding the reported violation, which it said occurred on December 21 at 9:45 a.m. local time and lasted one minute.

She “confirmed that the UAE plane entered the airspace of the State of Qatar without the prior knowledge or approval of the competent Qatari authorities,” the QNA quoted the ambassador as saying.

The envoy “considered that the incident was a flagrant violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the State of Qatar, as well as a flagrant violation of the provisions of international law, conventions, charters and international norms.”

The senior diplomat said her country is “keen to main good relations with its neighbors,” but does not accept any breach of its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

“In the event of a repeat of such violation, the State of Qatar will take, in order to preserve its legitimate sovereign right, all necessary measures to defend its borders and airspace and national security, in accordance with international laws and regulations,” the envoy



Foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt and Bahrain meet in Cairo on July 5, 2017, to discuss the row with Qatar.

warned.

UAE officials were not immediately available to comment on the report.

The United Arab Emirates is one of four Arab countries, which also include Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Egypt, that imposed in June a trade and diplomatic embargo on Qatar, accusing Doha of supporting terrorism, an allegation strongly denied by Doha.

The quartet of boycotters have also barred Qatari aircraft from using their airspace. Qatar’s only land border with Saudi Arabia has

also been blocked as a result.

The Saudi-led bloc then presented Qatar with a list of demands, among them downgrading ties with Iran, and gave it an ultimatum to comply with them or face consequences.

Doha, however, refused to meet the demands and said that they were meant to force the country to surrender its sovereignty. Qatar has also said it had too many financial resources at its disposal to be afraid of the financial assault.

Amid the diplomatic crisis, Abu Dhabi has taken an especially tough line towards Doha.

Turkish Parl’t Strips Pro-Kurdish MP of Status

ANKARA (Press TV) – The Turkish parliament has stripped a lawmaker from the pro-Kurdish Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) of her status for a second time as the Ankara government presses ahead with a clampdown on members of the opposition party.

The decision came after judicial and constitutional commissions from the parliament prepared a report on 56-year-old Leyla Zana, asking for her dismissal.

Of 324 legislators in attendance, 302 voted in favor of dismissing the Kurdish politician from the Turkish legislature, while 22 opposed the measure, Turkish-language NTV television news channel reported on Friday.

Parliamentary sources said Zana

missed 212 consecutive parliamentary days between October 1, 2016 and April 30, 2017.

Zana had taken the oath on November 17, 2015 while saying in Kurdish, “With the hope of an honorable and lasting peace.”

She had also finished it by changing its official wording of “Turkish people” to “people of Turkey,” leading the speaker to rule her oath invalid.

“Leyla Zana being stripped of her lawmaker status is void before our people,” the HDP said in a tweet following the decision.

It added, “Leyla Zana is the sound of peace, the will of the people, our member of parliament.”

Zana rose to prominence in

1991, when she spoke in Kurdish at her oath-swearing ceremony in Turkey’s parliament.

“I take this oath for the brotherhood between the Turkish people and the Kurdish people,” she said, earning herself a 10-year prison term.

The Turkish parliament has harsh punishments for speaking in Kurdish or using the word “Kurdistan” in the legislature.

On November 4, 2017, the Diyarbakir 5th High Criminal Court found opposition HDP lawmaker Selma Irmak guilty of “leading an armed terrorist organization” and “carrying out propaganda activities for terrorist purposes.”

On December 26, 2016, Turkish security forces arrested Aysel Tu-

gluk, a senior official of the HDP, in the capital Ankara, as part of an investigation launched by the Diyarbakir Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office against the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) militant group and the Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK), an alliance of pro-Kurdish groups.

In November last year, 13 HDP legislators were arrested over alleged links to the PKK.

Party leaders Selahattin Demirtas and Figen Yuksekdag remain in custody along with eight others, pending trial on terrorism-related charges.

On January 18 last year, Turkish prosecutors announced they were seeking a 142-year prison sentence for Demirtas.

75 Afghan Prisoners Loyal to Former Warlord Released

KABUL (Dispatches) – Afghan officials say the country’s president has issued pardons to 75 prisoners loyal to Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a warlord who signed a peace deal with the Kabul government in 2016.

The 75 pardoned convicts were released from the Pul-e-Charkhi prison east of Kabul, prison press officer Shah Mir Amirpoor said.

Under the 2016 agreement, President Ashraf Ghani agreed to release the followers of Hekmatyar in an effort to encourage insurgent groups to lay down their arms.

The release has been delayed for months. Human rights groups criticized Kabul for agreeing to the move that allowed prisoners suspected of being involved in attacks on civilians to go free.

An initial group of 55 prisoners were released in May 2017.

Hekmatyar, a former commander in the 1980s who waged a guerrilla war against the Soviet forces occupying Afghanistan, stands accused of leading the militancy that allegedly killed thousands of people, mostly civilians, in Kabul, during the 1992-1996 civil war.

In the wake of Taliban’s reign of terror in 2001, Hekmatyar was designated a “global terrorist” by the U.S. for his alleged links to the al-

Qaeda and Taliban militant groups and was hence forced to go into hiding.

Back in February last year, upon Kabul’s request, the United Nations Security Council lifted sanctions against Hekmatyar, saying “assets freeze, travel ban and arms embargo set out in ... Resolution 2253 (2015)” no longer applied to him. It also removed his name from its Daesh-linked group list.

The peace deal with Hekmatyar’s outfit, the country’s second-biggest militant group after Taliban, is seen by some as a symbolic victory for Ghani, who seeks to revive peace negotiations with the much stronger Taliban, and who has so far failed to bring complete peace to the country despite election promises to that effect.

Afghanistan has been plagued by insecurity since the US and its allies invaded the country as part of Washington’s so-called war on terror in 2001. Many parts of the Asian state suffer from militancy despite the presence of foreign troops.

During the past 16 years, the Taliban militants have been conducting terrorist attacks across the country, killing and displacing civilians.

Turkey:

Syria’s Idlib Operation to Cause New Migration Wave

ANKARA (Dispatches) – Increased attacks in Syria’s terrorist-held Idlib province will spark a new wave of migration, Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim said on Friday.

The offensive has gathered pace and displaced tens of thousands of people since November, according to the United Nations.

Already host to 3 million refugees from

the six-year-old conflict, Turkey fears a further influx across its border from Idlib. The northwestern province is the largest region still held by terrorists driven out of other strongholds in Syria, and is home to more than 2 million people, many in need of aid.

“Carrying out increased attacks in Idlib will cause new migration waves and vic-

timization there. This is very dangerous and wrong,” Yildirim told reporters after Friday prayers.

Turkey has been deploying forces inside northern Idlib and setting up bases there after agreeing with Iran and Russia to establish a “de-escalation zone” in Idlib and nearby areas.

Trump’s... (Continued From Page One)

for decades. We have consistently been portrayed as shitty people from shitty countries.”

Some acknowledged problems in their countries, but blamed this on their poor leaders as well as western nations such as the U.S.

“Please don’t confuse the #shithole leaders we Africans elect with our beautiful continent... Our motherland is the most blessed continent that has been raped by imperialists in collaboration with our shitty misleaders for generations,” wrote Kenyan activist Boniface Mwangi on Twitter.

In South Africa, the ruling party declared “ours is not a shithole country” and described Trump as “extremely offensive”.

“It is not as if the United States doesn’t have difficulties. There are millions of unemployed people in the U.S., millions of people who don’t have health care services or access to education and we would not deign to make comments as derogatory as that,” said Jessie Duarte, the deputy secretary general of the African National Congress (ANC).

‘It’s Our Shithole’

Nigerians however did not hold back, with many on Twitter saying their country was a “shithole”, but that it was “our shithole” to criticize.

Even war-torn South Sudan weighed in, with President Salva Kiir’s spokesman Ateny Wek Ateny slamming the comments as “outrageous”.

However Juba businesswoman Jenny Jore, 31, told AFP that Trump’s remarks were “on point”.

“It is thanks to our African leaders that we are insulted that way,” she said.

Trump’s latest comments also provided ample fodder for talkshow hosts.

South African comedian Trevor Noah, star of “The Daily Show”, described himself as an offended citizen of “South Shithole” and also called Trump out for racism, especially for saying he preferred immigrants from Norway. “He didn’t just name a white country, he named the whitest -- so white they wear moon-screen,” he said.

New...

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policy chief Federica Mogherini said.

The agreement, she said, is “making the world safer and... preventing a potential nuclear arms race in the region.”

UN inspectors have certified Iran’s compliance with the deal nine times, most recently in November.

Iran has said that if the U.S. walks away from the agreement, it is ready to give an “appropriate and heavy response.”

Zarif took to Twitter after the Brussels meeting to warn that “Iran’s continued compliance is conditioned on full compliance by the U.S.”

He said there was a “strong consensus in Brussels today” that Iran was complying with the deal and that “any move that undermines (the agreement) is unacceptable.”

Italy...

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Muhammad Khazaei, president of the Organization for Investment, Economic and Technical Assistance of Iran (OIETA), said the agreement with Invitalia had a special political and economic significance “particularly at the current juncture”.

“This is the biggest credit agreement ever signed between Iran and a European country which is a very important political and economic development at the current juncture,” Khazaei was quoted by Iran’s IRNA news agency as saying.

“It shows the determination of the European Union in working with Iran at the current juncture – what will be beneficial to all.”

Following the signing of agreements with India, China, South Korea, Denmark, Austria and Russia in recent months, Italy is the seventh country with which a finance agreement is sealed.

The credit agreement with Italy followed similar moves with several European banks over the past few months. The latest involved an agreement between four Iranian banks and the Eximbank of Russia to provide “unlimited funds” for development projects to be carried out by domestic and international contractors in the Islamic Republic.

In September, Austria’s Oberbank signed a major finance deal with over a dozen Iranian banks based on which it would provide €1 billion in credits to the country’s companies that invest in the Iranian economy.

Oberbank’s initiative – that was seen in Tehran as the first of its kind in many years – was followed on the same day by a similar agreement between Denmark’s Danske Bank and several Iranian banks.

Accordingly, Danske Bank would allocate a credit line of €500 million for investments by Danish businesses in Iran.

On a related front, France’s state investment bank Bpifrance (BPI) announced also in September that it planned to provide funds to French companies that invest in the Iranian economy from next year.

BPI France CEO Nicolas Dufourcq was quoted by media as telling reporters that his bank would grant up to €500 million (\$598 million) in annual credits to companies that venture into the Iranian market.

Italy is Iran’s major trade partner in the European Union. Latest Eurostat data show that with more than €2.58 billion worth of purchases, Italy was the main export destination for Iranian products during the 10 months to Oct. 31, 2017.

The figure shows a 315% hike compared with the corresponding period of 2016.

Russia...

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near the Russian bases when the attack took place.

The defense ministry said the drones were launched from Al Mouazzara in Syria’s northwestern province of Idlib, over 50 kilometers away from the Russian bases.

The attack heightened tensions between Russia and Turkey, which wields significant influence with some militant groups in Idlib. Following the drone attack, the Russian defense ministry sent letters to Turkey’s military leaders, asking them to deploy military observers to help prevent further attacks from Idlib on Russian assets.

Putin said Moscow knows who helped stage the attack on the Russian bases, but he didn’t identify the country allegedly involved, saying only that it wasn’t Turkey.

He added that he discussed the raid with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, voicing confidence that Turkey’s leadership and military had nothing to do with it.

“There were provocateurs, but they weren’t the Turks,” he said at a televised meeting with Russian newspaper editors. “We know who they were and how much they paid for that provocation.”

Putin said the drones looked primitive, but contained high-tech elements allowing precision satellite guidance and release of munitions. He added that those behind the attack were aiming to thwart the Russia-Turkey-Iran agreement on de-escalation zones. “These were provocations aimed at thwarting earlier agreements,” Putin said.

The attack occurred a few days after mortar and rocket shelling of the Hemeimeem air base.

PM Hariri...

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to be the best relationship, but one that serves the national interests of Lebanon.”

Maintaining stability is key to reviving Lebanon’s flagging economy and allowing the country’s annual growth to increase from between one and two percent today to four and six percent, Hariri said.

Hariri declined to discuss details of his stay in Saudi Arabia, but claimed that “Saudi Arabia never interfered directly in Lebanese politics” and that he hoped Riyadh would restart economic aid to Lebanon.

Hezbollah has played an increasingly important military role across the region, their battle-hardened fighters helping to turn the Syrian war in Bashar al-Assad’s favor.

Hariri admitted that Hezbollah’s withdrawal from Syria will take time as the situation there is more complex.

“Certain countries that are in Syria today consider Hezbollah as necessary. People who fight with Bashar al-Assad — Russia and Iran — consider them not interfering in Syrian affairs but as being part of that regime solution,” he said.

Moderate...

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were destroyed, many people are still living in tents or shipping containers amid cold winter weather.

Iran sits on major fault lines and is prone to earthquakes.

Other parts of Iran were hit by minor quakes on Thursday. A magnitude 4.9 quake hit Iran’s southern province of Kerman before dawn, followed by a late afternoon quake of 4.8 magnitude.

Another 4.6 magnitude temblor struck late Wednesday in Kermanshah Province. No injuries or damage were reported.