

For 'Defamation' of Erdogan, Family:

# Turkish Opposition Leader Fined Record Sum

ANKARA (Dispatches) – Turkey's main opposition leader was fined on Wednesday for "defaming" President Tayyip Erdogan and his family over claims about international money transfers, the state-run Anadolu news agency said.

Erdogan has dismissed the allegations by Republican People's Party (CHP) chairman Kemal Kilicdaroglu, saying in November last year that his family "haven't sent a dime abroad".

Officials at the presidency could not immediately be reached for comment.

The president, who was re-elected three weeks ago and assumed sweeping new executive powers, had vowed to take Kilicdaroglu to court, saying he would "pay the price".

Kilicdaroglu has since been ordered to pay Erdogan moral damages in several court cases, but Wednesday's ruling ordering a 359,000 lira (\$75,000) payment to the president and his close circle marked the largest sum yet.

Separately, authorities also launched an investigation into Kilicdaroglu after he posted a cartoon on social media in which Erdogan's face was drawn onto several animals, with the caption "Land of Tayyip", Anadolu said.

Meanwhile, a court in Turkey handed down aggravated life sentences to more than two dozen people on charges of involvement in the failed July 2016 coup attempt against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, which the Ankara government accuses to have been masterminded by US-based opposition cleric Fethullah Gulen.

Judicial sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Ankara's 20th High Criminal Court passed the rulings against 30 military officers and former Brigadier General Sadik Koroglu on Tuesday. They were all staff members at the Gendarme Schools Command headquarters in the capital.



Turkey's main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu attends a news conference in Ankara, Turkey June 26, 2018.

The court also ordered a prison term of 26 years and eight months for Lieutenant Colonel Fazil Ergun for a homicide attempt, and another 13 years and six months in prison for First Lieutenant Ozkan Darendeli

"for restricting personal freedom." Ergun was reportedly one of two officers, who opened fire on anti-coup officers confronting them at the Gendarme Schools Command headquarters.

## UN Warns of Situation in Gaza Over New Zionist Restrictions



Palestinian children hold bread patties during a protest against aid cuts, outside the United Nations' offices in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip on January 28, 2018.

GAZA STRIP (Dispatches) – The United Nations says that the freshly imposed restriction by the

Zionist regime on Gaza risk causing a "dramatic deterioration" in the enclave's humanitarian conditions.

"I am deeply concerned about the imposition of further restrictions at Kerem Shalom, which is the lifeline for Gaza's population, said Humanitarian Coordinator for the occupied Palestinian territory.

He added if the restrictions continue they may result in a severe deterioration of an already fragile situation, he added.

"We are steps away from a disastrous deterioration, with potential broad impacts not only on Palestinians in Gaza, but the region," he added.

"Everyone with the ability to improve the situation must take a step back, prevent further escalation and reduce the suffering of ordinary Palestinians in Gaza," he further noted.

Earlier in the day, the Zionist war minister's office announced

in a statement that Avigdor Lieberman had decided to halt fuel transfer into Gaza from Tuesday morning until Sunday.

The statement also noted that the regime had reduced the area where Gaza fishermen were allowed to fish, from six nautical miles to three.

On July 9, Israel imposed sanctions on Gaza in what it described as a crackdown against Hamas. The regime closed the Kerem Shalom crossing, Gaza's main conduit for trade, to most merchandise, except for fuel, food and medicine.

Various rights groups, such as the Legal Center for Freedom of Movement and the Palestinian Center for Human Rights, have also joined the UN in condemning the Israeli measure.

## Syrian Gov't Forces Discover Israeli-Made Bombs

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – Syrian government forces have discovered bombs made by the Zionist regime inside a weapons cache belonging to foreign-sponsored terrorists in the country's western-central province of Hama as they continue to make territorial gains in battles against the terrorists.

Syria's official news agency SANA reported that Syrian army troopers launched a large-scale operation in the northern sector of the province to clear liberated towns and villages of remnants of terror groups and mines left behind the terrorists.

Government forces then uncovered a militant arms depot in the town of Aqrab, located more than 210 kilometers (130 miles) north of the capital Damascus.

The weapons cache contained various munitions, including bombs made by the Zionist regime, assault rifles, pistols, PKC machine guns, wireless communication devices, mortar shells and sniper rifles.

Separately, an unspecified fighter aircraft has crashed in Syria's north-eastern province of Hasakah.

Syria's state-run television network reported that the warplane went down on the outskirts of al-Shaddadi town in the southern part of the province, and broadcast images of its charred debris.

It was not immediately clear whether the military aircraft was of Syrian

Air Force, Russian Air Force or the US-led coalition purportedly fighting the Daesh Takfiri terrorist group.

Meanwhile, a Syrian journalist working for a pro-government television channel lost his life while covering territorial advances made by government forces and allied fighters from popular defense groups in battles against foreign-backed terrorists near the Lebanese-Syrian border.

SANA reported that Mustafa Salamah was killed on Tuesday as army troops and their allies were moving deeper into Tal Mashara area in the eastern countryside of Syria's strategic southwestern province of Quneitra.

Salamah was fatally shot as government troops and allied fighters were engaged in fierce exchanges of gunfire with terrorists from the Jabhat Fateh al-Sham group, formerly known as al-Nusra Front.

Syria has been gripped by foreign-backed terrorism since March 2011. The Syrian government says the Israeli regime and its Western and regional allies are aiding Takfiri terrorist groups wreaking havoc in the country.

Russia has been helping Syrian forces in an ongoing battle in the province of Dayr al-Zawr as Daesh struggles to keep its last positions in eastern Syria.

## Egypt Targets Social Media With New Law

CAIRO (Reuters) – Egypt's parliament has passed a law giving the state powers to block social media accounts and penalize journalists held to be publishing fake news.

Under the law social media accounts and blogs with more than 5,000 followers on sites such as Twitter and Facebook will be treated as media outlets, which makes them subject to prosecution for publishing false news or incitement to break the law.

The Supreme Council for the Administration of the Media, headed by an official appointed by President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, will supervise the law and take action against viola-

tions. The bill prohibits the establishment of websites without obtaining a license from the Supreme Council and allows it to suspend or block existing websites, or impose fines on editors.

The law, which takes effect after it is ratified by Sisi, also states that journalists can only film in places that are not prohibited, but does not explain further.

Supporters of Sisi say the law is intended to safeguard freedom of expression and it was approved after consultations with judicial experts and journalists.

But critics say it will give legal basis to measures the government has been taking to crack down on dissent and extend its control over social media.

Sherif Mansour, Middle East and North Africa program coordinator for the Committee to Protect Journalists, said the vague wording of the law allows authorities to interpret violations and control the media.

"That power of interpretation has been a constant powerful legal and executive tool that was used to justify excessive aggressive and exceptional measures to go after journalists," he told Reuters.

## Factory...

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in the next seven or eight years, we built it during the negotiations but did not start it," Salehi, said.

"Of course, the Supreme Leader was completely informed and we gave him the necessary information at the time. And now that he has given the order this factory has started all of its work."

The factory would have the capacity to build rotors for up to 60 IR-6 centrifuges per day, he added.

Last month, Salehi announced that Iran has begun working on infrastructure for building advanced centrifuges at its Natanz facility.

Iran's only nuclear power plant in southern Iranian Bushehr went online in 2011 with help of Russia requires some 27 tons fuel per year.

## EU's...

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business working in Iran, they admit that big companies will not remain in Iran without U.S. waivers.

"There is no European bank which is presently able to do business in and with Iran," Hoyer said at a news conference at the European Commission.

"We have to take note of the fact that we would risk the business model of the bank if we were active in Iran."

The EIB currently steers clear of engaging in jurisdictions listed as high-risk under the FATF, a global group of government anti-money-laundering agencies. That includes Iran.

## AP...

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of the trans-Atlantic link over the past three-quarters century.

There have been other signs of the growing European detachment from the White House, especially after Trump pulled out of the global climate agreement and the Iran nuclear deal the EU brokered.

"With friends like that, who needs enemies?" Tusk asked two months ago.

Soon, Trump had also piled on economic punishment with punitive tariffs on European steel and aluminum.

Then came the NATO summit. Already viewed with apprehension, reality turned out to be worse.

First, Trump called Germany, the powerhouse of the European Union, "captive" to Russia. Then he suggested that Britain should "sue" the EU over Brexit terms. Finally, he finished off by calling the 28-nation bloc a trade "foe."

"For Trump, the categories of friend, ally, partner, opponent, enemy don't exist. For him there is only his own ego," said the head of the German parliament's foreign affairs committee, Norbert Roettgen.

So little wonder the EU has turned for friends elsewhere — and found one Tuesday in Japan, where the bloc said it put in place "the largest bilateral trade deal ever."

Up to two years ago, that was supposed to be the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, or TTIP, trade deal between the EU and the United States. But Trump quickly let it be known that such an international agreement would not happen on his watch.

"This is an act of enormous strategic importance for the rules-based international order, at a time when some are questioning this order," Tusk said at a joint news conference in Tokyo with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

"We are sending a clear message that we stand together against protectionism."

Despite it all, until last week there had remained hope that on the most critical of geopolitical security issues, Trump would remain true to American ideals. Instead, he unleashed unprecedented criticism at the NATO summit.

Fully extracting itself from the United States, though, is a daunting challenge for Europe.

Militarily, with the exceptions of France and Britain, the European allies have lived under the nuclear umbrella of the United States since World War II. Defense cooperation outside of U.S.-dominated NATO is only now taking off and the blocked Brexit negotiations make such a prospect fraught with uncertainty.

That military dimension, and the bond between Europe and the United States, have a special resonance in nations like Poland and the Baltic states, which had long been under the thumb of Moscow before the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Hence, Monday's Helsinki summit was seen with apprehension that Trump might make dramatic concessions to Putin and leave parts of Europe with too little protection. In Poland, the 1945 Yalta Conference is seen as a symbol of political treason because, without Poland's participation and against Poland's will, it put the country under Soviet control for decades, until 1989.