

ANKARA (Reuters) – President Tayyip Erdogan said on Wednesday that the European Union had treated Turkey in a restrictive way over the coronavirus pandemic in what he said was a political stance.

He did not provide further details but his comments came after the EU excluded Turkey, along with the United States and other countries, from its initial "safe list" of countries from which the bloc will allow non-essential travel from Wednesday.

Erdogan was giving a speech to officials from his AK Party.

## NGOs Urge Bahrain to Halt Execution of Men After Forced Confessions



This file picture shows the entrance to the building of Bahrain's Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs in the capital Manama.

MANAMA (Dispatches) – Bahrain must halt the imminent execution of two men sentenced to death based on confessions obtained through torture, rights groups say.

In a joint statement, Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture (ACAT-France) and Americans for Democracy and Human Rights

in Bahrain (ADHRB) launched an urgent call to halt the execution of Zuhair Ibrahim Abdullah and Hassan Abdullah Rashid.

ACAT and ADHRB revealed that both men were tortured and forced to confess carrying out terror acts, Middle East Monitor reported.

Last week, Bahrain's Court of Cas-

ation, the country's highest appeals court, upheld the death sentence against them.

Zuhair Abdullah is a 40-year old former restaurateur arrested in November 2017 on suspicion of carrying out what the regime called "a terror attack" that killed a police officer.

He is a father of five children and was held incommunicado for 55 days after his arrest, during which time he was interrogated without the presence of a lawyer at Bahrain's Criminal Investigations Directorate and Royal Academy of Policing.

In a telephone interview in October last year, Zuhair told a British rights group that he was subjected to a range of abuses including beatings, electric shocks, sexual assault, and attempted rape.

The investigators threatened to murder his children and rape his wife, who was beaten and threatened at gunpoint by security officers at their home.

After 13 days of continuous torture, Zuhair was coerced into issuing a false confession

Zuhair was sentenced to death and stripped of his citizenship on November 29, 2018, in an unfair trial marred by violations of due process.

His lawyer said that no physical evidence was presented linking him to the alleged crimes, while the presiding judge refused to disclose the findings of the investigations into Zuhair's torture allegations.

Anti-regime Bahraini protesters have been staging almost daily demonstrations in the tiny Persian Gulf kingdom ever since a pro-democracy uprising began there several years ago.

## Yemeni Clerics Denounce Saudi-Led Massacre of Tribal Family



This file photo shows smoke billowing following a reported airstrike by the Saudi-led coalition in the Yemeni capital Sana'a.

SANA'A (Press TV) – Yemeni religious scholars have strongly condemned a deadly attack by a group of Saudi-backed militiamen against the houses of family members of a tribal figure, demanding mobilization of more forces against the Riyadh-led coalition of aggressors and its allied militants.

According to a report by Yemen's al-Masirah TV, so-called Islah militiamen raided the homes of the Suba'yan family a day earlier, killing Sheikh Mohsen Suba'yan, as well as six of his brothers and children.

"We condemn the horrific crime against Al Suba'yan family by these cheap and criminal tools, who murdered its innocent members in cold blood and set their houses on fire without paying attention to presence of young children and seniors inside," the Yemen Scholars Association said in a statement.

The statement added, "In the face of such criminality and brutality by the agents of the Saudi-American coalition of aggression, the Association calls for further mobiliza-

tion of forces to the battlefield, Ma'rib in particular, to support the oppressed and purge the area of all criminals who have lost their religious faith in the God and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)."

Mohammed Ali al-Houthi, a member of Yemen's Supreme Political Council, also reacted to the deadly raid in a Twitter post on Tuesday.

"We denounce the heinous [June 29] crime committed by the mercenaries of the coalition of aggression against Al Suba'yan family in the Wadi Obeida district of Ma'rib province. They press ahead with their incessant criminal acts, and do not differentiate between civilians and military forces," he added.

Moreover, the political bureau of Houthi Ansarullah movement condemned the move, saying, "This sinful crime committed by militiamen linked to the aggressor states, which resulted in the martyrdom of Sheikh Mohsen bin Suba'yan and six members of his family, is a clear example of the arrogance and racism that the coalition of aggression and its mercenaries exercise."

## Turkey to Put Khashoggi Murder Suspects on Trial in Absentia

ANKARA (MEMO) – Turkey is to hold a trial for those suspected of murdering Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in absentia, according to his fiancée.

Khashoggi, who had close ties to the Saudi royal family before becoming critical of Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman and his policies, was assassinated in the kingdom's consulate in Istanbul on 2 October 2018 while attaining paperwork for his marriage to Hatice Cengiz.

Following his murder, which drew international outrage, an

investigation was conducted and it was discovered through CCTV footage that a team of Saudi hitmen had been deployed from the kingdom in order to prepare for the assassination. Audio recordings also reportedly found that it was the Crown prince himself who had directed the operation via a telephone call.

Around 20 suspects made up the hit team, including prominent Saudi government officials such as the deputy intelligence chief Ahmed Al-Asiri and the royal court's media chief Saud Al-Qahtani who

is thought to have led the operation. All were charged with "deliberately and monstrously killing, causing torment."

Turkey's trial in absentia comes half a year after Saudi Arabia held its own trial in December last year, in which it sentenced five to death but released major operatives such as Al-Qahtani and the Saudi consul Mohammed Al-Otaibi. The ruling by the kingdom's prosecutor was widely criticized and was seen as an insincere and unfair trial.

When Turkey then requested access to the investigation's

files, Saudi Arabia refused to hand them over, resulting in the Turkish public prosecutor's indictment of the 20 suspects in March this year.

The trial tomorrow will reportedly open at Istanbul's main court Çağlayan, and Cengiz stated that she "will also be there". The UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Agnes Callamard, is also expected to attend.

If the suspects of Khashoggi's assassination are convicted, they will face a sentence of life imprisonment.

## Lebanon Rescue Talks With IMF Hit Rocks

BEIRUT (Dispatches) – As accelerating poverty fuels anger, despair and fear of a social explosion, efforts by Lebanon's ruling elite to salvage the country from a financial meltdown with IMF help seem to be going in reverse.

A country known across the Middle East for its glamorous lifestyle and commercial savoir faire now projects images of people begging on the streets, scavenging in the garbage for something to eat or trading furniture for food.

Several current and former Lebanese officials, diplomats, international officials, economists and analysts agreed that talks with the IMF to rescue Lebanon from an economic crisis are going nowhere. Meanwhile, time is running out.

"This (IMF talks) is hitting the rocks" says Nasser Saidi, a former economy minister and central banker.

Two members of Lebanon's negotiating team

have quit in a month, both over what they described as attempts to massage huge financial losses set out in the government plan.

"They are not negotiating a (IMF) program", says one senior source privy to the talks. "There's no (Lebanese) consensus on the diagnosis so what can they possibly negotiate?"

Lebanon, with a population of 6 million, is fast running out of dollars. The state, its revenues collapsing, is printing local currency to pay public employees – an estimated 800,000-strong state payroll padded by politicians.

France's foreign minister expressed alarm on Wednesday over the crisis in Lebanon and said social discontent could lead to an escalation in violence.

"The situation is alarming, with an economic, financial, social and humanitarian crisis now reinforced by the risks of the coronavirus,"

Jean-Yves Le Drian told a parliamentary hearing.

"The worsening social crisis ... risks increasing the risk of violence," he said.

He said the government had to implement reforms so that the international community could help Lebanon.

The government on Tuesday raised the price of a 900-gram loaf of partially subsidized bread to 2,000 pounds from its pre-October-crisis price of 1,500 pounds.

The pound, which is officially pegged at 1,500 to the dollar, has lost over 80 percent of its value since October and is now trading at nearly 9,000 to the dollar on the black market after sharp falls in recent days.

Since October Lebanon has been in a financial crisis that has seen businesses close and prices and unemployment soar.

## Qatar Eases More Coronavirus Restrictions as 'Peak Passes'

DOHA (Dispatches) – Qatar is further easing its coronavirus restrictions, allowing a partial reopening of restaurants, mosques, beaches and parks.

Starting Wednesday, museums and libraries were also permitted to operate in a limited capacity and under limited working hours, the country's Supreme Committee for Crisis Management said in a statement.

It added that the decision to launch Phase Two of the gradual reopening plan was based on infections having passed their peak and the production rate subsiding.

Under the new guidelines, 50 percent of public and private sector employees are allowed back in the workplace as needed and under strict safety conditions, but gatherings are now limited to five people - reduced from 10.

Professional athletes are also allowed to train in groups not exceeding 10 people.

Qatar has the second-highest tally of infections among the Persian Gulf states after its neighbor Saudi Arabia. It reported 982 new cases on Tuesday, taking its total to 96,088, with 113 deaths.

Qatar started lifting its lock-

down restrictions in four phases last month, allowing some stores in shopping centers to reopen and for people to exercise outdoors without wearing a face mask.

The third phase, scheduled from August 1, will permit the resumption of flights from low-risk countries for priority passengers, such as returning residents.

It will also see the complete reopening of shopping centers, while health clubs, gyms, swimming pools, salons and hairdressers will be active with limited capacity.

The fourth phase will allow wedding parties and business gatherings, such as industrial exhibitions. It will also see the reopening of theatres, museums, libraries and cinemas.

On May 22, the Persian Gulf country with a population of roughly 2.8 million made it mandatory for all citizens and residents to download the EHTERAZ application on their phones when leaving their homes.

The app uses GPS and Bluetooth technology to help track COVID-19 cases, informing users if they come into contact with someone who may have tested positive for the disease.