

Egyptian army begins Radaa 2020 military drills

Author:

Thu, 2020-10-15 22:10

CAIRO: Radaa-2020 (Deterrence-2020 drills), carried out by units from the Egyptian Central Military Region with the participation of the branches of the Egyptian Armed Forces, is underway.

The drills will continue for several days as part of the annual plan for combat training of the Egyptian Armed Forces' formations and units, in conjunction with the celebrations of the country and the armed forces of the 47th anniversary of the October war.

The drills include training in the preparation and organization of battle, moving and conquering and then pushing the main force to attack the front border of the hostile defenses, and completing the attack to achieve the planned tasks using the MILES simulation.

Mohamed Farid Hegazy, chief of staff of the Egyptian Armed Forces, addressed a number of commanders and officers participating in the project about the way to carry out the tasks assigned to them.

He imposed a number of emergency tactical situations to ensure their ability to take the right decision to face sharp and rapid changes during the course of the battle.

The Egyptian and Russian navies are conducting joint exercises in the Black Sea until the end of this year.

During the exercises, the warships of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Navy and the Egyptian Navy, with the support of aircraft, will train to defend sea lanes against various threats.

Troops will be deployed to organize communications and resupply at sea, and participants in the exercises will conduct searches for suspicious ships.

Commander of the Egyptian Air Force Mohamed Abbas Helmy said on Tuesday that the Egyptian Army had air forces capable of reaching the farthest range to confront threats to Egypt's national security.

Helmy confirmed that all major branches, including the air force, had witnessed an unprecedented boom in weapons systems, especially in recent years.

He said that events in neighboring countries and the targeting of terrorist organizations, in addition to regional developments, was a push to modernize the armament system within the air force.

The choice of modern air weapons was based on the nature of the tasks

required, and challenges and potential threats against Egyptian national security, with the aim of protecting the capabilities and wealth of the Egyptian state, and if there was a need to strike terrorist elements.



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Egyptian Air Force commander hails modernization efforts
Public outcry following death of Egyptian Maadi girl who was dragged by car

[Israeli parliament backs UAE, Bahrain normalization deals](#)

Author:

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Thu, 2020-10-15 17:50

JERUSALEM: Israel's parliament voted Thursday in favor of the normalization of ties with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain after a marathon debate

with over 100 speeches lasting more than eight hours.

A total of 80 lawmakers voted to approve the US-brokered agreements, with 13 against, members of Israel's United Arab List party.

"This historic agreement... will bring us closer to other countries in the region to sign other peace agreements," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said.

Netanyahu said Israel had contact recently with another country in the region for the first time, but did not reveal its name.

The UAE in August became the first Arab nation to establish relations with Israel since Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994, followed after by Bahrain. The US-brokered deals were formalized at the White House on September 15. The Gulf agreements were condemned by the Palestinians as a "betrayal," and broke with years of Arab League policy on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The US administration is trying to broker other deals between the Jewish state and other Arab nations.





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Israel approves first new settler homes since suspending annexation
Twitter Poll: Shockingly, most Arab News readers in favor of Israeli actress Gal Gadot as Cleopatra

[International delegation draws attention to Turkey's press freedom record](#)

Author:

Thu, 2020-10-15 21:21

ANKARA: Restrictions on Turkey's press freedom have been put in the spotlight by a four-day visit to Turkey by a group of 11 international press freedom, journalism and human rights groups.

Based on its meetings with Turkish journalists, civil society members, parliamentarians, judiciary members and diplomatic missions, the delegation released its initial findings on Oct. 14, with a special emphasis on the increasing state control over the media, lack of independence of regulatory bodies and the restrictions of the new social media law on the freedom of expression.

The persistent investigations and imprisonment of independent journalists and the attacks that compromise the safety of media representatives were also voiced by the mission as a source of concern.

The delegation was convened by the International Press Institute (IPI) and involved representatives from Article 19, the Association of European Journalists (AEJ), the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF), the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), Human Rights Watch (HRW), Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso Transeuropa (OBC Transeuropa), PEN International, Reporters without Borders (RSF) and the South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO).

Turkey is ranked 154th out of 180 countries in Reporters Without Borders' 2020 World Press Freedom Index that assesses the level of freedom available to journalists.

In September, at least 64 journalists appeared in Turkish courts for 38 press trials.

According to the data of Press In Arrest, an independent database about journalists' trials, Turkish journalists faced a 7 counts of aggravated life sentence, and prison sentences of up to a total of 970 years and 10 months in September. Journalists mainly faced charges of terrorism and espionage, and of insulting state officials.

The government excluded journalists from an early release program to ease overcrowding in prisons during the pandemic, even though some of them faced grave health risks.

"We can clearly conclude that the censorship and press freedom crisis in Turkey is worsening," Scott Griffen, deputy director at IPI, told Arab News.

"On the one hand, journalists are still being jailed for doing their job and the justice system is being instrumentalized to crack down on critics. We don't see any political will from the authorities to change this. But on the other hand, new issues are emerging: State capture of the media, digital censorship and new attacks on judicial independence," he added.

Griffen underlined that after the mainstream media were captured by the state, social media and online platforms became havens of free expression beyond the government's censorship tools.

The new social media law that came into force on Oct. 1, obliges online platforms such as Twitter, YouTube and Facebook with more than a million users to send reports to Turkey's state-controlled Information and Communication Technologies Authority about requests to censor or block access

to online content.

The law sparked concern among rights groups about its potential use to censor outspoken journalists in the country who use online platforms as a small window through which they try to continue their journalism.

With the new law, internet hosts or search engines have immediately to execute access blocking decisions of the authorities, while the social media companies are required to appoint a representative in Turkey and store users' data on local servers, a move that gives the government more chance to silence fierce criticism and block access to websites such as Twitter that Turkish people use for following news that is not controlled by the government.

"Turkey's social media law threatens to usher in a new era of digital censorship. We also see the increasing use of regulatory bodies, such as the Radio and Television High Council (RTUK), which are supposed to be independent but are instead instrumentalized by the state, to punish critical broadcast and online media in particular," Griffen said.

The international delegation also drew attention to the rising pressure on the judiciary, especially on the Turkish Constitutional Court, which is the last remaining bastion for defending press freedom on the basis of the constitution.

The top court has been subject to harsh criticism by the government officials who have called for a reorganization of the institution to fit into the executive presidential system that will inevitably curb its independent status.

According to Griffen, if the court is lost to pressure, it will be a huge blow to democracy and the rule of law in Turkey.

The international mission also met with the Human Rights Department of the Ministry of Justice during their visit to Ankara.

However, Griffen said, the mission members did not see any political will from the governmental authorities to reverse the damage that the press freedom crackdown has caused to democracy in Turkey.

"We do not yet see the will to end the relentless attacks on individual journalists and their families or to end political influence over the judiciary and bring Turkey back to the club of countries that respect the rule of law," he added.

An Istanbul court on Oct. 7 declared exiled dissident journalist Can Dunder, the former editor of Cumhuriyet newspaper, a "fugitive" and ruled for the seizure of his assets. Dunder fled to Germany almost four years ago. He was charged with supporting a terrorist group.



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Turkey 'using virus curbs to target media' Broadcasting bans on critical Turkish outlets rise amid free press concerns

[Turkish court and ministry spar over lighting tweet](#)

Author:

Thu, 2020-10-15 01:32

ANKARA: A dispute between Turkish state apparatus heated up on Tuesday night after a Twitter spat about who worked harder at night.

The fresh debate was triggered after a tweet from a Constitutional Court member, Engin Yıldırım, who shared a photograph of the building and said: "The lights are on."

The tweet quickly came to the attention of pro-government media and government authorities, who accused the judge of "implying a coup attempt," a reference to a failed putsch from July 2016.

Not to be outdone, the Ministry of Interior tweeted a photograph of its building with the caption: "Our lights never go off."

“Those who assumed the duty of those who greeted putschists in the past by saying ‘the lights of the General Staff are on’ should not wait even for a second to resign!” the deputy interior minister tweeted, suggesting that journalists had always previously checked the General Staff building’s lights at night for signs that a coup was being prepared.

The judge later deleted his tweet.

The Constitutional Court held an unscheduled meeting on Wednesday, releasing a statement afterwards saying that it opposed all kinds of anti-democratic interventions that undermined constitutional order.

Berk Esen, a political scientist from Sabanci University in Istanbul, said the row between the court and the ministry was worrying and that he was concerned about the possible negative ramifications in the weeks ahead.

“For many, the lights don’t matter if justice and the rule of law are already under darkness for a longtime,” he told Arab News. “The decisions of Turkey’s top court were long annoying the government and its nationalistic alliance partner which was even urging for reshaping the court ‘in line with the presidential system.’”

A series of Constitutional Court actions have upset the ministry which, in turn, has pushed back and tried to cut the institution down to size.

Esen said that if the top court’s decisions were no longer recognized, there would be no legal body left to stop an arbitrary interpretation of Turkey’s constitution.

“In the past, the Constitutional Court did not take the necessary steps to prevent autocratization in the country and ratified many articles that undermined the democratic regime, including some presidential decrees.

It failed to serve as a check on the presidency’s growing control over the political system, so they share some blame for Turkey’s democratic backsliding,” he added.



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[Turkish court](#)

[Twitter](#)

Turkish court paves way to turn Hagia Sophia into a mosque, Erdogan signs decree
Turkish court convicts four rights activists on terrorism-related charges

[EU, Russia in double threat to Erdogan](#)

Author:

Thu, 2020-10-15 01:06

ANKARA, BRUSSELS: Recep Tayyip Erdogan faced isolation on two fronts on Wednesday as European and Russian diplomats moved to rein in the Turkish president's adventurism in the eastern Mediterranean and the Caucasus. EU officials admitted their strategy to defuse tensions with Turkey was unraveling only two weeks after it began. Despite an EU summit deal in the early hours of Oct. 2 aimed at persuading Ankara to stop exploring for natural gas in Greek and Cypriot territorial waters, Turkey has redeployed a survey vessel with an armed escort.

Three European diplomats said this gave the impression that Ankara was toying with Brussels.

EU leaders had failed to come up with a solution to the gas dispute, instead proposing a "carrot-and-stick" approach – offering benefits but also

threatening sanctions – that had failed, the diplomats said.

“EU leaders kicked the can down the road by saying they would come back to the issue in December. Now it is coming back with a vengeance,” one diplomat said.

Greece and Cyprus will raise the gas dispute again when EU leaders meet on Thursday and Friday, arguing that the latest escalation has demonstrated the need for more urgent action, including sanctions. German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas canceled a trip to Ankara in protest at the deployment of the Turkish exploration ship Oruc Reis.

HIGHLIGHT

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Meanwhile, Russia downgraded its relationship with Turkey on Wednesday amid growing concern in Moscow over Ankara’s role in the conflict in Nagorny-Karabakh.

“Russia has never considered Turkey as its strategic ally, only a partner,” Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said. He also warned that Turkey’s involvement in the conflict should be transparent.

“We disagree with the position which has been voiced by Turkey and which has also been expressed by Azerbaijan’s president,” Lavrov said. “We cannot agree ... that a military solution to the conflict is possible and admissible.”

Richard Giragosian, director of the Regional Studies Center in Yerevan, said Moscow was responding to Erdogan’s assertion of power in the South Caucasus, which Moscow saw as part of its sphere of influence.

“Lavrov’s statement ... is a direct message and warning to Turkey, driven by a responsive Russian posture to push back and push out Turkey from encroaching in the region and challenging Russian interests,” he said.

“Apart from Azerbaijan’s decision to deceive Moscow by rejecting the cease-fire, Turkey’s determination to defy the Kremlin poses a real obstacle to regional security.”



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'Disruptor' Erdogan faces sanctions over new oil mission in eastern
MedSeizure of ancient seed collection in Turkey sign of 'hyper-nationalist'
atmosphere under Erdogan