

# Algeria court orders arrest of former ministers

Author:

Tue, 2019-08-06 21:37

ALGIERS: Algeria's supreme court on Monday ordered two former ministers to be taken into custody over suspected corruption under former President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, state television reported.

The former Public Works and Transport Minister Abdelghani Zaalane and ex-Labor Minister Mohamed El Ghazi are the latest senior officials to be detained since protesters earlier this year demanded the prosecution of people involved in corruption and the departure of the ruling elite.

A judge at the supreme court ordered their detention over charges including "intentional waste of public property," the state channel said.

Zaalane served as minister from May 2017 to March 2019 and was Bouteflika's campaign manager for a presidential election previously planned for April this year, when Bouteflika had been seeking a fifth term of office.

El Ghazi was in charge of the Labor Ministry from May 2014 to May 2017.

Five former ministers have now been detained since February, when the protests broke out, after investigations over alleged corruption under the former regime.

Ex-prime ministers Ahmed Ouyahia and Abdelmalek Sellak have also been placed in custody for charges including "dissipation of public funds."

Bouteflika ended his 20-year-rule on April 2 under pressure from the army and protesters, who are now seeking the removal of the remaining symbols of the old guard.

The army has become the main player in Algerian politics. Its chief of staff Lt. Gen. Ahmed Gaed Salah has vowed to help the judiciary prosecute people suspected of corruption.

Algeria has postponed a presidential election initially planned for July 4, citing a lack of candidates. No new date has been set for the vote.

Interim President Abdelkader Bensalah late last month named a panel to begin a dialogue with the opposition with the aim of eventually holding a presidential election.

Protesters are now seeking the resignation of Bensalah, a former head of the upper house of Parliament, and Prime Minister Nouredine Bedoui, whom they regard as close to Bouteflika.



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## [Haftar forces say they hit Misrata air base](#)

Author:

Tue, 2019-08-06 21:28

TRIPOLI: Forces loyal to Libyan strongman Khalifa Haftar said they launched air strikes early Tuesday against an air base in third city Misrata held by government loyalists.

“Our air force carried out several raids against the Misrata air base, targeting anti-air defenses as well as a Turkish aircraft transporting ammunition, drones and missiles,” Haftar’s self-styled Libyan National Army said in a statement on its Facebook page.

Pro-Haftar television channel Libya Al-Hadath said a Turkish Ilyushin aircraft “was destroyed as it landed at the Misrata base.”

It aired footage, which could not be independently verified, of the alleged strikes.

Forces loyal to the UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) did not immediately confirm or deny the reported attack.

Haftar forces launched an offensive in April to wrest Tripoli from the GNA.

Many of the government’s best equipped and most seasoned fighters come from Misrata, which is east of the Libyan capital.

Tuesday’s airstrikes came a day after the GNA and a local official reported the death of at least 42 people in a raid targeting a town hall meeting in southern Libya.

Dozens more were wounded in Sunday night’s attack which the GNA said was carried out by Haftar forces.

UN envoy Ghassan Salame has repeatedly denounced an escalation of violence between the two camps and called for negotiations.

Last week he proposed a cease-fire for Eid Al-Adha, due to start on Aug. 10.

The World Health Organization says the battle for Tripoli has left nearly 1,100 people dead and wounded more than 5,750, while forcing more than 100,000 civilians to flee their homes.



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## [US sanctions Lebanese businessman for Hezbollah support](#)

Tue, 2019-08-06 19:53

BEIRUT: The US Treasury has added Lebanese businessman Fadi Hussein Serhan to a list of sanctioned foreign nationals for providing material support to Hezbollah.

The US government has accused Serhan of aiding the militant group through his Beirut electronics store.



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## [China 'might escort ships' in Gulf under US proposal](#)

Author:

Reuters

ID:

1565097741335255900

Tue, 2019-08-06 12:47

DUBAI: China might escort Chinese commercial vessels in Gulf waters under a US proposal for a maritime coalition to secure oil shipping lanes following attacks on tankers, its envoy to the United Arab Emirates said on Tuesday. "If there happens to be a very unsafe situation we will consider having our navy escort our commercial vessels," Ambassador Ni Jian told Reuters in Abu Dhabi.

"We are studying the US proposal on Gulf escort arrangements," China's embassy later said in a text message.

Washington is lobbying other nations to join a maritime security coalition at a time of heightened tensions with Iran, which the United States has blamed for explosive blasts on tankers near the Strait of Hormuz, a charge Tehran denies.

President Donald Trump said in a June 24 tweet that China, Japan and other countries "should be protecting their own ships" in the Gulf region, where the US Navy's Fifth Fleet is based in Bahrain.

It was not clear if Washington had made an official request to Beijing, which has had to tread softly in the Middle East due to its close energy ties with both Iran and Saudi Arabia.

The United States has struggled to gain support for the coalition from European and Asian allies, who fear it would further stoke tensions with Iran.

So far only Britain has officially said it would join the mission to protect merchant ships after Iran seized a British-flagged vessel.

Tension has mounted since Trump last year quit a 2015 nuclear pact under which Iran agreed to curtail its atomic program in return for relief from economic sanctions crippling its economy.

France, Britain and Germany, which with Russia and China are party to the agreement, have tried to rescue the deal and reduce tensions.

China has traditionally played a small role in Middle East conflicts or diplomacy despite its reliance on regional oil, but has increased its profile

under President Xi Jinping.

“We have the position that all disputes should be sorted by peaceful means and by political discussions, not ... military actions,” Ambassador Ni said. Iran says securing the Strait, the world’s most important oil artery, should be left to Tehran and other regional countries.

The UAE and Saudi Arabia, who support US policy against regional foe Iran, have called on the international community to safeguard maritime trade and security of global oil supplies.

Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan met President Xi during a visit to Beijing last month during which the two sides signed a military and defense cooperation deal.

The ambassador said the agreement could lead to cooperation on tackling terrorism and intelligence sharing, adding that further discussions would take place.

China, which has a military base in Djibouti, has participated in regional escort missions in the Gulf of Aden and off the Somali coast as part of a United Nations Security Council anti-piracy mandate.



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## UK to join US-led maritime security mission in Gulf

Author:

Reuters

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1565018011349519400

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LONDON: Britain said on Monday it was joining a US-led maritime security mission in the Gulf to protect merchant vessels traveling through the Strait of Hormuz.

Last month, Iran's Revolutionary Guards seized a British tanker, Stena Impero, near the Strait of Hormuz for alleged marine violations after Britain seized an Iranian oil tanker near Gibraltar, accusing it of violating sanctions on Syria.

"We look forward to working alongside the US and others to find an international solution to the problems in the Strait of Hormuz," Defense Minister Ben Wallace told reporters.

Foreign minister Dominic Raab said Britain remained committed to working with Iran to maintain the 2015 nuclear deal agreed with Tehran in return for an easing of sanctions.

A British security source said the focus of the new mission would be protecting the security of shipping and Britain would not be joining US sanctions against Iran.



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