

Militant attack kills two police, one soldier in Lebanon's Tripoli

Tue, 2019-06-04 00:15

BEIRUT: A militant attacked a patrol of Lebanon's Internal Security Forces (ISF) in the northern city of Tripoli on Monday night, killing two police officers and one army soldier, state news agency NNA said.

Two security sources told Reuters the police and army have the shooter encircled in a building after he threw a bomb at security forces in a government building and fired at a patrol.

One of the sources said the gunman had been in jail before on charges of belonging to Islamic State.

The Lebanese military confirmed the attack and the death of the soldier, and said the attacker also fired at the security forces center.

Lebanese authorities say they have foiled numerous attacks in recent years, including some tied to the conflict across the border in Syria. From 2013 to 2016, militants struck parts of Lebanon repeatedly with bomb attacks, but officials have since said that security has improved.



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Crop-destroying insect reported in Egypt

Author:

Mon, 2019-06-03 22:35

CAIRO: Fall armyworms have been reported in Egypt's Aswan governorate, putting agricultural crops, particularly maize, at high risk.

The announcement was made by the Agricultural Pesticide Committee (APC) of the Ministry of Agriculture, which said the insects were found in the town of Kom Ombo.

"The insect destroys more than 80 different agricultural crops, most notably maize and broomcorn, sugarcane, rice, cotton, vegetables and fruits," Hassan Abdel Rahman, head of the Farmers' Syndicate, said in a statement.

"Due to its short lifecycle, which does not exceed a month and a half, this larval insect is difficult to be killed with pesticide."

Abdel Rahman urged the ministry and farmers to take immediate action against the infestation.

The APC urged farmers to follow a list of measures to help eliminate the pests, and provided categories of insecticides that could be used.

The fall armyworm first made its way to Africa in 2016 on a ship or plane, according to the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO). It has since spread across more than 40 countries on the continent.

A training program was held in April to teach farmers how to observe and deal with the insect.

Additionally, the FAO is organizing a training course for engineers and researchers from Upper Egypt.

"This is very scary," Cairo resident Hourig Gabeyan told Arab News. "I hope the government is trying to find solutions. Egypt already has enough problems as it is."

The country's economy relies heavily on agriculture, which comprises up to 14.5 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) and 28 percent of the labor force. Maize is the second most important field crop in Egypt.



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Crop-destroying Armyworm caterpillar detected in AsiaSatellite images show crops on fire in Syria rebel enclave

Over 546 purged Turkish officials move case to top rights court

Author:

Mon, 2019-06-03 22:15

STRASBOURG: Over 500 Turkish judges and prosecutors have applied to have cases heard at Europe's top rights court after they were caught up in the crackdown after the failed 2016 coup bid, the court said on Monday.

The Strasbourg-based European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) said it had notified Turkey of applications from 546 judges and prosecutors protesting their provisional detention orders.

Those who applied were suspended, detained and then arrested in pre-trial detention on charges of being members of the group of US-based Muslim scholar Fethullah Gulen.

Gulen is accused by Turkey of leading a terror group behind the failed July 15, 2016 coup that aimed to unseat President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Gulen denies the charges.

The legal professionals lodged unsuccessful appeals with the Turkish constitutional court and the criminal proceedings against them are still ongoing, the ECHR said.

The plaintiffs have based their applications in particular on article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights concerning their right to liberty and security.

The hugely controversial crackdown that followed the coup bid has led to a vast backlog of Turkish cases at the ECHR as applicants run out of legal options in Turkey.

Turkey is a member of the Council of Europe (CoE), the pan-European rights body of which the ECHR is part.

The CoE has expressed concern in the past that the court is being swamped by Turkish cases.

The ECHR said it had informed Turkey of the 546 applications on May 17 and Ankara can now give its observations in writing. The court will then decide if the cases are admissible and give rulings in the coming months.

ECHR rulings have frequently angered Turkey, causing strains for its membership within the CoE, notably in November last year when it called on Ankara to release jailed Kurdish leader Selahattin Demirtas.



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Turkish minister says ECHR has no jurisdiction over referendum Turkey, EU find common ground in counterterrorism

[Libyan Coast Guard intercepts Europe-bound migrant boat](#)

Author:

Mon, 2019-06-03 22:06

BENGAZI, THE HAGUE: Libya's Coast Guard on Monday said it has intercepted a rubber boat carrying dozens of Europe-bound migrants, including women and children, off the country's Mediterranean coast.

Ayoub Gassim, a Libyan official, said that 85 migrants – among them five women and five children – were given humanitarian and medical aid, then taken to a refugee camp.

He said the boat was caught off the coast of the town of Khoms, 120 km (75 miles) east of the capital, Tripoli. After being picked up, the migrants were

returned to Khoms.

Libya became a major conduit for African migrants and refugees fleeing to Europe after the 2011 uprising that ousted and later killed longtime ruler Muammar Qaddafi.

Libyan authorities have stepped up efforts to stem the flow of migrants, with European assistance.

'Prosecute top EU officials'

Top EU and member states' officials should be prosecuted for crimes against humanity over the drowning of thousands of migrants in the Mediterranean Sea, international lawyers said on Monday.

The Paris-based lawyers presented the International Criminal Court with a detailed 245-page file, which they said was handed to chief prosecutor Fatou Bensouda's office.

The information provides "enough evidence implicating the EU and member states' officials and agents with crimes against humanity committed in pursuant to EU migration policies in the Mediterranean and Libya" since 2014, they said.

The lawyers alleged that in order to keep Europe's borders safe, the EU resorted to a "deterrence-based migration policy, intended to sacrifice the lives of migrants in distress at sea." The sole objective was to "dissuade others in similar situation from seeking safe haven in Europe," they said in their filing, of which a copy was handed to AFP.

When the policy failed because of rescue work by NGOs, the EU adopted a second strategy by employing the Libyan Coast Guard to intercept and send migrants back to camps in Libya.



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electricians battle to keep the lights on

[Lebanon electricity reform plans stalled by court appeal](#)

Author:

Mon, 2019-06-03 21:49

BEIRUT: Lebanon's constitutional court ruled on Monday to halt part of a power sector reform plan that seeks to reduce state subsidies which have led to one of the world's heaviest public debt burdens.

Lebanon's decades-old electricity crisis has pushed it to the brink of financial ruin. Power cuts have long hobbled the economy and subsidies helped rack up public debt equivalent to 150 percent of gross domestic product (GDP).

Steps toward fixing the power sector are seen as a critical test of the government's will to launch reforms which would help Lebanon unlock billions

of dollars of foreign support pledged last year.

The Lebanese government approved a reform plan in April that aims to boost generation capacity, reduce losses in transmission and eventually raise consumer electricity tariffs.

The court accepted an appeal on Monday regarding a key part of the plan, a move that stops the tendering process for the construction of six new power plants, state news agency NNA said.

“The goal of the appeal is for us to forbid violating the laws when it comes to awarding contracts,” Sami Gemayel, one of 10 lawmakers who appealed the plan, tweeted.

The MPs have questioned the legality of the plan, which would allow the cabinet to give licenses for power plants instead of a regulatory body that has not been set up.

Last month, Lebanon’s government agreed a 2019 budget – which has been sent to parliament for debate and approval – to bring its public finances under control, but it faces an uphill struggle to restore investor confidence.



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Lebanon draft budget won't deliver significant change to debt trajectory:
Moody's Lebanon to seek more cuts in 2020 budget targeting power subsidy