



People attend funeral of fighters killed in an airstrike in the town of Idlib, Syria on Oct 26. An airstrike on a rebel training camp in northwestern Syria on Monday killed dozens of Turkish-backed fighters and wounded nearly as many, in one of the heaviest blows to the opposition's strongest groups, a spokesman and a war monitor said. (AP)

### 'Plaintiff hasn't suffered any direct injury'

## Judge refuses to block measure

COLLEGE PARK, Maryland, Oct 27, (AP) — A federal judge on Monday threw out a lawsuit in which a Muslim civil rights group sought to block the state of Maryland from enforcing its ban on contracting with businesses that boycott Israel.

US District Judge Catherine Blake didn't reach a decision on whether the executive order that Maryland Gov Larry Hogan signed in October 2017 is constitutional. The judge ruled that a software engineer who is named as the lawsuit's plaintiff hasn't shown he has suffered any "direct injury" giving him the legal standing to challenge the order.

Hogan's order requires contractors to certify in writing that they don't boycott Israel. The order was called "Prohibiting Discriminatory Boycotts of Israel in State Procurement."

The Council on American-Islamic Relations sued Hogan and state Attorney General Brian Frosh on behalf of software engineer Syed Saqib Ali, a former state legislator. CAIR argued the order has an unconstitutional chilling effect on First Amendment-protected political advocacy supporting the Palestinians.

The executive order says a boycott based on religion, national origin or ethnicity is discriminatory. A business boycott of Israel and its territories "is not a commercial decision made for business or economic reasons," it says.

"Contracting with business entities that discriminate make the State a passive participant in private-sector commercial discrimination," the order says.

Ali's lawsuit said Hogan's order bars him from bidding for government software program contracts because he supports boycotts of businesses and organizations that "contribute to the oppression of Palestinians."

But Ali hasn't submitted any bids, so Blake ruled Monday that he cannot proceed on the basis of a "direct injury." Last October, the judge initially dismissed Mr Ali's complaint "without prejudice," meaning he could refile the case. In that ruling, the judge said Ali would have to plausibly show that his First Amendment free speech rights had been violated.

#### Complaint

Ali filed an amended complaint later that month, claiming Hogan's order violates his constitutional rights to freedom of speech and assembly. He also claimed the order and the mandated "No Boycott of Israel" certification in Maryland bids and contracts are unconstitutionally vague.

In Monday's ruling, the judge said Ali hasn't shown that his free speech has been "chilled" by the certification requirement or that he engaged in any self-censorship.

"Mr Ali has not presented any allegations that he has ceased any boycotting activities that would be covered by the Executive Order, or that but for the certification he would have expanded his boycotting activities," she wrote.

Blake also said Ali doesn't allege that he boycotts Israel in his business capacity, except possibly for one sen-

tence in a court filing that says he "will continue to refuse to do business with, for instance, American citizens who operate in the West Bank."

"Other than this," the judge wrote, "Mr Ali does not allege that he intends to participate in any activities that would be covered under the Executive Order, and it is not clear from Mr Ali's amended complaint that any of his potential work for the state — were he to bid on and obtain a contract — would require him to work with other businesses."

In January 2019, when it filed the initial version of the suit, CAIR said 25 other states had enacted measures similar to Maryland's through legislation or executive orders.

CAIR attorney Gadeir Abbas said he was disappointed that Blake's didn't resolve the "ultimate question" of whether Maryland's executive order is illegal.

"Whether through this case or another, this is certainly not the end of road for court challenges against these laws, which are clearly illegal," he said.

Raquel Coombs, a spokeswoman for the attorney general's office, declined to comment on the judge's ruling.

Ali, a resident of Gaithersburg, served as a member of the Maryland House of Delegates from 2007 to 2011 and represented Montgomery County as a Democrat. He accused Hogan, a Republican, of making an "end around" the Legislature by signing the executive order after lawmakers repeatedly rejected several "anti-BDS" bills targeting the Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement.

## Opposition fighters retaliate against Syria-allied troops

Missiles, artillery rockets lobbed at govt posts

**BEIRUT, Oct 27, (AP):** Syrian opposition groups lobbed hundreds of missiles and artillery rockets at government posts in northwestern Syria on Tuesday, in retaliation for a deadly attack that killed dozens of their fighters a day earlier.

The renewed violence has undermined an already shaky cease-fire in place since March that aimed to quell military operations and government troop advances in the overcrowded rebel enclave.

The escalation also comes as relations between Russia and Turkey, who negotiated the cease-fire, show signs of strain over Ankara's increased military involvement in a region stretching from Syria to the Caucasus and the Mediterranean.

UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pederson appealed to Russia and Turkey to "contain the situation." Meanwhile, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu and his Russian counterpart, Sergey Lavrov, discussed the attack in Idlib as well as the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh and Libya in a telephone call on Tuesday, the Turkish Foreign Ministry said. It did not provide details.

Monday's strike was the deadliest in Idlib since the Turkish-Russian-brokered truce there came into effect, raising fears that the truce could further fray. Some 1 million people were displaced by the last offensive inside the already packed enclave, home to over 3 million.

In retaliation, the Turkey-backed groups, operating under the umbrella of the National Front for Liberation, fired hundreds of artillery rounds and missiles since late Monday at government posts in territories adjacent to areas they control in Idlib and Aleppo provinces.

A spokesman for the NFL, Naji Mustafa, said the rebels' military retaliation targeted and killed Russian officers in southern Idlib, as well as Syrian soldiers working in the area.

The report could not be independently verified and there was no immediate comment from Russia or Syria.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights recorded hundreds of projectiles lobbed by opposition fighters at nearly 30 government posts in different locations in southern Idlib, western Aleppo and the coastal province of Latakia. The Observatory said 12 Syrian soldiers and allied fighters were killed in the barrage.

The Monday airstrike on a rebel training camp near the border with Turkey killed more than 50 Turkish-backed fighters, according to one opposition spokesman, and wounded nearly as many, in one of the heaviest blows to the opposition's strongest groups. The Observatory for Human Rights, which monitors the war in Syria, put the toll at 78 fighters dead and nearly 90 wounded. Videos circulating online showed the bodies of about a dozen men spread on the ground of an open space, wrapped in blankets.

The camp, operated by Faylaq al-Sham, an NFL faction, was hosting training sessions for new recruits. The NFL said a "large number" of fighters were killed, but declined to give details. It vowed retaliation and blamed Russia for the attack.

US Special Representative for

Syria James Jeffrey said the escalation in Idlib in violation of the March cease-fire deal is "dangerous" and threatens to prolong the conflict and deepen the Syrian people's suffering. Jeffrey said the UN-led political process is the only way to peace and stability in Syria.

"By continuing their quest for a military victory, the Assad regime and its Russian and Iranian allies are threatening the stability of the surrounding region," he said in a statement Tuesday. "It is time for the Assad regime and its allies to end their needless, brutal war against the Syrian people."

Russia and Turkey, although they support opposite sides in Syria's nine-year conflict, have worked together to maintain a cease-fire in the last enclave of Syria's rebels.

In the first official comment following the violence, the Turkish state-run Anadolu Agency said top Turkish presidential aide Ibrahim Kalin discussed the situation in Idlib with US President Donald Trump's National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien late Monday. The two men expressed concern over "recently increased attacks by the regime and its supporters," according to Anadolu.

#### Also:

**ANKARA:** Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is suing Dutch lawmaker Geert Wilders after the anti-Islam politician posted a series of tweets against the Turkish leader, including one that described him as a "terrorist."

The state-run Anadolu Agency said Erdogan's lawyer on Tuesday filed a criminal complaint against Wilders at the Ankara Chief Prosecutor's office for "insulting the president" — a crime in Turkey punishable by up to four years in prison.

Wilders posted a cartoon depicting Erdogan wearing a bomb-resembling hat on his head, with the comment: "terrorist."

Wilders continued posting tweets targeting Erdogan this week amid a growing quarrel between Turkey and European countries sparked by Erdogan's sharp comments against French President Emmanuel Macron, including remarks questioning Macron's mental health over his stance on Islam.

Erdogan has persistently sued people for alleged insults since he took office as president in 2014. Thousands have been convicted. More than 29,000 people were prosecuted on charges of insulting Erdogan last year, according to the Birgun newspaper.

The complaint against Wilders, whose political career has been based largely on his strident anti-Islam rhetoric, accused him of using language "insulting the honor and dignity of our president and of targeting Erdogan's personality, dignity and reputation," according to Anadolu.

Wilders, who leads the largest opposition party in the Dutch Parliament, shrugged off the Turkish criminal complaint and described Erdogan as a "loser." Wilders has lived under tight security for 16 years due to death threats following his anti-Islam rhetoric.

On Monday, Turkey's Daily Sabah newspaper, which is close to Erdogan, printed pictures of Wilders and Macron, with the headline: "the two faces of hatred and racism in Europe."

#### In Brief

**DOHA:** Qatar announced on Tuesday registering 257 coronavirus (COVID-19) infections during the last 24 hours.

Ministry of Health said in a statement that the pandemic registered cases climbed to 131,689, all placed in quarantine and are receiving medical care according to their health condition.

The recovered cases reached 274 in the past 24 hours to reach a total of 128,617 cases. (KUNA)

**MUSCAT:** Omani Ministry of Health stated on Tuesday recording 466 new coronavirus infections raising the total number to 113,820.

More than 99,997 cases were recovered, while deaths reached 1,203, Oman News Agency quoted from the ministry. (KUNA)

**TEHRAN:** Iran's daily confirmed coronavirus cases rose by 6,968 on Tuesday as 346 people succumbed to the deadly pandemic in the last 24 hours.

This brings the country's overall caseload to 581,824, ministry spokeswoman Dr Sima Sadat Lari said in a press statement.

The death toll has now reached 33,299, while on the other hand, a total 463,611 people have been cured since the beginning of the outbreak. (KUNA)

**BAGHDAD:** Iraqi Health Ministry announced Tuesday that it recorded 53 deaths and 4,510 coronavirus infections in the past 24 hours.

In a statement, the ministry said that it registered the highest number of coronavirus infections in the capital Baghdad that has 1,279 cases and nine deaths, whereas Kurdistan region registered 459,908 cases and 10,724 deaths.

Moreover, 388,081 people were recovered and tested negative for the virus. (KUNA)

**CAIRO:** The Egyptian Ministry of Health and Population said Monday that 167 people contracted the novel coronavirus and 12 others died from the illness over the past 24 hours.

The figures took the overall lab-confirmed cases to 106,707 and the death toll to 6,211, the ministry's spokesman Dr Khaled Mujahed said in a press release this evening.

As many as 78 patients have been discharged from hospitals, bringing the overall recoveries to 98,981 he added. (KUNA)

**AMMAN:** The Syrian Ministry of Health said Monday that 53 people tested positive for the novel coronavirus, bringing the country's caseload to 5,461.

Three more fatalities over the past 24 hours raised the death toll from the illness to 272 while recoveries went up by 35 to 1,788, the ministry said in a press release carried by SANA news agency. (KUNA)

**ANKARA:** Turkish Health Minister Fahrettin Koca said Monday that 75 patients have died of complications related to the novel coronavirus over the past 24 hours, bringing the death toll to 9,874.

As many as 2,198 people tested positive for the respiratory illness, raising the caseload to 363,999, he said in a statement carried by Anadolu Agency (AA).

Meanwhile, the recoveries went up by 1,618 to 316,008, the minister added. (KUNA)

## Burgan Bank Closes during the Prophet's Birthday Holiday

On the occasion of the Prophet's Birthday, Burgan Bank announced today that it will be officially closed on Thursday, 29th of October and will resume business on Sunday, 1st of November 2020.

Burgan Bank extends its best wishes and greetings to the all staff and customers on this occasion.

To ensure customers continue to enjoy their banking services, the Airport Branch will be operating from 8 am to 7 pm during the holidays. In addition, customers are encouraged to use our online services through www.burgan.com and mobile application. The dedicated Contact Center and WhatsApp service at 1804080 is also available around-the-clock to assist all customers' banking needs.