

# Sisi to accept court decision on island transfers



Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud (R) receiving Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, upon the latter's arrival in the capital Riyadh last week (file image)

**Cairo**  
**Egyptian** President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi said Wednesday he will not interfere in any decision the courts or parliament take on a controversial move to transfer two Red Sea islands to Saudi Arabia.

"I fulfilled my part, and it is now in the parliament and with the judiciary. We won't interfere," Sisi said live on television during a conference in the Suez canal city of Ismailiya.

The deal to hand over the islands, signed during an April 2016 visit by Saudi King Salman during which Riyadh showered Egypt with aid, provoked accusations in Egypt that Cairo had "sold" the strategic islands.

The accord has sparked street protests and a legal battle between the government, which insists along with Sisi that the islands are Saudi, and lawyers opposed to the measure.

"From the start, we told our (Saudi) brothers that we will go through procedures, but that we will not interfere with the technical side, and that the ratification will be done according to legal and constitutional rules," Sisi said on Wednesday.

Cairo said the two islands -- Tiran and Sanafir -- were Saudi territory to start with, but had been leased to Egypt in the 1950s, and Sisi has personally insisted publicly that the islands are Saudi.

The State Lawsuits Authority, the government's legal representative, has been battling in courts with lawyers opposed to the deal.

In June, an administrative court ruled against the transfer.

That ruling was upheld in January by Egypt's top administrative court which sided with the arguments of Khaled Ali, the lawyer who had initially demanded for the transfer be blocked.

But on April 2, the urgent matters court in Cairo ruled that the highest administrative court's ruling was invalid.

The State Lawsuits Authority filed an objection and the advisory "State Commissioners Authority is currently preparing its report

to be presented" in court, Ali said Wednesday.

After that, the constitutional court will hear arguments by the two sides, Ali said.

At the same time, the government has sent the deal to the parliament.

On April 10, parliament speaker Ali Abdel Aal referred the deal to the Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee for deliberations.

"We, as the executive authority, have concluded our responsibility, finished it and submitted it," Sisi said on Wednesday.

Saudi Arabia has been a main financial backer of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi since the former army chief toppled his Islamist predecessor in 2013. (AFP)

## Gulf states reject 'terror' and 'interference'

Riyadh

**Gulf Arab** states pledged yesterday to fight "terrorism" and "foreign interference" across the region.

In a joint statement following a summit in Riyadh, interior ministers of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council said they were determined to prevent "harm to their national unity, the provoking of sectarian tensions and support for terrorist groups."

Iran is accused of interfering in the internal affairs of the GCC states, particularly of stirring unrest in Bahrain and supporting rebels in Yemen -- charges Iran denies.

They said GCC states had shown determination to build bridges of cooperation with other states in the region.

"The biggest challenge facing any state in the modern world is preserving its national unity against foreign and domestic threats," said Saudi Interior Minister Prince Mohammad bin Naif, who chaired the summit.

The GCC states "continue to face dangerous challenges emanating from Iranian and Iraqi soil," he said.

## Two Saudi soldiers killed in rocket attack in Yemen



Yemeni fighters loyal to the Saudi-backed Yemeni president hold a hill-top position northwest of the central city of Taiz

Riyadh

**Two Saudi** soldiers were killed yesterday in a rocket attack near the border with war-torn Yemen, the interior ministry said.

They died in a simultaneous landmine explosion and rocket attack while on duty patrolling the border around Jazan, the ministry said in a statement carried by the official SPA news agency.

Saudi Arabia leads a Gulf coalition that has battled Iran-backed Huthi rebels in Yemen for two years. The coalition is allied with forces loyal to internationally recognised President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi.

Hadi's forces have struggled to wrench control of large swathes of Yemeni territory from the Huthis, who control the capital Sanaa, much of the northern highlands and key ports on the Red Sea coast.

## Turkish woman jailed for 'terror propaganda' in TV phone-in

Istanbul

**A Turkish** court on Wednesday handed a woman who phoned into a top television talk show to complain about military operations in the Kurdish-dominated southeast a one year and three month sentence for "terror propaganda."

The woman, Ayse Celik from Diyarbakir in southeast Turkey, in early 2016 phoned into the Beyaz Show on Kanal D to raise alarm over the human cost of the relentless military crackdown on Kurdish

militants.

While jailing her, the court in Istanbul acquitted the show's producer Kadir Turnali and 38 people who had supported Celik's comments, the state-run Anadolu news agency said.

The security forces have since 2015 pressed a campaign against the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in the Kurdish-majority southeast, which the government says is aimed at flushing out militants but activists claim has killed civilians.



A screen grab of Beyaz show when ayse Celik called in

## Gaza power cuts cause humanitarian crisis

Jerusalem

**Constant fuel** shortages and insufficient infrastructure have brought about a "humanitarian crisis" for Palestinians in the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip, the World Bank said yesterday.

In a report ahead of an international donor conference next week, it said that foreign aid alone cannot rescue the stagnant Palestinian economy without practical changes and Israeli cooperation.

Gaza's sole electricity plant frequently runs out of fuel for its generators and rations power supplies to as little as four hours per day.

The Islamist Hamas movement seized power in Gaza in 2007 from the Ramallah-based Fatah organisation of Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas.

It imports diesel for the generators through Abbas's Palestinian Authority (PA), but the rivals are in constant dispute over payment, leading to constant shortages.