

# Canada to ask allies to help cool Saudi dispute; US offers no aid

## Row sheds light on massive arrests of rights activists

Canada plans to seek help from the United Arab Emirates and Britain to defuse an escalating dispute with Saudi Arabia, sources said, but close ally, the United States, made clear it would not get involved.

The Saudi government on Sunday recalled its ambassador to Ottawa, banned Canada's envoy from returning and placed a bar on new trade, denouncing Canada for urging the "immediate release" of jailed rights activists. Riyadh accused Ottawa on Tuesday of interfering in its internal affairs, Reuters reported.

One well-placed source said the Liberal government of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau — which stresses the importance of human rights — planned to reach out to the UAE.

"The key is to work with allies and friends in the region to cool things down, which can happen quickly," said the source, who declined to be identified because of the sensitivity of the situation.

Another source said Canada would also seek help from Britain. The British government on Tuesday urged the two nations to show restraint.

The US, traditionally one of Canada's most important friends, stayed on the sidelines. US President Donald Trump has forged tighter ties with Riyadh.

"Both sides need to diplomatically resolve this together. We can't do it for them; they need to resolve it together," US State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert told a briefing.

The dispute looks set to damage what is a modest bilateral trade relationship worth nearly \$4 billion a year. Canadian exports to Saudi Arabia totaled about \$1.12 billion in 2017, or 0.2 percent of the total value of Canadian exports.

Canada says it does not know what will happen to a \$13-billion defense contract to sell Canadian-made General Dynamics Corp. armored vehicles to Saudi Arabia.

European traders said the main Saudi wheat-buying agency had told grain exporters it will no longer accept Canadian-origin wheat and barley.

The kingdom has suspended educational exchange programs with Canada and moved Saudi scholarship recipients to other countries, while Saudi state airline said it was suspending flights and from Toronto.

Saudi Arabia has ordered roughly 15,000 Saudis studying in Canada to leave, two senior university officials said Tuesday.

University of Toronto vice-provost, Joseph Wong, told The Canadian Press that Saudi students have received notification telling them they have a month to finish their studies and leave Canada.

Saudi Arabia said on Wednesday that it had stopped all medical treatment programs in Canada and was working on the transfer of all Saudi patients from hospitals there.

State news agency SPA said Riyadh had stopped sending patients to Canadian hospitals and "is coordinating for the transfer of all Saudi patients from Canadian hospitals ... according to directives by the leadership."

It was unclear how many Saudi patients would be affected by the decision and how many were covered by the kingdom's health care system. The government provides health care services through several government agencies for public employees.

Saudi Arabia's main state wheat buying agency, the Saudi Grains Organization (SAGO), has told grain exporters it will no longer accept Canadian-origin grains in its international purchase tenders, European traders said.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has apparently initiated broad reforms to diversify the economy from oil and update deeply conservative social norms.

But critics say the reforms have not extended into politics in an absolute monarchy where all public opposition to the authorities is still banned.

Since rising to power in 2015, the 32-year-old crown prince has courted Western allies to support his reform plans, offering billions of dollars of arms sales and promising to fight radicalism in the kingdom. Hundreds of billions of dollars of investments were discussed during his trips to the US and Europe.

The dispute with Canada has shed light on scores of political and rights activists arrested in Saudi Arabia over the last two years.

At least 15 government critics were arrested since mid-May, some of whose whereabouts are unknown amid a serious lack of transparency in the processing of their cases, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said on July 31.



THE CANADIAN PRESS

## Ryanair strike widens as German pilots join Friday stoppage

Ryanair (RYA) pilots in Germany will strike for 24 hours on Friday, grounding its operations there and adding to action planned in Ireland, Sweden and Belgium at the height of Europe's holiday season.

Europe's biggest airline by passengers, which last year agreed to recognize unions for the first time in its 30 year history, faces rising protests from unions frustrated at the slow progress in negotiations over collective labor agreements, Reuters reported.

The Irish airline had already cancelled 146 flights for Friday as a result of strikes planned in Ireland.

Sweden and Belgium. The 250 cancellations from the German strike takes the total to just under 400 flights, or about 17 percent of the more than 2,400 flights it has scheduled across Europe for that day.

Dutch pilots' union VNV is also considering calling for strikes on Friday, but has not yet decided, a spokesman said.

The walkout by pilots based in Germany will start at 0101 GMT on Friday, the Vereinigung Cockpit (VC) union said in a statement.

"We hope that the strike will lead Ryanair to say they are

notes, they wanted to change the large variable component in salaries and also alter Ryanair's practice of moving staff between bases without much notice.

Ryanair operates more than 2,000 flights a day, serving 223 airports across 37 countries in Europe and North Africa.

Its low-cost model makes it Europe's most profitable airline, and executives say they do not want to change that.

"We are not going to change the Ryanair business model ... but we still can change many things that we do," chief operating officer Peter Bellew told journalists in Frankfurt.

He said Ryanair was willing to look at the variable component of pay. The airline has further angered unions by threatening to shift jobs if walk-outs hurt its business.



PAUL HANNA/REUTERS

## Zimbabwe opposition to challenge election result in court

Zimbabwe's the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) opposition party on Wednesday vowed to overturn in court President Emmerson Mnangagwa's narrow election victory, alleging that he won the historic vote via "mammoth theft and fraud".

The country's first election since Robert Mugabe's ousting has been marred by rigging allegations, the army opening fire on opposition demonstrators killing six people, and accusations of a security crackdown on opposition supporters, AFP reported.

The MDC has until Friday to lodge its suit after Mnangagwa — formerly a close ally of Mugabe — won 50.8 percent in last week's vote, just scraping in above the 50 percent run-off threshold.

"Those results represent a total negation of the will of the people," MDC lawyer Thabani Mpfu told reporters in

Harare. "The election results made by ZEC (Zimbabwe Electoral Commission) will be challenged."

Under Zimbabwean law, the deadline for filing the challenge is Friday. The Constitutional Court must rule on the petition

within 14 days, delaying Mnangagwa's planned inauguration.

"ZEC's figures in our view grossly mathematically fail to tally," said Mpfu. "We are convinced once this has been placed before a court, there will only be one outcome."

He gave no details about any evidence of alleged fraud, promising instead to reveal "a

secret weapon" in court.

Mnangagwa has vowed to protect rights in the "new Zimbabwe" after Mugabe's 37-year repressive rule but the MDC and civil action groups allege that authorities have unleashed a brutal post-election crackdown on opponents.

Senior MDC figure Tendai Biti was arrested as he tried to flee to neighboring Zambia to seek asylum early Wednesday, his lawyer said, allegedly on charges of inciting violence over the disputed vote count. Biti last week claimed victory for the MDC party, triggering celebrations the day before soldiers opened fire on the protestors and before the final presidential results were announced.

"He was arrested at the Zambian border," Biti's lawyer Ngobizitha Milo told AFP, adding by text message that he was trying to seek asylum.



AFP

### Quake casualties and damage

The death toll from a powerful earthquake on the Indonesian island of Lombok rose above 130 on Wednesday, as authorities appealed for food, clean water and medical help for some 156,000 people forced to stay away from their homes.

### OPINION

## America addicted to sanctions; time for intervention

When these punitive economic measures become the go-to option for every grievance, they lose their meaning

By Neil Bhatiya and Edoardo Saravalle

In March 2016, shortly after the United States lifted sanctions on Iran over its nuclear program, then-Treasury Secretary Jack Lew gave a speech reflecting on the lessons Barack Obama's administration had learned. Sanctions, he said, had "become a powerful force in service of clear and coordinated foreign policy objectives," but the United States should be sure to use them "only to address significant threats to national security." Overusing them, he warned, could dull their effectiveness. His logic was simple: Sanctions work because they cut targets off from dealing with US citizens and American financial institutions — a complete severance from the world's largest economy and its most important financial center. If Washington used this power idly, Lew suggested, it could encourage countries to find partners outside of the United States, and undermine sanctions' deterrent effect.

Both the executive and legislative branches seem to have ignored Lew. Since his speech, the United States has reimposed sweeping sanctions on Iran, with restrictions on currency transactions and the trading of airline and automotive parts going into effect on August 6; expanded the penalties against Russia and Venezuela; and pursued a maximum economic-pressure campaign against North Korea. Just after Donald Trump's controversial Helsinki summit with Russia's President Vladimir Putin, a bipartisan group of senators unveiled new legislation to tighten sanctions on Moscow. To punish Turkey for its detention of the American pastor Andrew Brunson, the administration imposed human-rights sanctions on Turkish officials.

These days, policymakers not only impose sanctions with greater frequency — they're also considering ever more extreme measures, and paying less and less attention to the drawbacks. At their most effective, sanctions are the product of multilateral efforts to solve clearly articulated, shared global-security concerns. Now they are becoming strident expressions of displeasure from an isolated United States, often wielded in service of domestic partisan priorities — a careless approach that may well neutralize the effectiveness of these powerful tools.

In past successful sanctions efforts, officials in Washington, DC, worked closely with allies and international organizations, roll out new sanctions regimes. In 2014, for example, the United States and the European Union worked together to minimize any collateral costs the Russia sanctions in response to the Ukraine crisis might impose on their own economies. Such international buy-in does more than simply preserve norms or alliances — it gives sanctions real teeth. When the United States and Europe collaborated on oil sanctions on Iran in 2012, they nearly halved Tehran's oil exports. These efforts helped decrease Iran's GDP by nine percent from March 2012 to March 2014, and ultimately helped bring Tehran to the negotiating table. America's new penchant for unilateral sanctions is now jeopardizing long-standing relationships with allies. When the Trump administration left the Iran deal, the EU responded by updating a law that prohibited European companies from complying with certain US sanctions. As a result, the United States did more than lose a helpful partner — it set back its own program. Today, while lobbying major Iranian trading partners such as India and China to comply with new sanctions, the United States remains bogged down in an Atlantic tit for tat.

Another major problem with the current use of sanctions: It treats them as an end in and of themselves, rather than as a means to an end. Sanctions are meant to induce adversaries to come to the negotiating table; when they achieve their goals, they should end. Attacking each and every foreign-policy problem with sanctions will make them more rigid and harder to lift. Whereas policymakers once articulated clear conditions that would lead to sanctions relief, US officials now layer sanctions authorities on top of one another for each new perceived transgression.

Consider the US sanctions on Russia for its actions in Ukraine. These measures went into effect in 2014. But a year later, US officials tied sanctions relief to Moscow's compliance with the Minsk II peace road map, which outlined steps including a ceasefire, the withdrawal of heavy weapons from the front line, and the reintegration of the separatist regions. As tensions with the Kremlin have grown, the sanctions' goals have seemingly multiplied. When the Trump administration sanctioned major Russian oligarchs in April 2018, the Treasury Department added a laundry list of complaints to its original Ukraine justification, including Russia's support for Bashar al-Assad in Syria, its election meddling and its malicious cyber activity.

While all these activities surely warranted pushback from the United States, they've led to a sort of mission creep. Sanctions work best as narrowly targeted measures tied to clear demands — an approach most likely to lead to practical deals. Turkey offers a new test for Washington's sanctions discipline. So far, the administration has outlined a very specific goal: Brunson's freedom. Can it stick to that approach and lift the sanctions if they succeed? Or will it succumb to the momentum created by sanctions and tack on new goals?

The track record is not encouraging. By constantly expanding its demands, the United States may have given the impression that its negotiations are not in good faith, and that rather than trying to reach a diplomatic resolution, it is simply trying to punish the target. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's 12 points for resetting relations with Tehran tied so many goals to each sanction program so as to render such measures useless as conflict-resolution tools.

Domestic politics are also harming sanctions policy. Congress tends to see these measures as a way of seizing control of foreign policy back from the executive. Both congressional Democrats and Republicans have used sanctions against Russia to score points against the president (albeit, each side for its own partisan reasons). Now Democrats may be using this playbook with North Korea sanctions. For example, after the Singapore summit with the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un, they floated measures like making sanctions relief dependent on a Senate vote on any deal between Trump and Kim, which seemed aimed at tying the president's hands and making him appear weak.

The harder sanctions programs are to lift, the greater the chances are that they will become entrenched policy. If countries and companies begin to see certain sanction programs as a new normal, they could make permanent adjustments that would dull US sanctions' effectiveness. They might even start thinking of sanctions on Russia or Iran as more of a permanent inconvenience than a pressing crisis. Faced with US sanctions, for example, the French energy giant Total used Chinese financing for its Russian liquefied-natural-gas plant, thus dodging US restrictions. Going forward, Total may be less intimidated by the threat of sanctions from Washington.

As US sanctions cordon off greater slices of economic activity, they are fostering partnerships of convenience. Russia and Venezuela, both under the gun of US sanctions, have strengthened their investment relationship. Moscow is even rumored to have helped Caracas create a cryptocurrency aimed at sanctions evasion. If Congress limits the Trump administration's ability to strike a deal with Pyongyang, China will likely increase trade with North Korea as sanctions will seem less like a temporary tactic and more like a permanent state of affairs. More countries and firms may even emulate Total's approach to circumvent US measures. In chipping away at US sanctions' reach, they will find eager partners in Beijing. Ad hoc workarounds could even give rise to "coalitions of the sanctioned," or ecosystems of sanctioned countries and companies that operate freely having accepted their sanctioned status.

A better US approach to sanctions will ultimately hinge on policy makers refining their understanding of these measures. But whether they can find the political will to do so soon is doubtful.

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