

# Pakistan's ex-PM arrested, sparking protests

Pakistan's former Prime Minister Imran Khan was arrested Tuesday as he appeared in court to face charges in multiple graft cases, a dramatic escalation of political tensions in the country that sparked demonstrations by his supporters in at least three cities.

Khan, who was ousted in a no-confidence vote in April 2022 but remains the leading opposition figure, was dragged from the Islamabad High Court by security agents from the National Accountability Bureau, said Fawad Chaudhry, a senior official with his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party. Khan was shoved into an armored car and whisked away, AP reported.

Chaudhry denounced the arrest of the 71-year-old former cricket star as "an abduction." Pakistan's independent GEO TV broadcast video of Khan being hauled away.

Afterward, a scuffle broke out between Khan's supporters and police outside the court. Some of Khan's lawyers and supporters were injured in the melee, as were several police,

Chaudhry said. Khan's party complained to the court, which requested a police report explaining the charges for Khan's arrest.

Khan was taken to the garrison city of Rawalpindi, near Islamabad, for questioning at the offices of the National Accountability Bureau, according to police and government officials. He also was to undergo a routine medical checkup, police said.

Khan has denounced the cases against him, which include terrorism charges, as a politically motivated plot by his successor, Prime Minister Shabbaz Sharif, saying his ouster was illegal and a Western conspiracy. Khan has campaigned against Sharif and demanded early elections.

Tuesday's arrest was based on a new warrant from the National Accountability Bureau obtained last week in a separate graft case for which Khan had not obtained bail, making him vulnerable to arrest. He is scheduled to appear before an anti-graft tribunal today, officials said.



As the news of the arrest spread, about 4,000 of Khan's supporters stormed the official residence of the top regional commander in Lahore, smashing windows and doors, damaging furniture and staging a sit-in as troops there retreated to avoid violence. The protesters also burned police vehicles and blocked key roads.

Protesters also smashed the main gate of the army's headquarters in the

garrison city of Rawalpindi, where troops exercised restraint. Hundreds of demonstrators shouted pro-Khan slogans as they moved toward the sprawling building.

AFP correspondents in the eastern city of Lahore reported water cannon being fired, while in Karachi, AP reported that police swung batons and fired tear gas to disperse hundreds of Khan supporters who had gathered on a key road.

Khan is the seventh former prime minister to be arrested in Pakistan. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was arrested and hanged in 1979. The current prime minister's brother, Nawaz Sharif, who also served as prime minister, was arrested several times on corruption allegations.

Khan came to power in 2018 after winning parliamentary elections and had initially good relations with the military which gradually soured.



A man crosses a road past a barricade that was set afire by the supporters of Pakistan's former Prime Minister Imran Khan during a protest against his arrest, in Karachi, Pakistan, on May 9, 2023.

● AKHTAR SOOMRO/REUTERS

## China expels Canadian diplomat in tit-for-tat response



Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin is reflected in a wall of mirrored glass as he gestures during a regular press conference in Beijing, on May 9, 2023.

● MARK SCHIEFELBEIN/AP

China announced the expulsion of a Canadian diplomat on Tuesday in retaliation for Ottawa ordering a Chinese consular official to leave the country over alleged threats he made against a Canadian lawmaker and his family.

The Foreign Ministry said China was deploying a "reciprocal countermeasure to Canada's unscrupulous move," which it said it "firmly opposes," AP reported.

It said Jennifer Lynn Lalonde, the top Canadian diplomat in the business hub of Shanghai, has been asked to leave by May 13 and that China "reserves the right to take further actions in response." The Canadian Embassy in Beijing had no immediate comment on the expulsion order.

Canada earlier on Tuesday said that Prime Min-

ister Justin Trudeau's government is expelling a Chinese diplomat whom Canada's spy agency alleged was involved in a plot to intimidate an opposition lawmaker and his relatives in Hong Kong.

Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly said in a statement that Canada declared Zhao "persona non grata" and that Canada would "not tolerate any form of foreign interference in our internal affairs."

"Diplomats in Canada have been warned that if they engage in this type of behavior, they will be sent home," she said.

In a statement posted on its website, the Chinese Embassy in Ottawa said Zhao's expulsion was "based on rumors of the so-called 'China Interference' hyped up by some politicians and media."

## Putin touts 'sacred' battle with West as Russia marks Victory Day

President Vladimir Putin said on Tuesday that Russians were united in a "sacred" fight with the West over Ukraine but the strains of war were evident at one of the most pained back anniversaries of the victory over Nazi Germany in decades.

"The decisive battles for the fate of our Motherland have always become patriotic, all-national and sacred," the 70-year-old president told veterans and soldiers assembled on Red Square for the annual Victory Day parade, Reuters reported.

"A real war has again been unleashed against our homeland," he said.

Putin hailed Russian forces in Ukraine as heroes who were fighting for the country's future against a West which, he said, had forgotten the decisive role played by the Soviet Union in defeating Nazi Germany.

"The whole country rallied to support our heroes. Everyone is ready to help, praying for you," he said of those taking part in what the Kremlin calls a "special military operation".

Putin cheered for "Russia, for our valiant Armed Forces, for victory!" Cheers rang out across Red Square, with a gun salute and the Russian national anthem, though with a much-curtailed show of military hardware – and no aviation. A single tank took part – a T-34, a type used in World War Two.

As many as 354,000 Russian and Ukrainian soldiers have been killed or injured in the Ukraine war, which is now in its 15th month and could well grind on well beyond 2023, according to a trove of purported U.S. intelligence documents posted online.



Russian President Vladimir Putin delivers a speech during a military parade on Victory Day, which marks the 78th anniversary of the victory over Nazi Germany in World War Two, in Red Square in central Moscow, Russia, on May 9, 2023.

● SPUTNIK/GAVRIIL GRIGOROV/REUTERS



### NEWS IN BRIEF

**Over 5,500 still missing in flood-hit east Congo: local official**



REUTERS – More than 5,500 people are still unaccounted for in an area in east Democratic of Congo where floods killed more than 400 people last week, a local official said on Tuesday, as shaken survivors waited for food aid. Scores of bodies have been recovered from the villages of Bushushu and Nyamukubi in South Kivu province's Kalehe territory since torrential rain caused landslides and flash floods on Thursday, flattening buildings and sweeping away crops.

**UN: Over 700k Sudanese internally displaced**



● REUTERS

AP – The United Nations refugee agency said more than 700,000 Sudanese have fled their homes since violence broke out last month between two armed factions fighting for control of the northern African nation.

The updated figure, provided Tuesday by the U.N. International Organization for Migration, is more than double the 334,000 the agency reported to be internally displaced last week. The IOM said an additional 100,000 Sudanese have fled the country.

**Turkish, Syrian FMs to meet in Moscow**

AFP – The foreign ministers of Turkey and Syria will hold their first official meeting on Wednesday since the start of Syrian war more than a decade ago, officials said.

The talks in Moscow will also involve the top diplomats of Russia and Iran, Turkey's Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

The announcement delivers a diplomatic boost to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan just days before he faces the toughest general election of his 21-year rule on Sunday.

## Turks abroad wrap up voting in landmark election

Millions of Turks living abroad wrapped up voting on Tuesday, in a tense election.

Sunday's presidential and parliamentary ballot will pass judgement on Turkey's longest-serving leader and the social transformation spearheaded by his party,

AFP reported.

The vote is Turkey's most consequential in generations and the toughest of the 69-year-old's tectonic career.

Polls show Erdogan locked in a tight battle with secular rival Kemal Kilicdaroglu and his powerful alliance of six

parties that span Turkey's cultural and political divide. The first votes were cast by Turks who moved from poorer provinces to Western Europe over the decades under job schemes aimed at combating the continent's labour shortage in the wake of World War II.

Such voters comprise 3.4 million of Turkey's 64.1 million registered electorate and tend to support more conservative candidates.

Official turnout on the morning of the last day of overseas voting on Tuesday was reported at 51 percent – a touch lower than in past

elections and a possible sign of worry for Erdogan. The vote has been accompanied by spates of violence that reflect the anger running through Turkey's polarised society during its deepest economic crisis since the 1990s.

Dutch police said on Sun-

day they had to break up a "massive brawl involving some 300 people" at a polling station in Amsterdam. Police in the French city of Marseille used tear gas to stop a similar fight between Erdogan's supporters and opponents last week.