

## **Turkey-Dutch relations take further dip as two Turkish ministers denied entry**

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**Ankara:** The relationship between Turkey and the Netherlands took further dive on Saturday after a Turkish minister was stopped by Dutch police from entering the consulate in Rotterdam late Saturday.

### **Demonstrators wave turkish flags outside the Turkish consulate in Rotterdam**

Turkish Family and Social Policies Minister Betul Sayan Kaya's vehicle was stopped by Dutch police from entering the consulate after the Dutch had already blocked a visit by the foreign minister, prompting President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to call the Dutch "Nazi remnants."

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu was barred from landing in the Netherlands on Saturday and Turkish officials then closed off the Dutch Embassy and called its ambassador no longer welcome, sinking relations even deeper in the diplomatic standoff over plans by Turkish officials to address political rallies in Europe.

Cavusoglu was scheduled to address the Turkish community in the Dutch city of Rotterdam on Saturday.

About 1,000 pro-Turkish protesters gathered outside their country's consulate in Rotterdam after Kaya was prevented from entering it after traveling to the Netherlands from Germany.

Kaya's office reportedly said that she will meet with Turkish citizens there instead after the Netherlands denied landing permission to the top diplomat.

Dutch authorities blocked the street where the Turkish Consul General's residence in Rotterdam is located after Kaya announced that she will travel to Rotterdam by land.

She insisted the "Netherlands is violating all international laws, conventions and human rights by not letting me enter." Early Sunday, NOS network showed pictures of a woman, protesting, being taken to another car, amid media reports the minister was being taken back to Germany.

Turkey's state-run news agency later said the minister had left the consulate area, escorted by police.

The mayor of Rotterdam issued an emergency order late Saturday in an attempt to contain a pro-Turkish demonstration which has turned into a flashpoint of the quickly deteriorating relations.

Mayor Ahmed Aboutaleb said he needed special powers to assure security throughout the center of the city fearing that more people would join the demonstration and there was "serious concern" that riots might ensue.

The Dutch first withdrew the landing rights of the foreign minister because of objections to his intention to attend a rally in Rotterdam for a Turkish referendum on constitutional reforms to expand presidential powers, which the Dutch see as a step backward from democracy.

Erdogan told a rally in Istanbul that the Dutch "do not know politics or international diplomacy." He compared them to "Nazi remnants, they are fascists."

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte called it "a crazy remark, of course. But I understand they are angry but this is of

course way out of line."

Erdogan had earlier this month already compared German policies to "Nazi practices," after German municipalities canceled several campaign events by Turkish officials last weekend.

He told a rally in Istanbul Saturday: "You can stop our foreign minister's plane all you want, let's see how your (diplomatic) planes will come to Turkey from now on." Cavusoglu also referred to possible sanctions, and Rutte said consultations under such threats were impossible, forcing him to bar the visit.

The government said it withdrew the permission because of "risks to public order and security," causing Cavusoglu to say: "so is the foreign minister of the Turkish republic a terrorist?"

In the evening, a Turkish foreign ministry official who spoke on customary anonymity said the Dutch Embassy in Ankara and its consulate in Istanbul were closed off because of security reasons.

The official said entries and exits were closed to the two locations. Similar precautions were taken at the Dutch charge d'affaires' house and the ambassador's residence.

The Turkish foreign ministry also said that it doesn't want to see the Dutch ambassador, who is out of the country, return to his post for some time because of the increasingly divisive dispute with the Netherlands.

Cavusoglu said he arrived in Metz, France, late Saturday, where he was expected to address crowds on Sunday. Turkish officials have been campaigning in various European cities before the April 16 referendum.

Around 100 people marched in Istanbul Saturday afternoon to protest the Dutch decision, with demonstrators placing a black wreath in front of the Dutch Consulate amid a heavy police presence.

The diplomatic row comes at a time when relations between Turkey and the European Union, of which the Netherlands is a member, have been steadily worsening, especially in the wake of Erdogan's actions since last year's failed coup. More than 41,000 people have been arrested and 100,000 civil servants fired from their jobs.

Cavusoglu said that "unfortunately Europe and several countries in Europe, the Netherlands being in the first place, they are reminiscent of the Europe of World War II. The same racism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, we see all the crimes against humanity in today's politics."

The dispute also comes just days before the Netherlands goes to the polls in a March 15 election for the lower house of Parliament. The campaign has been dominated by issues of identity, with anti-Islam lawmaker Geert Wilders set to make strong gains.

Earlier Saturday, Cavusoglu said "Wilders is racist, fascist, Nazi, like a Nazi." Citing comments that Wilders wanted action against Muslims, Cavusoglu said: "What are you going to do? Are you going to kill them, burn them or what?"

- (With AP inputs)