



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on August 14, 2023

Intercept: U.S. Told Pakistan to Remove Imran Khan Due to His Stance on Ukraine

On August 5, a Pakistani court meted out a three-year jail sentence to former Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan on the grounds of corruption. Such a verdict implies that Khan, who alleges that the prosecution was politically motivated, would not be able to contest elections later this year.

In a pre-recorded statement released on X (formerly Twitter), Khan told his supporters, "I have only one appeal, don't sit at home silently."

Judge Humayun Dilawar proclaimed in court that Khan, 70, had "deliberately submitted fake details" after he was charged for unlawfully profiting from the sale of gifts he received while serving as Pakistan's head of state between 2018 and 2022. After declaring the three-year custodial term, the judge also ordered Khan to be forbidden from politics for a period of five years.

After the verdict, Khan, who was not present in court, was arrested at his home in Lahore and taken into police custody. The charges against the former prime minister are a case of "political victimization," his lawyer Intezar Hussain Panjutha asserted.

"Khan was not given an opportunity to defend himself and say his side of the story," he declared after the verdict. "We wanted to provide witnesses in his favor but he was not allowed this opportunity. Khan was not given a fair trial."

Khan's barrister, Gohar Khan, told *The Dawn* newspaper that the court's decision had been a "murder of justice."

Meanwhile, Khan's critics seemed to cheer the verdict, with some even chanting, "Imran Khan is a thief."

A former sports star turned populist political figure, Khan has had more than 150 cases brought against him since he was ousted from office last April following a no-confidence vote. Khan has been charged with numerous crimes since his ouster, from insulting state officials to terrorism, and last month it was declared that he would be prosecuted under the Official Secrets Act for divulging classified contents relating to a purported conspiracy to oust him. On his end, the former leader has denied all wrongdoing.

Unless a successful appeal is made, Khan's arrest would prevent him from running in Pakistan's general elections, which are expected to take place in October or November. Khan has hitherto stated his belief



AP Images
Imran Khan



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that Pakistan's military authorities have tried to hinder his Tehreek-e-Insaf party from regaining political power.

Around 100 paramilitary troops participated in Khan's prior detention last May linked to one of the numerous cases against him. Khan has also claimed that the United States conspired with Pakistan's government to stop him from regaining political power.

Corroborating with Khan's claims has been a [report](#) from The Intercept that stated the U.S. State Department pressured Pakistan to remove Khan last year over the latter's neutrality regarding the conflict in Ukraine, quoting a clandestine diplomatic cable obtained from a Pakistani military source. The cable details a meeting between U.S. State Department officials and Pakistan's ambassador to the United States on March 7, 2022.

"People here and in Europe are quite concerned about why Pakistan is taking such an aggressively neutral position" on Ukraine, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs Donald Lu cautioned his Pakistani counterpart in the cable, putting responsibility on the Pakistani prime minister for the stance.

Although Ambassador Asad Majeed Khan tried to explain to Lu by highlighting that Pakistan's stance on Ukraine was a unanimous opinion across the government, Lu maintained that it was Khan's stance that was the problem. However, Lu said that "if the no-confidence vote against the Prime Minister succeeds, all will be forgiven in Washington."

"Otherwise, I think it will be tough going ahead," Lu warned, adding that Europe will follow the United States' lead in the "isolation of the prime minister." Ambassador Khan penned in his notes that the threat seemed to be coming straight from the White House and called for a robust diplomatic response.

Khan, who seemingly obtained a copy of the cable in the weeks after the meeting, pointed at the United States as the director of his ouster after he was removed after a no-confidence vote last April — just as Lu had warned.

In a June 2023 interview with [The Intercept](#), Khan repeated his accusations about the United States, with the U.S. State Department again dismissing his claims throughout June and July, at least [three times](#) in [press conferences](#) and during a [speech](#) by a deputy assistant secretary of state for Pakistan, who referred to the claims as "propaganda, misinformation, and disinformation."

Although Khan's successor, Shehbaz Sharif of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party, acknowledged the existence of the cable and admitted that some of its contents were inappropriate, he did not confirm Khan's claims.

Washington has categorically denied accusations by Islamabad that it was involved in Khan's removal. Although the document obtained by The Intercept did not technically constitute a direct order, it nevertheless contained strongly worded threats against noncompliance and indicated strongly that the threats were coming directly from U.S. leader Joe Biden.

Upon Khan's removal, Pakistan immediately reversed its neutrality on Ukraine, and began providing huge amounts of weapons to Kyiv. In turn, its military was supposedly rewarded with a defense pact encompassing "joint exercises, operations, training, basing and equipment."

Khan, a charismatic ex-cricketer, was elected prime minister in 2018, with the official support of the influential military and its Army chief Qamar Javed Bajwa. That being said, opposition leaders have [claimed](#) that Khan was "selected," rather than "elected."



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However, in April of 2022, a no-confidence vote in Parliament led to his [dismissal as prime minister](#), shortly after the army had officially stopped supporting him. Earlier, Khan and the military had a falling out over the transfer of the director general of the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) in October 2021. Although the military had given the green light for the transfer for weeks, Khan refrained from signing off on the transfer, as he preferred the then-ISI chief who was loyal to him. Following these series of events, army chief Bajwa has maintained that the military is presently taking a “neutral stance” and has not officially backed Khan’s successor Sharif either.

While Khan openly castigated [the Biden administration](#) of “indulging in a regime change conspiracy” for Pakistan’s pursuit of an “independent foreign policy,” his opponents cite his track record as prime minister as being the factor behind his removal.

Economically, Khan sought to heavily subsidize fuel, increasing his popularity among voters but exhausting [state coffers](#) at an increasing rate since the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian crisis in February 2022. Additionally, a \$6 billion loan from the IMF placed more pressure on Khan, as the IMF demanded the reduction of subsidies on fuel, electricity, and natural gas as a condition to the release of a \$1.17 billion installment of the loan.

Sharif attempted to acquiesce to the demands by the IMF to bring much-needed funds into the country at the expense of Pakistan’s ordinary citizens. Just like Sri Lanka in 2022, Pakistan had an ailing economy, to say the least, and has been grappling with expanding its economic portfolio beyond the export of cotton textiles.

Barring any successful appeal, Khan will most likely be locked up for some time, while his pro-Western successor faces increasing pressure to support to globalist goals in Ukraine, draining the country’s resources as a result. With Pakistan’s economic prospects still looking dismal, the Pakistani people would be the ones licking their own wounds while their leaders are coerced by the globalist West into providing arms and money to relatively far-flung Ukraine.



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