



‘Time to drain the Brussels swamp’ – PM Orbán says widening corruption scandal could reach highest levels of EU

Description

EU: It is time to drain the swamp in Brussels, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said in a video posted on Facebook upon his arrival at the Dec. 15-16 EU summit, with the Hungarian leader referencing the growing bribery scandal that has rocked Europe.

“We are now finally here in Brussels, at the European Union summit,” Orbán said on his social media page. He said that this EU summit was marked by the arrest of the left-wing vice-president of the European Parliament, Greek Socialist MEP Eva Kaili, on corruption charges.

The prime minister also underlined that the corruption scandal has shocked European institutions, with searches continuing, millions of euros seized by police, and speculation about which other Brussels politicians could be involved.

“Many believe the strings could lead to the highest levels,” Orbán said. He added that “It is time to drain the swamp here in Brussels.”

As Remix News reported earlier, Greek Socialist MEP Eva Kaili, the outgoing vice-president of the EP, and three of her colleagues were arrested a week ago by Belgian authorities as part of an investigation into corruption in relation to Qatar, with European politicians defending Qatar’s human rights record and lobbying for the country to receive better visa conditions for travel into Europe.

The suspects have reportedly been in pre-trial detention since their arrest. According to a Belgian police statement, almost €1.5 million in cash was seized during searches in the Brussels region, with the money stuffed in briefcases and paper bags.

Now, it appears the corruption scandal is widening, and a variety of MEPs from the Socialists & Democrats (S&D) are stepping down from key posts, including Belgian MEP Marc Tarabella, who has been suspended from the group; Belgian MEP Maria Arena, who has stepped down as chair of the subcommittee on human rights; Italian MEP Pietro Bartolo, who stepped down for his role working on the visa liberalization for Qatar and Kuwait; and Italian MEP Andrea Cozzolino, who stepped down as

S&D coordinator.

“My group and myself are shocked by this corruption case,” S&D President Iratxe García Pérez told reporters. “I want to make it clear that our commitment to transparency is, has been, and will always be absolute.”

Tarabella, for instance, may have also accepted Qatari bribes. Just last month, he made a speech defending Qatar’s labor reforms during the World Cup, and those arguments looked very similar to the ones Kaili used during the same plenary session. Qatar has been accused of human rights violations, including using slave or forced labor during the construction of the country’s World Cup buildings, resulting in hundreds of deaths.

The ongoing case, which is being called perhaps the biggest corruption scandal in the EU’s history, has shocked the left, which often accuses countries like Hungary of corruption.

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