
Erdogan's son under investigation in Italy over allegations of money laundering

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The Bologna prosecutors' office has confirmed to various media outlets that the probe has been launched into the activities of 35-year-old Necmettin Bilal Erdogan, the third child of the Turkish president.

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Turkish businessman Murat Hakan Huzan, a political opponent of President Tayyip Erdogan living in exile in France, filed a complaint against the Turkish president's son in September 2015. Huzan's lawyer Massimiliano Annetta claims the papers handed over to the prosecutors by his client contain evidence that Erdogan Jr managed to smuggle into Italy a large amount of money gained through illegal economic activities.

Officially, Bilal Erdogan arrived to the capital of Italy's Emilia-Romagna region last September with his wife and children to study at Johns Hopkins University and conclude a doctorate he started in 2007.

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Murat Hakan Huzan, who fled Turkey citing political and judicial persecution, said Bilal's "*money trip*" to Italy was a part of an alleged "*project escape*" for the Erdogan family.

Bilal Erdogan's Italian attorney Giovanni Trombini has flatly denied all allegations against his client.

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"My client has on several occasions reiterated having no relation to any criminal case, especially to money laundering allegations," the lawyer said as cited by Corriere di Bologna. Trombini added that all his client's economic and financial activity is "absolutely transparent and legal," and that the allegations against him are "completely unfounded."

Erdogan Jr's lawyer insists that his client has no plans of settling down in Italy and will return to Turkey after finishing his PhD at Johns Hopkins.

The complaint against Bilal Erdogan's alleged illegal financial activities seems to be based on information from a politically oriented Twitter account opposing the current Turkish government, Trombini said.

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Bilal Erdogan has already found himself in the middle of two media scandals in Italy. The first was when his armed bodyguards were reportedly denied entry to the country. They were swiftly given Turkish diplomatic passports to enable them to proceed with their duties.

Another scandal took place in December last year, when offensive "*Erdogan terrorist*" inscriptions appeared on the walls of several buildings at Johns Hopkins University, forcing Erdogan Jr to file a defamation lawsuit.

In February 2014, a firestorm was sparked in Turkey when audio recordings, in which President Erdogan is reportedly heard telling Bilal to get rid of tens of millions of dollars, were posted on YouTube. The president has described the recordings as a "*vile montage*," according to AFP.

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