
NORTH MACEDONIA IS 'NATURAL ALLY', SAYS TURKISH FM

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Turkey's foreign minister on Tuesday said North Macedonia was "natural ally" of Ankara and would soon be its official ally in NATO.

Mevlut Cavusoglu's remarks came in a joint press conference with his counterpart Nikola Dimitrov in the capital Skopje.

"We have excellent political relations. We are natural allies, but we will become allies officially within NATO. As I said earlier, we had a natural alliance before North Macedonia was invited to join NATO," said Cavusoglu.

He expressed his satisfaction with the ratification of North Macedonia's NATO accession protocol in Turkey's parliament, adding that Ankara would continue its support for Skopje in the future as well.

Cavusoglu stressed that the integration of North Macedonia and the Western Balkans into Euro-Atlantic institutions was vital not only for these countries, but also for the stability of the region.

"Northern Macedonia is a friendly country for us. Turkey has supported North Macedonia's accession to NATO membership in the strongest way," said Cavusoglu.

Speaking about regional issues related to Turkey, Cavusoglu urged North Macedonia to take concrete steps against the Fetullah Terrorist Organization (FETÖ), the group behind the 2016 defeated coup in Turkey.

"The FETÖ terrorist organization is not only present in Turkey, but has spread to more than 160 countries all over the world. North Macedonia is one of those countries," he said.

He added: "The fight against this terrorist organization is not only important for Turkey. It is also important for the security and stability of North Macedonia and the countries in which it operates."

Meanwhile, North Macedonia's Foreign Minister Nikola Dimitrov said problems afflicting Turkey were also of concern to Skopje.

"The problem of our friend is our problem. We will do everything we can to help in terms of political will. There is incredible cooperation between our intelligence agencies. In this context, our hands are tied because we must comply with the local and international legal system," said Dimitrov.

Dimitrov said that he was following the extradition procedure carried out by the Ministry of Justice

of Northern Macedonia for 15 FETÖ members in the country.

"The procedure for these people continues at the Skopje Basic Court and the prosecutor's office. We are still in talks about how the procedure proceeds," he said.

Cavusoglu arrived in North Macedonia's capital Skopje on Tuesday.

During his two-day visit, he also met with Northern Macedonian Prime Minister Zoran Zaev and Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs Bujar Osmani.

<https://www.yenisafak.com/en/news/north-macedonia-is-natural-ally-says-turkish-fm-3495676>

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