

French far-right leader to appeal withholding of party funds

Written by Shamim

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Paris, Jul 9 (AP) - French far-right leader Marine le Pen said Monday she was appealing a decision by two judges to withhold the payment of a public subsidy which she says will kill her party, adding that it amounts to a "coup."

Speaking on BFMTV, the head of the National Rally party, formerly known as the National Front, said the appeal that was to be lodged Monday morning would not suspend the decision to withhold the funds.

Le Pen announced Sunday that 2 million euros (\$2.35 million), nearly half of a 4.5 million euro subsidy the party was allocated for 2018, was being withheld. The funds had been due to be disbursed Monday, she said.

"The judges' decision is a real coup d'etat," le Pen said, and accused them of acting through political motivations. On Sunday, she said in a statement that the subsidy was essential for the party to meet its running costs such as salaries and rent, and that without it the National Rally had only enough money to last until the end of August. The party set up a website to gather donations from the public.

The judicial move came amid an investigation into whether funds for European Parliament assistants were mis-used, going instead to people working for the party domestically. Politicians from other French parties have also been accused of misusing such funds.

Le Pen denies wrongdoing.

"No, no, ten times no," le Pen said when asked by the BFMTV presenter whether she had used European funds to pay for assistants who worked for her party.

She said the withholding of funds was illegal as it came during an investigation and therefore didn't respect the presumption of innocence.