

## International

# Dozens detained after Syrian shops attacked in Turkey

## Polls show anti-migrant sentiments riding high among many Turks

**ANKARA, Turkey:** Turkish police yesterday detained dozens of people after a mob of angry men smashed up shops and cars believed to belong to Syrian migrants in the capital Ankara. The unrest broke out late Wednesday in response to a fight between locals and migrants in which one Turkish national was stabbed to death. Images on social media showed dozens of shouting men breaking through police cordons and then attacking cars and shops believed to be owned by Syrian families. They smashed windows with stones and crowbars and tore down the metal grill of one store before breaking in and ransacking its shelves.

Turkish Red Crescent chief Kerem Kinik tweeted an image of a child with streams of blood running down their face who he said had been hurt in the unrest. "When did stoning houses at night become part of our tradition," Kinik demanded. "Many refugees contacted us. They are worried for the safety of their children. They are scared." The Ankara police said they had detained 76 people who were either suspected of involvement in the violence or of disseminating incendiary social media posts. The Anadolu state news agency said two "foreign nationals" also have been arrested and charged with homicide over the deadly fight.

### Anti-migrant sentiment

The unrest in Ankara comes with polls showing anti-migrant sentiments riding high among many Turks. Turkey has become home to 3.6 million Syrians under a deal it struck with the European Union in 2016 to help avert the continent's migrant crisis. The sides are currently working on updating the terms. Ankara has received billions of dollars in exchange for setting up camps in the southeast that are now home to more than four million people. Turkey's main opposition party last month made waves by vowing to send Syrians "back home" if it came to power in a general election scheduled for 2023.

Analysts link some of the resentment to economic instability that accelerated in Turkey with the coronavirus pandemic. The Teyit fact-checking platform has been debunking numerous negative social media posts about migrants—many of them Afghan—this week. The issue is gaining added attention because of sweeping gains being made by Taliban fighters in Afghanistan, with some fearing a mass exodus from the war-torn country. Turkey is on one of the main transit routes for Afghans seeking shelter in Europe. — AFP



**ANKARA:** Men smash up shops and homes believed to be owned by Syrian families during an unrest, which broke out in response to a fight between locals and migrants in Ankara, yesterday. — AFP

## Algeria sentences journalist to eight months in jail

**ALGIERS:** Algerian journalist Rabah Kareche, who reported on a protest movement by the Tuareg minority, was sentenced yesterday to serve eight months behind bars, his newspaper Liberte said. It said a court in the southern town of Tamanrasset handed Kareche, who was arrested in April, a one-year term with four months suspended. Taking into account time served, he has four months left in prison. He had been charged with "spreading false information liable to damage public order" and accused of posting reports that could trigger "segregation and hatred within society". Kareche was arrested after reporting that the Tuareg, a Berber minority who have long complained of economic and social marginalization, had protested over "expropriation" of their historical lands.

His detention triggered protests from fellow journalists, especially after President Abdelmadjid Tebboune described Kareche as an "arsonist" in an interview before his sentencing. To the dismay of rights and media freedom groups, the gov-



**Rabah Kareche**

ernment last year criminalized the dissemination of "false news" that "harms national unity". Human Rights Watch has repeatedly accused Algerian authorities of resorting to criminal prosecutions against journalists and others using vaguely worded offenses in the penal code. Media watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF) ranked Algeria 146th out of 180 countries and territories in its 2021 World Press Freedom Index. —AFP

## Sudan VP Machar's ex-deputy joins rival as infighting grows

**JUBA, South Sudan:** South Sudanese Vice President Riek Machar's movement suffered a fresh blow yesterday as his deputy quit to join a rival military faction, following deadly clashes between the two sides. At least 32 people were reported dead when violence broke out on Saturday, just days after Machar's foes in the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army In Opposition (SPLM/A-IO) said they had ousted him as party leader and head of its armed forces. The infighting has raised fears for South Sudan's fragile peace process. The East African bloc IGAD warned this week that the splintering of the SPLM/A-IO "is beyond an intra-party crisis and bears significant immediate and long-term implications" for the world's youngest nation.

Yesterday, Henry Odwar, the movement's deputy chairman and South Sudan's former mining minister, announced that following his resignation from the government a day earlier, he was switching loyalties to General Simon Gatwech Dual, who has led the push to oust Machar. In a signed document seen by AFP, Odwar accused Machar of sidelining other members in a bid to "single-handedly" direct the party's affairs and said the new faction hoped "to steer the movement and chart (a) more democratic and people's centered path."

The two men, who did not share a close personal relationship despite years working together, were reportedly at loggerheads for some time. Odwar's decision to walk away will likely weaken Machar's influence in the Equatoria region, his former deputy's base. Analysts say

the bickering leaves Machar in an increasingly precarious position as he attempts to work alongside his former foe President Salva Kiir to implement a peace process which is already behind schedule.

### 'A weak partner'

The 2018 agreement ended South Sudan's five-year civil war between forces loyal to Machar and Kiir that cost almost 400,000 lives, as the two men hammered out a power-sharing deal. But the latest fighting within Machar's movement diminishes his negotiating power and in doing so, threatens the peace process, said James Okuk, a South Sudanese policy analyst. "By splitting itself... (the SPLM/A-IO) becomes a weak partner and a weak partner is not good in the implementation of the peace agreement," Okuk told AFP.

"This will give President Kiir an upper hand now to be in control of politics in the country," Nicholas Haysom, the head of the UN mission in South Sudan, yesterday joined calls by IGAD and Kiir's office this week to halt the violence. He urged the "factions, and indeed all signatory parties to work together to overcome their differences peacefully." The warring parties have announced a temporary ceasefire for now, with each blaming the other for launching the early-morning attacks Saturday on rival forces in Upper Nile State which borders Sudan.

South Sudan has struggled with war, famine and chronic political and economic crisis since celebrating its hard-fought independence from Sudan in July 2011. Since he signed the power-sharing deal with Kiir, the 68-year-old Machar has faced growing opposition within his own ranks, with top cadres complaining they had lost out to the ruling party. Machar has said the recent squabbles are aimed at derailing the formation of a unified armed forces command, a key component of the peace deal. — AFP