



ANKARA: This video grab image taken from footage made available by local source 'Dokuz8 Haber' shows the moment an explosion ripped through a gathering ahead of a planned peace rally yesterday. — AFP

## BLASTS KILL 95 AT KURDISH RALLY IN TURKISH...

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protest over the deaths of hundreds since conflict resumed between security forces and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in the mainly Kurdish southeast.

HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent yesterday a cable of condolences to Erdogan, expressing his heartfelt sympathy and sorrow after the twin bombings. The Amir affirmed Kuwait's strong condemnation of the two terrorist operations which targeted innocent civilians and the security and stability of the country. He wished in his cable speedy recovery for the injured in this terrible accident and solace for the families of those who lost their loved ones. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables.

A senior Kuwaiti foreign ministry source told KUNA that Kuwait denounces the bombings and stands beside the sisterly Turkish Republic and supports all the measures it takes to maintain its security and stability. The source reiterated Kuwait's firm rejection of all forms of terrorism regardless of their source. Kuwait also extends condolences to the Turkish government, people and families of the victims, the source said, wishing quick recovery for the wounded.

"I heard one big explosion first and tried to cover myself as the windows broke. Right away there was the second one," said Serdar, 37, who was working at a newspaper stand in the train station. "There was shouting and crying and I stayed under the newspapers for a while. I could smell burnt flesh." There were no claims of responsibility for the attack, which comes as external threats mount for NATO member Turkey with increased fighting across its border with Syria and incursions by Russian warplanes on its air space over the last week.

But Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, exposing a mosaic of domestic political perils, said Islamic State, Kurdish or far-leftist militants could have carried out the bombing. He said there were strong signs two suicide bombers were responsible. HDP leader Selahattin Demirtas blamed the government in blunt terms. He said the attack was part of the same campaign as the bombing of an HDP rally in the southeastern city of Diyarbakir on the eve of June elections and a suicide bombing blamed on Islamic State in Suruc near the Syrian border in July, which killed 33 mostly young pro-Kurdish activists.

"The government's right and chance to hum and haw has long expired. You are murderers. Your hand is bloody. Blood has splattered from your face, your mouth to your nails and all over you. You are the biggest supporters of terror," he told reporters in comments broadcast on the internet. The HDP argues that Erdogan seeks to undermine its support and increase backing for his AK Party in elections due on Nov. 1 by associating it with PKK violence and factional infighting, a link the party denies strongly. Davutoglu accused Demirtas, whose party garnered

support from largely left-leaning voters beyond its Kurdish base to enter parliament in June, of "open provocation". Some activists saw the hand of the state in all three attacks on Kurdish interests, accusing Erdogan and the AK Party he founded of seeking to stir up nationalist sentiment, a charge Turkey's leaders have vehemently rejected. Labor unions which helped organize the rally hit by the bombs called a two-day strike for Oct 12-13, although such calls have not always been widely followed in the past.

The scale of casualties exceeded attacks in 2003, when two synagogues, the Istanbul HSBC Bank headquarters and the British consulate were hit with a total loss of 62 lives. Authorities said those incidents bore the hallmarks of Al-Qaeda. Turkey has been on alert since starting a "synchronized war on terror" in July, including air strikes against Islamic State fighters in Syria and PKK bases in northern Iraq. It has rounded up hundreds of suspected Kurdish and Islamist militants at home.

Hours after the bombing, the PKK as widely expected beforehand ordered its fighters to halt operations in Turkey unless they faced attack. It said it would avoid acts that could hinder a "fair and just election" on Nov 1. Renewed conflict in the southeast had raised questions over how Turkey can hold a credible election in violence-hit areas but the government has so far said the vote will go ahead. Davutoglu invited the leaders of the main opposition CHP and nationalist MHP to a meeting today to discuss the events, his office said. Nationalist leader Devlet Bahçeli declined.

Turkey's problems have been compounded over the last week by Russia's launching of air strikes in neighboring Syria that could further swell a refugee population of over two million on Turkish soil. Turkey has protested to Moscow over incursions into its air space by Russian warplanes. "This brutal terrorist attack on peaceful demonstrators is also an assault on the democratic process in Turkey which I vehemently condemn," German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said.

The attacks come three weeks ahead of an election at which the AKP is trying to claw back its majority. In June polls, the party lost the overall majority it had held since 2002, partly because of the electoral success of the HDP, which Erdogan accuses of links to the PKK. The HDP denies the charge and says it seeks improved Kurdish minority rights by democratic means. Designated a terrorist group by Turkey, the United States and the European Union, the PKK launched a separatist insurgency in 1984 in which more than 40,000 people have been killed.

It has since reduced its demands to greater rights for the Kurdish minority; but Ankara fears a link-up between Kurdish militants in Turkey and Kurdish groups in Iraq and Syria that could lead to demands for a separate Kurdish state. The state launched peace talks with the PKK's jailed leader Abdullah Ocalan in 2012 and the latest in a series of ceasefires had been holding until the violence flared again in July. — Agencies

## BLACK MEN CALL FOR CHANGE AT MILLION MAN...

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Deaths of unarmed black males at the hands of law enforcement officers have inspired protests under the "Black Lives Matter" moniker around the country.

The original march on Oct 16, 1995, brought hundreds of thousands to Washington to pledge to improve their lives, their families and their communities. Women, whites and other minorities were not invited to the original march, but organizers welcomed all yesterday, saying they expected hundreds of thousands of participants. The National Park Service estimated the attendance at the original march to be around 400,000, but subsequent counts by private organizations put the number at 800,000 or higher. The National Park Service has refused to give crowd estimates on Mall activities since President Barack Obama, who attended the first

Million Man March, was in California yesterday. Life has improved in some ways for African-American men since the original march, but not in others. For example:

\*The unemployment rate for African-American men in October 1995 was 8.1 percent, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. In September 2015 it was 8.9 percent.

\* In 1995, 73.4 percent of African-American men had high school degrees. In 2004, 84.3 percent did, according to the Census Bureau.

Law enforcement agencies made 3.5 million arrests of blacks in 1994, which was 30.9 percent of all arrests, the FBI said. (By comparison, they made 7.6 million arrests of whites that year, which was 66 percent of all arrests.) By 2013, the latest available data, African-American arrests had decreased to 2.5 million, 28 percent of all arrests. Anti-Muslim protesters planned to demonstrate at mosques around the nation on the same day. — AP

## ISRAELI FORCES KILL 5 PALESTINIANS

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A Palestinian stabbed two police officers, seriously wounding one of them, near the Damascus Gate a few hours after a 16-year-old Palestinian stabbed and wounded two ultra-Orthodox Jewish men in the same area, Rosenfeld said. He said paramilitary police had also killed a Palestinian militant after he fired on them during late-night clashes at the Shuafat refugee camp in East Jerusalem. Hamas, the Islamist Palestinian militant group that controls the Gaza Strip, said in a statement that the Shuafat shooter was one of its members. "The hero martyr fought the Israeli occupation with language they understand," Hamas said.

In Gaza, Israeli soldiers shot dead the Palestinian boy and teenager as they were taking part in protests near Israel's border security fence, Palestinian medical officials said. An army spokeswoman said the protesters had been hurling burning tyres and stones towards the soldiers in a no-go border security zone declared by Israelis. She said the soldiers had fired warning shots in the air before shooting "at the main instigators". A military statement added that scores of Palestinians had managed to breach the fence and enter Israeli territory before being pushed back by the soldiers.

On Friday, the Israeli army said there had been repeated attempts to storm the border fence between Gaza and Israel and that 1,000 rioters had infiltrated the buffer zone, throwing a grenade, rocks and rolling burning tyres at troops. After warning shots, troops fired "towards main instigators in order to prevent their advance and disperse the riot", a statement said. Seven Palestinians were killed, including a 15-year-old, and 145 wounded, medics said.

In a bid to stop further escalation, US Secretary of State John Kerry spoke by phone with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Friday, Netanyahu's office said, and with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas yesterday, according to the official Palestinian news agency WAFA. Netanyahu and Abbas have called for calm and Palestinian police continue to coordinate with Israeli security forces to try to restore order, but there are few signs of the violence dying

down. The almost daily Palestinian knife attacks and clashes between Israeli soldiers and stone-throwing Palestinians are not at the levels of past Palestinian uprisings, but the escalation has prompted talk of a third "intifada". Palestinians see increasing visits over the past year by Jewish groups and right-wing lawmakers to the Al-Aqsa plaza, revered in Judaism as the site of two destroyed biblical temples, as eroding Muslim religious control of the compound.

Netanyahu has said repeatedly that he will not allow any change to the status quo under which Jews are allowed to visit the site but non-Muslim prayer is banned, but his assurances have done little to quell alarm among Muslims across the region. Ali Al-Qaradaghi, a prominent Muslim cleric, urged worshippers on Saturday to join what he described as an uprising. "Every Muslim should contribute to the intifada that started for the sake of al-Aqsa and Palestine," he tweeted. Al-Qaradaghi is a cleric at the Doha-based International Union of Muslim Scholars, headed by the spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, Sheikh Youssef Al-Qaradawi.

In 2000, a visit to the Al-Aqsa compound by Ariel Sharon, then Israel's opposition leader and later prime minister, enraged Palestinians and helped to trigger an uprising that continued for five years and left about 3,000 Palestinians and 1,000 Israelis dead. Clashes between Palestinians and Israeli troops broke out yesterday near the West Bank cities of Hebron and Ramallah and again at the Shuafat camp. Scores of Palestinians were injured, including 17 hit by live gunfire, according to the Palestinian Red Crescent.

Protests have also spread to several Arab towns in Israel, with demonstrators blocking roads and throwing stones and firecrackers at police. Netanyahu said in a statement he had ordered hundreds of paramilitary border police to be called up to boost security. A Channel Two Television poll found that 73 percent of Israelis were dissatisfied with his handling of the security situation. Palestinians want East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, lands that Israel captured in the 1967 Middle East war, for a future state. US-brokered peace talks broke down in April 2014. — Agencies



Refugees and migrants arrive by boat on the Greek island of Lesbos after crossing the Aegean sea from Turkey yesterday. — AFP

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