

Germany warns travelers to Turkey over legal action on VPN use

Author:

Wed, 2019-11-27 01:51

ISTANBUL: Germany has warned its citizens traveling to Turkey that they could face legal action for using Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) in the country.

In the first-ever formal warning on the issue from such a high government level, the German Ministry for Foreign Affairs cautioned that the digital networks were strictly monitored by the Turkish government to control the flow of information.

The alert is likely to prompt travelers from other countries to be aware of the potential legal consequences of using VPNs.

With hundreds of thousands of websites now inaccessible in Turkey, its citizens and foreigners have been driven toward VPNs for free access to the internet. But the use of a VPN connection can turn some people into a person of interest in the eyes of law enforcement agencies.

“Do not sign any documents that you do not understand. Request a lawyer. Keep your ID on your person. Be open to cooperation while at security checkpoints,” the German ministry said in a statement.

Its updated warning noted that German citizens who had been active in Kurdish organizations in Germany were being detained in Turkey and it issued a reminder that insulting the president (of Turkey) or terror charges carried heavy sentences.

Turkey’s recent military incursion into northern Syria also prompted Germany to update its travel safety advice on eastern and southeastern regions of Turkey, while it cautioned against visiting the country’s major cities where potential terror group attacks could target foreign nationals.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Turkey’s recent military incursion into northern Syria also prompted Germany to update its travel safety advice on eastern and southeastern regions of Turkey, while it cautioned against visiting the country’s major cities where potential terror group attacks could target foreign nationals.
- The warning coincided with the latest row between Berlin and Ankara over the detention of a lawyer who had been working on asylum cases in the German Embassy in the Turkish capital.

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detention of a lawyer who had been working on asylum cases in the German Embassy in the Turkish capital.

German officials have slammed the move as a “violation” of diplomatic conventions and urged for the release of the lawyer who was in charge of Turkish citizens seeking asylum in Germany. But Ankara has accused him of espionage.

Meanwhile, Turkey recently deported a number of German citizens with suspected ties to Daesh.

Isik Mater, a digital rights activist, told Arab News that nobody had so far been punished just for using VPNs, but the use of such internet tools had been among the political reasons for going after some foreigners.

The year-long incarceration of German-Turkish correspondent Deniz Yucel, of Die Welt, over espionage and terrorism charges brought Ankara and Berlin to the brink of a diplomatic crisis last year. He was released after intense political negotiations.

Mater, who is also the research director at media freedom watchdog Turkey Blocks, said internet service providers were able to detect the moment a person connected to a VPN, but could not reach the website the person clicked on.

“The only way the public authorities obtain personal information about people using the VPNs is through contacting the company which provides VPN services. But again, this means there is a political motive behind it,” she added.

Turkey Blocks regularly monitors internet censorship and blackout cases in Turkey. The group also reveals signs of interference and cyberattacks on critical infrastructure using real-time measurement techniques.



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Yildirim terms call to Merkel 'productive' as leaders talk to ease Turkey-Germany row
Germany-Turkey tensions flare up over EU bid

[Car bomb claims lives of 17 people in northern Syrian village of Tal Halaf](#)

Author:

Wed, 2019-11-27 01:41

ISTANBUL: A car bomb killed at least 17 people and wounded 20 others in the Turkish-controlled region of northern Syria on Tuesday, Turkey's Defense Ministry said.

The attack took place in the Tal Halaf village west of the city of Ras Al-Ayn, which is now controlled by the Turkish military after its offensive in October, the ministry said on its official Twitter account.

It blamed the attack on the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), which Ankara accuses of being the Syrian offshoot of the outlawed Kurdistan

Workers' Party (PKK) that has waged an insurgency against Turkey since 1984.

"The PKK/YPG terror group continues its car bombings aimed at civilians. The child murderers this time detonated a car bomb in Tal Halaf village west of Ras Al-Ayn, killing 17 people and wounding more than 20," the Defense Ministry said on Twitter.

Britain-based war monitor the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights confirmed the attack but gave a lower toll, saying 11 people – including at least three civilians – had been killed.

But it said the death toll is likely to climb due to the severity of some of the injuries suffered.

Turkish forces and their proxies – former Syrian rebels hired as a ground force by Ankara – launched an offensive against Kurdish forces in Syria on Oct. 9.

The military action came after US President Donald Trump ordered his troops to withdraw in a move that observers condemned as a betrayal of their Kurdish partners in the war against Daesh in Syria.

In its operation, Turkey secured a strip of land in northern Syria after signing separate deals with the US and Russia.

Ankara says it wants to establish a "safe zone" in which to resettle some of the 3.6 million Syrian refugees it hosts on its soil.



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Syria car bombing kills 40 Syria blamed for Turkey car bombs that killed 42

[Gaza man masters rare skill of balancing art](#)

Author:

Wed, 2019-11-27 01:06

GAZA STRIP: Whenever Mohammed Al-Shenbari sees a new object, he quickly tries to find its “balancing point” and make it stand in a way that appears to defy the law of gravity.

The 24-year-old self-taught Palestinian artist says he can balance almost any object, using what he calls a mix of mind and body.

This has made him a popular entertainer and frequent participant in psychological support sessions that are common in conflict-ridden, poverty-stricken Gaza.

In the yard of his home in northern Gaza, Al-Shenbari stood a chair on one leg, propped two gas canisters on a slanted pipe wrench and balanced an upside-down TV screen on the rim of a Coke bottle.

“You just need to know the fulcrum of the object and you get it,” he said.

A fitness and bodybuilding coach, Al-Shenbari says his healthy lifestyle helped him slowly develop “the great focus” required to balance the objects.

“When I do this, I feel something indescribable – like a magnet drawing out energy from me toward the objects,” he said after he stacked four oddly angled cans of beans on a wood frame hanging off a tree.

A year ago, Al-Shenbari came across a YouTube video by a Korean balance artist, Nam Seok Byun, and was fascinated by the way the artist arranged layers of rocks delicately supported by round pebbles.

Trying to emulate his hero, Al-Shenbari said he would spend days working on what now seem like basic sculptures. Now, it takes him just a few minutes and several attempts to figure things out.

Gaza is sandwiched between Israel and Egypt, which have kept it under a blockade for 12 years since the Hamas militant group took power. After years of living under the blockade and three devastating wars between Israel and Hamas, Al-Shenbari, like many young Gazans, wants to leave the territory in

search of better opportunities.

His dream is to compete on reality TV shows and travel to Asia, where he says the art of balancing is practiced, to improve his skills.

“I want to balance larger objects like a washing machine or a fridge,” he said.



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Amid tension in southern Gaza, a newlywed couple's future is thrown to the wind
Truce ends deadly clashes across Gaza border

[UN investigators eye 160 Daesh militants over Yazidi massacres](#)

Author:

Reuters

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1574799912696584300

Tue, 2019-11-26 20:10

UNITED NATIONS: United Nations investigators have so far identified 160 Daesh

militants accused of massacres of Yazidis in northern Iraq in 2014 and are building legal cases against them, the head of the team told the UN Security Council on Tuesday.

The UN investigative team, created by the UN Security Council, started work a year ago to collect and preserve evidence for future prosecution of acts by Daesh in Iraq that may be war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide.

"In relation to the Yazidi community alone, the crimes that targeted them, we have identified over 160 perpetrators of massacres against the Yazidis ... and we're focusing our work to build solid cases hopefully in relation to each of those that may be presented to domestic courts," said Karim Asad Ahmad Khan, head of the UN team.

UN experts warned in June 2016 that Daesh was committing genocide against the Yazidis in Syria and Iraq to destroy the minority religious community through killings, sexual slavery and other crimes.

Daesh militants consider the Yazidis to be devil-worshippers. The Yazidi faith has elements of Christianity, Zoroastrianism and Islam.

Nadia Murad, who won the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize for her efforts to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war, and human rights lawyer Amal Clooney played a key role in pushing for the UN investigative team. Murad is a Yazidi woman who was enslaved and raped by Daesh fighters in 2014.

Daesh overran the Yazidi faith's heartland of Sinjar in northern Iraq in 2014, forcing young women into servitude as "wives" for its fighters and massacring men and older women.

Yazidi survivor Kachi, whose full name was withheld to protect him, addressed the UN Security Council on Tuesday.

"After shooting at us, Daesh members left to another place. I found myself under a pile of dead bodies," he told the council. "When I opened my eyes I saw three of my brothers. They were next to me. They were dead. So were my nephews and my cousins."

He said his wife and daughters were kidnapped and sold as slaves and that he had lost some 75 members of his family.

"Five years have passed and I can still hear my wife and my daughters screaming when the members of ISIL (Daesh) kidnapped them. I can also hear the voice of my daughter Lara, who was three months old when she passed away in captivity because of thirst and hunger," Kachi said.

He said the Yazidis now want justice.



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[Six dead in blasts in Iraqi capital amid deadly protests](#)

Author:

Reuters

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1574793823776083100

Tue, 2019-11-26 18:19

BAGHDAD: Six people were killed in near-simultaneous blasts across Iraq's capital late Tuesday, medics and a security source said, amid deadly anti-government protests that have rocked Baghdad and the Shiite-majority south for weeks.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the three explosions, which were the first such violence in the capital after months of relative calm.

The blasts were caused by two explosives-laden motorcycles and a roadside bomb and hit three Shiite neighborhoods of Baghdad, according to medical and security sources.

Around a dozen people were wounded and taken to Baghdad hospitals already treating scores of demonstrators hurt earlier in the day in protests. Rallies demanding deep-rooted regime change erupted in early October across Baghdad and southern Iraq, leaving more than 350 people dead and around 15,000 wounded.

In the Shiite holy city of Karbala on Tuesday, one person was killed as protests escalated into chaotic "clashes" with security forces, a medical source told AFP.

There were no immediate details about the victim's identity or cause of death, but the medic said the toll was likely to rise further.

AFP's correspondent saw riot police fire live rounds both into the air and directly at crowds of teenage protesters with at least one demonstrator suffering a bullet wound to the head.

In one face-off under a bridge, teenagers threw rocks at riot police trucks, bursting into song when the vehicles screeched away.

Clashes also erupted in Baghdad, where security forces fired rubber bullets and tear gas to keep demonstrators away from Al-Ahrar bridge, which leads to government buildings on the west bank of the river Tigris.

One protester died after being shot by a rubber bullet and 18 were wounded, a medical source said.

A body bearing a rubber bullet wound was also found underneath Al-Ahrar on Tuesday, but it was unclear when the person had died, the medic said.

The historic districts near Al-Ahrar have morphed into arenas for daily street battles.

Demonstrators – mostly teenagers who have been there for days or weeks – throw rocks from behind makeshift barricades at security forces firing tear gas, rubber bullets, live rounds and even machine gun fire.

"We won't leave unless it's in coffins," one protester told AFP.

"Either way, I've got no job, no money, so whether I stay here or go home, it's all the same," said another.

An Iraqi tricolor tied around his shoulders, he went on bitterly: "I'll never be able to get married without work or a salary, so I've got no family and no home anyway."

Smoke bombs exploded all around the protesters, filling the colonnaded streets with puffs of orange, green and purple.

In the south, protesters burned tires along highways outside the city of Diwaniyah, blockading bridges and one of the province's three power stations.

In the city itself, massive crowds marched through the streets, tearing down posters of politicians and beating them with shoes to insult them.

"It's been two months, we're sick of your promises," they chanted.

Schools and public buildings have been shut in Diwaniyah for the past month by strikes and road closures, but skirmishes with riot police have been rare. In nearby Hillah, usually peaceful sit-ins took a violent turn overnight when security forces fired tear gas grenades at protesters, wounding around 60, medics said.

Demonstrators and security forces in Karbala lobbed Molotov cocktails at each another.

Night-time skirmishes have become routine in the city.

In Dhi Qar, arterial routes linking key cities and the three oilfields of Garraf, Nasiriyah and Subba were shut.

Clashes with police guarding the fields wounded 13 officers.

Together, the three oilfields produce around 200,000 of Iraq's roughly 3.6 million barrels a day.

Iraq is ranked OPEC's second-biggest crude producer and, according to Transparency International, the world's 12th most corrupt country.

The turmoil since the start of October has not significantly impacted oil production or exports, which fund virtually the entire state budget.

Iraq's cabinet is currently discussing the 2020 budget before it is submitted to parliament, and government sources say it is expected to be one of the largest yet.

That is mostly because of the enormous public sector, which has ballooned in recent years as the government has hired tens of thousands of new graduates in a country with a severely under-developed private sector.

But experts say that model is unsustainable for a country of nearly 40 million people, set to grow by another 10 million in the next decade.

Public anger over a lack of jobs fueled the latest grassroots protests, Iraq's most widespread and deadly in decades.

One in five people lives below the poverty line and youth unemployment hovers at a staggering 25 percent, the World Bank says.



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Iraq to close nine TV stations for 'inciting violence' Security forces kill nine in Iraq protests