

# Iran 'deliberately' suppressing death, arrest tolls: Rights group

Wed, 2019-11-27 23:32

BEIRUT: Human Rights Watch (HRW) on Wednesday accused the Iranian authorities of "deliberately covering up" deaths and arrests during a crackdown on demonstrations across the country earlier this month.

Protests broke out across sanction-hit Iran on Nov. 15, hours after a shock announcement of fuel price rise of up to 200 percent.

Reports of deaths and arrests emerged as security forces were deployed to rein in demonstrations, which turned violent in some areas, with dozens of banks, petrol pumps and police stations torched.

The extent of the crackdown is unclear, however, primarily due to an internet outage imposed during the unrest in a step seen as aimed at curbing the spread of videos of the violence.

HRW said the authorities were "deliberately covering up the scale of the mass crackdown against protesters" and called on them to "immediately announce the number of deaths, arrests, and detentions ... and permit an independent inquiry into alleged abuses."

Its deputy Middle East director, Michael Page, censured Iran for having so far "refused to provide an accurate death toll and instead threatened detainees with death."

Rights groups, including Amnesty International, have estimated at least 140 people were killed and up to 7,000 arrested in the protests, HRW said in a statement.

Officials have confirmed five people were killed and have so far announced the arrest of about 500 others, including some 180 "ringleaders."

"Keeping families in the dark about the fate of their loved ones while ratcheting up an atmosphere of fear and retribution is a deliberate government strategy to stifle dissent," Page said.

Internet connectivity has returned to much of the country in recent days, except for on mobile telephone networks, said NetBlocks, a site that monitors internet disruptions.

The US said Tuesday that it had received thousands of messages from Iran about protests after appealing to demonstrators to defy restrictions on the internet.

"We've received to date nearly 20,000 messages, videos, pictures, notes of the regime's abuses through Telegram messaging services," Secretary of State Mike Pompeo told reporters, referring to the encrypted app.

Iranian officials have blamed the violence during demonstrations on the intervention of “thugs” backed by royalists and Iran’s archenemies – the US, Israel and Saudi Arabia.

Long-fraught links between Tehran and Washington plunged to a new low in May last year when the US unilaterally withdrew from an international accord that gave Iran relief from sanctions in return for curbs on its nuclear program.



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Iran supreme leader claims protests a US-backed ‘conspiracy’ Iraqi protesters set fire to Iranian consulate in Najaf

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## [Iraqi protesters set fire to Iranian consulate in Najaf](#)

Wed, 2019-11-27 22:10

NAJAF, Iraq: Iraqi protesters torched the Iranian consulate in the holy city of Najaf on Wednesday in a dramatic escalation of anti-government demonstrations that have left more than 350 people dead.

Tall flames and thick clouds of smoke rose from the entrance of the consulate

in the southern city, AFP's correspondent there said.

"Victory to Iraq!" and "Iran out!" protesters chanted, outraged at the country they blame for propping up a government they've been demonstrating against for nearly two months.

[#BREAKING](#): Iraqi protesters have set fire to the Iranian consulate in Najaf [#Iraqprotestshttps://t.co/0wY9f25pyP](#)  
[pic.twitter.com/9HZ9y3GVrQ](#)

– Arab News (@arabnews) [November 27, 2019](#)

Iraq's capital and its Shiite-majority south have been gripped by the largest grassroots protests since the US-led invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein in 2003.

The change of regime 16 years ago opened the door for Baghdad's eastern neighbour to develop tremendous economic, political and military sway, now slammed by protesters as overreach.

Iran's consulate in Iraq's second holy city of Karbala was targeted earlier this month, and security forces defending the site shot four demonstrators dead at the time.

In Najaf on Wednesday, units fired tear gas that wounded several dozen but ultimately retreated as hundreds of people encircled the consulate and lit tyres, blankets, cardboard and other items, AFP's correspondent said.

The protesters broke into the building itself, which had been apparently evacuated of its Iranian staff.

The fires capped a deadly day in Iraq, where two protesters were shot dead in the capital, according to medical and security sources.

In Baghdad's colonnaded streets, young demonstrators donned helmets and medical masks to face off once more against security forces unleashing tear gas.

An AFP correspondent reported volleys of gunfire from behind concrete barricades where the security forces were deployed.



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Protesters storm key Najaf facilities as demonstrations escalate in Iraq  
Iraqi protesters storm Iranian consulate in Karbala

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## [Dubai court reduces sentence for editor who killed his wife](#)

Author:

AP

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Wed, 2019-11-27 11:50

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates: A British newspaper editor convicted of killing his wife with a hammer had his sentence reduced by Dubai's Court of Appeal on

Wednesday.

The court ordered that former Gulf News editor Francis Matthew must serve a seven-year sentence for manslaughter in the 2017 killing of his wife, Jane.

Matthew had received as much as a 15-year sentence for the killing. A series of appeals has seen his sentence change and his case go before Dubai's Court of Appeal.

Matthew's lawyer Ali Al-Shamsi had previously asked the court to reduce his client's sentence to two years in prison, saying evidence proves the crime was not premeditated and Matthew had no previous intent to kill.

On Wednesday, the court changed Matthew's charge to manslaughter but reduced the sentence to seven years rather than two, followed by deportation. Such a charge carries a maximum sentence of 10 years under UAE law.

Matthew and his wife of 30 years were prominent members of the United Arab Emirates' large British expatriate community.

Dubai police were called to the Matthews' three-bedroom villa in Dubai's Jumeirah neighborhood on July 4, 2017, where they found Jane dead. Matthew told the police that robbers had broken into the home and killed her.

During a later interrogation, however, police say Matthew told them his wife had grown angry with him because they were in debt and needed to move, and that he got angry when she called him a "loser" and told him "you should provide financially."

Matthew told police his wife pushed him during the argument. He then got a hammer, followed her into the bedroom and struck her twice in the head, killing her, according to a police report. The next morning, Matthew tried to make it look like the house had been robbed and later went to work like nothing had happened, throwing the hammer in a nearby trash can, police said.



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[Francis Matthew](#)

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Israeli soldier who shot dead prone Palestinian guilty of manslaughterMan arrested on suspicion of manslaughter over Emiliano Sala death

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## [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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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

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[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