

Turkish government had prior knowledge of Ankara suicide bombing

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Evidence is mounting that Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) knew that a suicide bombing was planned for Ankara on October 10 and was familiar with the bombers involved.

Reports are drawn from a limited number of domestic sources, including the Kemalist opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) and the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), as well as the *Radikal* newspaper, *Hurriyet Daily News* and *Today's Zaman*.

Revelations that authorities were tipped off in advance of the bombing have emerged despite a clampdown on media reports about the investigation into Turkey's worst ever terrorist atrocity. The suicide attack claimed the lives of over 100 people protesting the government's escalating conflict with Turkey's minority Kurdish population and its involvement in the war in neighbouring Syria.

The Ankara 2nd Criminal Court of Peace ruled Monday that the investigation into the twin suicide bombings in the capital should remain confidential. The ruling followed a request filed by the Bureau for Crimes against the Constitutional Order of the Ankara Public Prosecutor's Office.

Lawyers will be denied access to all documents other than those that contain a suspect's statement, an expert's opinion or official reports related to judicial procedures. Even this limited access will be granted only based on government approval.

On October 14, an Ankara court followed Monday's ruling with a broad media ban on reporting the suicide bombing investigation, including "all kinds of news, interviews, criticism and similar publications in print, visual, social media and all kinds of media on the Internet," effective immediately.

This decision was made prior to the naming of the two alleged suicide bombers as Yunus Emre Alagoz

and Omer Deniz Dundar. They are reported to be members of an Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL or ISIS) cell in Adiyaman, south-central Turkey.

Alagoz is the older brother of Seyh Abdurrahman Alagoz, the suicide bomber who killed 33 pro-Kurdish peace activists and students on July 20 in the border town of Suruc. The two brothers had operated the "Islam Tea House" cafe in the southeastern city of Adiyaman, known as a centre of Islamic State activity in Turkey.

One of the brothers' more high-profile connections was Orhan Gonder, charged with bombing a rally of the HDP in Diyarbakir on June 5. The HDP had a large presence on the October 10 Ankara peace demonstration.

According to reports, the government had delayed taking any action against the Islam Tea House or its owners even after the parents of the two alleged killers had complained about the government's failure to act.

An article in *Bloomberg*, translating coverage that appeared in *Radikal*, noted that "Families concerned about their children stormed the cafe several times themselves before the police did. ... It was shut down last year for operating without a license, *Radikal* reported. After that, Yunus Emre Alagoz and his brother Seyh Abdurrahman left for Syria."

Bloomberg wrote that family members said they "spent eight months complaining to authorities about his disappearance" before raising the issue in person with AKP Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu "at a provincial congress for the ruling party." The *Bloomberg* article went on to say, "Davutoglu told them he'd given an order to the national intelligence chief regarding their son. When another family told Davutoglu their son had left for Syria with his wife, he allegedly responded: 'It's good that they went

together, they'll support each other,' according to [a CHP] report.”

The UK's *Daily Telegraph* reported remarks by the father of the second alleged Ankara suicide bomber, explaining that Dunder left Turkey for Syria in 2013: “In 2014, my son came to Adiyaman and lived with me for eight months. I told police to jail him. They questioned and released him. Eight months later, he went to Syria.”

Hurriyet Daily News added the revelation by *Radikal*'s Ezgi Basaran that police in Adiyaman “have a list of 15 youngsters who had gone to Syria. That list, which included Yunus Emre Alagoz, was sent to the entire police force with a request that the youngsters be arrested. ... Basaran ends her article with a basic question: ‘If journalists can track them down, how come the intelligence services of the state can't?’”

A list produced by the Turkish National Intelligence Organisation (MIT) of 21 potential suicide bombers was circulated online prior to October 10 featuring both alleged bombers' names. *Bloomberg* reports that Basaran wrote in an email Wednesday, “I find it hard to believe that these bombers, whose names and families were written about extensively in the press, were not being watched by the government and came to Ankara without the National Intelligence Agency knowing about it.”

On July 23, she published a column entitled, “Another bombing attack is closer than we think,” which warned specifically of Yunus Emre Alagoz, using his initials without naming him. “We've written this over and over,” she said. “We have lists of their names. Does the state not know what we know?” *Hurriyet Daily News* has also noted that before October 10 “messages indicating that a terrorist attack would take place in the capital city of Ankara were shared by fake Twitter accounts.”

Prime Minister Davutoglu's only answer was to claim, “As a country with the rule of law, you can't arrest [suicide bombers] until they act.”

Since the June 5 election, the police and security forces in this country with “the rule of law” have detained over 3,000 people in anti-terror operations, most of whom have been Kurds and members of other oppositional groups. Many have been arrested on grounds of “reasonable suspicion.”

Turkey's latest terror law defines terrorism as “all

kinds of acts that are perpetrated by any of the methods of extortion, intimidation, discouragement, menace or threat by using force and violence by a person or persons belonging to an organization with a view to changing the nature of the Republic.”

Those subject to arrest include any member of a proscribed organization (three to five years of heavy imprisonment), anyone who aids members of such as organization (one to five years of imprisonment), and any one who propagandizes in behalf of such an organization. *Today's Zaman* reports that, according to Yusuf Halaçoğlu of the far-right Nationalist Action Party (MHP), “[S]everal foreign embassies in Ankara were tipped off with a warning that there may be an attack in Ankara before the suicide bombing occurred.”

Halaçoğlu told the newspaper, “Those embassies knew about the attack and had taken precautions.”



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