

# Three police officers killed during an operation against ISIS in Turkey

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Turkish police forces launched simultaneous operations at 108 addresses in 15 provinces early Monday morning against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (Islamic State/ISIS). The operation on the road to Elmal?k village in Yalova province turned into a major clash between police and ISIS suspects. The fighting, which began around 2:00 a.m., continued until 9:40 a.m.

Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya announced that three police officers were killed and eight officers and one watchman injured in a clash with ISIS members in a house where women and children were also present. They said six ISIS members who were Turkish citizens were also killed in the clash, and five women and six children safely evacuated from the house.

Education was suspended in five schools in the region, and there were natural gas and electricity outages. The Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) imposed a broadcasting ban on the incident.

The killing of two US soldiers in an attack in Syria on December 13 and the Bondi attack in Australia on December 14 heightened concerns worldwide that ISIS was reviving its activities. The possibility of terrorist acts being carried out before New Year's eve is cited as the main reason for the operations in Turkey.

In his statement on Monday, Minister Yerlikaya said that 138 people had been arrested in operations against ISIS over the past month, while 97 others were placed under judicial control. On Tuesday, another simultaneous operation against ISIS in 21 provinces led to the detention of 357 suspects.

*Cumhuriyet* newspaper columnist Mustafa Balbay claimed on Tuesday that “according to data shared by the US with Türkiye, the number of ISIS members in Türkiye exceeds 10,000.” At the end of 2024, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan announced that 1,399

operations had been carried out against ISIS within a year. The figures reveal not only the extent of ISIS's organization within Turkey, but also the consequences of the Turkish government's reactionary policies regarding jihadist forces.

From the mujahideen who fought against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan to the groups that played a role in the overthrow of the regimes of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi and Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad, jihadist forces received financial, logistical, and military support for years from imperialist powers, primarily the United States. In addition to fighting as proxies, these forces sometimes served as a pretext for imperialist attacks.

The fact that Ahmed al-Sharaa, the former Al Qaeda leader for whom the US had previously offered a \$10 million bounty, was received by Trump at the White House last November as the “interim president of Syria” was a striking result of this policy.

This situation must be considered in the context of the United States' drive for full dominance over Central Asia and the Middle East. Through this policy, the Turkish ruling elite also pursues its own reactionary interests. Deeply involved in the imperialists' regime-change wars, the Turkish ruling elite played a central role in the deployment and arming of jihadist forces. Particularly in the Syrian civil war, the Central Intelligence Agency and Turkish intelligence facilitated the passage, training, and arming of jihadists from Libya, Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Europe across the border into Syria.

In Iraq and Syria, as ISIS slipped out of the control of the imperialist powers and ceased to be a useful proxy, Kurdish forces linked to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) became the main proxy force in Syria, and a US-led “war against ISIS” was launched. This prompted

Ankara, fearful that a Kurdish entity on its southern border would encourage similar tendencies within Turkey, to establish a military presence in northern Syria alongside other jihadist forces.

Jihadist forces did not view Turkey merely as a transit point to Syria. They also had a favorable environment to increase their activities within Turkey. ISIS members carried out numerous massacres in the country, primarily bomb attacks targeting the Kurdish movement and leftist forces:

- On June 5, 2015, two days before the general elections, a bomb attack was carried out during a rally of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) in Diyarbakır. Five people were killed and more than 400 were injured in the attack claimed by ISIS.

- On July 20, 2015, in the Suruç district of Şanlıurfa, near the Syrian border, a suicide attack was carried out during a press conference by members of the Federation of Socialist Youth Associations (SGDF) who had gathered to bring aid to Kobani after the ISIS siege. Thirty-three people were killed and more than 150 were injured.

- The Ankara Train Station Massacre on October 10, 2015, was the bloodiest terrorist attack in modern Turkish history. A “Peace Rally” was to have taken place in Ankara on that day. Trade union confederations and professional organizations organized the event, and the Kurdish nationalist Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) and numerous left-wing organizations were set to participate. At least 104 people were killed and nearly 400 injured when two ISIS-affiliated suicide bombers blew themselves up among the crowd gathered at the Ankara Train Station intersection before the rally.

- On January 12, 2016, 12 people were killed and 16 injured in a suicide attack in Sultanahmet Square in Istanbul.

- On June 28, 2016, 45 people were killed and approximately 250 injured in an armed attack at the Atatürk Airport International Terminal.

- On August 20, 2016, 59 people were killed and more than 90 were injured in a bomb attack claimed by ISIS at a wedding attended by HDP members in Gaziantep.

- On the last day of 2016, 39 people, most of them tourists, were killed in an attack at the Reina nightclub in Istanbul.

Many of these attackers were individuals under surveillance by Turkish intelligence. According to intelligence reports, Tuncay Kaya—known as ISIS's expert bomber—was released 11 days before the October 10 Ankara bombings. He was sought as a suspect in a “possible attack” just hours after the explosions.

According to a report by *Kısa Dalga*, it has emerged that the two ISIS members killed in a clash with police in Yalova on Monday had been arrested last year on serious charges—but were released after only seven months in detention. While this official leniency is shown to individuals linked to ISIS and similar jihadist organizations, the arbitrary arrests of thousands of Kurdish and leftist political prisoners continue.



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