

# Morocco arrests Daesh suspect in joint probe with US

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RABAT: Moroccan police said on Friday they had arrested a suspected Daesh member, in cooperation with the US Federal Bureau of Investigation, who was implicated in plotting "acts of terrorism."

The announcement came ahead of the opening next Wednesday in the Moroccan city of Marrakesh of a conference of member countries in the US-led coalition against Daesh.

The suspect, based in the kingdom's northeastern Berkane region, was implicated in the "preparation of a terrorist plot aimed at delivering a serious blow to public order," Morocco's counterterrorism police, the Central Office of Judicial Research, said in a statement.

"The outlines of his terrorist conspiracy were unmasked on the basis of research and technical investigation carried out jointly with the FBI," it added.

## **FASTFACT**

The announcement came ahead of the opening next Wednesday in the Moroccan city of Marrakesh of a conference of member countries in the US-led coalition against Daesh.

This operation "is further evidence of the persistent dangers of the terrorist threat that hangs" over Morocco and "the importance of bilateral cooperation ... with the United States in the fight against terrorism."

The suspect, a 37-year-old engineer, "ran a closed user group dedicated to extremist goals and projects and aimed at recruiting and drawing in sympathisers," the statement said.

His objective was to carry out attacks against Moroccan and foreign dignitaries on Moroccan soil, it alleged.

Morocco has been spared the extremist violence that has shaken other Middle East and North African countries in recent years but the security services regularly report arrests of suspects in operations targeting militant cells. Since 2002, the police say they have arrested more than 3,500 suspects in terrorism-linked cases.



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Moroccan prison program aims to de-radicalize Daesh veterans  
Daesh 'Beagle' sentenced to life for murdering US hostages

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## [Northern Iraq registers Congo fever death as infections spread](#)

Author:

Fri, 2022-05-06 23:37

BAGHDAD: Iraqi authorities said one person died on Friday of Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever as cases of the virus spread to the country's north.

Iraq has registered at least six deaths from around 20 cases of the illness, also known as Congo fever, since early April, according to health ministry

figures.

Health authorities in Kirkuk, north of Baghdad, announced the province's first death from the illness on Friday.

The deceased was a butcher who had failed to follow health regulations, health official Ziad Khalaf said.

The disease is tick-borne and causes severe hemorrhaging, according to the World Health Organization.

People are generally infected through contact with the blood of infected animals, often after slaughtering livestock.

It can also be transmitted between humans through "close contact with the blood, secretions, organs or other bodily fluids of infected persons," according to the WHO.

The disease has a high fatality rate of between 10 and 40 percent of all cases.

Kirkuk authorities have prohibited the transport of cattle to or from the province.

Nineveh province, also in northern Iraq, registered its first case on Thursday, while central Babil province recorded one death on April 29.

Most of the cases have been in Dhi Qar, a poor largely rural southern province known for rearing cattle, sheep and goats, all of which are potential carriers of the disease.

Health Ministry spokesman Seif Al-Badr said on Friday that the country was not "in a state of epidemic."

He said cases were "limited" but acknowledged that the infection rate was "higher than the previous year."

Most of those infected have been cattle farmers and abattoir workers, according to the Health Ministry.

The WHO says Congo fever is endemic in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and the Balkans.



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## [Sweden says tourist traveling with group detained in Iran](#)

Author:

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Fri, 2022-05-06 23:38

STOCKHOLM: Sweden said Friday that one of its citizens traveling as a tourist has been detained in Iran, in the latest incident to worsen relations between the two countries.

In a brief comment by email, the Foreign Ministry said that the man was in his 30s, and that the embassy in Tehran was "seeking information and is in contact with local authorities."

Iranian authorities did not immediately acknowledge the arrest. Neither

Iran's judiciary nor its mission to the UN responded immediately to requests for comment.

Sweden's Aftonbladet tabloid wrote late on Thursday that the man was arrested as he was about to leave Iran, where he was traveling with other Swedes. No date was given.

## **BACKGROUND**

Swedish prosecutors have sought life imprisonment for Hamid Nouri, who has been held in custody in Sweden since he was arrested in Stockholm in November 2019.

The newspaper linked the arrest with the trial in Sweden of an Iranian accused of genocide. The verdict in that case is due on July 14.

Swedish prosecutors have sought life imprisonment for Hamid Nouri, who has been held in custody in Sweden since he was arrested in Stockholm in November 2019.

The Stockholm District Court said this week that Nouri will "remain in custody until the verdict is announced or otherwise is decided."

Iran also is planning to execute an Iranian-Swedish researcher imprisoned since 2016, according to an Iranian media report.

The report semi-official ISNA news agency quoted informed Iranian officials as saying that Iran will implement the death penalty against Ahmad Reza Jalali by May 21 at the latest.



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Iran to execute Swedish-Iranian national Djalali by May 21 Iranian regime under pressure to release teachers held after wage protests

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## [10,000 people fled northern Iraq fighting, says Kurdish official](#)

Author:

Fri, 2022-05-06 23:40

DOHUK: More than 10,000 people have fled fighting between the Iraqi army and Yazidi fighters affiliated with Turkey's banned Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), an official from Iraq's Kurdistan region said.

The latest figure is more than double the 4,000 which an official from the

region reported on Tuesday had arrived.

The Yazidis are a Kurdish-speaking non-Arab, non-Muslim minority who were massacred by Daesh in 2014.

Clashes left one Iraqi soldier dead on Monday in the northern region of Sinjar, the Yazidi minority's heartland which is the site of frequent confrontations between security forces and local fighters allied with the separatist PKK.

The latest fighting "has driven families to flee to the Kurdistan region," with many heading to Dohuk province, said Dayane Hamo, an official in charge of crisis response.

"In three days, their number reached 1,711 families and 10,261 people," Hamo said, adding they had been given food and other supplies to last a week.

The latest fighting began Sunday, with each side blaming the other for starting it. A senior Iraqi army official said the clashes cost the lives of a dozen Yazidi fighters.

The army is seeking to apply an agreement reached between Baghdad and the Kurdistan region for the withdrawal of Yazidi and PKK fighters.

The Sinjar region has also been a target of Turkish air strikes on rear bases of the PKK. Turkey considers the PKK a terrorist organization.



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Turkey begins large-scale operation in northern Iraq against Kurdish militants  
Years after Daesh defeat, northern Iraq struggles to rebuild

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## Turkey loses westward outreach after philanthropist Kavala's jailing

Author:

Thu, 2022-05-05 23:44

ANKARA: Before traveling to Moscow last week, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres stopped over in Ankara to meet Recep Tayyip Erdogan and praise the Turkish leader's diplomatic efforts to end the war in Ukraine.

Less than two hours after the two shook hands, a big part of the goodwill that Ankara has engendered in the West through its unique role as mediator between warring parties was undone, undermining Turkey's chances of capitalizing on thawing ties.

The turning point came when an Istanbul court sentenced a philanthropist, Osman Kavala, to life in jail for his role in anti-government protests in 2013, in defiance of Western calls to free him in a closely watched case many see as politically motivated.

One Western diplomat who watched with surprise as the headlines landed on his phone on April 25 said the ruling underscored how Erdogan's government "cannot be trusted on some issues," despite having scored political points over Ukraine.

Another envoy called the verdict the "worst-case scenario."

Eight diplomats told Reuters that the ruling was a blow to Turkey's ambitions to heal frayed economic and political ties with Western countries while also remaining close to Moscow – Erdogan opposes the sanctions against it.

It also chilled Western hopes of rapprochement, they said.

It is a reversal for Turkey, which is alone in having hosted wartime talks between Russian and Ukrainian foreign ministers and peace negotiators. Ankara wants the West to prepare for the end of the war, including the gradual lifting of sanctions, and for restrictions on its own defense industry to be lifted.

It also wants more cooperation with its NATO allies, including the US, France and Italy, and to alleviate existing tensions with the West in the run-up to

elections amid mounting economic woes.

Wariness of boosting Erdogan ahead of 2023 elections that recent polls suggest he could lose have also undermined chances of meaningful trade or investment deals, including progress updating a European Union customs union, several of the diplomats said.

Erdogan and officials say the war has made allies realize Turkey's geopolitical importance and that Ankara's balanced policy on Ukraine was welcomed, even admired. The diplomats interviewed shared that assessment.

The West understands Turkey's position on sanctions and Ankara will not become a haven to evade them, Turkish officials add.

At the weekend, Erdogan's spokesman and chief foreign policy adviser Ibrahim Kalin made a surprise visit to Kyiv to meet President Volodymyr Zelensky. He later said he discussed ways to end the war.

If Russia's attacks on Ukraine last through the summer, Turkey, with the second-biggest military in NATO, will likely come under increasing pressure from Washington and Brussels to boost its support for Ukraine, the diplomats said.

It has already sent armed drones to Kyiv, blocked some Russian naval passage to the Black Sea and barred Russian flights to and from Syria.

Turkey's stance of facilitating negotiations and opposing sanctions on Moscow on principle "can only last so long," said a third diplomat.

A shift toward Ukraine in the conflict could prompt Russia to punish Turkey's economy by cutting heavy tourist and energy flows, or both, the person said, underlining how opportunity could turn to crisis for Ankara.

Soaring energy costs due to the war have already exacerbated Turkey's currency crisis and sent inflation to 61 percent, complicating Erdogan's prospects in the mid-2023 election.

Some analysts said the Kavala ruling, by courts some critics believe are influenced by Erdogan, served to warn the opposition ahead of the vote. The president may have been emboldened by the diplomatic cover the war afforded him, they added.

"Erdogan does not want to be excluded by the West but he wants it to accept him as he is: as a strong man of Turkey," said Birol Baskan, non-resident scholar at the Washington-based Middle East Institute. Throughout the second of Erdogan's two decades in power, Western leaders have criticized Turkey's crackdown on rights and dissent.

Germany summoned Turkey's ambassador to Berlin over the Kavala verdict, which Washington also called "unjust," prompting Ankara to summon the German ambassador in response.

Turkey says its courts are independent and that it is taking steps to improve

rule of law, but also dismisses domestic and international criticism of its judiciary as interference in its internal affairs.

Turkey's stance on the war, including allowing flights from Moscow, has made it a top destination for Russian citizens, funds and even sanctioned assets such as oligarchs' yachts.

Three Western diplomats said this could prompt the US or Europe to adopt "secondary sanctions" against those doing business with Moscow.

"We are asking Ankara to enforce our sanctions. If it becomes clear they are being broken, secondary sanctions would be likely," one of the envoys said.

Another potential strain is Turkey's desire, shared by the UN, to end the fighting in Ukraine immediately and return as much as possible to a world in which Ankara balances its Western and Russian relations.

The US and some other countries instead want the war to end under the right terms. US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said last week that Washington wants to see Moscow "weakened" so that it cannot invade again.

Still, Turkey is expected to rethink its relationship with Russia.

Ankara's purchase of Russian S-400 defenses prompted US sanctions on Turkey in 2020 and chilled ties.

Yet its request for 40 US-made F-16 fighters last year combined with cooperation over Ukraine could pave the way for a compromise on Washington's demand that Turkey abandon the S-400s, three diplomats said.



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Turkish court jails Erdogan critic Kavala for life