

Turkey: Thousands gather to mourn victims of Ankara bombings, clash with police

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Ankara: Scuffles broke out Sunday in the Turkish capital as police used tear gas to prevent pro-Kurdish politicians and other mourners from laying carnations at the site of two suspected suicide bombings that killed 95 people and wounded hundreds in Turkey's deadliest attack in years.

Police held back the mourners, including the pro-Kurdish party's co-leaders Selahattin Demirtas and Figen Yuksekdag, insisting that investigators were still working at the site.

Turkey declared three days of mourning following Saturday's nearly simultaneous explosions that targeted a peace rally in Ankara. The rally was attended by activists, labor unions and members of the pro-Kurdish party, and came just weeks as Turkey holds a new election on Nov. 1.

A group of about 70 mourners were eventually allowed to enter the cordoned off area outside the capital's main train station Sunday to briefly pay their respects for the victims.

The group of mourners then began to march toward a central square in Ankara, chanting slogans against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, whom many hold responsible for the spiraling violence that has plagued Turkey since the summer.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attacks, but Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said Kurdish rebels and Islamic State militants were the most likely culprits.

Yeni Safak, a newspaper close to the government, said investigators had determined that one of the bombers was a male aged about 25 or 30.

The attacks came at a tense time for Turkey, a NATO member that borders war-torn Syria, hosts more refugees than any other nation in the world and has seen renewed fighting with Kurdish rebels that has left hundreds dead in the last few months.

Turkey agreed to take a more active role in the U.S.-led battle against the Islamic State group. Turkey opened up its bases to U.S. aircraft to launch air raids on the extremist group in Syria and carried out a limited number of strikes on the group itself.

Critics have accused Erdogan of inflaming tensions and re-igniting the fighting with the Kurds in the hope that the turmoil would rally voters back to the ruling Justice and Development Party, or AKP. Electoral gains by the pro-Kurdish party caused the ruling party, founded by Erdogan, to lose its parliamentary majority in a June election after a decade of single-party rule.

Erdogan condemned the attacks which he said targeted the country's unity and called for solidarity.

- AP