

11 killed in attacks on police, military in Turkey; 226 hurt

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A string of bombings, blamed on Kurdish rebels and targeting Turkey's security forces, killed at least 11 people and wounded 226 others, officials said on Thursday.

Turkey blasts

Two of the attacks were car bombings that hit police stations in eastern Turkey, while a third a roadside blast targeted a military vehicle carrying soldiers in the southeast of the country.

PKK did it: authorities

Authorities say the assaults were carried out by the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, which has launched a campaign of car bombings targeting police stations or roadside bomb attacks security force vehicles. Last week, PKK commander Cemil Bayik threatened increased attacks against police in Turkish cities.

The wave of attacks come as Turkey is focused on a clampdown on suspected followers of a movement led by U.S.-based Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen, which the government accuses of orchestrating a failed military coup last month, which killed at least 270 people.

53 civilians injured

The first car bombing hit a police station in the eastern province of Van late Wednesday, killing a police officer and two civilians. At least 73 other people — 53 civilians and 20 police officers — were wounded, officials said.

Video footage showed a large plume of smoke rising from the area. Cars were overturned and the windows of the four-story building and its wings were blown out.

In the southeastern province of Bitlis meanwhile, four soldiers were killed after the rebels detonated a roadside improvised explosive device as an armored military vehicle was passing by, officials said. Seven other soldiers were wounded in the attack. A government-paid village guard, helping the security forces battle the PKK was also killed in a clash with the rebels in the province, Anadolu reported.

Gulen movement no more assertive: Yildirim

Prime Minister Binali Yildirim traveled to Elazig to visit the site of the bombing as well as those wounded in the attack.

The (PKK) terror group has lost its chain of command. Its elements inside (Turkey) are carrying out suicide attacks randomly wherever they get the opportunity," Yildirim told reporters in Elazig.

"We have raised the state of alarm to a higher level," he said at the scene of the attack, where a crowd chanted "Damn the PKK!"

The PKK has carried out dozens of attacks on police and military posts since 2015 in the largely Kurdish southeast in its fight for greater autonomy for Turkey's 15 million Kurds.

Fighting between the PKK and Turkey's security forces resumed last year after a fragile peace process collapsed.

Since then, more than 600 Turkish security personnel and thousands of PKK militants have been killed, according to 'Anadolu' Agency. Human rights groups say hundreds of civilians have also died in the clashes.

Tens of thousands of people have died in the conflict since the PKK took up arms for autonomy in southeast Turkey in 1984. Turkey and its allies consider the PKK a terrorist organization.

Amnesty condemns bombings

Amnesty International condemned Thursday's car bombings as "the latest in a series of reckless and brutal attacks."

"Those responsible for these crimes show a contempt for the right to life and must be brought to justice," said Andrew Gardner, the rights group's Turkey researcher.

Blackout on media coverage

On Thursday, authorities imposed a temporary blackout on media coverage of the bombing in Elazig, citing "public order and national security" concerns.

Turkey frequently imposes such bans following deadly bomb attacks. Thursday's order asked media organizations to refrain from broadcasting and publishing anything that may cause "fear in the public, panic and disorder and which may serve the aims of terrorist organisations."

- AP inputs