

PALESTINIAN JOURNALIST SUFFERS IN ISRAELI PRISON



Fayha Shalash has been living in a state of anxiety after her husband Mohammed al-Qeeq began an open-ended hunger strike in an Israeli jail 58 days ago. Shalash, 29, told Anadolu Agency that "Mohammed was arrested solely because he was a bold journalist." Originally from the West Bank city of Hebron, al-Qeeq, 32, lived in Ramallah, where he worked for al-Majid TV, a popular Arabic language satellite channel. "He was known for his bold speech and protesting pen," his wife added. >>>TURKEY

FOREIGNERS DISPLAY INCREASED APPETITE FOR TURKISH HOUSES



Much of the demand for houses in Turkey in 2015 has come from foreign buyers, according to a report by the Turkish Statistical Institute on Friday. Foreigners bought 22,830 of the more than a million houses sold in Turkey last year, the report said. This was an increase of 20.4 percent compared with 18,959 houses in 2014, the report said. Total home sales in the country were up 10.6 percent from 2014, to 1,289,320, the report said. Figures show that home sales have been rising over the years in Turkey, as the number of houses sold increased to 1,165,381 in 2014, from 701,621 in 2012. >>>ECONOMY

FOOTBALL: BESIKTAS SIGN UKRAINIAN GOALKEEPER



Turkish football heavyweights Besiktas on Friday signed Ukrainian team Dnipro's goalkeeper Denys Boyko on a 4.5-year contract. The Istanbul club announced their new signing on their website. Besiktas will reportedly pay 3.3 million euros (\$3.58 million) to Dnipro in transfer fee for the 28-year-old goalkeeper. The Ukrainian international will be paid 4.2 million euros (\$4.55 million) in total as well as 4,000 euros (\$4,339) per match bonus. >>>SPORTS

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Turkey, Germany to join forces on refugee crisis

Countries hold first joint-Cabinet meeting in Berlin



The Turkish and German governments have agreed to intensify cooperation against irregular migration while stressing that they will keep their doors open to asylum seekers fleeing conflicts in Syria and Iraq. Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu assured Chancellor Angela Merkel at a joint-Cabinet meeting in Berlin on Friday that Turkey would continue to take measures to decrease the refugee influx towards Western Europe. "Turkey has already start-

ed taking measures in line with the EU-Turkey joint action plan agreed on Nov. 29," Davutoglu told a joint press conference with Merkel. "A few days ago, we adopted a decision that allows Syrian refugees to work in Turkey. We have also started implementing visa requirements for Syrian nationals who are traveling from third countries," he said. "We have increased our cooperation with [EU border agency] Frontex in the Aegean. We are planning

to take additional measures in the near future together with working groups between Turkey and Germany," he added. Davutoglu called on all EU member states to take responsibility, and underlined that a solution to the refugee crisis could only be achieved through genuine cooperation, by sharing the burden. "The refugee crisis is not a crisis of Germany. It is not a crisis of Turkey. These are not crises we are exporting. On the contrary they are the reflections of conflicts in Syria and Iraq," he said. Davutoglu's Berlin visit came amid growing divisions within the EU on ways to address the refugee crisis, as several member states, including Poland and Hungary, openly challenged Merkel's open-door policy for asylum seekers, and closed their frontiers to refugees. - 'Merkel is not alone' Davutoglu praised Chancellor Merkel for approaching the refugee crisis as a "humanitarian issue", rather than a

"strategic risk". He dismissed criticisms in the media that claimed Merkel is increasingly becoming isolated in Europe. "Neither Ms. Merkel, nor Germany, is alone on this issue. Turkey is determined to go hand-in-hand with Germany throughout this critical process," he said. Davutoglu commended Merkel for showing leadership that would go down in history. "At a time when in many parts of the world people have forgotten the humanitarian aspect of the Syrian refugee crisis, and when some have started to argue that there is no place for Muslims in Europe, Ms. Merkel has taken a step on behalf of the conscience of humanity, a step which will go down in history," Davutoglu said. "Syrian refugees will never forget Germany's humanitarian stance, the history of international relations with record this humanitarian decision," he stressed. >>>MORE DETAILS

Turkish president may meet HDP lawmaker

Recep Tayyip Erdogan indicates he is open to meeting HDP MP Leyla Zana

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has indicated he is open to meeting a senior figure from Turkey's Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP). Speaking in Istanbul on Friday, Erdogan said the government had heard a call from Turkish MP Leyla Zana to meet.



Zana is a veteran politician with Kurdish origins and a deputy representing Agri in Turkey's east. Erdogan said: "Leyla Zana demanded the meeting. We discussed the demand at Beştepe [the Presidential Palace in Ankara] with our friends. "As a result of this discussion, I am persuaded to meet her," Erdogan told reporters during a speech in Istanbul. However, speaking earlier this week, Erdogan had vowed that there would be no more talks or negotiations with the terrorist PKK group or the HDP.

"They [the PKK and HDP] will never be taken into consideration," he had said. Erdogan also strongly condemned a PKK-led attack on a school which left five children injured on Friday. The incident happened in the Baglar district of Turkey's southeastern province of Diyarbakir. "This is really a sad incident. This attack proves how the terrorist organization [PKK] is immoral, coward and despicable. Actually, it is such a response to the 1,128 academics [who signed a petition to end anti-terrorist operations in the south-

east]," Erdogan said. An improvised explosive device, thrown by PKK terrorists, exploded in Celebi Eser secondary school's yard while students were receiving their report cards, according to Diyarbakir's provincial director of national education, Adnan Hurata. Health officials said that the injured students' lives were not at risk. The PKK -- also considered a terrorist organization by the U.S. and the EU -- resumed its 30-year campaign against the Turkish state in late July last year. >>>MORE DETAILS

US Vice President hails Turkish democracy

Joe Biden tells reporters and NGOs that free expression and strong Turkish democracy matter 'not only Turks but to America'



U.S. Vice President Joe Biden has told reporters in Istanbul that Turkey is a strong example for the entire region as to what a vibrant democracy means. The veteran politician arrived in Turkey late Thursday to hold talks with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu. These discussions are expected to take place on Saturday.

Biden met Turkish journalists and deputies from prominent political parties in Istanbul's Besiktas district on Friday. In an address to NGO representatives and reporters, Biden said Turkey was an example for the entire region. "The more Turkey succeeds, the stronger the message sent to the entire Middle East and parts of the world who are only beginning to grapple with the no-

tion of freedom," he said. He also emphasized the importance of freedom of speech and freedom of the press. "[These are] Two of the most important basic rights we Americans believe and your constitution says are basic, fundamental rights," he said. "If you don't have an ability to express your opinion, to criticize a policy, to offer competing ideas without fear of intimidation or retribution, the country is robbed of opportunity and the country is being robbed of possibilities," Biden added. Biden said that free expression and a strong Turkish democracy matter "not only to Turks but to America". During his speech, Biden mentioned Turkey's occasional moves to restrict social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook. "When internet freedom is curtailed and social media sites like YouTube or Twitter are shut down and more

than 1,000 academics are accused of treason simply by signing a petition, that's not the kind of example that needs to be set in the region," he said. Last week, a collection of university lecturers called the Group of Academics for Peace issued a manifesto calling for end to fighting in southeast Turkey. The region has witnessed security curfews and several towns have been cut off as the police and military battle the PKK terrorist organization. The academics' declaration sparked an investigation, amid accusations of making 'terrorist propaganda' and insulting the state. More than a dozen academics were arrested over the petition, which accused the state of violating human rights and conducting a "deliberate and planned massacre". >>>MORE DETAILS

Another suspect remanded over Istanbul bomb attack

Friday's court ruling brings to 13 the number of people awaiting trial in connection with deadly blast



A suspect believed to be linked to the recent Istanbul suicide bomb attack was remanded in custody after a court appearance in Istanbul on Friday. Judges from the Istanbul Criminal Court of Peace decided that the individual, detained earlier in Ankara, should be jailed while awaiting trial. Today's move brings the numbers of suspects in custody to 13. The suspect is accused of

'intentional killing' and 'being a member of an armed terror organization'. It has also been claimed that the suspect gave financial support to the suicide attacker. A suicide bomb attack at Istanbul's Sultanahmet district on Jan. 12 killed 10 German tourists and wounded 15 others. Security forces subsequently arrested dozens of people across Turkey, including three Russian nationals, for alleged links to Daesh. Turkey has suffered several attacks recently, from ultra-left groups as well as Daesh, amid a renewed terror campaign in the country's southeast by the PKK. >>>MORE DETAILS

Forty-five die in Aegean refugee boat disasters



At least 45 people have died after three boats carrying refugees sank in the Aegean Sea on Friday. The Greek Coast Guard recovered the bodies of 34 people, including 11 children and 16 women, after a sailing boat sank in the sea off Kalolimnos island. They also rescued 26 people so far, sending them to Leros island. Greek news agency ANA-MPA reported that according to survivors, almost 70-100 people were on board. Earlier on Friday morning, the bodies of six children and one woman were retrieved after a wooden boat, which had been carrying 48 people, crashed into rocks on the eastern coast of the Greek island of Farmakonisi. The Greek authorities said they managed to rescue one girl, while 40 people who had been onboard managed to reach land on their own. Meanwhile, in another incident, at least four people died after a boat carrying refugees sank in the Aegean Sea off Turkey's western Aydin coast. The incident occurred Friday off the coast of Didim district as the boat was sailing towards the Greek island of Farmakonisi.... >>>MORE DETAILS

Turkey: 5 students wounded in IED blast in southeast with Turkey

Improvised explosive device was thrown in schoolyard in southeastern Diyarbakir province



Five students were wounded on Friday after suspected PKK terrorists reportedly threw an improvised explosive device (IED) in a schoolyard in Turkey's southeastern province of Diyarbakir's Baglar district, said officials. The IED exploded in Celebi Eser secondary school's garden while

students were receiving their report cards, Diyarbakir's provincial director of national education, Adnan Hurata, said in a statement. The wounded students were taken to the Selahaddin Eyyubi state hospital. Health officials said that the students' lives were not at risk. Hurata added that an investigation into the attack had been launched. "This is totally barbarity," Turkish Education Minister Nabi Avci said regarding the attack. "We harshly condemn not only this incident, but also all terrorist actions so far," he added. >>>MORE DETAILS

Security forces kill 26 PKK terrorists in SE Turkey

Twenty-one terrorists were killed in Cizre, four in Sur and one in Van, Turkish army says



Turkish security forces killed a total of 26 PKK terrorists Thursday in the ongoing anti-terror operations in southeastern Turkey, the

army said Friday. The Turkish General Staff said in a statement that 26 terrorists had been "neutralized" in security operations in Turkey's southeastern provinces of Sirnak and Diyarbakir and eastern province of Van on Thursday. "Twenty-one terrorists were neutralized in Cizre [Sirnak], four in Sur [Diyarbakir] and one in Van," the statement said. >>>MORE DETAILS

PM decries allegation Turkey tolerating Daesh

DAVOS, Switzerland (AA) - Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu has flatly denied allegations that Turkey tolerated the Daesh terrorist group. "The claim that Turkey condones Daesh implicitly or explicitly is an insult for Turkey. We are against any kind of terrorist group," Davutoglu told a dinner at the World Economic Forum in Davos on Thursday. He said that Daesh was the biggest threat to all humanity. "It [Daesh] is a threat to our region but it does the greatest of all harms to Islam. [...] Islam is misunderstood because of Daesh," the Turkish premier said. Davutoglu Turkey listed Daesh as a terrorist group.

"We have been fighting against the organization since it first emerged. They had targeted Ankara, Istanbul, and Suruc. We have launched operations against them. Turkey's attitude is very clear on this issue [fighting against Daesh]," he said. On Jan. 12 a suspected Daesh suicide bomber killed 10 people -- mostly German tourists -- and wounded 15 others at Istanbul's Sultanahmet district. On Oct. 10, 2015, twin suicide bombings killed 103 people during a rally outside capital Ankara's main train station. The attack was blamed on Daesh. >>>MORE DETAILS