

## Six killed by bomb at Turkey police HQ

A car bomb blast has hit a police headquarters in south-eastern Turkey, killing six people and wounding at least 39, officials say.

A woman and a baby were among the dead. Rescuers were searching through rubble at the scene in Cinar district, Diyarbakir province.

Officials blamed the blast on Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) militants, who are active in the mainly Kurdish province.

No group has so far said it carried out the attack.

The bomb was detonated at the entrance of the Cinar district police complex, officials say. The blast also damaged nearby residential buildings, where the mother and baby were killed.

The attackers then reportedly fired rockets at the headquarters.

Another police station, in Midyat town, in neighbouring Mardin province, was also attacked by militants, according to Turkish media, but there are no reports of casualties.

Diyarbakir province has seen violent clashes between PKK separatists and the Turkish army in recent months.

Last year, the city of Diyarbakir and a number of other areas in the south-east were put under curfew as part of a security crackdown.

This followed a bomb blast that left 16 soldiers dead and a rebel ambush that killed 14 police officers – both incidents in the east.

A ceasefire between the army and the PKK collapsed in July, and Turkish jets have since bombed PKK bases in northern Iraq and the army launched a ground operation there.

Turkey is also part of a US-led coalition that has been carrying out air strikes against Islamic State (IS) militants in Iraq and Syria.

However, Ankara has been accused of hitting mostly PKK targets, angering Kurds who are themselves fighting IS in the two countries.

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## Obama puts 'focus on the future' in State of the Union address

US President Barack Obama vigorously defended his legacy while striking an optimistic tone for the future in his final State of the Union address.

He pushed back against the negative tone of the current presidential race, arguing the US has the "strongest, most durable economy in the world".

"Anyone claiming that America's economy is in decline is peddling fiction," Mr Obama told lawmakers.

The speech to Congress highlighted his accomplishments such as health reform.

However, his focus was on cementing his legacy rather than unveiling new policies.

“For my final address to this chamber, I don’t want to talk just about the next year,” he said. “I want to focus on our future.”



*Both houses of Congress attended Mr Obama’s annual address*

Mr Obama focused on tackling income inequity, using technology to combat climate change and how to maintain national security while not becoming mired in far-flung conflicts.

Finally, he talked at length about improving the state of politics and debate.

“Democracy does require basic bonds of trust between its citizens,” he said.

He called on voters and members of Congress to change the divisive tone of politics and to “change the system to reflect our better selves”.

Mr Obama said a major regret of his presidency is that Republicans and Democrats have become more divided.

Mr Obama took indirect aim to Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump who has been criticised for his comments about Muslims and immigrants.

“When politicians insult Muslims, when a mosque is vandalized, or a kid bullied, that doesn’t make us safer,” Mr Obama said.

“That’s not telling it like it is. It’s just wrong. ... And it betrays who we are as a country.”

In the year ahead, Mr Obama said he wants to:

- close the Guantanamo Bay prison
- achieve meaningful criminal justice reform
- address rising tide of prescription drug abuse
- authorise the use of military force against IS
- lift the embargo on Cuba

He also announced a new national cancer research initiative that Vice President Joe Biden will be leading.

He only mentioned guns briefly, despite a recent policy push for executive actions on gun

control, though a chair was left empty in the chamber to symbolise victims of gun violence.

South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley, delivering the Republican response to the address, said Mr Obama “spoke eloquently about grand things,” but that his “record has fallen short of his soaring words”.

“During anxious times, it can be tempting to follow the siren call of the angriest voices. We must resist that temptation,” she said, likely referring to Mr Trump but not mentioning him by name.

She said Republicans must recognise their role in the declining trust in government in the US.

“We have big decisions to make. Our country is being tested,” she said. “But we’ve been tested in the past, and our people have always risen to the challenge.”

[News Source](#)

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### Saudi Arabia breaks off ties with Iran

Saudi Arabia says it has broken off diplomatic ties with Iran, amid a row over the Saudi execution of a prominent Shia Muslim cleric.

Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir was speaking after demonstrators had stormed the Saudi embassy in Tehran.

Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr and 46 others were executed on Saturday after being convicted of terror-related offences.

Mr Jubeir said that all Iranian diplomats must leave Saudi Arabia within 48 hours.

Saudi Arabia was recalling its diplomats from Tehran, he said.

Mr Jubeir said Saudi Arabia would not let Iran undermine its security, accusing it of having “distributed weapons and planted terrorist cells in the region”.

“Iran’s history is full of negative interference and hostility in Arab issues, and it is always accompanied by destruction,” he told a news conference.

US state department spokesman John Kirby said: “We will continue to urge leaders across the region to take affirmative steps to calm tensions”.

“We believe that diplomatic engagement and direct conversations remain essential,” he said.

Saudi Arabia says it has broken off diplomatic ties with Iran, amid a row over the Saudi execution of a prominent Shia Muslim cleric.

Earlier, Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei warned that the Sunni Muslim kingdom would face “divine revenge” for the execution – an act which also angered Shia Muslims elsewhere in the Middle East.

Ayatollah Khamenei called Sheikh Nimr a “martyr” who had acted peacefully.

Protesters stormed the Saudi embassy in Tehran late on Saturday, setting fire to the building before being driven back by police. The Saudi foreign ministry said none of its diplomats had been harmed in the incident.

Iran is Saudi Arabia's main regional rival – they back opposing sides in the conflicts in Syria and Yemen.

Relations between the countries have been strained over various issues in recent decades, including Iran's nuclear programme and deaths of Iranians at the Hajj pilgrimage in 1987 and again in 2015.

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## Who was Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr?

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*News of Sheikh Nimr's execution prompted an angry response from Shias across the region*

- In his 50s when he was executed, he has been a persistent critic of Saudi Arabia's Sunni royal family
- Arrested several times over the past decade, alleging he was beaten by Saudi secret police during one detention
- Met US officials in 2008, [Wikileaks revealed](#), seeking to distance himself from anti-American and pro-Iranian statements
- Said to have a particularly strong following among Saudi Shia youth

[Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr: Figurehead Shia cleric](#)

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Most of the 47 people executed by Saudi Arabia were Sunnis convicted of involvement in al-

Qaeda-linked terror attacks over the last decade.

Sheikh Nimr was involved in anti-government protests that erupted in Saudi Arabia in the wake of the Arab Spring, up to his arrest in 2012.

The execution sparked new demonstrations in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province, where Shia Muslims complain of marginalisation, as well as in Iraq, Bahrain and several other countries.

The top Shia cleric in Iraq, Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani denounced the execution as an "unjust aggression".

The leader of Lebanon's Shia Hezbollah movement, Hassan Nasrallah, launched his sharpest attack yet on the Saudi ruling family on Sunday, accusing them of seeking to ignite a Shia-Sunni civil war across the world.

He said the blood of Sheikh Nimr would "plague the Al Saud [family] until the Day of Resurrection", prompting cries of "Death to the Al Saud!" among an audience watching his address.

[News Source](#)

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### Pope Francis recognises second Mother Teresa 'miracle'

Pope Francis has recognised a second miracle attributed to Mother Teresa, clearing the way for the Roman Catholic nun to be made a saint next year.

The miracle involved the healing of a Brazilian man with several brain tumours in 2008, the Vatican said.

Mother Teresa died in 1997 and was beatified – the first step towards sainthood – in 2003.

She won the Nobel Peace Prize for her work with the poor in the slums of the Indian city of Kolkata (Calcutta).

"The Holy Father has authorised the Congregation for the Causes of Saints to proclaim the decree concerning the miracle attributed to the intercession of blessed Mother Teresa," the Vatican said on Friday.

She is expected to be canonised in Rome in September.

Sister Christie, a spokesperson for the Missionaries of Charity Mother Teresa founded in 1950, told the BBC that they were delighted by the news.

"Obviously all of us at the Missionaries of Charity are extremely happy. But we do not have any plans to celebrate this announcement as yet," she said.

'Saint of the gutter'

Beatification by the Catholic Church requires one miracle, while the process of becoming recognised as a saint requires proof of at least two miracles.

Mother Teresa was beatified in 2003 after Pope John Paul II accepted as authentic a miracle attributed to her.

He judged that the curing of an Indian woman suffering from an abdominal tumour was the result of the supernatural intervention of the late Mother Teresa – a claim challenged by Indian rationalists.

There are few details about the recovery of the Brazilian man, whose life the Vatican says was saved in the second miracle.

His identity has not been disclosed to maintain the discretion needed for the investigation, the Catholic New Agency has said.

It says he was unexpectedly cured from brain tumours in 2008 after his priest prayed for Mother Teresa's intervention with God.

Born Agnes Gonxhe Bojaxhiu in Skopje, Macedonia, in 1910, she dedicated her life to caring for impoverished and sick people in Kolkata.

Known as the "saint of the gutter", she earned worldwide acclaim for her efforts.

Her critics, however, accused her of peddling a hardline Catholicism, mixing with dictators and accepting funds from them for her charity.

Her supporters justified the funding, saying it did not matter where the money came from as long as it was used to help the poor.

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### David Cameron accused of 'governing from the gloom' over bid to scrap Freedom of Information Act

David Cameron has been urged to scrap his review of the Freedom of Information Act and instead strengthen the legislation to give voters a greater insight into the Government's work.

Accusing the Prime Minister of wanting to "govern from the gloom," deputy Labour leader Tom Watson has described the review of the transparency legislation out of touch with the public's desire for more openness, a "waste of taxpayers' money" and "predestined" to recommend raising barriers to obtaining information.

He claimed Mr Cameron was trying to "reverse the transparency Labour introduced" and seeking to "turn off the lights, systematically making it harder for people to engage with policy making, retreating into a darker and more secretive place".

Labour would strengthen and extend the FOI Act, he said, which was brought in by Tony Blair but who later admitted the legislation was his biggest regret.

Mr Cameron was criticised for appointing a commission full of opponents of the Act to look into reforming the legislation, including former Home Secretary Jack Straw, a vocal critic of the law despite playing a role in introducing it.

Mr Watson's attack on the Government's review comes after the former head of the civil service Lord Kerslake dismissed claims that the FOI Act had a "chilling effect" on civil servants.

In a speech in central London, Mr Watson will accuse Mr Cameron of contradicting his pledge as opposition leader when he said “sunlight is the best disinfectant” and promised the Tories would “bring the operation of Government out into the open”.

“As Prime Minister he is methodically closing all the doors and the shutters, drawing the blinds and the curtains, retreating to the shadows at the back of the national farmhouse,” Mr Watson said.

“He wants to govern from the gloom in the old fashioned way, without the inconvenience of scrutiny, abandoning any hope of decency or trust.”

Mr Watson cited NHS England’s announcement that weekly bulletins on the health service’s performance over the winter will no longer include figures on four-hour waits in A&E departments, the number of ambulances queuing outside hospitals or operations cancelled at the last minute.

“His response to the crisis in our health service has been to introduce an NHS news blackout,” Mr Watson said.

“He thinks we won’t like what they’re doing, so they’re going to stop telling us about it.”

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### Isis: Former German militant claims group is planning co-ordinated terror attacks in Europe

A German jihadist who fled Isis after witnessing beheadings and executions in Syria has claimed the group is trying to plan a Europe-wide terror attack.

The 27-year-old former militant, named as Harry S, said he and other foreign fighters had been asked if they would “bring jihad to their homeland”.

“They want something that happens everywhere at the same time,” he said.



Harry S witnessed Isis massacres after the group seized Palmyra in May. Harry S was speaking to [Der Spiegel](#) from prison, where he is still being questioned by police and the intelligence services after being arrested at Bremen airport on his return in July.

He claimed he fled Isis because he could not stand its brutality after three months with the group in Syria and is now telling German authorities all he knows.

The former extremist appeared in a propaganda video filmed shortly after Isis seized the city of Palmyra in May.

Wearing camouflage, he carried the flag of the so-called Islamic State across the screen before German-speaking militants called on supporters across the world to kill “infidels” before shooting two prisoners dead.

“All you need is to take a big knife, and go down to the streets and slaughter every infidel you encounter,” they urged.

The video, entitled “The lions of the Caliphate: A message signed in blood to Angela Merkel” featured notorious Austrian Islamist Mohamed Mahmoud, who founded a banned Salafist group called Millatu Ibrahim.

Since travelling to join Isis in Syria, Harry S said he had been leading mass executions and holding weekly ideological training sessions in Raqqa.

Reports that Mahmoud and former Berlin rapper Denis Cuspert (aka Deso Dogg), who went under the name Abu Talha al-Almani, have been killed in air strikes have not been confirmed by the German government.

Harry S said he met both men for the first time in Syria, having apparently been radicalised after meeting German Islamist René Marc Sepac in prison as he served a two-year sentence for robbery.

After attempting to join Isis in 2014, when he was arrested and returned to Bremen by Turkish



authorities, he had his passport confiscated and was ordered to check in at a police station twice a week, [Der Spiegel](#) reported.

But in the spring of his year he managed to travel under someone else's passport to Syria, where he says he was trained to become part of a special unit intended to carry out urban combat missions before detonating suicide bombs. But he fled before being sent into battle.

Harry S stands accused of membership of a terror group and faces a lengthy prison sentence if convicted.

His lawyer, Udo Würtz, said his client did not directly take part in any atrocities, calling him a "lackey who allowed himself to be misled by the propaganda of Isis and who misled himself".

Germany's domestic intelligence agency believes more than 700 Germans have joined Isis in Iraq and Syria.

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### Germany ready to help 'natural ally' Britain

Germany signalled its readiness yesterday to be "extremely helpful" to Prime Minister David Cameron in his quest to renegotiate Britain's membership of the European Union.

Speaking before EU leaders debate Cameron's EU reform demands today, Chancellor Angela Merkel called Britain a "natural ally" and described the benefits British membership brings to the bloc's 28 members.

Cameron has promised to renegotiate Britain's EU ties ahead of a membership referendum by the end of 2017. While he favours staying in a reformed EU, he has said he rules out nothing if he does not get the changes he wants.

She stressed Britain's contribution to strengthening Europe's internal market and promoting economic growth.

"As a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, Great Britain contributes significantly to the European Union's importance in the world," she said.

Reaching a deal on the British question would be "very challenging", Merkel added. But she said the EU had in the past addressed other countries' issues in the bloc "and I am therefore confident we can do it this time".

She said the core EU principles of free movement of people and non-discrimination between citizens could not be questioned.

"These principles are not up for negotiation," Merkel declared to loud applause in the Bundestag, stressing that the details of the talks would be critical.

Limiting benefits available to EU migrants to Britain is the most contentious of Cameron's demands.

A senior German official told a pre-summit briefing Berlin was ready to be "extremely helpful" to Cameron, but it was up to him to present his case.

Pressed on the benefits issue, the official said: “We have clear political guidance. We want Britain to stay in the EU. We can’t accept everything but we will do what we can to accommodate Mr. Cameron.”

A poll yesterday showed that British support for remaining in the EU would fall significantly if Cameron was unable to achieve safeguards for non-euro zone countries and curbs to welfare payments for migrants.

Some German government officials have stressed they cannot convince other European states, mainly eastern, to drop their opposition to Britain’s push for a four-year curb on welfare payments for EU migrants.

But they said they wanted Britain to play an active role in the EU.

“The UK must sit in the driver’s seat, and not next to it,” said another German official.

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### Google CEO Pichai touts India as key testing ground for new products

New Google leader Sundar Pichai pledged on Wednesday to use India as a testing ground for its products as the US tech giant targets hundreds of millions of consumers in the developing world set to move online in the next few years.

“We think that what we build in India will apply to many global places,” Indian-born Pichai, appointed chief executive officer in August, told reporters at an event in New Delhi.

With internet penetration already topping more than 90 percent in many developed markets, Google is increasingly betting on large developing countries like India as a future source of growth. The company does not disclose how much it has invested in India.



*Google CEO Sundar Pichai gestures as he addresses a news conference in New Delhi, India*

Google expects more than 500 million Indians to be online by 2018, up from around 300 million today. But Pichai said that with most new users accessing the internet via cheap smartphones instead of desktops, poor mobile connectivity is forcing the company to adapt how it structures and sells its software.

Google's CEO said the company would train two million Indian developers for its Android operating system by 2019, promote internet use among rural women in thousands of villages, and expand its campus in Hyderabad to get more people online.

"It's about making sure that as the next one billion come online, they have access," he said during a visit to the Indian capital, where he is also scheduled to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi. There are likely to be more users of Google's Android software in India than in the United States next year, Google said in a statement.

Pichai cited user-generated maps, as well as a version of YouTube that allows consumers with limited internet access to store videos offline, as two recent examples of products developed in India that have since been rolled out to other countries.

Google is also working with Indian Railways to bring wireless internet service to 100 train stations, with Mumbai Central the first to go online in January. It's also working on increasing the number of local languages available on its virtual keyboard to target non-English speakers.

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### Switzerland gets first Bangladeshi lawmaker

Iftikhar Ahmed, a former ILO official, has become the first ever Bangladeshi to become a Swiss lawmaker as he took oath of office in the



*Iftikhar Ahmed*

Parliament (Conseil Communale) of the prosperous,

picturesque French-speaking Commune of Founex (Canton of Vaud) on the outskirts of Geneva on Tuesday.

Ahmed is a development economist having worked at the International Labour Office (ILO) in Geneva for three decades (1974-2004) in the employment sector, says a press release.

He is the author of "Voices of the Working Children and Their Parents: Will Anyone Listen?" (London, Austin Macauley Publishers Ltd, 2015), and of "Technological Change and Agrarian Structure: A Study of Bangladesh" (Geneva, ILO, 1981), and co-authored many other publications.

Iftikhar Ahmed is the son of late Dr Momtazuddin Ahmed who was a vice-chancellor of Rajshahi University.

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### Republican candidates clash over how to counter IS

Republican presidential hopefuls sparred over how to stop the so-called Islamic State (IS), in the first debate since attacks in California and Paris.

The national security focus yielded heated exchanges between Senators Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio who clashed on surveillance and immigration policy.

Jeb Bush also sought to revive his struggling campaign by forcefully attacking front-runner Donald Trump.

"You're not going to be able to insult your way to the presidency," he said.

Mr Trump was on the defensive early in the debate for his proposed ban on Muslims entering the US, saying, "We are not talking about religion, we are talking about security."

However the debate quickly expanded to broader issues of foreign policy and national security.

The candidates repeatedly addressed heightened fears of terrorism in the US on the same day an emailed threat shut down Los Angeles' school system.

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## Analysis: Anthony Zurcher, BBC News, Las Vegas

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*The audience was outspoken during the debate*

The big question going into this last Republican debate of 2015 was how Donald Trump's competitors would try to take the front-runner down.

It seems, however, that only Jeb Bush got that memo. He alone among the candidates engaged the New Yorker directly, and if he had been as forceful several months ago as he was on Tuesday night, his campaign might be in much better shape.

Instead, most of the fireworks during the Las Vegas event occurred between the trio of first-term senators – Marco Rubio, Rand Paul and Ted Cruz.

On the issues of national security and immigration, Mr Rubio faced off against his two congressional colleagues in often acrimonious exchanges.

Barely mentioned over the course of an evening that focused on foreign policy was Mr Trump's call to close the US border to all Muslims.

Given how all the candidates assiduously avoided the subject, one would never have guessed that it was a story that merited global headlines and ignited a firestorm of controversy.

[What Trump doesn't get about the net](#)

[Republican debate: Winners and losers](#)

[Four ways Republicans might take on Trump](#)

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But the top nine candidates disagreed over the scope of government surveillance and how to end the civil war raging in Syria.

"If terrorists strike again... the first question will be, 'Why didn't we know about it and why didn't we stop it?'" said Mr Rubio, taking aim at Mr Cruz, who had voted to curtail government surveillance powers.

Another of Mr Trump's proposals – "closing that internet up" to stop IS recruitment – has been hotly debated, with the candidate saying, "I don't want them using our Internet".

Image copyright Reuters

Image caption Mr Carson has seen his support dip in recent weeks  
After defending it, he seemed confused by loud booing from the audience, and replied: “These are people that want to kill us folks.”

It was not the only time that the crowd played a part in the programme; on several occasions the audience’s cheers and jeers forced a pause in the candidates’ conversation.

At one point, a heckler interrupted Mr Trump with inaudible comments.



*Image caption Mr Kasich called for the country become more united*

## Other highlights from the debate included:

- Despite expectations of a confrontation between the top candidates – Senator Cruz and Mr Trump – the men avoided directly criticising each other
- Mr Trump said that he would not pursue a third-party campaign, saying he had “gained great respect” for the party’s leadership
- When asked whether he could order air strikes that could kill civilians or children, Ben Carson pointed to his experience as a paediatric surgeon and having to tell children about brain cancer
- Kentucky Senator Rand Paul stuck to his strong libertarian foreign policy beliefs, despite stark differences with the other candidates
- New Jersey Governor Chris Christie repeatedly stressed his executive experience as a governor and prosecutor and took a swipe at senators like Mr Cruz and Mr Rubio saying they were all talk
- Ohio Governor John Kasich said world leaders would have been better off discussing terrorism than climate change at a recent summit in Paris
- Former Hewlett Packard CEO Carly Fiorina said help from the private sector should be sought to fix an “incompetent” government

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# The Republican contest – in depth

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[How to dump Trump](#) – four ways his rivals might beat him at the debate

[Muslims on Trump](#) – Muslims in Las Vegas reflect on Trump ban plan

[Cruz on the rise](#) – five things to know about Trump's biggest threat

[Clinton's secret agent?](#) – Conspiracy theorists claim Trump is Hillary Clinton's plant

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Mr Trump loomed large over the so-called undercard debate, with the four candidates split over the efficacy of his proposed ban.

Senator Lindsey Graham apologised to US-allied Muslim leaders saying: "I am sorry. He does not represent us".

Democrats debate on Saturday night, and both parties will hold debates in January.

The state-by-state primary contests in the presidential election begin in six weeks in Iowa on 1 February and will last for months.

Each party will formally nominate their candidate over the summer, with Hillary Clinton the favourite to win the Democratic nomination.

Americans will finally go to the polls in November, and the newly elected president will assume office in late January of 2017.

[News Source](#)

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