

Κατηγορία: Politics

Δημιουργήθηκε στις Πέμπτη, 18 Μαΐου 2017 12:30

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Καταχωρήθηκε από τον/την Δέσποινα Συριοπούλου

Ευρωπαϊκά 262



By Associated Press

U.S. officials strongly criticized the Turkish government Wednesday as video appeared to show its president's security forces pushing past police and violently breaking up a protest outside their diplomatic residence in Washington.

Attacking the small group of protesters with their fists and feet, men in dark suits and others were recorded repeatedly kicking one woman as she lay curled on a sidewalk. Another wrenches a woman's neck and throws her to the ground. A man with a bullhorn is repeatedly kicked in the face. In all, nine people were hurt.

The clash happened at the Turkish ambassador's residence Tuesday as President Recep Tayyip Erdogan arrived after a [White House](#) meeting with President Donald Trump. Video shows people pushing past police to confront a small group of protesters across the street in Sheridan Circle.

Turkey's official Anadolu news agency labeled the protesters Kurdish "supporters of terror." It said they chanted anti-Erdogan slogans, and that Erdogan's team moved in to disperse them because "police did not heed to Turkish demands to intervene."

In a statement, the Turkish Embassy blamed the violence on the demonstrators, saying they were "aggressively provoking Turkish-American citizens who had peacefully assembled to greet the President. The Turkish-Americans responded in self-defense and one of them was seriously injured."

A Voice of America video showed police officers struggling to protect the protesters and ordering the men in suits to retreat. Instead, several of the men dodge the officers and run into the park to continue the attacks.

"Violence is never an appropriate response to free speech, and we support the rights of people everywhere to free expression and peaceful protest," [State Department](#) spokeswoman Heather Nauert said in a statement. "We are communicating our concern to the Turkish government in the strongest possible terms."

Politicians weighed in as well. D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser called it a "violent attack on a peaceful demonstration," and said it "is an affront to DC values and our rights as Americans."

"This is the United States of America. We do not do this here," Sen. [John McCain](#) commented while retweeting the video. "There is no excuse for this kind of thuggish behavior."

Sen. Patrick Leahy's tweet said "We've got to come back to American values."

Two men were arrested at the scene, and police intend to pursue charges against others involved, the Metropolitan Police Department said Wednesday.

"The actions seen outside the Turkish Embassy yesterday in Washington, D.C. stand in contrast to the First Amendment rights and principles we work tirelessly to protect each and every day," the police statement said. "We will continue to work with our partners at the United States State Department and United States Secret Service to identify and hold all subjects accountable for their involvement in the altercation."

There may be issues with diplomatic immunity, Police Chief Peter Newsham said at a news conference Wednesday. He said police were examining video to identify those responsible.

The background of the two men arrested wasn't immediately clear.

Ayten Necmi, 49, of Woodside, New York, was charged with aggravated assault, police said, after a woman who was thrown to the ground and kicked identified Necmi as her attacker.

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Jalel Kheirabadi, 42, of Fairfax, Virginia, is charged with assaulting a police officer, who refused treatment for lacerations to his face.

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Kheirabadi told The Associated Press on Wednesday that he joined the demonstration, saying "Erdogan is a terrorist" and "Mr. Trump, please say no to Erdogan," when Turkish security staff "just attacked us."

"It happened really fast," he said, insisting that he was trying to defend himself and to protect a police officer, not attack one. Kheirabadi said he is a Kurd who passed through Turkey as a refugee and is now a U.S. citizen.

Court paperwork spells his name Kheirabadi, but he said that is incorrect. The document says he struck an officer in the face while the officer was trying to separate protesters and that he "engaged in a physical confrontation" with the officer. Online court records say he must return to court June 1 and Necmi on July 12.

The biggest dispute between Turkey and the U.S. recently has been the Trump administration's plans to arm Kurdish Syrian militants fighting the Islamic State group.

The U.S. sees the Syrian Kurds as its best battlefield partner on the ground in northern Syria. Turkey insists that these YPG militants and their PYD political party are tied to the Kurdish insurgency in Turkey known as the PKK, which the U.S., the European Union and Turkey all consider a terrorist organization.

At their meeting Tuesday, Trump said the U.S. would re-establish its military and economic partnership with Turkey, committing to backing Turkey's defense against both Islamic State and the PKK. Such groups will "have no safe quarter," Trump said.

Erdogan responded that there is there is no place for any Kurdish "terrorist organizations" in any agreement about the region's future.

### **Turkish security involved in DC protester assault**

By CNN

Turkish security officials were involved in Tuesday's assault of protesters against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan outside the Turkish ambassador's residence in Washington, two law enforcement sources tell CNN.

The US State Department said it is "concerned by the violent incidents involving protestors and Turkish security personnel" in a statement on Wednesday.

"Violence is never an appropriate response to free speech, and we support the rights of people everywhere to free expression and peaceful protest," the statement said. "We are communicating our concern to the Turkish government in the strongest possible terms."

A State Department official said the Turkish security that was involved appears to be a mix of Turkish embassy and Erdogan security staff.

But in a statement late Wednesday, the Turkish embassy claimed the groups that assembled were "affiliated with the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party)" without permission and "began aggressively provoking Turkish-American citizens who had peacefully assembled to greet the President."

"The Turkish-Americans responded in self-defense," the statement from the Turkish embassy said, adding "We hope that, in the future, appropriate measures will be taken to ensure that similar provocative actions causing harm and violence do not occur."

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But that account differs greatly from the sequence of events described by protesters and video captured by the Voice of America Turkish service they said was taken at the scene.

The bloody brawl outside the Turkish ambassador's residence Tuesday sent nine to the hospital. Turkish security officials were seen coming out of the ambassador's residence, then retreating to the residence grounds, a law enforcement official said, adding that the same scenario played out more than once.

Federal and local law enforcement are going through security video to identify exactly who was involved.

"We intend to ensure accountability of anybody involved," DC police chief Peter Newsham said at a news conference Wednesday.

The incident came as Trump extended a warm welcome to Erdogan, an authoritarian-style leader who had a strained relationship with the previous US administration.

"We've had a great relationship and we will make it even better," Trump said in the Oval Office as he sat beside Erdogan. "We look forward to having very strong and solid discussions."

The anti-Erdogan protest was organized by Kurdish Americans, the Armenian National Committee of America and supporters of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), a pro-Kurdish political party in Turkey.

A protest organizer tells CNN there were fewer than 25 protesters in total.

Flint Arthur, an anti-Erdogan protester, told CNN Tuesday that police had them stand in a roundabout park across the street from Erdogan supporters near the Turkish ambassador's residence.

"A few police officers stood between us," Flint said.

One observer told CNN the entire melee started when a plastic water bottle was thrown; it's not clear by whom. CNN is not publishing the name of that observer as they were

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not authorized to speak to the media.

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"After the police line broke, all fought with each other no matter if they were officially on duty or civilian," said the observer.

Police were caught off guard, said another eyewitness, as Erdogan was yet to arrive. CNN is not publishing the name of the eyewitness for security concerns.

"I, myself, (saw) a Turkish bodyguard kicking a Kurdish protester," that eyewitness said. "An American police (officer was) trying to stop him hitting (the protester) with a stick."

That Kurdish protester, in red pants, was Lucy Usoyan. After she was hit with the flying water bottle, she said she remembers falling to the ground.

"I could feel that someone was heavily beating my head and back," she told CNN. Soon after, she lost consciousness.

In the Voice of America video, three men are seen kicking Usoyan. One of the men is in a suit, the other two are in attire that Erdogan's personal security detail wears—one appears to have a weapon holstered on his side.

"I didn't expect it would be so violent," said Usoyan. "I had heard many stories of protests in Turkey. But okay, that's Turkey."

Arthur told CNN that some of the men who attacked them were part of the Turkish security detail.

"We were attacked by people in suits with earpieces in," he said.

Aram Hamparian, who works with the Armenian National Committee of America, arrived just prior to the violence.

"(The Erdogan supporters) got very agitated," he told CNN on Tuesday. "There was a lot of energy on that side. They crossed the line. They ran around the police line. Crossed the circle and attacked the protesters."

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Hamparian said the individuals were, "very capable of beating people up."

"They were really well trained; some of the photos show that they had weapons on them," he said; the Voice of America video appears to show some individuals with sidearms.

"At some point, somebody on the Erdogan side, sent a bunch of security folks," Hamparian added.

Some of the individuals, in the videos seen by CNN, also appear to be wearing the same uniform as Erdogan's personal security detail. A CNN analysis of photos shows the security detail at previous Erdogan events wearing their uniform: a brown, unbuttoned shirt with a black undershirt and beige pants.

"The guys were very violent," said Hamparian. "They knew what they were doing. It wasn't like people wrestling in the street."

### DC mayor condemns protest response

Mayor Muriel Bowser issued the following statement on Wednesday morning: "What we saw yesterday -- a violent attack on a peaceful demonstration -- is an affront to DC values and our rights as Americans. I strongly condemn these actions and have been briefed by Chief Newsham on our response. The Metropolitan Police Department will continue investigating the incident and will work with federal partners to ensure justice is served."

The Washington Fire and EMS Department's Twitter account said that nine people were injured during the protests on Tuesday. Those injured were taken to George Washington University Hospital and Georgetown Hospital.

In a separate video from Voice of America, a very bloodied Erdogan supporter is helped away from the scene. It's unclear how he received these injuries.

The observer who was not authorized to talk to the media told CNN that the individual was hit by a megaphone by anti-Erdogan protesters and received 17 stitches to his head.

They say that when DC Police refused to arrest that anti-Erdogan protester, it angered the crowd.

Hamparian tells CNN that injuries ranged from cuts and bruises, some of which required stitches.

Despite Trump's greeting to the Turkish leader, the relationship has been strained by the United States' refusal to extradite a Turkish cleric living in Pennsylvania, whom

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Erdogan blames for orchestrating a July coup attempt against him.

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And the two countries are at odds over Trump's decision to arm Kurdish militias that are helping in the fight to rout ISIS from its Syrian stronghold in Raqqa. Turkey sees these militias as an extension of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK, which is considered a terrorist group in the United States, Turkey and Europe.