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Title: **Attack in Utrecht: the Erdogan connection?**

Description: *The day before the Utrecht attack, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan shared a video of the Christchurch attack with his followers. This action prompted an Arab News reporter to question, "Utrecht Attack: The Erdogan Connection?"*

Author: Arab News

Date: March 19, 2019

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Utrecht attack: The Erdogan connection?

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- Saturday, 4 p.m.: Turkish president uses footage of Christchurch massacre to inflame election supporters
- Monday, 11 a.m: Turkish gunman in Netherlands shoots three people dead in rampage on tram

ANKARA: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was heavily criticized on Monday for using the New Zealand mosque terrorist's video footage to

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inflame his supporters at election rallies.

After Erdogan spoke, a Turkish gunman in the Netherlands shot three people dead on a tram. Gokmen Tanis, 37, was arrested on Monday night after an eight-hour manhunt in the Dutch city of Utrecht. Police said initially the incident was a terrorist attack, but they have not ruled out a family dispute.

The Turkish leader used the video footage, filmed by Brenton Tarrant as he killed 50 people in two mosques in Christchurch on Friday, at a series of election rallies the following day. He said Tarrant's manifesto was to keep Turks from Europe.

As the footage of Friday's attack played on a screen,

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HIGHLIGHTS

- President Erdogan's use of the video footage, which social media companies have been trying to block from their sites, was condemned in both New Zealand and Turkey.
- New Zealand Foreign Minister Winston Peters raised the issue on a visit by Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu.

Erdogan said: "What does it say? That we shouldn't go west of the Bosphorus, meaning Europe. Otherwise, he would come to Istanbul, kill us all, drive us out of our land."

Erdogan's use of the video footage, which social media companies have been trying to block from their sites, was condemned in both New Zealand and Turkey. New Zealand Foreign Minister Winston Peters raised the issue on a visit by Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu.

"Anything of that nature that misrepresents this country ... imperils

the future and safety of the New Zealand people and our people abroad, and it's totally unfair," Peters said.

"We had a long dialogue on the need for any other country, or Turkey for that matter, to ensure that our country, New Zealand, was not misrepresented."

Turkey's main opposition CHP party spokesman Faik Oztrak, said: "Is it worth showing this bloody massacre in order to gain a few more votes?"

In Utrecht, the man arrested for shooting dead three people on a tram had been detained previously on suspicion of being

connected to Daesh, after he went to Chechnya to fight.

Gokmen Tanis, 37, is from Turkey's central Yozgat province, the scene of several anti-Daesh operations in recent years. He has lived in the Netherlands since 1993.

Tanis was known to police for both minor and major crimes, including a shooting in 2013.

Suspect Gokmen Tanis is from Turkey's Yozgat province, the scene of several anti-Daesh operations in recent years. AFP

The shooting took place in Kanaleneiland, a quiet residential district on the outskirts of Utrecht with a large immigrant population.

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte convened crisis talks immediately after the incident.

“Our country has today been shocked by an attack in Utrecht. A terrorist motive cannot be excluded,” he said.

Dutch police issued an image of Tanis and warned the public not to approach him.

“It’s frightening that something like this can happen so close to home,” said Omar Rahhou, whose parents lived on a street cordoned off by police. “These things normally

happen far away but this brings it very close, awful.”

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activists blocked access to the Norwegian energy ministry in Oslo on Monday as part of an ongoing 10-day campaign to protest against the Nordic country's oil industry.

Norway is Western Europe's largest producer of crude and natural gas, pumping some four million barrels of oil equivalent per day.

Around 17 campaigners, some with "Ban oil" written on their palms, occupied the reception area of the ministry in central Oslo, while dozens of others demonstrated outside.

"For decades we have written letters, we have spoken out, we have demonstrated. You let us speak but you are not listening," Hanna Kristina

Jakobsen, 22, told the crowd via megaphone.

“This is why we do peaceful civil disobedience now. We are desperate.”

Following the publication of the latest IPCC report on Aug. 9, climate change has become a focal point of debate ahead of an election on Sept. 13, in which Norway’s center-left opposition is expected to defeat https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/norway-government-faces-big-defeat-sept-election-poll-shows-2021-08-10 the incumbent Conservative-led coalition.

In a separate location, 29 protesters were arrested when they blocked a major road in the city and refused to comply with police orders

to move, Oslo police said on Twitter.

Extinction Rebellion is also planning protests elsewhere in Europe, with two weeks of demonstrations starting on Monday in London.

Norway Minister of Petroleum and Energy Tina Bru said that, while she shared the worry over climate change, the protesters were using what she called anti-democratic methods that would not lead to results.

“We’ll never succeed in the fight against climate change if we scrap democracy on the way,” Bru said in a statement.

Earlier this week Extinction Rebellion activists blocked access to an Equinor-run oil export facility on

Norway's west coast, temporarily halting the loading of oil. (Reporting by Gwladys Fouche, Terje Solsvik and Nerijus Adomaitis Editing by Raissa Kasolowsky and Mark Porter)

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In Germany, Syrians worry Afghan crisis could fuel anti-migrant vote (/node/1915841)

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800,000 Syrians have been granted protection in Germany since war broke out in Syria a decade ago

BERLIN: With just five weeks to go before Germany holds an election that decides who succeeds Chancellor Angela Merkel, Syrians on asylum visas are concerned that an Afghan migrant crisis could fuel an anti-immigrant vote and block their path to citizenship.

Some leaders of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party are warning about a possible influx of Afghan refugees, seeking to draw voters fearing a repeat of the 2015 migrant crisis when Merkel opened Germany's borders to almost one million asylum seekers.

The Taliban's lightning takeover of Afghanistan has sparked a chaotic flight of thousands of Afghans and foreigners from Kabul airport this week, raising fears of a larger exodus across land borders as the Islamist militants impose sharia law.

Germany's scramble to evacuate thousands of local helpers from Afghanistan, along with its own citizens, has turned immigration into a big issue in the election: a poll last week showed that two-thirds of Germans fear a repetition of 2015.

Anas Modamani, among the close to 800,000 Syrians who fled the war back home and resettled in Germany, is still waiting to qualify for citizenship. Now he is afraid the Afghan crisis could

harden German voters against immigration and prompt the next coalition government to adopt tougher policies.

Modamani describes Merkel, with whom he posed for a selfie at a Berlin migrants shelter in September 2015, as a "hero" thanks to her decision that year to open Germany's border to almost one million asylum seekers, mainly Syrians.

"I'm worried about what immigration policies will come our way once she's no longer chancellor," said Modamani, 24, as Merkel prepares to step down after Germany's Sept. 26 election.

His picture with Merkel became a symbol of her decision in 2015 to gamble her political

capital on welcoming 1 million unscreened migrants, mainly from Syria. But her conservative Christian Democrats now vow there can be no repeat of 2015.

The far-right party has urged the government to institute a moratorium on asylum applications, hoping its tough line will draw voters fearing a spike in asylum applications.

“I know that most Germans will not vote for the AfD,” said Modamani. “But a small part of me is like: what if the AfD are just a bit stronger and the next government responds by making it harder for us to apply for German citizenship, for example?“

Karl Kopp, director of the Pro Asyl charity for asylum seekers, said

concerns about a possible hardening of Germany's immigration policy are widespread, not just among Syrians, but also the wider migrant community, especially Afghans desperate to bring in family members stuck in Afghanistan.

"The tragic events in Afghanistan have resulted in a toxic discussion about immigration," said Kopp. "When refugees hear the negative narrative that 2015 should not repeat itself, they worry about tougher immigration rules after the election. Their fears are justified."

More than 800,000 Syrians have been granted protection in Germany since war broke out in Syria a decade ago. The vast majority do not yet have German citizenship but hope to get it in the next

few years when they meet residency criteria.

Opinion polls put support for the AfD at 10 percent or slightly more, just below its result at the last election in 2017. The major parties have all ruled out sharing power with the AfD but migrants worry it could influence policy when Merkel goes.

AfD co-leader Tino Chrupalla has rejected calls by the ecologist Greens to take in Afghan asylum seekers beyond those who helped the German army, saying such plans would constitute “a threat to the population.”

Fawaz Tello, a Syrian dissident who is also waiting for citizenship, said: “If the AfD wins two or three points more, whoever succeeds Merkel could say ‘let’s

suspend the right for refugees to bring immediate family members.' Look at Denmark."

Many Syrians in Germany have been unsettled by neighboring Denmark's decision this year to deport Syrian asylum seekers to parts of Syria that the government of center-left Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen considers safe.

Five weeks before the election, Merkel's conservatives have a razor-thin lead in polls. Their candidate to succeed her as chancellor, Armin Laschet, has seen his ratings slump since he was seen laughing on a visit to a flood-stricken town.

Modamani, who should be entitled to German citizenship next year, said if he

could vote in September he would cast a ballot for Laschet because of a sense of awe for Merkel. “I can’t imagine life in Germany without her,” he added.

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- Authorities ordered the protective clearance of the villages of Vilia and Profitis Ilias
- Over 500 wildfires have broken out across Greece since the

beginning of August

ATHENS: People were evacuated from two villages west of Athens on Monday as firefighters battled a new blaze in a forested area that was devastated by flames last week.

Authorities ordered the protective clearance of the villages of Vilia and Profitis Ilias, about 50 km (30 miles) from the Greek capital, as strong winds fanned the blaze. There were no immediate reports of injuries.

More than 500 wildfires have broken out across Greece since the beginning of August, ravaging swathes of forest and forcing the evacuation of thousands of people.

The biggest one, on the island of Evia near Athens, burned

for days before it was contained.

Greece, Turkey, Tunisia and other countries across the Mediterranean region have seen some of their highest temperatures in decades this summer.

A total of 85 firefighters, 13 helicopters and eight water bombing planes were sent in to contain the wildfire west of Athens on Monday, a fire brigade official said.

More than 9,000 hectares of thick pine forest were burned in the same area last week.

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- The hard-line Islamists' takeover of the country last weekend shocked Western nations
- The rush to leave Kabul has sparked harrowing scenes and killed at least eight people

KABUL: The Taliban warned on Monday there would be "consequences" if the United States and its allies extend their presence in Afghanistan beyond next week, as chaos continued to overwhelm Kabul airport.

The hard-line Islamists' takeover of the country last weekend shocked Western nations, coming just two weeks before an August 31 deadline for all troops to fully withdraw from the country.

To manage the chaotic airlifting of foreigners and Afghans — many of whom fear reprisals for working with Western nations — thousands of soldiers have poured back into Afghanistan, with pressure growing on Washington to extend the deadline.

But the Taliban, who have so far sought to strike a more moderate tone, showed no willingness to compromise on the US pullout.

"If the US or UK were to seek additional time to continue evacuations — the

answer is no. Or there would be consequences," Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen told Sky News on Monday.

Staying beyond the agreed deadline would be "extending occupation," he added.

Two Taliban sources meanwhile told AFP the group would not announce the makeup of its government or cabinet until the last US soldier has left the country.

The rush to leave Kabul has sparked harrowing scenes and killed at least eight people, some crushed to death while at least one person died after falling from a moving plane.

One Afghan was killed and three others were injured in a dawn firefight on Monday that according to the German military

erupted between Afghan guards and unknown assailants.

German and American troops "participated in further exchange of fire," the German army said in a statement.

The Taliban, infamous for an ultra-strict interpretation of sharia law during their initial 1996-2001 rule, have repeatedly vowed a softer version this time.

President Biden has insisted he wants to end the US military presence and the airlifts by August 31.

But with the European Union and Britain saying it would be impossible to get everyone out by then, Biden is under pressure to extend the deadline.

Speaking at the White House on Sunday, Biden said talks were under

way to explore the possibility of extending the deadline.

He also acknowledged the tragic scenes at the airport, which have included babies and children being passed to soldiers over razor-wire fences and men clinging to the outside of departing planes.

But he said they were part of the cost of departure.

“There is no way to evacuate this many people without pain and loss and heartbreaking images you see,” he said.

In the streets of the capital, the Taliban have enforced a calm of a kind, with their armed forces patrolling the streets and manning checkpoints.

Visually, they have also been looking to stamp their

authority, ensuring the tri-colored national flag is replaced with their white banner.

At a roadside in Kabul at the weekend, young men sold Taliban flags, which bear in black text the Muslim proclamation of faith and the regime's formal name: "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan."

"Our goal is to spread the flag of the Islamic Emirate throughout Afghanistan," said seller Ahmad Shakib, who studies economics at university.

Outside of Kabul, there have been flickers of resistance against the Taliban.

Some ex-government troops have gathered in the Panjshir Valley, north of the capital

— long known as an anti-Taliban bastion.

The Taliban said Monday their fighters had surrounded resistance forces holed up in the valley, but were looking to negotiate rather than take the fight to them.

Taliban fighters “are stationed near Panjshir,” spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid tweeted, saying they had the area surrounded on three sides.

“The Islamic Emirate is trying to resolve this issue peacefully,” he added.

The announcement follows scattered reports of clashes overnight, with pro-Taliban social media accounts claiming gunmen were massing, and Afghanistan’s former vice president Amrullah

Saleh saying resistance forces were holding strong.

One of the leaders of the movement in Panjshir, named the National Resistance Front, is the son of famed anti-Taliban commander Ahmad Shah Massoud.

The NRF is prepared for a “long-term conflict” but is also still seeking to negotiate with the Taliban about an inclusive government, its spokesman Ali Maisam Nazary told AFP in an interview on the weekend.

“The conditions for a peace deal with the Taliban are decentralization, a system that ensures social justice, equality, rights, and freedom for all,” he said.

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- Priority should be given to raising vaccination rates in countries where only 1 percent or 2 percent of the population has been inoculated

BUDAPEST: WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on Monday that COVID-19 booster

shots should be delayed as priority should be given to raising vaccination rates in countries where only 1 percent or 2 percent of the population has been inoculated.

If vaccination rates are not raised globally, stronger variants of the coronavirus could develop and vaccines intended as booster shots should be donated to countries where people have not received their first or second doses, he said during a visit to Budapest.

“In addition, there is a debate about whether booster shots are effective at all,” Ghebreyesus told a news conference with Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto.

Those whose immune system is compromised should get a booster

shot, though they represent only small percentage of the population, he added.

The WHO said last week current data does not indicate that COVID-19 booster shots are needed and that the most vulnerable people worldwide should be fully vaccinated before high-income countries deploy a top-up.

The Unites States announced last week it plans to make COVID-19 vaccine booster shots widely available starting on Sept. 20 as infections rise from the coronavirus Delta variant.

Hungary has already started widely distributing booster shots, with anyone eligible four months after they received their second dose of a coronavirus vaccine.

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