

Beat: News

TURKISH PROSECUTOR AND HIS TWO CAPTORS WERE KILLED IN HOSTAGE STANDOFF

SHOOTOUT AT ISTANBUL COURTHOUSE

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USPA NEWS - A Turkish prosecutor and his two captors were killed Tuesday after a shootout with police at an Istanbul courthouse, bringing a six-hour hostage standoff to a bloody end.

Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said the prosecutor died of the gunshot wounds he sustained in a police shootout with the hostage takers, who also died. It was unclear who fired the shots that killed the prosecutor, identified as Mehmet Selim Kiraz. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said he had been shot three times in the head and twice in the body. Erdogan said the hostage takers had dressed up as lawyers in order to sneak arms inside the courthouse.

Officials said they tried to negotiate with the gunmen before storming the courthouse where Kiraz was being held hostage. "Because of gunshots heard from inside the prosecutor's office, our security forces carried out an operation," Istanbul Police Chief Selami Altinok said.

Kiraz was the lead prosecutor in a controversial case over the death of Berkin Elvan, a teenager killed after being hit in the head by a police tear gas canister during the 2013 Gezi Park anti-government protests.

Suspected members of an outlawed leftist group stormed the courthouse earlier Tuesday, taking Kiraz hostage and giving authorities three hours to meet their demands, including forcing policemen held responsible for the teenager's death to confess.

The militants belong to a group affiliated with the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP-C), a banned Marxist group that has waged a long-running battle against the Turkish state and its security apparatus.

Elvan was one of thousands injured in anti-government protests in Turkey. The teenager, who was then 14, had gone out to buy bread when he was struck with a tear gas canister thrown by police during street battles with demonstrators in Istanbul. He died after spending nearly nine months in a coma.

Elvan's death sparked a new round of protests across Turkey. Since then, he has become a symbol of the alleged police brutality faced by protesters throughout the nationwide Gezi demonstrations.

Article online:

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