

EU-TURKEY MIGRANT DEAL

Greece reports no new arrivals in last 24-hrs

AFP, Athens

Greece yesterday said no migrants had arrived on its Aegean islands in the previous 24 hours, for the first time since a controversial EU-Turkey deal to halt the massive influx came into force at the weekend.

But France's Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said "hundreds of thousands" of migrants were in Libya hoping to cross to Europe, amid fears the shutdown of the Turkey-Greece route could encourage people to attempt the even more dangerous Mediterranean crossing to Italy.

The high-level panel coordinating Greece's response to the crisis cautioned that bad weather may also explain the halt in boat arrivals from neighbouring Turkey, as the Aegean has been buffeted by storm-force winds since Wednesday.

The European Union (EU) and Ankara struck a deal on Friday aiming to cut off the sea crossing from Turkey to the islands, which bore the brunt of a refugee wave last year.

The agreement, under which all migrants landing on the Greek islands face being sent back to Turkey, went into effect early on Sunday.

Despite the deal 1,662 people arrived on Monday, but this fell to 600 on Tuesday and 260 on Wednesday.

In 2015 more than a million migrants entered Europe, about half of them Syrians fleeing war, with Germany shouldering most of the burden.

Under the migrant deal, for every Syrian sent back, the EU will resettle one Syrian from Turkey, a country that is hosting nearly three million people who have fled Syria's five-year civil war. The idea is to reduce the incentive for refugees to board dangerous smugglers' boats to cross to Greece, encouraging them instead to stay in Turkish refugee camps.



A woman puts a poem at a makeshift memorial in front of Brussels' Stock Exchange on Place de la Bourse yesterday, two days after a triple bomb attack, claimed by the Islamic State group, hit Brussels' airport and the Maelbeek - Maalbeek metro station, killing 31 people and wounding 300 others. Inset, Belgian troops control a road leading to Zaventem airport. PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS

SECURITY REVIEW AFTER BRUSSELS BLASTS
No stricter airport screening planned

REUTERS, Brussels

European Union experts will next week discuss ways of strengthening security in airports after the attacks in Brussels on Tuesday that killed at least 31 people, an EU official said, but they will not put forward stricter EU-wide screening rules.

At least 10 were killed by two bombs at Zaventem airport, the main one in the Brussels area. The attackers accessed the airport without passing security checks, which in Europe usually only take place after check-in.

The European Commission, the EU executive arm, will host a meeting of aviation security experts from the 28 EU states, Transport Commissioner Violeta Bulc said. An EU official said it would take place on March 31. A meeting of land transport security experts would be held on April 11.

There is no defined agenda for the meetings at the moment, but the Commission official ruled out stricter measures being imposed at EU level.

"Security is a national prerogative," the official said. "The Commission will not impose on a small airport in Finland the same security measures that may be required for major hubs such as Brussels or Paris."

Asked whether security scanners may be installed at airport entrances, the official said that would be a decision to be taken by national authorities.

Adding landside screening at airports might not improve security, the trade association of European airports, ACI Europe, said.

IS has '400 trained fighters to attack European targets'

Report says attackers planned to attack nuke power station

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

IS has trained at least 400 fighters to target Europe in deadly waves of attacks, deploying interlocking terror cells like the ones that struck Brussels and Paris with orders to choose the time, place and method for maximum carnage. The Associated Press has learned.

The network of agile and semiautonomous cells shows the reach of the extremist group in Europe even as it loses ground in Syria and Iraq. The officials, including European and Iraqi intelligence officials and a French lawmaker who follows the jihadi networks, described camps in Syria, Iraq and possibly the former Soviet bloc where attackers are trained to attack the West.

Estimates range from 400 to 600 IS fighters trained specifically for external attacks, according to the officials, including French Senator Nathalie Goulet. Some 5,000 Europeans have gone to Syria.

Several security officials have said there is growing evidence to suggest the bulk of the training is taking place in Syria, Libya and elsewhere in North Africa.

Before being killed in a police raid, the ringleader of the Paris attacks claimed to have entered Europe in a multinational group of 90 fighters, who scattered "more or less everywhere."

But the biggest break yet in the Paris attacks investigation — the arrest on Friday of fugitive Salah Abdeslam — did not thwart the multipronged attack just four days later on the Belgian capital's airport and metro that left 31 people dead and an estimated 270 wounded. Three suicide bombers also died.

Meanwhile a new report suggested that the Brussels bombers were planning to attack a nuclear power plant and had recorded 10 hours of surveillance footage of Belgium's nuclear power chief.

Ibrahim and Khalid el-Bakraoui, the two brothers who blew themselves up in the terror attacks on Zaventem Airport and Maelbeek Metro Station on Tuesday, reportedly obtained the footage from a hidden camera in nearby bushes.

It is believed they may have been spying on the director as part of a possible kidnap plan to make him help them get into a plant, Belgian newspaper La Demiere Heure reports.

UN TRIAL ON SREBRENICA GENOCIDE

Karadzic gets 40 yrs in jail

AFP, The Hague

UN war crimes judges yesterday found former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic guilty of genocide and sentenced him to 40 years in jail over the worst atrocities in Europe since World War II.

The court said Karadzic, the most high-profile figure convicted over the wars that tore Yugoslavia apart in the 1990s, bore criminal responsibility for murder and persecution in the Bosnian conflict.

Judge O-Gon Kwon said the court in The Hague found Karadzic guilty of genocide for the 1995 Srebrenica massacre and nine other charges of murder, persecution, and hostage-taking.

But in what will be a blow to thousands of victims, the court said it did not have enough evidence to prove "beyond reasonable doubt" that genocide had been committed in seven Bosnian towns and villages over two decades ago.

It marks the end of a marathon trial at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia for Karadzic's role during the 1992-1995 Bosnian war that claimed more than 100,000 lives and displaced 2.2 million others.

The 70-year-old listened stony-faced as Kwon said it was clear Karadzic bore "individual criminal responsibility" for murder, persecution as well as the hostage-taking of UN peacekeepers.

Karadzic, 70, is the highest-profile politician from the Balkans conflicts to be judged, after former Serbian strongman Slobodan Milosevic died in his prison cell while on trial in 2006.

UN rights chief Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein hailed the verdict as "hugely significant".

A long-time fugitive from justice until his arrest on a Belgrade bus in 2008, Karadzic, a one-time psychiatrist with his trademark bouffant hairdo, was found guilty for his role in the 1995 Srebrenica massacre in eastern Bosnia.

Almost 8,000 Muslim men and boys were slaughtered and their bodies dumped in mass graves by Bosnian Serb forces who brushed aside Dutch UN peacekeepers in the supposedly "safe area." The massacre was the worst bloodshed on European soil since World War II.



A Bosnian Muslim woman cries during a mass funeral for victims of the Srebrenica massacre in Potocari, Bosnia in this July 11, 2005 file photo. PHOTO: REUTERS

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