

# Meddling in religious affairs: Germany warns Turkey



**Berlin** yesterday warned Ankara against interfering in how people in Germany practised their religion, as a new row erupted over a new "liberal" mosque in the German capital.

Diyabet, which oversees religious activity in Turkey, on Wednesday voiced distaste over the Berlin mosque where men and women pray side-by-side, saying it was incompatible with the principles of Islam.

Diyabet's criticism sparked strong words from Germany, with foreign ministry spokesman Martin Schaefer firmly rejecting the Turkish agency's comments "which are targeted at limiting people's right to practise their religion and freedom of opinion".

"How, where, when and in which manner people worship is not a matter for the state," said the spokesman.

"According to our understanding, the state has absolutely no authority over the assessment of theological questions. Rather, it has the duty to protect freedom of religion as well as freedom of opinion or press," stressed Schaefer.

Interior ministry spokesman Tobias Plate added that comments that "endanger domestic peace in Germany is something that cannot be accepted."

"We will be sure to express that bilaterally in every channel of dialogue that the interior ministry is responsible for," he added.

Berlin's new mosque, located in a rented room on the third floor of the Protestant Johanniskirche (St. John's Church) building, welcomes all Muslims -- Sunni or Shia, Alawite or Sufi, and comes complete with female imams.

Ties between Ankara and Berlin have been strained since the failed coup in Turkey, and tensions have worsened over multiple issues including a referendum campaign to expand President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's powers.

Relations plunged further after Turkey imprisoned Deniz Yucel, a German-Turkish journalist with Germany's Die Welt daily, on terror charges earlier this year. (AFP)

## UAE Foreign Ministry denies operating prisons in Yemen

Abu Dhabi

The United Arab Emirates yesterday denied it operated any prisons in Yemen, after Human Rights Watch accused it of running "informal detention facilities" in the war-torn country.

The UAE is a key member of a Saudi-led military coalition that entered Yemen's conflict in 2015 to battle on the government's side against Iran-backed Huthi rebels.

"The Emirati state, a member of the Arab coalition, does not administer or supervise any prison in Yemen," the foreign ministry said in a statement.

Human Rights Watch said on Thursday that the UAE runs at least two "informal detention facilities" in Yemen and has reportedly transferred detainees to a base in Eritrea.

The New York-based group said the UAE also runs detention facilities in southern provinces home to Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and a local affiliate of the Islamic State group.

The foreign ministry rejected the allegations as "totally unfounded", saying UAE forces "respect international conventions on armed conflicts". (AFP)

## Bomber blows himself up among civilians fleeing Mosul

Mosul

A suicide bomber blew himself up yesterday among civilians fleeing Mosul's Old City, where Iraqi forces are gaining ground against jihadists mounting a fierce but desperate defence, officers said.

Ahmed Hashem, a major and medic in the Iraqi army speaking from a field hospital, said the attack took place in the Mashahda neighbourhood of the Old City.

"We received 12 people killed and more than 20 wounded in our field hospital, including women and children," he said.

A colonel in the army's 16th infantry division said it was difficult to get a definitive casualty toll because the area where the attack happened was not fully cleared.

"The suicide bomber infiltrated a group of displaced people and blew himself up among them before reaching our troops," he said.

Thousands of civilians have fled the Old City of Mosul since Iraqi forces launched their most perilous assault yet against the Islamic State group.

## N.Korea conducts rocket engine test

Seoul

North Korea has tested a rocket engine that could be fitted to an intercontinental ballistic missile, a US official said, in an apparent provocation ahead of a summit between President Donald Trump and the leader of South Korea.

President Moon Jae-In heads to Washington next week to meet Trump for the first time since taking office in May, as tensions soar on the Korean peninsula over Kim Jong-Un's nuclear weapons programme.

The US official confirmed that Pyongyang tested a rocket engine on Thursday,

on condition of anonymity and without providing further details.

Political science professor Yoo Ho-Yeol at Korea University said the test was "a carefully calibrated act of provocation ahead of the summit".

The North Korean regime

will closely follow the meeting to gauge Seoul and Washington's future course of action concerning Pyongyang's pursuit of nuclear arsenal and missile development, he said.

"The North has been building up missile capability for decades. The general consensus among experts here is that if left unchecked, the North would be able to have ICBMs in the near future", Yoo said.

Also Friday, Moon oversaw the test-firing of a home-grown missile with a range of 800 kilometres (500 miles).

The presidential Blue House said the South's test was meant as a warning against the North's provocative acts over the past months.

North Korea's last rocket engine test came in March and was apparently timed to coincide with the visit of US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson to Beijing, where he warned that regional tensions had reached a "dangerous level".

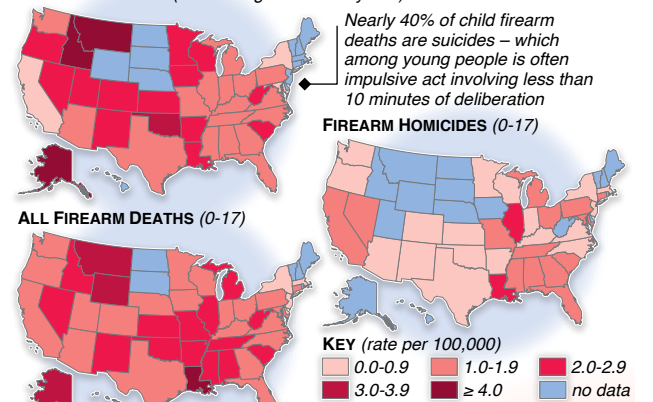


Representative picture

## Childhood gun suicide rising in U.S.

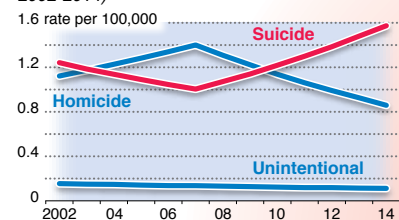
Around 1,300 U.S. children under the age of 17 die from gun-related injuries every year, about 500 of which are self-inflicted, according to a study by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

FIREARM SUICIDES (children aged 10 to 17 years)



Child plays with U.S. Marine Corps rifle during Fleet Week, New York City, May 2017

FATAL FIREARM INJURY RATES BY INTENT (children aged 0-17, 2002-2014)



Sources: American Academy of Pediatrics, CDC, USA Today Data from 2010-2014, unless otherwise stated Picture: Getty Images © GRAPHIC NEWS