



Policemen walk past their cars standing on the grounds of the Bilal mosque in the Griesheim district of Frankfurt am Main, western Germany, on Feb 1. German police arrested a Tunisian man suspected of recruiting for the Islamic State group and planning an attack, as they carried out sweeping raids in the west of the country. (Inset): Policemen of a special unit stand next to their cars on the grounds of the Bilal mosque in the Griesheim district of Frankfurt am Main, western Germany, on Wednesday. (AFP)

Extremism

Tunisian linked to museum attack

German police arrest 3 suspected jihadists

BERLIN, Feb 1, (AFP): German police said they arrested three people in Berlin on Tuesday suspected of trying to reach foreign "war zones" in order to train to carry out an attack.

The suspects may be linked to the Islamic State group and had "planned to travel to war zones," likely Syria or Iraq, a Berlin police spokesman told AFP.

Police also carried out searches, but there has been "no indication of concrete plans to carry out an attack in Germany", according to the Bild daily's website.

The suspects, whose gender was not immediately given, were aged 21, 31 and 45, the spokesman said. He added that investigators suspect they were trying to reach a camp to train to launch an attack.

At least two of the people arrested lived in Berlin, Bild reported.

Those arrested frequented the same mosque attended by a Tunisian man suspected of ploughing a hijacked lorry into a Berlin Christmas market, killing 12. The Dec 19 attack was claimed by IS.

The mosque, which is being investigated by authorities, was also searched.

Arrested

Meanwhile, a Tunisian man arrested in Germany on Wednesday on suspicion of recruiting for the Islamic State group is also accused of involvement in the deadly 2015 attack on the Bardo Museum in Tunis, German prosecutors said.

The 36-year-old is wanted by Tunisian authorities on suspicion of "participating in planning and carrying out" the attack, which killed more than 20 foreigners, the prosecutor's office in the western state of Hesse said in a statement.

They also suspect him of involvement in a bloody jihadist assault on the border town of Ben Guerane last March, it added.

Tunisia issued a warrant for his arrest in June 2016 but he escaped extradition from Germany late last year because Tunisian authorities failed to provide the required documentation for his deportation, according to the prosecutors.

The suspect was taken into custody in the early morning as police carried out sweeping anti-terror raids in Frankfurt and nearby towns.

There was no immediate response from Tunis to the arrest.

"At the moment we don't know the identity of this person,



Merkel

there are several suspects in the Bardo and Ben Guerane cases currently on the run," Tunisian prosecution spokesman Sofiene Sliiti told AFP.

The case is likely to reignite debate about Tunisia's cooperation in taking back nationals due for deportation.

The issue has already caused tensions between the German government and Tunis after it emerged that the Tunisian national who ploughed a truck into a Berlin Christmas market in December, killing 12 people, was a failed asylum-seeker.

Anis Amri should have been deported months earlier but Tunisia did not provide the necessary paperwork until after the attack.

More than 1,000 officers were involved in Wednesday's dawn searches in the Frankfurt area, which targeted dozens of homes and offices as well as two mosques.

Alexander Badle, a spokesman for the Frankfurt prosecutor's office, said the Tunisian national did not put up any resistance when he was taken into custody.

The suspect is accused of recruiting for the IS jihadist group and of trying to build a network of IS supporters with the goal of staging an attack in Germany.

Prosecutors are also investigating 15 other people aged 16 to 46 over the alleged plot.

Badle stressed the plans were still "at a very early stage".

"There was no concrete danger of an attack," he told reporters in the western city of Wiesbaden.

The suspect arrived in Germany as an asylum-seeker in August 2015, the prosecutors' statement said. He had already lived in the country for a decade some years earlier.

He was arrested the following August on an outstanding 2008 conviction for causing bodily harm.

After serving a 43-day sentence, he was kept in detention awaiting deportation to Tunisia before the authorities were forced to release him again.

"As the Tunisian authorities, despite repeated reminders from the German authorities, failed to supply the necessary deportation documents within the 40-day period, the suspect was released on November 4, 2016," the statement said.

He was kept under surveillance from the day of his release until his arrest on Wednesday, it added. Germany has been on high alert since the December 19 Christmas market assault, which was claimed by the Islamic State group.

The attack fuelled criticism of Germany's security services and of Chancellor Angela Merkel's liberal asylum policy, with opponents saying not enough was done to stop Amri.

Europe

Fillon decries 'coup': French presidential candidate Francois Fillon on Wednesday asked his fellow conservative lawmakers to stay loyal to him in the face of a scandal over his wife's work, denouncing the furor that has hurt his campaign as the work of left-wing opponents.

"We are facing an institutional coup d'etat from the left," said a member of parliament for The Republicans party who attended a meeting with Fillon.

The lawmaker, who wanted to stay anonymous, said Fillon asked his fellows to "hold on for 15 days" - long enough for the official inquiry into the affair to run its course.

"Nobody will stop Francois Fillon and the Right from being present in the first round of the presidential election and the second round of the presidential election," Fillon's spokesman Thierry Solere said later.

Fillon has lost his spot as favourite to win the presidential election this year since the opening of an official inquiry into a newspaper report that his wife and family earned over 1 million euros, mostly taxpayer-funded, for doing very little work. (RTRS)

Court upholds acquittal:

Portugal's supreme court on Tuesday upheld the acquittal of an ex-policeman sued for libel by the parents of Madeleine McCann, the British toddler who disappeared during a family vacation in 2007.

Goncalo Amaral, who had led the inquiry into the child's disappearance just a few days before her fourth birthday, in Praia da Luz in southern Portugal, was sued over his 2008 book "The Truth of the Lie".

In the book, he accused Kate and Gerry McCann of concealing their daughter's body after her accidental death.

Goncalo had originally been ordered to pay the parents of the missing girl 500,000 euros (\$540,000), plus more than 100,000 euros in interest, but that judgement was struck down on appeal last April.

The supreme court ruled Tuesday that "Goncalo Amaral did not abuse the liberty of expression", as his claims remained "within the limits tolerated in an open and democratic society". (AFP)

Slovakia okays law: Slovakia's parliament has overridden a veto by President Andrej Kiska and approved legislation that will tighten conditions for the official registration of churches.

Starting in March, the law will increase the number of members needed for a religion to become official - and eligible for state subsidies - from 20,000 to 50,000.

The bill was drafted by the ultra-nationalist Slovak National Party, which is a member of the governing coalition. It has made no secret of its intent to target Muslims.

There are about 5,000 Muslims in Slovakia, and the community had already considered the original number restrictive.

Its leader, Mohamad Safwan Hasna, called Tuesday an "unfortunate day for religious freedom in Slovakia."

The move is another sign of anti-Islamic sentiment in Catholic-dominated Slovakia. (AP)

Four 'terrorists' killed:

Azerbaijani security forces said Wednesday they had killed four alleged "Islamic terrorists" suspected of plotting attacks in the predominantly Muslim nation.

States, lawmakers OK caps

EU roaming charges to end June

BRUSSELS, Feb 1, (Agencies): European travellers will no longer have to pay roaming charges for using their mobile phones within the EU after the bloc reached a deal Wednesday that will take effect in June.

The hard-won accord is the key element towards delivering the long-delayed "free roaming" promise first made by Brussels with great fanfare in early 2015.

"This was the last piece of the puzzle. As of June 15, Europeans will be able to travel in the EU without roaming charges," said Andrus Ansip, the commission's vice-president for the Digital Single Market. The plan was initially delayed

when angry telecoms operators in tourist magnets such as Italy and Spain complained of the deal's knock-on effects and threatened to hike domestic prices to pay for travellers from northern Europe using their networks.

They complained that "free roaming" would in effect make poorer Europeans in the south pay for wealthy tourists phoning home or surfing for data while on holiday.

Roaming charges have long been a lucrative source of extra income for telecoms companies.

To solve the issue, negotiators for the European Commission, the European Parliament and the EU's 28 member states agreed on a

scale of wholesale charges telecom operators pay each other when customers use their mobile phones abroad.

The overall deal still needs final approval by the European Parliament and member states but this is expected to be a formality.

In a move that angered consumer advocates, the Commission had in December said "free roaming" would have some limits to ensure there was no abuse of the new system.

Telecoms operators would be able to closely track usage and crack down on users unfairly taking advantage of cheaper phone deals available in other EU countries.

The special operation on Tuesday was carried out by the State Security Service (SSS) and targeted four Azerbaijani citizens "suspected of planning serious crimes" motivated by "religious extremism," the security agency said in a statement.

They had "pledged allegiance to a terrorist organisation active abroad and were planning terrorist acts across the

country," it said, without giving details.

"The group offered armed resistance using automatic rifles and guns," the statement added. (AFP)

Ukraine fighting continues:

Freezing and nerve-shattered residents of an eastern Ukraine town battered by

an upsurge in fighting between troops and Russia-backed rebels flocked to a humanitarian aid center Wednesday to receive food and warm up.

Heavy shelling of government-held Avdiivka, just north of the rebel stronghold city of Donetsk, began over the weekend and persisted into early Wednesday. Donetsk city also was hit. (AP)

In a grand ceremony attended by tech-savvy people and media delegates Al-Nahar International Co. debuts its third "Alpha Store" branch



Al-Nahar International Co., the leading provider of latest technology solutions in Kuwait, announced today the launch of its third "Alpha Store" branch that is located in Mohammad Abdulwahab Complex (known previously as Galleria 2000), Salmiya-Salem Al Mubarak street. The launch event was held in the presence of a number of media delegates, tech-savvy people as well as VIPs. During the event, attendees got the chance to enter a draw on valuable prizes like mobile phones and smart devices as well as enjoyed the various surprises.

On this occasion, CEO of Al-Nahar, Mr. Fares Al

Mukbel, said "we are extremely glad to open our third Alpha Store branch, an Apple authorized dealer in Kuwait, which translates our expansion strategy locally to reach all segments of society. This branch will provide customers with a new shopping experience; especially that Salmiya is a populated area and is considered as one of the most dynamic areas in Kuwait. We hope this step will help answer customers' demands while providing them with fast and convenient services". He added that a new service workshop will be soon opened in the same branch.

