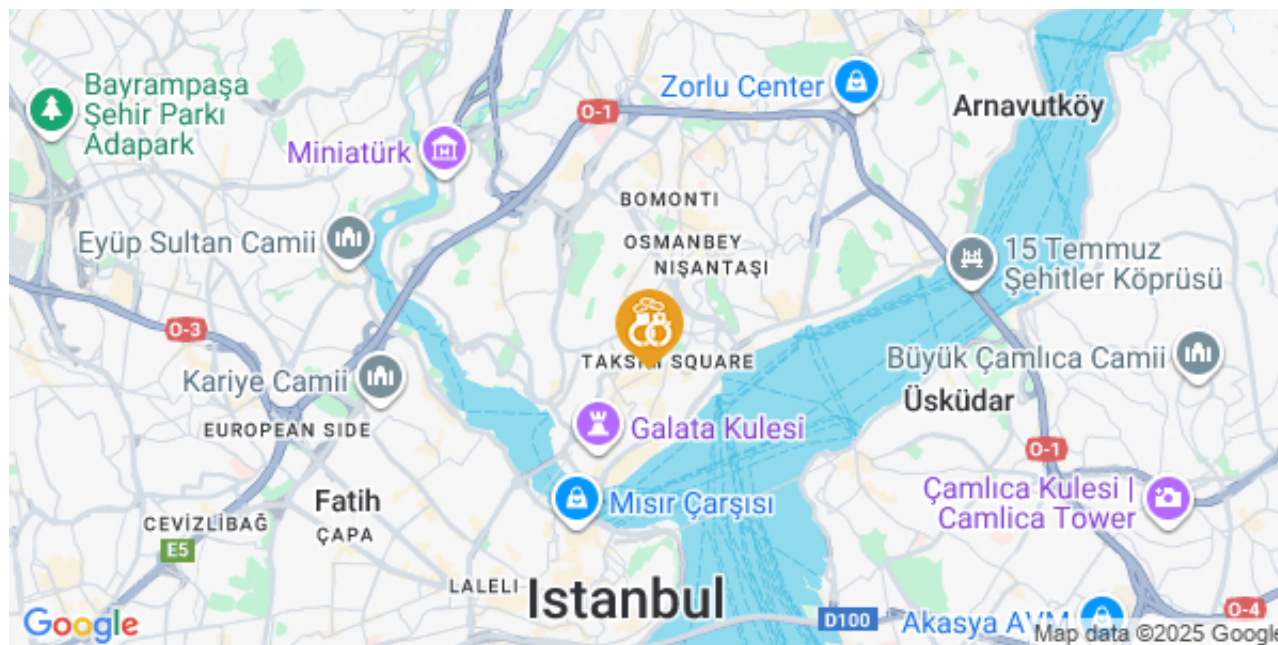


Crime

**10**

NOV

16:17 UTC

Turkey Alert: Two individuals wounded in armed altercation near Istanbul's Taksim Square on November 8; notable given rarity of such incidents in tourist area

Current Situation:

- At around 10:00 (local time) on November 8, a dispute between employees of a cafe and a hotel on Istanbul's Bekar Sokak, located about 200 meters from Taksim Square, reportedly escalated into a physical confrontation.
- Footage indicates that a motorcycle-riding employee of the cafe arrived at the scene and physically assaulted an individual standing outside a hotel. Shortly thereafter, the hotel owner emerged from the premises armed with a firearm and opened fire on the cafe staff, including the employee who had initiated the altercation.
- Two individuals who had been involved in the dispute were reportedly wounded.
- On November 9, the Romanian Foreign Ministry announced that two Romanian tourists were slightly wounded in an armed attack near Taksim Square during the "night hours" of November 8.
- In a subsequent press release, the Ministry confirmed that two Romanian nationals were wounded in an armed attack in Istanbul but did not specify the incident's location. The individuals did not require hospitalization.
- According to an unconfirmed report from a Romanian news outlet, the incident that affected the Romanian citizens was not related to the gun attack near Taksim Square.

Assessments & Forecast:

1. Criminal violence has remained a significant concern in Turkey in recent years, underscoring the persistent risk of personal disputes escalating into armed confrontations. The November 8 incident reflects this trend and is particularly notable given its proximity to Istiklal Avenue and Taksim Square, both of which are highly frequented, well-policed landmarks in central Istanbul that attract both locals and tourists. Such altercations are rare in this area, particularly during daytime hours. The escalation from a noise complaint to physical confrontation and ultimately armed gunfire underscores the readiness of individuals to resort to violence, illustrating how personal or commercial disputes can rapidly spiral into armed fights. It shows that even rare and isolated incidents like this can undermine perceptions of safety in secure parts of the city.
2. Although incidents involving firearms remain rare in highly frequented central tourist areas of Istanbul, adjacent neighborhoods to Istiklal Avenue and Taksim Square, such as Tarlabasi and Dolapdere, which are comparatively impoverished, continue to face elevated crime risks. In November 2024, four individuals reportedly harassed pedestrians near Tarlabasi Boulevard, approximately 580 meters from Taksim Square, and discharged firearms, though no injuries were reported. Similarly, in August 2023, gunmen targeted two individuals along the same boulevard in a dispute between rival criminals, resulting in one fatality and one injury. The overnight timing of both incidents, combined with the targeted nature of the second attack, suggests that such armed confrontations generally pose limited risk to uninvolved individuals traveling near Taksim Square during daytime hours. **FORECAST:** Overall, this does not indicate an emerging trend of indiscriminate gun violence in these highly frequented urban areas. Nonetheless, a residual risk of gun violence persists across Turkey, including near prominent tourist sites, with the potential for misfires or collateral impact affecting both locals and foreign nationals.
3. This latest incident highlights the growing challenge of widespread firearm proliferation in Turkey. According to data from a Turkish NGO, 3,801 incidents of armed violence were recorded in 2024, of which 3,194 involved firearms. Istanbul alone accounted for 545 cases, a disproportionately high share relative to its 18 percent of the national population. Comparable figures were reported in 2023 (505 cases) and 2022 (519 cases), indicating that the rate of armed violence has remained consistently elevated in recent years. In the latest incident, both individuals reportedly possessed licensed firearms. While the sustained prevalence of firearm-related crimes in Turkey is primarily driven by the widespread availability of illegal weapons, the accessibility of legally registered firearms to civilians likely also plays a critical role in enabling the escalation to lethal violence. Under Turkish law, individuals over 21 years of age may obtain a firearm license, valid for five years, provided they meet criteria including absence of criminal convictions and a demonstrated need, such as self-defense or business protection. However, enforcement often remains lax, as illustrated by this recent case, in which at least one of the individuals involved reportedly had prior criminal convictions on police records.
4. Nevertheless, estimates suggest that nearly 90 percent of firearms in circulation are unlicensed and can be easily obtained through black market channels, further exacerbating the risk of armed violence in Turkey. Although the Ministry of Interior (MoI) continues to implement nationwide operations aimed at dismantling arms trafficking networks, these initiatives face deep structural constraints. **FORECAST:** With an estimated 36 million illicit weapons circulating across Turkey as of 2025, such enforcement measures are unlikely to yield a decline in firearm-related violence in the near term. The entrenched scale of firearms will continue to present a significant challenge for authorities in preventing their use in armed conflicts and mitigating their impact on public safety.

Recommendations:

1. Travel to Istanbul may continue while remaining cognizant of the underlying threat of militancy and frequent protest activity. Contact us at Operations@max-security.com or +44 20-3540-0434 for itinerary and contingency support options.
2. Generally, maintain vigilance in Turkey, including in central locations, as armed altercations, even when generally targeted, carry the potential for collateral damage.
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