

Turkish police foil plot to kill priest

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ANKARA (Reuters) - Turkish police have foiled a plot to murder a priest, in a case that recalls other attacks this year against Christians in Muslim but secular Turkey, newspapers reported on Monday.

Police in the coastal resort of Antalya detained a young man on Sunday on suspicion of preparing to kill Orthodox priest Ramazan Arkan, who is a Turk, the Milliyet daily said.

The suspect, who was due to appear in court on Monday, told police he had been influenced by a television serial "The Valley of the Wolves," popular among Turkish ultra-nationalists, the paper said.

Police confirmed a young man had been taken into custody but said they could not comment on details of the case.

Two weeks ago, an Italian Catholic priest was stabbed at his church in the port city of Izmir in western Turkey by a youth. The priest, Adriano Franchini, survived the attack.

In April, assailants slit the throats of three Christians -- a German national and two Turks -- at a Bible publishing house in the eastern town of Malatya.

Last year, Italian Catholic priest Andrea Santoro was shot dead in his church in the Turkish Black Sea city of Trabzon.

Many Turkish nationalists see Christian missionaries operating in Turkey as a threat to national security. Some Christians say they feel less safe in Turkey than before.

The European Union has long complained that Turkey, an EU applicant, fails to fully protect the religious freedoms of its tiny Christian minority, which numbers barely 100,000 in a total population of nearly 75 million.

(Reporting by Gareth Jones)

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