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<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/19/istanbul-hit-by-deadly-bomb-attack>

Istanbul hit by suicide attack

At least five people killed and another 36 injured in suicide bombing in major tourist district of Turkish city

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At least five people, including a suicide bomber, have been killed and another 36 wounded in a bomb attack on Istanbul's main shopping street.

Two Israelis with dual US nationality and an Iranian were killed in the blast on Saturday morning.

The explosion happened close to the local district governor's office on Istiklal Street, a pedestrian boulevard lined with international stores and restaurants.

Turkey's health minister, Mehmet Müezzinoğlu, said 12 of the 36 injured were foreigners. Six were Israelis, two were Irish and the four others were from Germany, Iceland, Iran and Dubai.

CNN Türk reported that the bomb went off early and the attacker had wanted to hit different target. According to the governor, three of those injured were in critical condition.

Police sealed off the area and helicopters were circling overhead as security forces investigated the area. Several ambulances rushed to the scene.

A witness told the Guardian he had heard a loud explosion and saw several injured people sprawled on the ground before he ran from the scene. Turkey's broadcasting agency, RTÜK, has issued a broadcast ban.

The Turkish prime minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu, denounced the attack as "inhumane" and said Turkey would continue its struggle against terrorism.

"No centre of terrorism will reach its aim with such monstrous attacks," he said in a written statement. "Our struggle will continue with the same resolution and determination until terrorism ends completely."

There have not been any immediate claims of responsibility.

Istanbul bomber had 'links to Islamic State', says Turkish minister - video

Israel has sent two planes to Turkey to bring home its wounded citizens and its foreign ministry director, general Dore Gold, cancelled a trip to the United States to travel to Istanbul on Sunday.

The White House's national security council spokesman, Ned Price, said: "We are in close touch with Turkish authorities and reaffirm our commitment to work together with Turkey to confront the evil of terrorism. Turkey has once again suffered a horrific terrorist attack and we remain steadfast in our support for our Nato ally and partner. These repeated acts of terrorism in Turkey must come to an end."

The Irish minister for trade and foreign affairs, Charlie Flanagan, said: "I am deeply saddened by today's horrific bomb attack in central Istanbul. I have spoken to ambassador Brendan Ward in Turkey and can confirm that we are aware of a number of Irish citizens among the injured. An embassy official is on the ground in Istanbul to provide consular assistance."

Nato's secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg, said the attack was "yet another terrorist outrage targeting innocent civilians and our ally Turkey".

People take shelter inside a shop after the explosion. Photograph: Bulent Kilic/AFP/Getty Images

On Thursday Germany closed its embassy in Ankara and its general consulate in Istanbul because of the threat of a "possible imminent attack".

The German school and the Goethe Institute in Istanbul, both of which are in the Taksim area, have also been shut. On Friday Istanbul's governor accused the German diplomatic mission of creating panic and for reacting prematurely to "unconfirmed information".

Turkey has been on high alert after suffering a string of deadly terrorist attacks on its soil. More than 200 people have died in five major bombings since July of last year. Last Sunday suicide

bombers killed 37 people at a bus stop in the Turkish capital, Ankara. The militant Kurdistan freedom falcons (Tak) claimed responsibility for the attack.

The group, an offshoot of the outlawed Kurdistan workers' party (PKK), said that the bombing was retaliation for ongoing security operations in the predominantly Kurdish south-east and threatened that attacks would continue. Tak claimed responsibility for a separate suicide car bombing in Ankara last month that killed 29 people.