

Father Of Dead Boys: ‘All I Want Is To Be With My Children’

SUZAN FRASER
Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey — He is one among many, far too many. But the plight of one boy, washed up like a piece of debris on a Turkish beach, has focused the world’s attention on a wave of war-and-deprivation-fueled migration unmatched since World War II.

Aylan Kurdi, 3, was found on a Turkish beach in sneakers, blue shorts and a red shirt after the small rubber boat he and his family were in capsized in a desperate voyage from Turkey to Greece.

Aylan died along with 5-year-old brother Galip and his mother, Rehan, leaving their distraught father, Abdullah, to cope with his sudden, overwhelming loss. He said Thursday he wanted one thing and one thing only: to sit by the graves of his wife and children.

“My kids were the most beautiful children in the world, wonderful. They wake me up every morning to play with them. They are all gone now,” he said.

A Canadian legislator said the family, fleeing the conflict in Syria, had been turned down in a bid for legal entry to Canada even though it had close relatives there offering financial backing and shelter, but Canada’s Department of Citizenship and Immigration later denied that assertion.

“There was no record of an application received for Mr. Abdullah Kurdi and his family,” the department said in a statement, indicating that a bid for another member of the family, Mohammad Kurdi, had been returned as incomplete.

Tima Kurdi of Vancouver, who is Abdullah’s sister, initially told Canadian media that the family had embarked on the perilous boat journey only after its bid was rejected. She later said, however, that no formal request for refugee status had been made on Abdullah Kurdi’s behalf, saying one was filed, and rejected, on another relative’s behalf. She also gave a different transliteration for the boys’ names, calling them Alan and Galib.

Accounts of events changed several times Thursday as information flowed in from several parts of the world.

Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper said some early accounts contained inaccurate information.

Describing the tragedy, Abdullah Kurdi said the overloaded boat flipped over moments after the captain, described as a Turkish man, panicked and abandoned the vessel, leaving Abdullah as the de facto commander of a small boat over-matched by high seas.

“I took over and started steering. The waves were so high and the boat flipped. I took my wife and my kids in my arms and I realized they were all dead,” he said.

In a police statement later leaked to the Turkish news agency Dogan, Abdullah Kurdi gave a different account, denying that a smuggler was aboard. However, smugglers often instruct migrants that if caught they should deny their presence and it was unclear whether he had been trying to protect a smuggler’s identity in his statement to police.

The distraught father, who worked as a barber in Syria, added wistfully: “All I want is to be with my children at the moment.”

Abdullah Kurdi said the boat, headed for the Greek island of Kos, was only at sea for four minutes before the captain abandoned the vessel and its 12 passengers.

The route between Bodrum in Turkey and Kos, just a few miles, is one of the shortest from Turkey to the Greek islands, but it remains dangerous. Hundreds of people a day try to cross it despite the well-documented risks.

Tima Kurdi’s husband, Rocco Logozzo, told The Canadian Press that Abudllah Kurdi told his sister that both boys were wearing lifejackets when the boat capsized but that the protective gear somehow slipped off when the boat flipped.

Thousands Of Gallons Of Oil Spilled In Mississippi River

BRUCE SCHREINER
Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ky. — Part of the Mississippi River was closed as crews investigated an oil spill caused by the collision of two tow boats, the U.S. Coast Guard said Thursday.

The collision Wednesday evening near Columbus, Kentucky, damaged at least one barge carrying clarified slurry oil. The cargo tank was ruptured, causing thousands of gallons of oil to spill into the river, the Coast Guard said.

No injuries were reported.

The river is closed from mile markers 938 to 922, Petty Officer Lora Ratliff said.

The barge was carrying approximately 1 million gallons, but the breach was only in one area, affecting just one of its six tanks, Ratliff said. That tank holds 250,000 gallons, and Lt. Takila Powell said a little more than 120,000 gallons spilled into the river.

The Coast Guard said it was working with the barge owner, Inland Marine Services, and an oil spill response organization. Inland Marine Services referred calls to its public relations person, Patrick Crowley, who did not return repeated calls seeking comment.

Both tow boat operators had been interviewed by Coast Guard investigators and underwent drug and alcohol testing, but results aren’t back yet, Powell said.

It wasn’t known how long the river would be closed.

“We are working diligently to try to restore our marine transportation system,” Powell said. “We understand that it is vital.”

The Coast Guard determined five barges were damaged in the collision, but nothing other than the oil leaked into the river, Powell said.

The tow boats were moored on opposite sides of the river and a long gash was apparent in the smaller vessel. River traffic was backed up on both sides, though it wasn’t yet known how many vessels were backed up. By Thursday evening, there was no sign of a large cleanup operation.

Powell said cleanup efforts had started with the barge and that crews put a boom around the ruptured cargo tank to prevent any residual oil from leaking into the river. Cleanup crews Friday will go into the river to try to determine where the oil is, with a goal of trying to recover as much of the oil as possible from the river.

Some oil was recovered from the surface during cleanup operations Thursday, Powell said, but she didn’t know how much.

Powell said the oil is thick and has to be heated to be transferred or moved.

“How this type of product typically would react is that when it reaches the water that is of a lower temperature, it would solidify and sink,” she said Thursday. “But one of the things that we will be doing tomorrow is trying to determine where that oil has migrated to, to try to determine whether or not it has moved down the river or if it’s still in the vicinity of where the collision occurred.”

The collision happened in the middle of the river channel near Columbus, Kentucky, late Wednesday, the Coast Guard said. The cause was under investigation. The closure stretched 17 miles south to

the city of Hickman.

Powell said it was hard to say how much of the oil was released mid-channel because the barge was eventually pushed up to the bank.

Keleia McCloud, assistant director of the Hickman port, says both the port and ferry service were operating normally.

Hickman County official Kenny Wilson said local communities experienced no disruptions from the spill and the water supply in Columbus was not affected because it comes from wells. He said Columbus-Belmont State Park remained open.

Powell said there had been no reports of fish kills.

Joe Hogancamp of Bardwell, Kentucky, was putting his 20-foot-long boat into the Mississippi River just downstream from the collision. He said he might refrain from fishing in the area affected by the oil spill.

“It might mess up some of the fishing,” he said. “I’d say it’s going to hurt the environment a little bit. I doubt we’ll eat some fish (from the river) for a little while.”

A May 19 oil pipeline rupture in California caused a spill of what has been estimated to be up to 143,000 gallons of crude, according to documents from Texas-based Plains All American Pipeline. That spill forced a popular state park to shut down for two months, and goo from the spill washed up on beaches as far as 100 miles away.

A July 2008 spill caused by a collision between a tugboat and a barge carrying oil on the Mississippi River in New Orleans sent 282,000 gallons into the water and caused the closure of the river.

Trump Vows No Third-Party Bid, Will Back GOP Primary Winner

STEVE PEOPLES
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Caving to intense Republican lobbying, presidential candidate Donald Trump ruled out the prospect of a third-party White House bid on Thursday and vowed to support whoever wins the party’s nomination — a U-turn made easier by his position at the front of the field.

The decision follows weeks of behind-the-scenes efforts by GOP leaders, who’ve been trying to avert the possibility of an independent campaign by Trump ever since last month’s opening debate, when he refused to promise to back the party’s eventual nominee. A third-party bid by Trump, or any prominent conservative, could doom Republican efforts in 2016.

“I will be totally pledging my allegiance to the Republi-

can Party and the conservative principles for which it stands,” Trump said in a news conference at Trump Tower, the gold-hued skyscraper in midtown Manhattan where he launched his surging campaign for president.

The 69-year-old billionaire, who announced his decision after meeting with Republican National Committee Chairman Reince Priebus, insisted he got “absolutely nothing” for pledging his loyalty “other than the assurance that I’ll be treated fairly.”

In a statement Thursday night, Priebus didn’t mention Trump by name but declared his pride in having all major GOP candidates pledging to support the eventual nominee and then took a swipe at the Democratic front-runner. “We have the largest, most diverse field in the history of either party,” he said. “Any

candidate would be a better president than Hillary Clinton and offer the new direction Americans want.”

To the dismay of GOP leaders, Trump has emerged as the overwhelming leader in a crowded field, despite repeatedly insulting key constituencies and offering few details about his policies. The reality television star has described Mexican immigrants as rapists, questioned Sen. John McCain’s war hero status and insulted a popular Fox News host. His refusal during the party’s first debate to pledge his support for the primary campaign winner further roiled the GOP.

The document Trump signed Thursday is a pledge, not a contract. Even if it were legally binding, Trump’s history in contract law is suspect.

When lender Boston Safe

Deposit & Trust refused to extend the mortgage on his Palm Beach resort, Mar-a-Lago, he ceased making loan payments until the bank capitulated in 1992.

In his book, “The Art of the Comeback,” Trump proudly recounts forcing his unpaid lenders to choose between fighting him in bankruptcy court or cutting him an additional \$65 million check. Afraid of losing their jobs, the bankers folded, Trump says.

On Thursday, Trump insisted he would make good on his commitment to Republicans.

“I see no circumstances under which I would tear up that pledge,” he said.

If not for Trump, the need for a loyalty oath probably wouldn’t exist.

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