

Turkey bans haka at Gallipoli

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In past years the haka has been performed at official events and at the presidential palace in Ankara. (*Bay Isomoto: AFP*)

Turkish authorities have banned the traditional Maori haka war dance from ceremonies marking the 90th anniversary of the ill-fated World War I Gallipoli battle, deeming it "obscene", local media reported.

"Overzealous", read the front-page headline of the daily *Vatan*, which condemned the decision by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan to bar Maori performers from doing the haka at Monday's ceremonies.

The daily *Aksam* reported that Ankara "pleaded" with officials in New Zealand not to send Maori haka dancers to the Gallipoli Peninsula in north-western Turkey, where the ill-fated battle occurred in 1915.

In past years, the haka was performed at official events, including at the presidential palace in Ankara.

Thousands of Australians and New Zealanders are expected in Turkey on Monday amid tight security to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the World War I Gallipoli battle, in which 11,000 of their compatriots were killed.

Britain's Prince Charles, and the prime ministers of Australia, New Zealand and Turkey will attend the solemn dawn ceremony marking the fateful landing of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (Anzac) on the Gallipoli Peninsula.

The landing marked the start of a bloody eight-month campaign in which about 11,000 Anzac troops died fighting alongside British, Indian and French troops in an unsuccessful bid to wrest the strategic Dardanelles Strait from Turkey's predecessor, the Ottoman Empire, allied to Austria and Germany.

Turkey puts its own losses during the campaign at some 86,000. - **AFP**

