

# TR the Truth

JULY 2021 NR. 01



'a gift  
from god'

## THE FACTS OF 15 JULY 2016 COUP ATTEMPT



**My reflections on Turkey:**  
Orhan Inandi, who went missing in Bishkek last month, was kidnapped by the National Intelligence Organization (MIT) for alleged links to the Gulen movement.

**54**

**Journalist and scholar  
Jorgen Lorentzen:**

'Western intelligence services know everything about Erdoğan but keep quiet.'

**33**



*2 Kurdish farmers  
detained by  
soldiers pushed  
out of helicopter  
witnesses  
claim*

**26**



*Pregnant  
women and  
women with  
babies were  
detained*

**35**



*I'm free  
but my  
friends still  
languish  
in Turkish  
jails*

**18**



# TR the uth



We will explore some of the questions still waiting to be answered

04



Ten fundamental changes Erdoğan managed to do thanks to July 15

06



Erdogan's hostility towards Gülen goes back to 17/25 December 2013

08



Erdogan Planned the Coup Attempt

20



Female and Male officers were raped

21



A regime that murdered Kabakçıoğlu and Açıkkollu!

22



Pro-Kurdish HDP at center of Erdoğan's crackdown and world of hate

28



The tragic stories of Cengiz Aytmatov and Selman/s

30



Why does Fethullah Gülen matter to the world?

38



My reflections on Post-Kemalist Turkey

54

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# Silence is the greatest enemy of human rights!

In the early years of the AKP rule, Erdogan's government made significant progress in the EU accession process, and this in turn resulted in significant improvement in Turkey's economy. Erdogan, however, insisted on using stereotypical political Islamist rhetoric at every opportunity to consolidate the large conservative segment of voters. As a result, he was supported by the majority of voters.

As the AKP Government increased its power, Erdogan began to display tendencies towards authoritarianism by gradually abandoning values promoted by the EU.

During Erdogan's leadership, the people of Turkey had their first close encounter with mass arrests at the Gezi Park protests held in Istanbul when the AKP Government decided to construct a shopping center at the famous landmark.

The Government dispersed the demonstrations by using excessive force. Erdogan claimed that the Gezi Park protests were organised by "terrorists and illegal organisations" who endeavored to hinder the rise of Turkey.

On December 17, 2013 a large-scale corruption and bribery investigation was launched by the Istanbul police. Family members of four ministers and highprofile Government officials were included in the investigation.

Reza Zarrab, the Turkish-Iranian merchant who bribed the ministers, was at the center of the entire scheme.

Erdogan described the bribery and corruption investigation as a political maneuver targeting the ruling Government.

Erdogan accused the prosecutors and police chiefs of attempting to overthrow the Government through criminal investigations. The police officers and prosecutors who participated in the investigation were immediately discharged.

Erdogan claimed that those who led the investigations were followers of the "Gulen Movement" (or Hizmet Movement).

**Erdogan labelled the Hizmet Movement as "the Parallel State".**

A month after the corruption investigation was terminated by Erdogan, prosecutors in Adana stopped several trucks heading to Syria. It was alleged that the trucks, loaded with weapons and artillery ammunition, were heading to jihadist groups in Syria under the instructions of the National Intelligence Organization (MIT).

Immediately, Erdogan accused the members of the police force and gendarmerie, including the prosecutors who lead the investigation of treason, of disclosing state secrets.

Although heavy weaponry and ammunition were found in the trucks and published in the media, Erdogan insisted the trucks belonged to MIT and were carrying "humanitarian aid" to Turkmens in Syria.

During the period of the "lawlessness debates" in the country, a military coup attempt took place on July 15, 2016.

Erdogan claimed in the first hours of the coup attempt, without any evidence, that it was carried out by officers in the Turkish Army who were loyal to Fethullah Gulen. Gulen denied the accusations, recommending the immediate establishment of an international commission to investigate the failed putsch in Turkey. "If I am found guilty, I will voluntarily return to Turkey for a legal trial." Gulen responded. The Erdogan administration failed to respond to this recommendation.

**Who benefitted from the coup attempt?**

As the magazine portraying the truth, we have tried to shed some light on what happened to Turkey since the failed coup attempt and how the coup led to the establishment of a dictatorial leadership by Erdogan.

Former head of Turkey's National Intelligence Organisation (MIT), author and writer Prof Mahir Kaynak states: "In order to understand who the perpetrator of an event was, it is necessary to ask the question, 'Who benefits the most from this event?'"

In light of this important presumption, it is not difficult to see the real actors and how they wield power in orchestrating such an event. Immediately after the so-called coup attempt, the institutions established by the members of the Gulen Movement were usurped by Erdogan and given to his relatives. The institutions that were closed or seized were as follows: 15 universities, 49 hospitals, 164 foundations, 2,300 schools and educational

institutions.

There were 35,000 teachers purged. How, where and when did Erdogan conclusively determine these teachers were "putschists"? In the days immediately after the planned coup, 31,500 police officers, 13,000 officers, 7,000 doctors, 6,000 academicians, 1,524 judges and prosecutors, 605 lawyers (most of those detained, including women, were in solitary cells) were purged.

More than US\$20 billion in assets and more than 1,000 private businesses were confiscated and taken by the Government. The regime's wrath extended to 780 babies and 11,000 innocent women, who were given jail terms between 4 to 8 years. The actions and misinformation of the Erdogan regime is well documented. There are many reports that cast doubt on the regime's statements and actions, especially relating to the regime's claims about who was responsible for the so-called coup.

Furthermore, it is interesting and revealing to consider the information from Turkish mafia boss Sedat Peker. He is now in exile, and he revealed the extent of the looting and corruption by the Erdogan regime in a series of videos he posted on YouTube. Considering all the evidence provided, we leave the reader to decide this question. Who benefitted the most from the July 15 coup attempt?



**Illuminating  
the events  
surrounding  
July 15, 2016**



# **We will explore some of the questions still waiting to be answered**

**A** military coup is always planned and certain conditions must be met for a coup to take place. One of them is the agreement in the chain of command amongst the military leadership. Among the individuals and ranks to be considered, the role of the Chief of Staff and the commanding officers are critical. This is because, if these powerful individuals issue a statement in opposition to military activity leading to a coup, this can prevent the event occurring. Special Forces Commander Zekai Aksakalli said, "In times of crisis, personnel are ordered to remain with their units. If this order had been given to army personnel, the coup's true nature would have been exposed". This statement by Zekai Aksakalli shows that Chief of General Staff Hulusi Akar was not against the coup, but was part of the planned intelligence operation.

## **WHY WERE THE COMMANDERS HIDING?**

The actions of the commanding officers during, before and after July 15 are not in line with standard military procedure. Why does a commander not give any orders until the morning after while his subordinates are waiting for orders? Why would a commander remain hidden, or treat an officer close to him as the leader of the coup while he is at the Akıncı base in Ankara?

## **WHY WAS THE PUBLIC INVITED TO THE STREETS?**

If there was a military uprising, why would the ruling party call the people to the streets, not the state's security forces? Among the people who were called to the streets, 99% of those who died were killed not by soldiers but by armed people whose origins were unknown. It is clearly seen in forensic medical reports that bullets that not in the TSK's inventory were used and civilians standing face to face with military units were shot in the neck.

## **BEHEADING PEOPLE?**

Why weren't the people who were armed and cut off soldiers' heads on a bridge investigated? These people were recognized as "heroes who prevented the coup".

Why weren't the weapons of military personnel who were summoned to bridges, placed on the street or in action on July 15 subject to ballistic examinations?

What was the reason for the action taken against military personnel who never served on July 15, who were abroad, on leave, retired or had died long ago?

Why can't journalists follow the July 15 trials? This was one of the most important events in Turkish history. Why aren't the trials broadcasted live? Why are authorities afraid of what may be revealed?

## **WHY ARE THOSE WHO WRITE THE TRUTH ARRESTED?**

Journalists who write about the facts revealed in courts and lawyers who







describe the events in the courts are arrested and silenced.

Why weren't the Prime Minister, the President, the ministers, the deputies, any of the important figures who could be the target of the coup d'état arrested by the putschists on July 15? Why were commanding officers alleged to have been detained not as prisoners but as directors of the coup?

### HOW CAN TWO DOCUMENTS BE THE SAME?

How can the Martial Law Directive, which is included in the records of court files, be said to have been prepared by the putschists? A document prepared long ago by the MIT had the same spelling and information errors?

During a live broadcast, a Fox TV reporter said the parliament was bombed but planes were not flying there. How was the parliament bombed when there were no planes in the air?

### WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE BOMBING OF PARLIAMENT?

The Gölbaşı Police Special Operations building was bombed quite accurately, but why was there no hit recorded on the whole Parliament or the Presidential Palace? What benefit did the putschists think they would gain with these bombing activities? Why is there no physical damage or effects of the supposed bombings that are said to have taken place in the Parliament and the Palace? So much so that there was not even a fire. Why wasn't all the national media (except for a show or two) commandeered by the putschists for their own use?



### WHY WERE THESE NAMES EXCLUDED FROM THE COMMISSION?

Why were names such as the Chief of Staff, commanding officers, MIT Undersecretary, and important people such as Zekai Aksakalli excluded from the Coup Investigation Commission? Why are they not being tried in the courts or accused of carrying out the coup?

How could the President, Prime Minister and other government officials, who said that they could not reach the MIT Undersecretary or the Armed Forces Command during the coup attempt, come to the conclusion that the coup was carried out by members of the Hizmet Movement?

### WHY IS THE HEAD OF MIT, WHO DID NOT NOTIFY OF THE COUP, STILL IN OFFICE?

Why did names such as the MIT Undersecretary and the Chief of General Staff, who did not share any information or warn the government about the

coup attempt, continue their duties or were promoted after the coup?

Why did the buses carrying the Air Force Academy students returning from Yalova to Istanbul not all follow the same route? They preferred different routes. How was it that there were armed people waiting for them at points and they were involved in a fire fight?

### HOW DID EVENTS THAT NEVER TOOK PLACE GET DOCUMENTED?

How is it possible that thousands of Judges and Prosecutors in many provinces were grouped together with the putschists in the early hours after the coup attempt? This was before anything was truly understood and before anyone knew who had carried out the coup d'état of July 15?

How can events that never happened on July 15 be recorded in the report of Public Prosecutor Serdar Coşkun, which forms the basis for the detention of the abovementioned judges and prosecutors?



**T**urkey's President Tayyip Erdogan called the coup attempt on the night of July 15 in his first statement as "a gift from God." The Vice-chairman of his AK Party (AKP) said later that they were able to make regulations under the favor of July 15.

Here is the list that Erdogan's AKP couldn't have done if it weren't for July 15.

## 01

### GOVERNING STRUCTURE OF TURKEY CHANGED

Turkey's administrative system has changed, and the presidency system called "Turkish-style presidency" has been adopted. The AKP has destroyed the parliamentary system. The new system has given the power of legislation, enforcement, and judiciary to one man.

## 02

### JUDICIARY SUBDUED BY THE GOVERNMENT

More than 4,500 judges and prosecutors have been dismissed from their posts under the pretext of investigations over the Gulen movement. Most of them have also been arrested. Some new 10,000 judges and prosecutors have been recruited based on their ties to the government. The AKP has appointed 180 new members in the Supreme Court and Council of State, with the help of presidential decrees. It has replaced more than half of the staff in the higher courts. Erdogan has become the only authority to appoint the members and chairpersons of the high courts.

## 03

### THE MILITARY PULLED FROM NATO

The Government has dismissed at least 17,380 people from the Turkish armed forces (TSK). At least 150 are high-ranked generals and this is more than 40 percent of the army's generals. After the military transformation, TSK moved away from NATO and shifted to the axis of ultra-nationalist Euroasianism. The AKP has shaped the new command echelon of the military according to its policies.

## 04

### PARTY BUREAUCRACY EMERGED

Instead of independent exams, the AKP has started to employ state officers with the condition of manipulated interviews. It has accepted new employees after testing them through these interviews of their ideology, political and religious ideas. Erdogan has excluded all these decisions from any judicial control. The AKP has dismissed 125,687 public officers and replaced them with new officers who could pass the interview "test".



# TEN FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES ERDOGAN HAS TO DO THAT



# TAL GAN MANAGED NKs TO JULY 15

## 10 STATE OF EMERGENCY DECLARED

Turkey was governed under a state of emergency for two years following the coup attempt. Some 511,000 people have been detained, 30,821 people have been arrested. Thirty-seven presidential decrees bypassing the parliament have been adopted. Two thousand, seven hundred and sixty-one institutes have been closed. The Government has canceled the passports of 234,419 people.

## 09 EDUCATION SYSTEM CHANGED

The AKP has shut down nearly 1,200 schools and 22 universities. It has converted those schools to religious establishments declaiming the propaganda of the Government's ideology. Around 6,080 academics and 427,000 personnel in the administration of the universities have been dismissed. Another 270 students have been dismissed from their schools.

## 08

### ECHR SUSPENDED

Turkey has suspended the European Convention on Human Rights. Systematic torture and enforced disappearances have become prevalent in the country. Public officers on duty during the state of emergency have been taken under protection with parliamentary immunity to avoid a trial for their unlawful activities.

## 07

### FREEDOM OF COMMUNICATION RESTRICTED:

The Government has regulated the rules of banning and censoring social media. Platforms like social media, which became more important for those aiming to access the news, have been restricted.

## 06

### TRANSBORDER INTERVENTIONS

Ankara decided to invade Syria soon after July 15. This military operation became possible after the dismissal of generals who were opposing intervention in Syria. The Turkish military subsequently has intervened in Libya.

## 05

### THE GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED THE MEDIA

The Government has shut down 179 media outlets, including 53 newspapers, 37 radio stations, 34 TV stations, 29 publication houses, 20 magazines, and six news agencies. The owners of the big media companies, such as the Dogan Group, have been forced to sell their media. Erdogan Demiroren, a businessman with close ties to Tayyip Erdogan now owns the Dogan Group. More than 200 journalists have been arrested. The government has implemented strict rules to ease the ban on digital media.

# Erdogan's hostility towards Gülen goes back to December 17/25, 2013

*Prof. Greg Barton stated that the AKP government started to see Fethullah Gülen as an enemy of the state after the Gezi Park protests and the December 17/25 investigations; Greg Barton touched on important points.*

The Gülen Movement is not Erdogan's only problem, Barton claims. Anyone who disagrees and dares to oppose him is considered an enemy of the state. It does not matter whether you are a Kemalist or affiliated with the Gülen Movement, you are an enemy if you oppose Erdogan. July 15 is only a smokescreen, a legal excuse for a large-scale purge. Barton indicated that Erdogan had already expressed his desire to become a strong president before. This will probably be permanent with the constitutional amendments.

During an interview on ABC's Lateline, Tony Jones asked Greg Barton some key questions about the post-coup purge in Turkey.

**TONY JONES:** Greg Barton is a counterterrorism expert at Deakin University. He was also once an advisor to the former Indonesian President Wahid, sometimes known as "the laughing Sufi". Professor Barton has also studied the religious underpinnings of the Gülenist movement.

Thanks for being here.

**GREG BARTON:** Thanks, Tony. Good to be with you.

**T.J:** Erdogan's purge, as we've heard, is incredibly extensive of soldiers, police, judges, teachers, civil servants, sacked, suspended or detained. Is he trying to tear out the Gülenist Movement from the society by its roots?

**G.B:** That's what he

says, Tony, but actually what he's doing goes way beyond anything that makes sense on those grounds. He's using that as a pretext to cover what he does, but I think he surely knows that his problem is not with the Gülen movement, it's anyone who dares speak up and dissent, whether they're Kemalist or they do have links to the Gülen movement. So, this is really a smokescreen for a much bigger operation. He's made no secret of his desire for executive presidential power. He didn't have that yesterday. He has it today with emergency rule, and when that expires, if it does, in three months' time, it'll probably be permanent as a result of constitutional change.

**T. J:** Yeah. I mean, we know, however, the Gülenist movement is rooted in the schools, it's global, as we've seen with

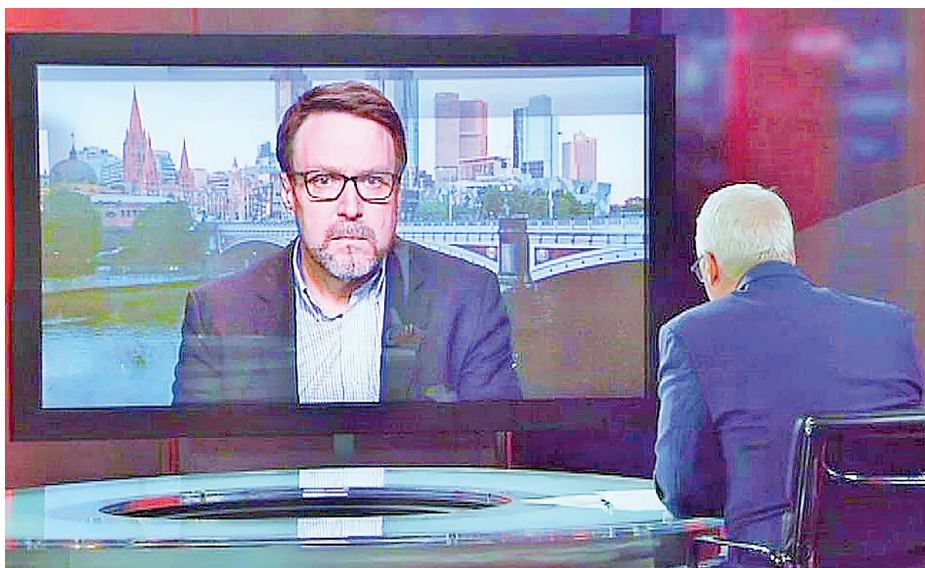
the schools set up in Australia. Erdogan has now turned the education system on its head. He's closed down 600 schools, tens of thousands of teachers, Education minister, bureaucrats, university deans, all sacked. Is it possible that he's just getting rid of every element of the Gülenist movement in the education system along with everything else?

**G. B:** Well he certainly seems to be trying to do that. In fact, he's been working on that for three years now. Relations with the Gülen movement went sour three years ago, first with the Gezi Park protest, a very harsh reaction, and then December, 2013 with really serious corruption allegations aired through Gülen-linked media outlets. It's kind of remarkable he's got anyone left to purge, but he's certainly made them his public enemy, but there must be many, many more who have no links. I mean, one-third of the general staff of the senior military officers are now arrested or detained, and most of them, given their seniority, would have had no connection with any religious movement because the Turkish military never allowed religious connections. So, common sense suggests there's something much more than this going on.

**T. J:** Is there any doubt though how pervasive the Gülenist movement was for example in the police force? Promotion in the police force was







part of being a member of this movement, according to many. I mean, there's no doubt, is there, that the movement was infiltrating, effectively, some parts of the society?

**G. B:** Well Tony, it was a very powerful still is a very powerful civil society movement in Turkey and around the world. One of the world's most significant moderate Islamic movements and it had enormous cultural sway in Turkey. It's always hard with Turkey to figure out fact from fiction when it comes to conspiracy theory, but they were the most powerful movement outside of Government control. But cultural civil society's fear, whether that amounts to infiltration or whether it just is a natural consequence of having an effective education program, you know, is a matter of debate. But they never were a political movement and never aspired to political power, so they're being painted as being something beyond what they ever were.

**T. J:** Do they pose a philosophical and religious threat to Erdogan's version of Islam? Is that, part of the problem here and are they in fact Sufis in their nature?

**G. B:** Look, they certainly are Sufi and the irony is that, for a decade, as Erdogan was a successful democratic prime minister and the economy grew and democracy was consolidated, there was a confluence between the same demographic base that voted for AKP, Erdogan's party, and the democratic base that basically supported the Gulen movement - small-town



conservative, socially conservative, but Sufistic moderate Turkish Muslims. That split that emerged in 2013 was entirely for personal reasons and you get the sense that Erdogan is so afraid not just of corruption allegations, but of the sense that his religious legitimacy is being challenged by the most revered religious leader in Turkey that he finds it necessary to demonize that religious leader so that he can maintain his claim to be acting not just for the people of Turkey, but for true religion. He's very much a religious figure, Erdogan, and he doesn't want any challenge to his religious authority, although it's put in political terms.

**T. J:** So, in what way are Sufis actually different in their philosophy, if you like, their religious philosophy to the kind of Islam which Erdogan would espouse and too Islamism or Islamists

generally?

**G. B:** Well Islamism is very much a here-and-now focus on political power. I mean, commonly the formulation is application of Sharia, if not an Islamic state, so top-down enforcement of religious morality and observance. Erdogan is representing people and has the popular support of people who are basically Sufistically-inclined, but his own inclinations has borrowed a lot from the surrounding Islamism of countries like Egypt, where in many respects he's always had a sympathy for the Muslim Brotherhood. That doesn't have a presence in Turkey, but his inclinations ran that way ever since he was Mayor of Istanbul in the 1990s and then became this transformational prime minister of a new party. So, there's an odd tension there. I mean, in theory, the people supporting him actually have the same religious outlook as people in the Gulen network, but this is about personal authority.

**T. J:** It is interesting to note, though, when it comes to the Gulenist movement, the Catholic Church, even some leading Zionists in the United States, have described the principles and teachings of Gulen as the antidote to fundamentalism. Is that an accurate assessment?

**G. B:** Yeah, I mean, you mentioned Indonesia earlier, Tony. I mean, Gus Dur Abdurrahman Wahid was very different in his personal style than Fethullah Gulen, but I've met Gulen a couple of times and he strikes me as a similar sort of moderate, modern Sufistic Muslim. He's more socially conservative than Abdurrahman Wahid was, but in many ways, very similar ideas and I've looked at the ideas of both men very closely. So, yeah, I think that idea that people often say Islam needs reformation. That's too simplistic, but all religions need a way of coming to terms with the modern world and with plural society, and in Indonesia and in Turkey, we've seen these leaders offer a way forward and it's basically been a good news story, so it's a pity it's mired in political controversy at the moment.

# TURKEY'S JULY 15 CONUNDRUM



**DR. ÖMER ATILLA ERGI**

Political analysts, military strategists, academics and journalists around the globe were not buying the story told by the Erdogan administration, because there were major inconsistencies in the narrative. Now let us briefly analyse some of the most important discrepancies in the official story.

The Republic of Turkey has been battered by several coups in its 100-year history. It is a historical fact that, whenever the Turkish military decides to topple the government, they succeed. The TSK is the second biggest military power in NATO as it has just under one million military personnel. Strangely, there were a mere 8.000 soldiers involved in the coup. Even more strangely, most of these soldiers were young cadets or privates. How was it possible for a coup to succeed with 8.000 soldiers when the top generals of the Turkish military and majority of the ranked officers were not involved? It is also important to note that Turkey has over 250.000 officers in its police force alone. How could the military personnel be oblivious of these odds?

All previous coups in Turkey commenced in the middle of the night, around 03.00 to minimize



civilian casualties, yet for some inexplicable reason the July 15 coup commenced primetime (22.00) on a warm summer night when streets were crowded with civilians.

The July 15 coup attempt was controlled from Akıncı Airbase, meaning the Air Force was attempting a coup, which strategically made no sense. Why would the Air Force bomb its own parliament, the police headquarters, and the presidential palace? Moreover, how would they take control of the Government?

What strategic role did the soldiers who theatrically closed one side of the traffic on Bosphorus Bridge play in the coup? Most of them were military cadets, ages ranging from 18-21. According to court testimonies, they were loaded on buses and

sent to the bridge by their commanding officers who said, "there is a possible terrorist activity, you need to protect the bridge". Abidin Unal, General of the Air Force, visited the boys earlier at a campsite and suggested light training, explaining they had a mission later that night. He was not even questioned about this, while most of the young cadets were given life sentences. These cadets had surrendered to the police immediately after being informed about the possible coup attempt. Yet, some of them were violently lynched by a mob. Murat Tekin (21) was one of those killed by the angry mob. There is substantial evidence that members of SADAT, a counter guerrilla force working for Erdogan were amongst the crowd for provocation purposes.





All previous military coups were meticulously planned, identifying the chain of command and who would lead the nation after the coup. It has been five years since the July 15 attempt; no plans were uncovered and there was no information on who would have taken office if the coup had succeeded.

In a well-planned coup attempt, initial targets are the President, Prime Minister and ministers of the cabinet. On July 15, there were no attempts to capture any of these people in office, except for a sloppy attempt to capture or assassinate Erdogan.

The military team that was sent to capture the president landed in Marmaris long after Erdogan had left the hotel in a Sikorsky S-92 helicopter. Quite ironically, this team of special forces spoke to a taxi driver and asked for directions to the Grand Yazıcı Hotel. Erdogan was at Dalaman Airport boarding a TC-ATA jet, which took off at 01.43. Strangely, Erdogan was flying to Ataturk Airport, which was allegedly still held by the military activists. His jet was on radar and it could be traced by anyone who logged onto Flightradar24.com. It is still unknown why the president took an official flight to Istanbul when he was the

primary target of the Air Force.

Another discrepancy in the narrative was Hakan Fidan, Director of National Intelligence Service (MIT) who had intel on the coup attempt at early as 16.30, and claimed he could not reach the president on the phone. He then informed Hulusi Akar, Chief of Staff, who apparently did nothing about it, and was later detained by the putschists. However, the footage from the military headquarters does not show any indication of Akar being forcefully detained. Akar, who had the power to save the lives of 300 civilians and soldiers, did nothing. For some reason, Erdogan appointed him as the new Defence Minister, a promotion for doing nothing to stop the coup.

Turkey has 81 cities, but the coup attempt was taking place only in a few, specifically Istanbul and Ankara. How would the putschists control the entire country by only hitting a few locations in two major cities?

Several incidents that took place on July 15 suggests the Erdogan administration was well-prepared for the so-called coup attempt.

AKP councils on key military locations blocked the entrances of several army compounds with heavy machinery, loaded trucks and bulldozers long before the military

activity had commenced.

Hundreds of civilians from Sincan commuted on an unofficial train trip and were taken to key locations in Ankara to fight against the putschists.

The police headquarters in Ankara distributed semi-automatic weapons to selected civilians and this was confirmed by the Governor of Ankara. After the failed coup, it was reported that 107,000 weapons were missing from the police and military inventory.

The President of Religious Affairs, Mehmet Görmez, gave instructions to mosque Imams in key cities to invite civilians to the streets from the minarets with a call of sala, indicating he had already been briefed earlier. Abdulkadir Selvi, a pro-government journalist, confirmed that Hakan Fidan, the Director of the National Intelligence Service had met with Mehmet Görmez, the President of Religious Affairs and had soup with him on the night of the coup at 22.00. This was just before the military action commenced.

**WAS 15 JULY, 2016**

**REALLY A COUP ATTEMPT?**

The above mentioned incongruities in the official story have led political analysts like Adem Yavuz





Arslan to conclude this was no military coup attempt, but a carefully planned intelligence operation. According to Arslan, the July 15 operation was planned by President Erdogan, Hakan Fidan and Hulusi Akar. There are others who hold a similar opinion. During a program on Haberturk, Prof Nurşen Mazıcı of Marmara University said, “July 15 is not a military coup. If you want to know who was behind it, look at who benefitted from it.”

Erdogan’s famous comment “this is a gift from God” seems to support this theory. Moreover, shortly after the failed coup attempt, Erdogan announced a state of emergency during which he passed several laws that literally gave him the powers of a dictator.

Kemal Kılıçdaroglu, the leader of the opposition, also believes the coup was staged, as in April 2017 he announced that it was a controlled coup.

It is also interesting, that while thousands of people were being prosecuted and given life sentences, key figures like the President, Director of Intelligence, Chief of Staff and the top generals, who were allegedly the primary victims of the coup, refused to testify in a court of law. Many lawyers believe that they did

this to avoid being cross-examined by the defendants’ lawyers. Perhaps, as Arslan argues, this was a well-executed intelligence operation. They did, however, forget one important thing: we are in the 21st century and incidents can easily be captured with mobile phone cameras. Footage captured by civilians indicates the majority of the soldiers in the streets had no knowledge of the coup attempt, which suggests they were sent out there to be ambushed by those who had been provoked for this purpose.

#### **WHY DID ERDOGAN ACCUSE THE HIZMET MOVEMENT OF ORCHESTRATING THE COUP?**

Democratic nations around the globe and independent inquiries confirmed that there was no evidence to indicate the coup was orchestrated by the Gülen Movement. The official story infers that General Akın Öztürk, who is currently serving several life sentences, was number 1 and General Semih Terzi, who was assassinated on the night of the coup, was number 2. Interestingly, both generals had no connections to the Gülen Movement: in fact, they were both well-known Kemalists. So, why did Erdogan blame the Gülen Movement for the coup?

A brief historical background of

Turkey may help the reader better understand his motives. Turkey is a semi-democratic state that held its first democratic election in 1946. Since 1946, 54 elected governments have come to power in Turkey, during which the state was continuously threatened by several coups, human rights violations and judiciary systems that never had the full authority to function independently. The main reason for this was the presence of deep state ultra-nationalist cliques consisting of right and left wings. These cliques had sworn to protect the fundamental principles of the republic, which were established by Ataturk. Members of these cliques have always had connections in the constitutional court, the high court, judiciary system, police force, military, bureaucracy and media. Some of their sub-factions also had direct connections to crime bosses and extremist groups in Turkey.

Some may argue that regimes tolerate the formation of such groups within ‘deep states’ to protect their status quos. This may be considered as a norm if human rights are not violated and minorities oppressed, and certain people do not consider themselves as being above the law.



Unfortunately, for decades, the common practice in Turkey was, whenever the status quo was threatened, the ultra-nationalist 'deep state' resorted to oppression and violence. If the threat was coming from elected governments, they would be toppled and prosecuted as well.

The Hizmet Movement was also at the receiving end as Fethullah Gulen was persecuted and prosecuted several times. However, years of service in the community indicated that the Hizmet Movement was advocating for peace, social reforms and full democracy through education, intercultural dialogue and humanitarian aid campaigns. The Movement was strongly supported by all elected governments and politicians since the 90s as students from Hizmet schools were being awarded gold medals in physics, chemistry, biology and math competitions around the globe. Graduates from these schools were contributing to society as academics, bureaucrats, lawyers, prosecutors, judges, journalists, police chiefs and military officers.

The ultra-nationalists, however, were sceptical about the movement's motives as they made their first move on February 28, 1997 with a Military Memorandum. This was dubbed as the postmodern coup and removed the democratically elected government at the time. They decided to control or at the very least assign military inspectors to all schools established by the Movement. Although the political



Islamists claimed they were the primary target of the postmodern coup, many years later, Doğu Perinçek, currently the leader of Vatan Partisi, confessed on a live broadcast that the Gülen Movement was the primary target. They had planned to dissolve the Gülen Movement in 1997 but did not have public support and so the Movement survived.

During the 2000s, the Movement's educational and dialogue activities advocating social reforms bore their fruits as Turkey began to excel as a nation. In 2002, Erdogan came to power with promises of further improvement in democracy, reforms in social justice and joining the European Union. Turkey continued to develop its democracy, justice system and human rights record to become a role model for the Muslim world as the AKP government then supported the activities of the Hizmet Movement.

In 2004, the ultra-nationalists made their second move during a MGK (National Security Council) meeting when they convinced members of the Erdogan admin-

istration to sign a document instructing the government to purge the Gülen Movement. When the document was leaked to the press, some of the politicians who signed it argued that it was only a formality, which they did not intend to implement. Due to media and public support, the Hizmet Movement had survived again.

In 2008, prosecutors commenced a major investigation into Ergenekon, a deep-state faction of the ultra-nationalists arrested high profile people, including members of the military. The accusations included political violence, assassinations and atrocities committed against minorities, specifically, Kurdish citizens living in the Eastern region of Turkey. The prosecution of Ergenekon members helped Erdogan increase his powers and during the trials he declared that he was the prosecutor of the Ergenekon case.

At the time, Erdogan was pleased with the support he received through the media, judicial system and police force not realizing that they were only doing their jobs. Everything took a drastic turn when the police commenced a major corruption operation in December 17/25, 2013.

Close to 89 people were arrested, including sons of the Minister for Economy, Minister for internal Affairs and Minister for Environment and Urban Development. A corruption ring breaking the international sanctions against Iran was uncovered. The key figure in the organized corruption ring was an Iranian man named Reza Zarrab, who allegedly







gave bribes of millions of dollars to Erdogan's ministers in return for using Halkbank and other government venues for laundering money. Reza Zarrab, who is currently in a US prison, has admitted to all these accusations, although he was cleared and released earlier by Erdogan's justice system.

As the investigation implicated Erdogan's son (Bilal), Erdogan appeared on national TV and accused members of the police force and the prosecutors of being Gülenists, and claimed the corruption investigation intended to overthrow his government. The members of the police force and the prosecutors were expelled then charged with plotting to overthrow the government. These officers of the law are still in prison today. At the time, the Opposition asked for a motion to commence an inquiry into the corruption allegations. This was rejected in the parliament with a majority of votes coming from AKP members. The Erdogan administration claimed that the millions of dollars found in shoe boxes and bathtubs were planted by the police. However, the money was eventually returned to all those who were charged and released. Four ministers were forced to resign but one of them, Erdogan Bayraktar, said, "if I am indicted for this, I will explain that I was instructed from the top." He was telling the truth as soon, after, audio recordings of

phone calls between Erdogan and his son were released. Here, Erdogan was instructing his son to clear the money from his house, which appeared on social media. It is estimated that he had around a billion dollars stashed in two large safes under his house.

Gradually, Erdogan assigned new prosecutors to the case and all the accused were found not guilty. He then accused the Hizmet Movement of establishing a parallel state. This was not enough for Erdogan as the corruption allegations had damaged his reputation and he did not have sufficient influence over the media, police force and judiciary system to change public opinion. He then made a diabolical move and released all the members of Ergenekon from prisons knowing they had the contacts he needed. Erdogan formed an alliance with the ultra-nationalists, the deep state he once considered the arch enemy. They quickly announced that the Ergenekon cases were a plot against members of the Turkish military and it was orchestrated by the Hizmet Movement.

The Hizmet Movement was referred to as the parallel state now and Erdogan had saved himself from being indicted for corruption. However, this was still not enough as they needed a major purge where all those who sympathized with the movement could be expelled from

government organizations, including the police force, army, judiciary system, media and bureaucracy.

This was the main reason that immediately after the July 15 coup attempt, 4,238 judges and prosecutors were expelled although they had nothing to do with the coup. The coup was indeed a "gift from God" for Erdogan who commenced a McCarthy style witch-hunt that resulted in the arrests of over 600,000 people, including lawyers, judges, prosecutors, businesspeople, journalists, academics, teachers, sportspersons, housewives, pregnant women, children and people in their seventies and eighties.

Hundreds have died since, in prisons or trying to abscond. Entire families with small children have drowned in Meric River trying to escape persecution. The purge continues today as everyday people are being arrested. There are even people being abducted from various countries where they had sought asylum.

Erdogan pointing his finger at the Gulen Movement on the night of the coup and mass distribution of a generic message that said "commence the purge, Gulenists will be blamed" leads us to the conclusion 'that July 15 was a planned-to-fail coup attempt orchestrated by Erdogan who used the Gulen Movement as a scapegoat.'





Russian expert:

# The Coup attempt was fabricated by Erdogan

Once the verdicts in the Akinci case were announced, the events that took place during and after July 15 began to be discussed in the Russian press in some detail. VZGLYAD, Russia's leading print media outlet, commented on the Turkish court's decision on July 2016 to sentence those who participated in the coup attempt to life imprisonment.

According to the translated news on haberrus.ru, Turkologist Gümer Isaev, Head of the Russian Current Middle East Research Center, told VZGLYAD newspaper that the coup attempt on July 15, 2016 was fabricated by Erdogan to strengthen his own position. Isaev said "After the events of 2016, a number of opposition forces were put under pressure and crushed like a cylinder. Therefore, Erdogan continues to have a monopoly in the political life of the country today."

"I think the 2016 coup attempt was fabricated by Erdogan."

Isaev, emphasizing what happened after 2016, said Erdogan staged a 'coup' in order to strengthen his own position and find an excuse to clear all



opposition in the country.

"We are still observing how large numbers of people were persecuted, whose involvement in these events is very suspicious." Isaev made the following assessment about what happened after July 15:

"Not only the army, but also all opposition forces were crushed under the pressure roller. On the pretext of preventing coups, a large-scale liquidation took place in society. We are still observing how large numbers of people are persecuted, whose involvement in these events are suspicious to say the least. All this happens with the tacit consent of society and does not cause a reaction from human rights defenders."

Isaev believes that today only a

token opposition in parliament exists in Turkey: legal and constitutional power does exist to oppose what has happened, but these mechanisms are not used effectively. He claims, "For example, candidates from a party that is not in power can win mayoral elections." The Russian expert gave examples of left-wing parties such as the Republican People's Party or Peoples' Democracy Party winning local elections. This indicates that these parties have the potential and power to do more, but sadly choose not to. Isaev also emphasizes that Erdogan continues to monopolize the political life of the country and uses various illegal means and subversion to protect his position.

"In this case, the opposition no longer needs to take initiatives to overthrow the government with a coup." Isaev states that the opposition in Turkey should find ways to come to power by using legal and constitutional mechanisms.

# Sergeant Gökhan Karabacak explains the torture he suffered at the hands of Ali Türkşen

SAT commando Gökhan Karabacak, who was detained on July 15, told of the torture he faced at the hands of retired soldier Ali Türkşen and his paramilitary unit. The Nordic Monitor news site published the statements of SAT commando Sergeant Gökhan Karabacak. According to news reports, details emerged of how retired soldiers who were once accused in the Ergenekon trials were torturing officers. SAT commando Karabacak, who was transported to Akıncı Air Base on the premise of a possible terrorist attack and was on duty guarding the runway, returned to Istanbul with someone from his unit after the runways were bombed. He returned to his unit in Istanbul after orders were issued by Lieutenant İsmet Elmas. The detention process began and continued with severe torture.

## "RETIRED SOLDIERS MET US"

Karabacak described the torture he was subjected to in his statement: It was very bizarre to see that, alongside unit personnel, retired colonel Ali Türkşen greeted me with a rifle belonging to our unit in his hands. I repeat, in 2016's Turkey, I saw a retired colonel barking orders at people in a military unit with an M16. Together with Türkşen was retired major Erme Onat, also with an M16 weapon belonging to the unit. Next to him was Erme Onat who was brandishing a wooden bat. Retired major Erten Kaya, retired non-commissioned officer Bülent Kuru and many people from Türkşen's team whose names I do not know were also in the unit.

## "THEY HAD TORTURED THE SOLDIERS AND MADE THEM LIE ON THE GROUND"

In front of the entrance of the barracks, I saw Major Murat Çetinkaya, Captain Tahsin İşlekel, Sergeants Murat Fırat and Timur Ağca lying on the ground with their hands on their



backs, in handcuffs lying on their faces; as far as I can evaluate, they had been tortured.

## "THE MOST BASIC FORM OF TORTURE WAS BEING HIT ON THE HEAD WITH A WOODEN STICK"

Before I could even utter a single word, they handcuffed and blindfolded me, obviously this was pre-planned. The torture inflicted on the people I mentioned above began to occur to me as well. These people, who were not even soldiers, who were not in any part of the Turkish Armed Forces hierarchy, tortured us for hours in a way that would

not befit humanity. The simplest of these tortures was hitting my head with a stick and being kicked countless times.

## HE IDENTIFIED HIS TORTURERS

The people who beat him with sticks were retired major Erten Kahya and retired non-commissioned officer Bülent Kuru. Those who were kicking and slapping people were Colonel Turan Ecevit, Captain Özgür Kaya, Lieutenant Ugur Günaslan and retired colonel Ali Türkşen.

## KARABACAK: THEY THREATENED TO RAPE MY WIFE

During the torture Lieutenant





## İŞKENCEYE AZMETTİRENLER



Nusret DİRİM  
VALİ



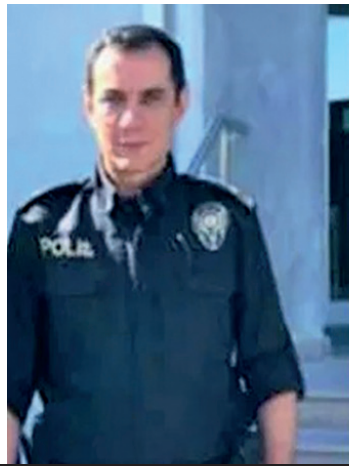
İbrahim BOZKURT  
C. Başsavcısı



İsa AYDOĞDU  
İl Emniyet Müdürü



Tolga ŞİPAHİ  
KOM Şube Müdürü



**Perpetrators of torture and those who ordered this torture, governor and prosecutors.**

Ugur Günaslan screamed at me with explicit curses, they were so personal including threats about my wife. He threatened to rape my wife. This horrendous treatment that took place in the army barracks continued at Beykoz police station.

### "THE TORTURE CONTINUED AT THE POLICE STATION"

Blindfolded and handcuffed, I was taken by the police from the barracks to a dark place at the back of Beykoz courthouse. After being grabbed by the neck and thrown from the vehicle transporting me, I was beaten for a long time by a crowded police group.

The Chief of the Public Security Bureau, Commissioner Alper Korkmaz, displayed how low and inhumane a law enforcement officer can get by telling the police to firstly get a medical report for us. Then he added "show your skills" which meant beat us up over and over. Make a medical report after the torture, so that "the whole world can see our handiwork".

### SPECIAL OPERATIONS OFFICER "RAMBO"

One of the police officers that would come and go was a special operations

officer, nicknamed Rambo. He tortured us while his colleagues supported him with chants of approval. This fake hero, who had been torturing us for days while we were handcuffed backwards, brought out gloves after a while because his hands hurt from the number of blows, he had landed.

### "A POND OF BLOOD"

He continued to strike me in this way. A short time later, my eardrums burst. Blood poured from the noses and mouths of the tortured, forming a small pond on the ground.

### KARABACAK MANAGED TO



### DOCUMENT THE TORTURE HE FACED

The SAT commando, who could not record the tortures he suffered during his first medical examination, succeeded in having some of the tortures noted in a subsequent medical examination.

Although Karabacak noted each individual soldier who tortured him at the Beykoz Police Station and Military Prosecutor Öner Şentepe and the Public Prosecutor Serkan Ağalday were fully aware of what was happening at the police station, Karabacak's application for a criminal complaint against these individuals was not accepted or processed.

### ALİ TÜRKŞEN ADMITS TO TORTURE

Torture suspect Ali Türkşen accepted the allegations of torture made against him on a CNN Türk panel he took part in and tried to justify the acts. Even Ahmet Hakan, the host of the program, had to intervene in Türkşen's efforts to justify his actions.



# I'm free but my friends still languish in Turkish jails

AHMET ALTAN

*I know that the most frightening thing on Earth is an encounter with someone who holds the power to determine your fate. I know what torment and humiliation it is that the person with that authority doesn't care about what you say. I know the sound of a flute can express unquenched longing.*

The novelist reflects on a judiciary that ignores the rights of those it imprisons.

Nothing is scarier than an encounter with the horrifying power of someone who holds your fate in his hands. That person can kill you, lock you up, send you into exile or let you go free. Regardless of the difference in outcome, to be locked up or released by such an authority is equally devastating. You don't have a say in what happens. People with such authority usually wear a robe and sit on a dais. They are called judges. You can forgive the wielding of such superhuman powers if they are used righteously. What happens, then, if the authority in question doesn't care about righteousness?

In *A Farewell to Arms* there is a scene where Hemingway describes a trial of soldiers by military judges that takes place in a cave at the time of the

defeat of the Italian army. Confident that their decisions will never affect their own destiny, the judges nonchalantly condemn people to death, then put on their caps and salute. They turn people over to the execution squad. During my long incarceration, I faced judges on many occasions. They didn't even listen to what I said. I laid out the proofs of my innocence and they kept repeating the same accusations. First, they sentenced me to life without parole, then they changed my sentence to ten and a half years and I was released. I write this as I await the decision a judge will make on the appeal of the prosecutor who objected to my release - they may send me back to prison.

I am out of the Turkish prison but thousands of innocent people are still there. For over three years, I lived in a small cell with two other inmates who had committed no crime.



AHMET ALTAN





Nobody listened to what they said. Despite pleading innocence again and again they were condemned to prison by judges not unlike those in *A Farewell to Arms*.

One of my cellmates is the same age as my son; he was newly married when they arrested him. He is religious but also interested in philosophy and science. He is amazing with his hands, making the most unlikely things with the most unlikely materials. He can turn bags of salt into dumbbells, forks into clothes pins, teaspoons into tweezers. He mixes ingredients into prison meals to invent new dishes. His name is Selman. He believes complaining is akin to arguing against God's will and he never complains. He never has visitors. He doesn't complain about that either.

One day, as I was writing my novel *Lady Life* on the plastic table, I heard music in the courtyard. The sound of a flute. I stepped out. Selman had leaned his back against the wall, closed his eyes and was playing a flute. Noises in the surrounding cells died down. Everyone listened to this unexpected music. Once the

song Selman played was over, there was a loud clatter. Pieces of candy bought at the prison commissary were being thrown into our courtyard and a request for an encore. Selman played for hours.

After the courtyard door was locked, I asked him where he found that flute. He had made it using the cardboard pages of a calendar. Lacking a measuring tape, he had to estimate the distance between each hole; he turned the top of a plastic bottle into the mouthpiece.

No other instrument on Earth could match the sound of that flute. It had a strange tone, a low pitch. Selman never missed a note. He not only played ballads, he played happy tunes too, but now and again his flute would shift towards sorrow.

I was released from the prison one midnight and people asked how I was. People wanted to hear the joy a person felt in his first moment of freedom after years. I said I was a bit sad. I had left behind thousands of innocent people, including Selman. I lacked the power to save them and nobody listened to what they said. Not only the judges but a very large

part of society has turned into those men in the cave, perfunctorily sentencing others to death. They put on their caps, salute, send the person off to face the execution squad and turn to their next victim.

Once you have seen that cave, witnessed the suffering of innocent people and once you have listened to the cardboard flute, you can't possibly be ecstatic about leaving prison. You feel like an accessory to a terrible crime. As a prisoner, you are the victim of injustice; once you leave, you become an accomplice.

I know that the most frightening thing on Earth is an encounter with someone who holds the power to determine your fate. I know what torment and humiliation it is that the person with that authority does not care about what you say. I know the sound of a flute can express unquenched longing.

I also know it is possible that they will rearrest me. But Selman is already under arrest. He is my son's age. He makes dumbbells from salt. He has no visitors. He never complains. He just leans against the wall and plays his flute. **K24**



German  
intelligence  
expert Erich  
Schmitdt:

# Erdogan planned the coup attempt



During a discussion program aired on German television channel ZDF, Intelligence Specialist Erich Schmitdt-Eenboom claimed that the July 15 coup attempt was of Recep Tayyip Erdogan's making. Schmitdt-Eenboom stated "according to CIA analysis the so-called coup attempt was carried out by Erdogan to prevent a real coup. The BND (German intelligence), CIA (US intelligence) and other Western Intelligence services do not see the slightest possibility

that the coup attempt was carried out by Gülen." In response to the host's question of "Why is Erdogan making this claim?" he replied, "Because this is the most suitable way to both criminalize and eliminate them." Erich Schmitdt-Eenboom then said "the CIA and other intelligence services are capable of infiltrating even the most secret communication systems, and according to the information they have obtained, July 15th was fabricated, a so-called coup".

The Head of the German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution stated that:

"There is no other state that believes that the Gülen Movement is behind the coup attempt other than Turkey."

Hans-Georg Maaßen, speaking to the German news agency DPA, described the current situation between Turkish and German security organizations as "difficult, very difficult".

According to DW Turkish; Speaking at the CeBIT IT fair in Hannover, Maaßen stated that the evidence for the Turkish government's accusations against people alleged to be close to the Gülen Movement is insufficient. The President of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution said, "I think no one outside of Turkey believes that the Gülen organization is responsible for the coup attempt. At least, I don't know anyone who lives outside of Turkey and is convinced by the Turkish government."

On a question about "spying between friends," Maaßen said, "In the intelligence service, there are no friends, there are partners, and it is often personal relationships that are decisive."

## AKP's Emre Cemil Ayvalı: "We had the Gülen Movement and Kemalists hurt each other"

AKP's Vice President of Promotion and Media Emre Cemil Ayvalı: We made the Kemalists hurt each other with "FETO"! Ayvalı, who was a guest of Ahmet Hakan's 'Neutral Zone' program on CNN Türk, admitted that the AKP had worked together with the Gülen Movement in the field of bureaucracy. He said, "AKP came to power in 2002. The year

is either 2007/2008. For me to appoint one undersecretary, this man has to complete 12 years as a general manager. On the one hand, there was the putschist Islamist tradition; on the other, there was 'FETO'. We had to move forward by having them fight each other. That was the issue." After this statement Ayvalı announced his resignation from his position in the AKP.





The tortures of July 15:

# Female and male officers were raped

The Nordic Monitor continues to publish court statements from tortured soldiers. In his 18-page statement, Lieutenant Abdulvahap Berke described the tortures he experienced and witnessed in detail.

Lieutenant Abdulvahap Berke disclosed the details of tortures that were being kept hidden due to social pressure and fears that those who were tortured would face even more difficult scenarios. He stated that a female officer was raped and had to abort her child. Berke also claimed that a male officer was raped.

It is understood that the torture and ill-treatment had started when Berke surrendered voluntarily on the day after July 15. His clothes were taken off and he was laid on hot asphalt. This treatment reached unbearable proportions in the detention center.

## BERKE'S STATEMENT;

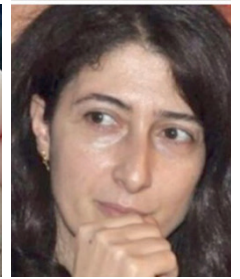
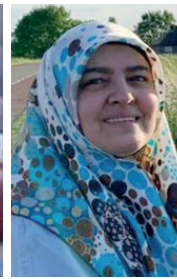
They started kicking and slapping us, our hands were handcuffed behind our backs. People who saw us outside started to stone the bus with cobblestones. The windows of the bus were broken. We had stones and broken glass showered over us.

A piece of glass got stuck in the head of the person sitting next to me, this is how he completed the detention process. While in prison, he went to the hospital and had the glass piece removed from his head.

As we got out of the bus and walked towards the building, we were beaten and attacked by people who surrounded us. As a result of these blows, I had fractures to my teeth, nose and ribs.

The next day the police officers who were supervising us could not enter the detention room due to the smell of blood. They brought cleaning supplies and had us clean the detention room.

One of the pilots among us had his head knocked against the wall and was unconscious. My urine turned the color of blood because of thirst. Two police



who took me to make my statement hit my head and kicked my feet. Generals were stripped naked and forced to walk in front of other people present to humiliate them. They tried to force those who did not want to look and who bowed their heads in front of them by slapping them in the face. At the same time, they sexually harassed a general by putting the baton between his legs.

## FEMALE TORTURE

They stripped a group of women down to their underwear and placed them in the same environment as the men. They were constantly harassed and insulted by the officers on duty.

Do you know that one of the female officers was raped and had to abort her child? I call out to those who defend women's rights and to those who stand together against rape and harassment. Why did they remain silent and continue to do so against these heartbreaking events?

## IT'S NOT RAPE, IT'S HARASSMENT!

A case relating to the Guard Regiment, I know the name of an individual, but I don't want to give it away. This man puts forward his defense before the court: "They took me to the

anti-terror branch, I was ordered into a room, and they raped me."

The man presiding over the court did not believe this. "Did they harass you?" he asked. In other words, he finds harassment normal. The defendant says, "No sir, they raped me" and retells the situation with tears in his eyes, emphasizing that he had been raped repeatedly.

## THREATENING WIVES AND CHILDREN

Special Forces torture chambers are set up under the command of Zekai Aksakallı and Oğuz Tozak. They threatened the wives and daughters of people they had worked with for years. No action has been taken so far regarding the tortures committed on July 15. No criminal complaint was filed against the torturers recorded in court by defendants. With Decree No. 667, all crimes committed under the pretext of protecting the state were left unpunished.

Torture cases filed against torturers in various provinces of Turkey, especially in Istanbul, were rejected and it was decided not to prosecute victims of torture on the grounds of statutory decrees.



# A regime that murdered Kabakçioğlu and Açıkkollu!

A scandal in Gümüşhane Prison. It was revealed that Mustafa Kabakçioğlu, who was expelled from the police force with a decree, died suspiciously in prison sitting on a plastic chair.

Kabakçioğlu, 44, was found dead on a plastic chair in a dilapidated, filthy cell in a so-called quarantine where he was held alone, 4 months before his release date.

In fact, he died on August 29. The public learned that he died, how he died, how he was kept in a cell, thanks to photographs that emerged 48 days later.

He was arrested on July 26, 2016, while he was a deputy commissioner.

He was expelled with a statutory decree on September 1, 2016.

Among the charges against him were donations to 'Kimse Yok Mu', a Turkish charity. He donated 5 TL to this association and canceled his subscription to Dijitürk.

Ömer Faruk Gergerlioglu, HDP Kocaeli Deputy and a member of the Parliamentary Human Rights Investigation Commission, pursued all violations of human rights in Turkey no matter the background or



political affiliation. (Unfortunately, he has been unlawfully imprisoned at the moment.) He also pursued Kabakçioğlu's death at the time.

Gergerlioglu shed light on the violations and maltreatment that Kabakçioğlu faced.

There were 13 people staying in an 8-person ward. He wrote in his diary that he was having trouble breathing and even moving.

His health was deteriorating day by day. He was not allowed to see a

doctor for regular checkups.

He was frequently hospitalized, and he was experiencing rights violations while going to the hospital.

The blanket and pillow he bought with his own money were taken from him during a search of the ward.

## FROM COMMISSIONER MUSTAFA'S DIARY...

Kabakçioğlu wrote in his diary:

"What is this? Cruelty, cruelty, cruelty.

And that's not enough, after the search, the same officer opens the ward door and threatens us again."

Gergerlioglu says, "This is a suspicious death."

Let's summarize what Kabakçioğlu had been through in the last 9 days from Gergerlioglu's narration:

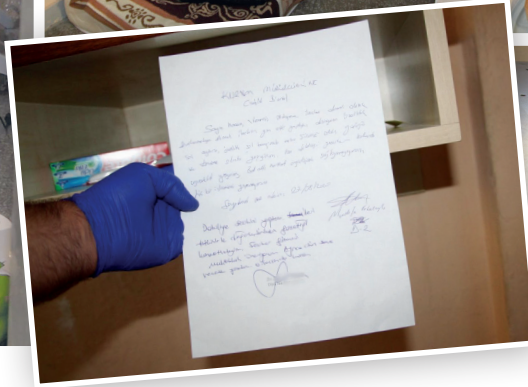
- On August 20, his health deteriorates. Kabakçioğlu says that he wants to go to the hospital. But he is not taken to the hospital. He is not taken back to his ward.

As part of COVID measures, he is taken to a solitary cell for 14-day quarantine. However, he did not go out, did not go to the hospital, and did not even have a COVID test.

-Prison officials tell his family that he first went to the hospital on August 20. Then change the story and say he didn't go to the hospital







- On August 20, he changed his mind after getting in the ambulance, he went back to his ward.

- On August 24, Kabakçioğlu says he wants to go to the hospital again. And he still isn't allowed to go. Although his condition is quite bad, he is taken back to the cell.

- On August 27, he completely deteriorates and writes a petition to the doctor, it says; "Dear Sir, I used the drugs you gave me all the time, but I think that the drugs have side effects, especially as I have swelling in the left of my mouth and left leg, I have trouble speaking and I have numbness, I have numbness in my arm, I have numbness in my lower back, my lower body does not function properly."

The infirmary doctor who visits him writes the following note under his petition: "I made the referral to internal medicine, I think that he should be referred for a consultation where he should be evaluated with further examinations, he should definitely go to the hospital."

But he is not taken to the hospital again. Prison administration claims

that Kabakçioğlu was put in an ambulance. A report stating this has been placed in his file.

However, there is no petition or signature in the file that states Kabakçioğlu has visited the hospital, nor decided to not go.

"This place is a closed box," says Gergerlioğlu. He describes Kabakçioğlu's treatment as a "scandal" "who should actually be in intensive care," continued to be kept in solitary confinement.

Gülizar Biçer Karaca, Deputy Chairman of the CHP for Human Rights, submitted a parliamentary question asking the Minister of Justice Abdülhamit Gül to answer.

He asked if there was any negligence by the guards and attendants in regards to Kabakçioğlu's treatment.

Gül appointed 2 ministry inspectors to investigate Kabakçioğlu's death.

Investigators will examine whether there was negligence in the incident.

There are dozens of unanswered questions about Mustafa Kabakçioğlu's death.

The statement by the Chief Public Prosecutor's Office that "he refused

to go to the hospital" is not credible because it is seen in published documents that Kabakçioğlu repeatedly asked for a referral to the hospital.

It is also claimed the report kept in prison is retrospectively dated.

### THIS IS NOT THE FIRST MURDER!

Prosecutors were more interested in pursuing those who published the photos, not the suspects in the death.

Mustafa Kabakçioğlu is not the first person to be arrested as part of the investigations against the Hizmet Movement and to die suspiciously in custody or in prison.

Halime Gülsu, Zeki Güven, Cengiz Karakurt, İsmail Hıta, Muzafer Özcengiz, Kemal Bilici, Mevlüt Öztaş, Fatih Terzioğlu, Haluk Savaş, Kadir Eyce, Nesrin Gençosmanoğlu, Gökhan Açikkolu.

All these are names of people who died in custody or in prison. All were tortured while in detention.

To date, none of these suspicious deaths have been identified.

It is not even known what stage the investigations are at.

Those who show up to investigate or ask questions are punished.



Mevlüt Öztaş



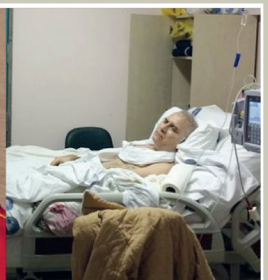
Mustafa Barış Avialan



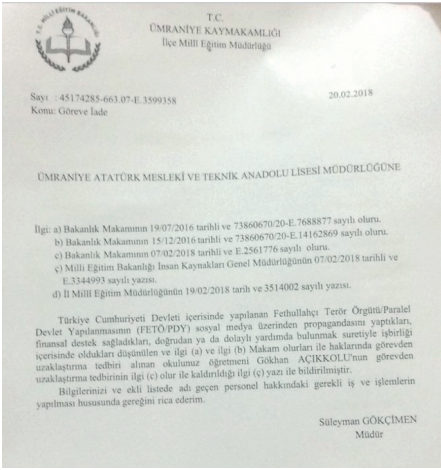
Halime Gülsu



Mustafa Erdoğan







## GÖKHAN AÇIKKOLU TORTURED TO DEATH

While there are many doubts, negligence and unknown's surrounding this case, the prosecutor's office has a more important job: to pursue those who leaked photos to the press and social media.

Why?

They claim that "this type of news is deliberately made by marginalized groups in order to cause public indignation."

Just like the statement made by the prosecutor's office after the death of teacher Gökhan Açıkkollu, who died as a result of a heart attack after being tortured in prison.

Açıkkollu was detained after being taken from his home in Istanbul. He was a diabetic.

He was a history teacher who died after being tortured and arrested on the grounds that he was involved in the coup.

Açıkkollu was tortured for 13 days.

His head was hit against the walls, his ribs were broken, he was tortured with truncheons. He fell into a diabetic coma twice.

And on the 13th day, he died of a heart attack in a 6 square meter cell that he shared with 4 other prisoners, unable to stand the torture he was subjected to.

It turned out that he was only allowed to use 4 of the 100 insulin injections his family delivered to the police for him to use.

## HE WAS UNABLE TO USE HIS MEDICATION

If this was not enough, the coroner said that his body would be given to his family on the condition that he was buried in the traitors' cemetery.



The family took him from the coroner by their own means so his funeral could be in his hometown in Konya.

The mosque imam did not lead the funeral prayer due to the directive of the Presidency of Religious Affairs that "the prayers of traitors should not be performed".

He was not tried, he was not even interrogated, only tortured. A year and a half after his death, the state of Turkey informed his wife that Gökhan was free and could return to his teaching position.

## WE CAN'T BREATHE!

Mustafa Kabakçıoğlu's health problems started 7 months after he was imprisoned.

He writes in his diary on March 3, 2017 that his mental and physical health are not good.

He states that he could not reach

health services, could not tell anyone about his problems, and that his psychology was broken: "We live with 13 people in the 8-person ward. We can't breathe."

## GOING FROM 90 TO 50 KG

Mustafa lost 40 kilos during his stay in prison.

On March 4, 2017 he writes about his feelings: "I will hold accountable those who wronged me in God's court."

Because I do not and will not forgive those people who did this.

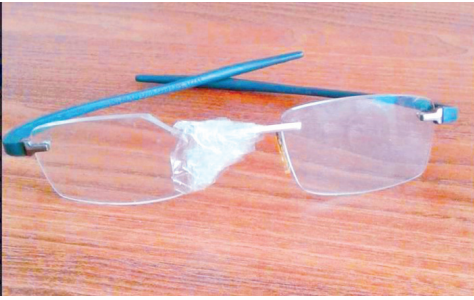
Cruelty, cruelty, cruelty...

If the oppressor has oppression, the poor have God.

There are no documents to defend myself, how will I defend myself? Justice is justice...

One day will you need this kind of justice?"





## EXPLANATION AFTER 48 DAYS

Photos in the file regarding Mustafa Kabakçioğlu's death further increased suspicions.

Following the photographs Boldmedya revealed, the Office of the Chief Public Prosecutor had to make a statement 48 days after the incident.

In the statement, it was claimed that Kabakçioğlu did not want to go to the hospital in his petition on August 27.

However, there is no signature by Kabakçioğlu on the petition in question!

In addition, Kabakçioğlu has repeatedly petitioned for his referral to the hospital.

There are many notes on this in his diaries.

In addition, there are no camera

records of Kabakçioğlu's death!

## WHY IS THE CHAIR IN FRONT OF THE DOOR?

According to the photographs, Mustafa Kabakçioğlu dies sitting on a white plastic chair.

It's not normal for the chair to be in the middle of the room.

There are two possibilities. Either he was placed into that chair after he died, or he pressed the help button because he got sick and waited for the guards to open the door.

Considering that dinner was also not eaten, the second possibility is that Kabakçioğlu asked for help in the evening hours.

If so, why wasn't he checked until 05:45 the next day?

## THEY ARE TRYING TO SAVE THEMSELVES

Public Prosecutor Dr. Hasan Dursun also explains that Mustafa Kabakçioğlu's death is suspicious. "It is unusual for the death to be detected at 05:45 because there is no routine check on the wards at that time. It is unusual for the deceased to write an opinion on a petition written and that petition returned to the prisoner. Normally, a petition is received and a photocopy is given to the owner when necessary. The content of the report kept by the guards regarding the incident gives the impression of an effort by those responsible to save themselves and cover it up. The fact that the report in prison is dated August 27, 2020 and its content makes us think that this report was dated after the reported date." **TRUTH**

# Kurdish villagers allegedly thrown from helicopter were assaulted by a mob of soldiers, opposition deputy's research reveals

**S**ervet Turgut and Osman Şiban, two Kurdish villagers allegedly thrown from a military helicopter in the southeastern province of Van, were in fact assaulted by a mob of more than 100 soldiers, a report by independent deputy and investigative journalist Ahmet Şık revealed.

Initial reporting on the incident by rights groups and media outlets cited a medical report giving the reason for their admission to the hospital as a “fall from a helicopter.”

According to Şık, the villagers were in fact thrown out of the helicopter but only after it had landed. The claim that they were thrown out of helicopter when it was airborne was based on an “official lie” told by the gendarmes to cover their crimes.

Şık's research revealed that gendarmes in civilian clothes took Turgut and Şiban to two separate hospitals and told the doctors that the two were terrorists who clashed with them and later jumped out of a helicopter when they were being transported after detention.

Hospital personnel later recorded this account as the cause of hospitalization as “fall from a height” and “fall from a helicopter.” According to Şık, the lie became widespread because the rights activists and lawyers who spoke to the press thought the victims had in fact been thrown from a helicopter.

In a statement on September 21, the Van Governor's Office had denied the torture and claimed the villagers were hospitalized after they fell from a cliff while running away from security forces despite an order to halt.

Şiban was discharged from the hospital on September 20 and later received a medical report stating that he was not able to provide an official statement to the authorities, according to Turkish Minute.



On September 30, 55-year-old Servet Turgut, a father of seven, succumbed to his injuries in the Van Regional Teaching and Research Hospital's intensive care unit.

According to Şiban, who had suffered partial memory loss due to his injuries, a group of Turkish soldiers had detained him and Turgut in the Van countryside on September 11 and taken them to the Van Gendarmerie Command by helicopter.

Speaking to the Mesopotamia News Agency, Şiban's brother Cengiz claimed that both victims were taken by gendarmes in view of all the villagers, who were forced to remain on their knees during the detention of the two men. Cengiz added, while they were being taken away, villagers who tried

to follow them were threatened with death by the soldiers.

On the way, Şiban says, soldiers had shown him the dead body of a militant, purportedly a member of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), claiming that Şiban knew him. When he said he didn't recognize the body, he was battered by the soldiers.

Şiban recalls one voice saying, “Don't hit the elderly one [Servet Turgut], he might die.”

“The helicopter landed. I saw many soldiers out there. Maybe 100 or 150 soldiers were there; they were armed and ready. They first threw the dead bodies [of militants] out of the helicopter, and then us,” Şiban was quoted as saying in narrating the incident.

“I heard someone shouting, ‘This terrorist is still alive!’ Then all the soldiers mobbed us. Ten or 20 of them came for each of us. I don't know what they did to us. I don't know what they did to me. They threw us on the ground and then started hitting us. ‘Terrorists,’ they called us as they battered us. We are villagers; we are citizens. I don't know how long it went on. I passed out.”

“The fact that Van's top military commanders waited in front of the Van Council of Forensic Medicine for the autopsy of Servet Turgut is very telling,” Şık's report said. “Were you there to cover up your crimes?”

“Although it has been 53 days since the incident, instead of identifying the perpetrators of this torture, the fact that journalists who reported on the incident were arrested is evidence of this coverup. Surprise us if we are wrong,” Şık concluded.

Four journalists were arrested on October 9 over their reports on the incident on charges of disseminating propaganda on behalf of the PKK. 





## 2 Kurdish farmers detained by soldiers pushed out of helicopter, witnesses claim

*The Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) had confirmed in two reports published on August 5 the continued existence of ill-treatment, torture, informal questioning and restricted access to a lawyer as well as a fundamentally flawed medical screening system in Turkish detention facilities.*

Two farmers who were detained by soldiers while working on their farm were pushed out of a helicopter on September 11, in the southeastern city of Van, witnesses claimed.

According to reports in Turkish media, their families could not find the farmers for two days. They were later located in the intensive care unit of Van Regional Teaching and Research Hospital. The farmers were identified as Servet Turgut (55) and Osman Şiban (50).

In a series of tweets, pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) deputy Murat Sarısaç said Turgut and Şiban were manhandled and forced into the helicopter, citing witnesses. According to Sarısaç, both victims were unconscious when they were brought to the hospital. Turgut is currently intubated and is in critical condition. A note in his health report says, "Unknown patient hospitalized due to falling from a height."

The Mesopotamia News Agency reported, based on a health report, that both of Şiban's eyes were bruised, swelling was observed on his head, neck and face caused by trauma, and he had spat up blood. Şiban's condition is said to be serious but improving, and he is conscious.


HDP deputy Sarısaç said, even if the farmers had not been pushed out of a helicopter, it is still clear that they were

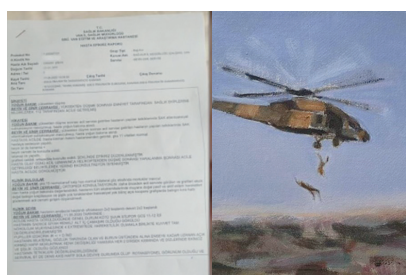
tortured to such an extent that they lost consciousness and were later brought to the hospital.

In a parliamentary question to Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu, Sarısaç said the policy of impunity that protected security forces involved in wrongdoing had led to this and similar incidents. He asked if any investigations had been launched into the incident and what precautions were being taken to prevent similar incidents from taking place in the future.

The Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) had confirmed in two reports published on August 5 the continued existence of ill-treatment, torture, informal questioning and restricted access to a lawyer as well as a fundamentally flawed medical screening system in Turkish detention facilities.

Ill-treatment and torture are resorted to with a view to extracting a confession or obtaining information or as a punishment, the CPT had found.

The CPT, a body combatting torture and other ill-treatment through periodic or unannounced visits to places of detention of member states, made its reports along with the responses of the Turkish authorities public with the permission of the Turkish government. 



# Pro-Kurdish HDP at center of Erdoğan's crackdown and world of hate



ALIN OZINIAN

A gunman stormed a local office of Turkey's pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) in the western city of Izmir and shot dead a 38-year-old woman last week. The victim was a party official covering a janitorial shift for her mother at the office.

HDP co-leader Mithat Sancar said a planned meeting of 40 officials at the office had been called off for unrelated reasons moments before the attack. "The plan here was clear, what they wanted was a massacre," Sancar told reporters.

The HDP, the second-largest opposition party in the Turkish parliament, has faced a widespread government crackdown, with party members accused of supporting the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) militant group.

It is important to add that President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and its election partner, the ultranationalist Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), and their party members have frequently labeled HDP leaders, members and supporters as terrorists.

Hundreds of HDP politicians, including the party's former co-chairs, are behind bars on terrorism charges, while most of the 65 HDP mayors elected in the predominantly Kurdish Southeast in 2019 have been replaced by government-appointed trustees.



Ali Duran Topuz, editor-in-chief of the *Duvar* daily, thinks what is happening in Turkey right now is a result of the hate speech directed at the HDP and its members.

According to Topuz the hateful rhetoric employed by Turkey's ruling AKP and its partner the MHP targeting the HDP laid the groundwork for the fatal attack.

"Some people in Turkey see the PKK and HDP as one and the same, the main reason for which is this discourse constantly expressed at all levels of government. Ultranationalist MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli sings the same song day and night. This is why HDP buildings are frequently the subjects of physical attacks," said Topuz, in an interview with *Turkish Minute*.

HDP Istanbul MP Hüda Kaya thinks the government is the main party responsible for the murder of Poyraz.

"The attack is an effort to cover up the AKP's own disgrace and criminal relations with gangs and the mafia. If the opposition really wants to oppose, they must expose the state's dirty relations. If they want to save the country from the AKP, all opposition parties, regardless

of ideology, should stand with the HDP to learn the real facts behind Deniz's murder," Kaya told *Turkish Minute*.

Topuz thinks HDP offices are under constant surveillance and that such an attack is not an easy job, so some people necessarily think this attack and murder are too complicated to solve.

"In any attack against the HDP, the state routine includes stories about 'the reaction to terrorism' and 'the individual has no relations with any group,' but these approaches are never adequate for the reality. Those attacks were always carefully planned," said Topuz.

The ruling AKP's official spokesman called the incident a provocation aimed at disrupting Turkey's peace and security. "We condemn the attack and the murder that occurred at the HDP Izmir office," AKP spokesman Ömer Çelik said.

While the opposition parties and AKP condemned the attack, MHP leader Bahçeli claimed the murdered woman was responsible for recruiting militants for the PKK. "I'll tell you who Poyraz was. She was a militia collaborator," Bahçeli told MHP members during a parliamentary group meeting on June 22.





The ultranationalist politician claimed that Poyraz was in the circle that sent those who wanted to join the PKK to militant camps. “A militia collaborator is a terrorist that aids the organization’s treacherous attacks,” Bahçeli said and also claimed that the murder was carried out to “make the HDP seem innocent” and blame the Turkish state.

According to Kaya, HDP members do not know where and when the attacks will come, but they always assume they will know who the perpetrators are.

“What happened was not a surprise. Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu has transformed the Interior Ministry into a center of organized crime. Haters, including him, are responsible for Deniz’s murder. Haters are the main shooters, the main perpetrators. It’s just that clear,” she said.

“Don’t pay any attention to the fact that the police arrested the alleged shooter. They are shamelessly protecting him, and they will continue to do so. Tomorrow they will say the assailant was drunk, mad, insane or sick. Those who are backing the perpetrator today are the ones who encouraged him yesterday.”

Turkish media reported that the suspect claimed to have been sent to Syria by the Turkish state, sharing pictures on social media of him posing with Kalashnikov rifles and Turkish flags. Meanwhile, the Izmir Governor’s Office

said the alleged assailant had “resigned as a health worker” in Turkey.

Kaya is warning the opposition parties that what happened to the HDP today could happen to other opposition parties in the future.

“Something is very clear; the attack was aimed at suppressing all opposition parties through the HDP. If we all don’t say ‘stop’ to these attacks, they will continue,” said Kaya.

Turkey’s Constitutional Court on June 21, soon after the attack, accepted an indictment filed by a senior prosecutor seeking the closure of the HDP for alleged ties to the PKK.

Immediately after the decision was announced, HDP Co-Chairs Sancar and Pervin Buldan held a press conference and said, “The indictment filed against the HDP does not have any ‘legal value’.”

Sancar reminded that the top court had the opportunity to reject the indictment, adding: “There were sufficient legal and ethical reasons to do so. The closure case was filed following a months-long political campaign.”

“The government, and especially its partner the MHP, and pro-government groups as a whole have targeted the HDP for months. They made statements on various platforms, portraying the HDP as an enemy; they issued threats, and ultimately a senior prosecutor asked the Constitutional Court to close down the HDP,” said Sancar.

According to Topuz, after the attack

and murder at the HDP office in Izmir, the government immediately began signaling its strategy to absolve itself of any responsibility. Topuz thinks it’s obvious that they want people to think this was not an organized political act but a hate crime.

“The attacker said he has no connection to anyone. He entered the building because he hated the PKK and fired at random. His ‘emotional motivation’ was made public by the pro-government media,” Topuz said, and added: “Pay attention - he did not say he hates the HDP or the Kurds, he said he hates the PKK. Before the prosecution begins, even before the investigation, these are clear indications of how the murder is going to be approached from a legal perspective.”

Topuz thinks official statements and developments such as the leaking of the suspect’s statements during police interrogation remind him of a wave of violence that occurred after the June 7, 2015 elections, when the AKP lost its majority, including the Suruç and Ankara train station attacks, when dozens of people lost their lives.

“Political leaders and opinion leaders are coming to a parting of the ways. They can choose to raise a collective voice against the government and its dirty policies and demand democracy and transparency, or accept it and go along with the hostile, cheap and bloody acts of the ‘murderous front.’ There’s no other way...” **Turkishminute**



# The tragic stories of Cengiz Aytmatov and Selman/s



**ENES CANSEVER**

*We are witnessing a genocide, like the one committed by Stalin in the early 20th century. Erdoğan's political Islamists and Perinçek's Maoists are walking in the footsteps of Stalin. This is not an exaggeration...*

**S**elman drew his last breath without seeing his father. He departed from a world transformed into a dungeon by tyrants, with an innocent look on his face.

Selman Çalışkan was only seven when his body succumbed to the tumour in his brain.

His tiny heart could not tolerate the suffering inflicted on his parents and himself.

It stopped twice before he died.

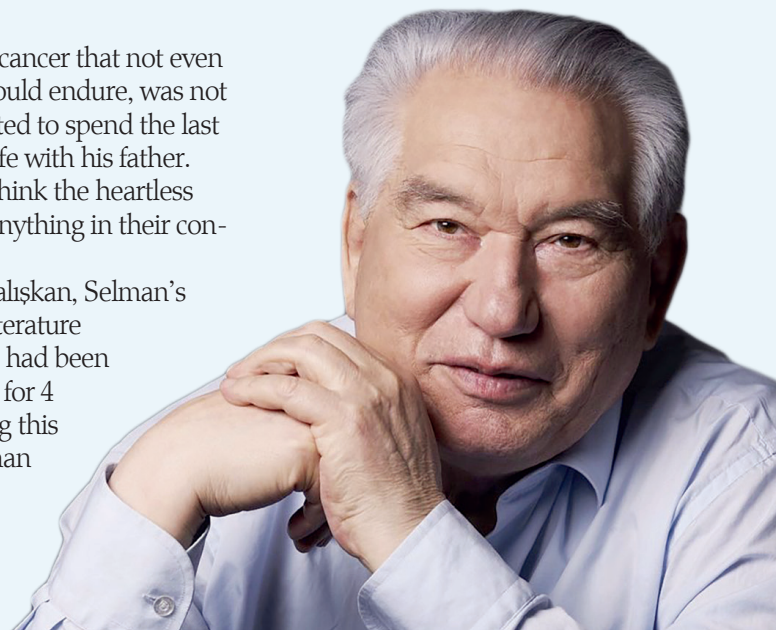
He flapped his wings towards his father whose freedom had been taken away by heartless rulers.

This child, who was battling

the pains of cancer that not even grownups could endure, was not even permitted to spend the last days of his life with his father.

Do you think the heartless tyrants felt anything in their conscience?

Rasim Çalışkan, Selman's father, is a literature teacher who had been incarcerated for 4 years. During this period, Selman developed brain cancer.







### **LIVES LOST IN THE AEGEAN SEA AND MERIC RIVER**

Total barbarianism...

They caused Furkan's death by not allowing him to leave for treatment in Europe.

When the Maden family tried to flee from oppression, their father Hüseyin, a physics teacher, along with his 3 children, Nadire (13), Nur (10) and Feridun (7), drowned in the Aegean Sea. Feridun's little body has never been found.

They said, "serves them right" with no sign of sympathy...

Ahmet Ataç, Ali Yekta, Furkan, Ayşe and Selman were some of the lives lost to cancer caused by the grave suffering inflicted by the Erdogan regime...

We are witnessing a genocide, like the one committed by Stalin in the early 20th century.

Erdoğan's political Islamists and Perinçek's Maoists are walking in the footsteps of Stalin.

This is not an exaggeration...

One of the major genocides in modern human history occurred during the time of Stalin. Civilians were massacred by the state during an operation that they called "the great cleansing."

Hundreds and thousands of ci-

vilians who were declared enemies of the Soviet Union became the victims of this political genocide.

Joseph Stalin, who was a Georgian communist revolutionary, committed mass atrocities in Central Asia.

He ordered the killing of many Kazak and Kyrgyz intellectuals who were known as 'Bilge' or 'Dahi'.

They were slaughtered and buried in unknown locations.

The so-called 'Political Repression' was a great tragedy where thinkers, intellectuals, scholars, and scientists were eliminated.

The only justification for this ethnic cleansing was "they refused to embrace the Soviet ideology".

Everyone who opposed the new regime was a target.

Stalin inflicted suffering on millions of human beings.

He punished thousands of people based on his prejudgment and biases, without any evidence.

For this reason, the month of October is considered a time of grievance in many countries that were part of the old Soviet Union.

Each year, millions of people commemorate the 40 million lives lost during Stalin's rule.

### **AYTMATOV BECOMES AN ORPHAN**

That day, the world-renowned Kyrgyz author explained his story with tears in his eyes.

I remember other journalists and authors listening to his story with tears in their eyes as well. He explained how intellectuals were eliminated by Stalin.

After his father Torekul was killed, his mother Nagima raised young Cengiz who was orphaned in 1937. The Stalin regime took his father from him when he was only 9. I remember how I was deeply affected after reading his life story from his book "Mother Earth".

Stalin killed Torekul during the Kyrgyz genocide, after accusing him of being a Kyrgyz nationalist. He did not even return the body to his family for a proper burial. Cengiz's uncle was also killed by Stalin.

In fact, more than 4.000 Kyrgyz intellectuals were slaughtered by Stalin.

Aytmatov had an extremely difficult childhood as, in addition to the pain and suffered during the genocide, he also experienced the harsh conditions of World War.





### POSTMAN, THE BEARER OF BAD NEWS

After he completed high school Aytmatov became a postman. As he was among the few in the village who knew how to read and write, he not only delivered the mail but also read it for them.

After a while, whenever they saw Aytmatov coming with the mail in his bag, people would burst into tears, knowing that they had lost another family member.

He is not a postman anymore, but a bearer of news of the casualties of war.

Aytmatov relates the story of the tags of the soldiers who lost their lives and how they were brought to the village, in his 'Mother Earth'.

He explains that cries would rise from family homes upon seeing the postman approach.

He says the state had not only taken his father away from him but also stopped him from continuing his education.

They had prevented him from completing his doctorate.

The Soviet police were always on the watch for the Aytmatov family.

Does it not sound like the witch-hunt we are witnessing in Turkey today?

Aytmatov, though, never gave up on his dreams.

His long struggle resulted in worldwide success in literature.

When he died at the age of 76, he had left behind 128 books, which were translated into 176 languages.

During the 1990s, Gorbachev started a movement called Glasnost (openness) and Perestroika (reformation), which tolerated the disclosure of atrocities committed by the Stalin regime. The entire world learned about the pain and suffering endured by people behind the Iron Curtain.





Filmmaker, journalist and writer Lorentzen:

# “Western intelligence services know everything about Erdogan but keep quiet”



*Jørgen Lorentzen: “I’ve spoken with different intelligence services in Norway, Germany, and the EU. All of them say that they don’t believe Fethullah Gulen was behind the coup.”*

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**AYDOĞAN VATANDAŞ**  
**POLİTURCO**

In this interview, Jørgen Lorentzen, explains how the idea to make a documentary about a coup attempt in Turkey came to his mind. Since he is married to a Turkish woman, he is already an insider. He followed Turkish politics for years as a journalist and a scholar. However, this simply is not enough to decide to make a documentary about the coup attempt in Turkey. A journalist needs a driving force that triggers his enthusiasm to investigate a subject, to make in-depth research and ask questions that others do not. As he was in Turkey for a vacation during the coup, he witnessed many strange things about the coup which did not match previous coups that had occurred in Turkey.

“It was all very chaotic. The Turkish people I spoke to after the coup also experienced it as very chaotic, and they really did not understand what was happening. Late in the evening, from 12:30 am and onwards only one person was to be seen on television, Erdogan. In present FaceTime, he was the one speaking and talking about the fact that he knew who the coup plotters were. So, you know from that time on, things started to calm down and, in a sense, we started to understand that nothing more will happen. Even though we followed





## THE ERDOGAN GOVERNMENT AND CONTROL OF MEDIA

By using 30 TV channels and more than 30 daily newspapers controlled by the Government, all dissidents, especially members of the Gulen Movement and political figures of Kurdish politics, were turned into enemies in the eyes of the public.



the developments for a couple of hours with family and friends, one of the older members of the family said that “I experienced several coups in Turkey, this is not a coup.” My brain started working and seeing that there is something really strange happening here.”

As a foreign investigative filmmaker, journalist and writer, Lorentzen began to ask questions and tried to find answers about the coup. He said Erdogan’s, “A Gift from God” explanation doesn’t give a satisfactory answer about how and why the coup happened.

I know you with your documentary “A Gift from God”. First, I want to ask you how the idea to make a documentary about a military coup attempt in Turkey came to your mind. Were you interested in Turkish

politics?

I think we have to start from the beginning because I am married to a Turkish woman and this means that Turkey is my second country. I have been to Turkey many times over the last 20 years. I lived there from time to time with our children and they have a close relationship to the country, people, culture, and delicious food. So, I am very familiar with Turkish people and culture. We went to Turkey for a holiday in 2016 as we did many times before over a 20 year period.

So, were you in Turkey during the coup in 2016?

Yes, we were there.

So, you saw the coup?

We were there but we really did not see it because we were not either in Ankara or Istanbul. We were at

our holiday home, which is not far from Istanbul. We received a phone call from my wife’s close relative. We were told that “something strange is happening in Ankara. Fighter jets are flying low over the city.” We turned on the television and heard news about the coup attempt in the evening.

What triggered you to make a documentary about the failed military coup? Was it newsworthy enough to make a documentary about it?

I have been working as an academic researcher and journalist for many years. I have written many articles on Turkish politics for Norwegian papers. I also have done many interviews with different authors and activists from Turkey and published them. So, I know a great deal about Turkish politics...The Turkish dias-





## WOMEN IN JAILS

There are almost 10,000 women who are victims of Erdogan's post-coup campaign in Turkish prisons. According to open source information, over 100 women in the maternity ward were unlawfully detained immediately after giving birth and sent to prison with their babies. According to open source data, 174 pregnant women and women with babies were detained.



pora heard rumors about the coup attempt. They could read and listen to news six months before the coup attempt and expect something could happen and then something happened. So, we followed up the news about the coup attempt from different TV channels and tried to understand what was going on. As it is known, the coup leaders wanted to take control of the media first and then arrest the politicians. Following this, they would appear on the media and declare that the military has taken control of the country. However, we did not see any of that.

### What do you mean?

As we switched between different TV channels, we didn't see any military leader taking over the media or arresting politicians.

It was very chaotic. I spoke to Turkish friends right after the coup attempt. They also experienced it as very chaotic, and they did not understand what was happening. Then, late in the evening, from 12:30 am on, the only person we saw on television was Erdogan via FaceTime. He was the one talking about the fact he knew who the coup plotters were.

After Erdogan talked and appeared, the situation calmed down. Then we understood that nothing else is going to happen. One of the elders among my wife's family said "I witnessed many military coups in my life, but this does not look like a military coup." After hearing this, I began to think that something really strange happened.

### Can you tell us what was strange about the military coup attempt? Why was it different from the previous military coups or coup attempts in Turkey and other countries?

First of all, if you look at the previous well-known coups of 1980 in Turkey or the one in Chile in 1973, the TV channels put on air nationalistic music, movies and documentaries about the heroism of the army. There were many soldiers and tanks in the streets. The coup leaders implemented a curfew and ordered a lockdown. At the same time, they took over the presidential and governmental offices, political parties and began to control everything. This control happened immediately. In the coup

attempt in 2016, there were not many soldiers in the streets. The soldiers on the bridge and on the roads did not know what to do. It looked like they were not aware of what was happening. They were confused and it did not look like a real military coup from an authoritarian regime.

### If it was not a real coup, then what was it? Do you think that it might be a false coup attempt?

As a journalist, you could tell something was strange and not making sense in the early stages of the coup attempt. It is the nature of a journalist to ask questions. Questioning a failed military coup is crucial for me to understand what really happened.



### ESCAPE FROM ARBITRARY DETENTION AND TORTURE

Thousands fled abroad for fear of systematic torture and arbitrary detention, and some drowned in the Aegean Sea or Evros (Maritza) River while fleeing. "At least 3 victims of Erdogan's persecution drowned trying to cross the river between Turkey and Greece." A family drowned in the Maritza while illegally leaving country.



## ALL OPPONENTS UNDER ARREST, HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AT STAKE

The Erdogan regime continues to detain/jail all its opponents. Members of the opposition parties, such as HDP co-chairs Selahattin Demirtas and Figen Yuksekdag, human rights defenders, victims of the Emergency Decrees, and anyone seeking justice are detained and arrested.

Turkish authorities continue to detain elected mayors in the Kurdish-majority southeast

The press reported that 36.000 people were investigated for "insulting the president Erdogan" in a year.

Ayhan Bilgen, the mayor of the eastern provincial capital of Kars, was among 20 politicians and activists from the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) detained on surprise charges stemming from protests that took place six years ago.

Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu, MP and a member of the Parliament's Human Rights Investigation Commission, was first sentenced to prison by the pro-Erdogan judiciary. Later, with the votes of the ruling party and its unofficial partner, the Nationalist Party (MHP), his seat in the parliament fell. Finally, on April 2, 2021, the police forcibly removed him from his home and sent him to prison. He was not even allowed to wear his shoes.



What questions did you ask to explore more about the coup?

First, I started to find people and asked them what they thought about the coup. It is also bizarre that no one wanted to talk. Very few shared their thoughts with me. Thousands and thousands of public servants were dismissed from schools, universities, nurseries, hospitals. It is a fact that they had nothing to do with the coup. For example, if you work as a nurse in a hospital, you will not know anything about a military coup and you have nothing to do in a coup.

You then understand that something is going on which is suspicious. After the coup attempt every public servant who had connections to Gulenist ideas was dismissed. The same thing happened to other dissidents such as Marxists and pro-Kurdish people. Later Erdogan removed anyone critical of government policy. Cumhuriyet Newspaper was closed down. In addition, those who were critical of the regime were imprisoned.

So, you started to ask critical questions about the coup attempt, and then did you go to Turkey to interview people? How long did you stay there?

In the beginning it was very hard to find anybody who wanted to speak or anybody that knew anything. The people I spoke to knew very little, and they were also very confused. Then, of course, Erdogan gave out booklets of 'proofs,' to blame people critical of his government as coup sympathizers. As a journalist, you can easily read that. I spoke to many international journalists and you can easily see that the truth about what happened had not been told. So, of course, I've felt that there is something strange going on here. I worked on the documentary for 3 years.

It took 3 years?

Yes, because the first year I almost got no information, no material, no documents. Then, people started leaving Turkey. Some high officers left Turkey and came to Norway and to other countries in Europe. I was able to

speak with top officers in the military who had experienced the coup situation firsthand.

What did they tell you?

And then they started to tell me. Some of them are in the film. They were in the army, top officers in the navy and NATO officers. They started telling me what they tell in the film that there is something strange here; they cannot understand it, and they don't believe it was a coup attempt in the way that Erdogan was talking about it. But the thing is that, and I have to say this honestly as a journalist and as a researcher and filmmaker, that still I really don't know. I cannot be 100 percent sure that these people's stories are accurate as there is not documented evidence to verify their stories.

So, do you think that the Europeans or Western countries bought this argument or claim?

I have spoken with different intelligence services in Norway, Germany, and the EU. All of them say that they



don't believe Fethullah Gulen was behind the coup. But that does not mean that other local or lower-level officers plotted the coup together with Gulenists or the Kemalists and others. It is difficult to rule out or implicate all kinds of Gulen-related people because we don't yet know who was really behind the coup attempt.

**What do you think about the responsibility of the Director of the Turkish Intelligence, and the Commander in Chief of the time, Hulusi Akar, because right after the coup attempt, they became confidants of President Erdogan?**

Of course, what I am saying in the documentary, and I am quite sure on that also, is that Erdogan, Hulusi Akar, and Hakan Fidan knew about any kind of coup attempt or coup plot ideas long before the July 15, 2016. They knew at least one week before. I followed the movements of Hulusi Akar and Hakan Fidan minute by minute on the 14th and 15th of July. You can see very clearly in their movements they are aware of what's happening and that something's happened.

**Why are the CIA or European Union keeping quiet?**

I think there is an agreement now among the European countries and among the NATO members to keep quiet to keep Turkey as a member of the NATO alliance.

**So, they are tolerating Erdogan and his all crimes for their own interests.**

Yes. I am sad to say it, but I think so.

## FOREIGN NATIONALS WERE ARRESTED AS A TRUMP CARD

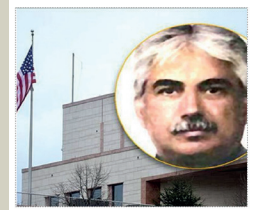
In the wake of the coup attempt, the Erdogan Administration arrested certain foreign nationals and some Turkish individuals working at foreign institutions in Turkey on charges of supporting and/or propagating terrorist organizations. "They cannot be released as long as I am in power," Erdogan said.



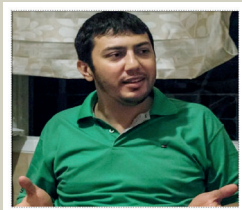
Turkey's Erdogan calls on the US to extradite Gulen in return for jailed US pastor.



Prosecutors had charged Yucel with "making terror propaganda" and "inciting public hatred and hostility", state-run news agency Anadolu reported.



Metin Topuz: Turkish court jails US consulate employee for terror offences.

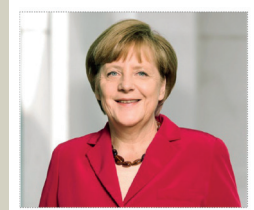


Serkan Gölge is still dismayed by the "garbage" evidence linking him to a failed coup.

However, he was released after talks between Erdogan and the leaders of the countries concerned.

US President Trump thanked Turkish President Erdogan for helping with his release.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel welcomed his release and thanked "all those" who worked to free him.



## CLOSURE OF MEDIA AND ARREST OF JOURNALISTS

Opposition media outlets were shut down through the judicial bodies, broadcasts were stopped with police raids, and appointed trustees changed publishing and broadcasting policies in line with the Government's request.

Erdogan built a loyal media (propaganda machine), both through businessmen who constantly won state tenders and by exposing other media organizations to fear and threats.

The broadcast group with the

highest circulation in the country (Samanyolu), along with its television and newspapers, was shut down by a police raid, and their assets were confiscated. The Editors in Chief and journalists of the opposition media were arrested.



## OPINION

# Why does Fethullah Gülen matter to the world?

DR. KASHIF HASAN KHAN\*

*TIME magazine named him one of the hundred most influential people in the world in 2013. Gülen was born in 1941 in Turkey. He is a follower of the neo-Sunni movement of Islamic scholar Said Nursi and founded a movement of his own called 'Hizmet' in the late 1970s. Currently, he has been living in the US for more than two decades.*

Mr. Muhammed Fethullah Gülen is not an unknown name. He is among the world's most well-known religious leaders. TIME magazine named him one of the hundred most influential people in the world in 2013. Gülen was born in 1941 in Turkey. He is a follower of the neo-Sunni movement of Islamic scholar Said Nursi and started a movement of his own called 'Hizmet' in the late 1970s.

Relations between the Turkish government and the Hizmet Movement date back to the premiership of Turgut Özal, who took office in 1983. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, along with his ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), accused him of orchestrating a coup attempt in July 2016. Since then, thousands of his followers have been imprisoned without a fair trial and often tortured. Erdoğan asked the Obama and Trump administrations to hand Gülen over to Turkey. His government was asked to provide sufficient

evidence to justify the request and this Turkey failed to do. After declaring a crackdown on Hizmet followers in Turkey, Erdoğan expanded his agenda of imprisoning innocent domestic Hizmet followers into seeking the "extradition of Hizmet followers" abroad. Immediately after the coup attempt, he began giving warnings to world leaders about Hizmet followers running educational institutions in their respective countries. However, democratic countries, including those in the West, India and others, refused to acknowledge Erdoğan's accusations. Nevertheless, some poor countries acting out of financial need or misplaced religious motivation like Pakistan acted on Erdoğan's demands. They either shut down Hizmet schools and universities or sold them to local organizations. Some were taken over by Turkey's Maarif Foundation, which was set up a month before the abortive putsch in 2016. One of the main objectives of this foundation is to take over Hizmet



schools in Turkey and abroad.

It was believed in 2016 that Erdoğan was carrying out a witch hunt to drive Hizmet underground so as to completely erase its history in Turkey. However, that witch hunt never seemed to stop. In fact, it continues even today. The most recent examples of abduction of Hizmet followers are in Kenya and Kyrgyzstan.

On May 31, 2021 Turkey's national intelligence agency MİT "captured" Selahaddin Gülen, a nephew of Fethullah Gülen, in Kenya and brought him to Turkey. Erdoğan had reportedly been constantly pressuring the Kenyan government to hand over Gülen followers. The New York Times in a May report stated. "When the Kenyan government didn't do so, the pressure was indicative of Mr. Erdogan's influence and how far he would go to break up the Gülen Movement". On the same day, in the Kyrgyz capital of Bishkek, Orhan İnandı, the founder and president of the prestigious Sapat network of Kyrgyz-Turkish schools - run by Hizmet followers - was kidnapped. İnandı had been a Kyrgyz citizen since 2012.

He was advised by the National Security Committee to hire bodyguards against the threat of kidnap, but as of the time of writing, it has been more than two weeks since his disappearance. Claims suggesting that he was kidnapped by criminals for ransom make no sense. Moreover, Turkey had earlier demanded the extradition of İnandı as well.

It is obvious from the AKP's ongoing crackdown on Hizmet that the group matters more to Erdoğan than anything else. Apart from this, "saving Muslims all over the world" is mere rhetoric. He spares no efforts to portray himself as the savior of Islam and wants to make Turkey similar to the Ottoman Empire again. Historically, Hizmet and the AKP were not always enemies. Their differences increased after the 2011 elections but actually began in 2007, when Hizmet followers and sympathizers grew significantly in number and challenged AKP corruption. According to The Guardian, one Turkish government official stated: "Let me put it this way. Nobody, I mean nobody, was aware at the time that the Gülen Movement had a secret agenda. Let's keep in mind that [in 2007] it was a

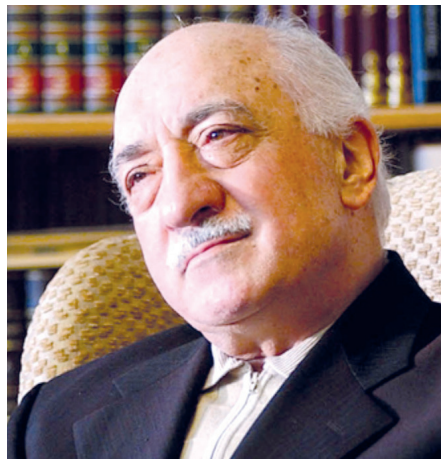
very different situation, with the armed forces openly threatening to overthrow the government."

Erdoğan never looked back after 2011 and his political vendetta reached its zenith.

### **GÜLEN'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION AND INTEGRATION**

Gülen has a very clear stance on the question of democracy and he is a staunch supporter of pluralism. He categorically condemns any kind of radicalization. In one of his interviews, he stated that, "In contrast to claims by political Islamists, Islam is not a political ideology, it is a religion. It does have some principles that pertain to governance, but these account for, at most, five percent of all Islamic principles. To reduce Islam to a political ideology is the greatest crime against its ethos."

The times we are living in have been



dominated by capitalism. As is held by the classical/realist tradition of politics, "Humans always try to maximize their benefit at the expense of others." If a foundation based on morality and integration is not inculcated in students early on, there can be a loss of ethical and moral standards that might lead this world to anarchy and a struggle for power to rule over others. The main objective of educational institutions must be twofold: inculcate up-to-date education so that students are able to find satisfying jobs and at the same time learn how to be peaceful, harmonious and tolerant towards different religions, cultures and races.

Regardless of the political situation and whoever wants to gain power, the one thing that is beyond belief are claims that Gülen wants to be the most powerful man in Turkey. Gülen is 80 years old, his health is fragile, and

he has no reason to seek power. He is known as a Sufi among his followers. He has more than 100 books on spirituality and interfaith dialogue to his credit. A leader can be judged by his writings and speeches. Gülen is not someone who preaches in seclusion. In fact, his writings and opinions are spread around the world and have been translated into several languages. From his books, one can easily see that Gülen's teachings are very modern and based on non-violence. He has repeatedly mentioned and praised the ambassadors of a peace-loving world such as Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Nelson Mandela in his speeches and books.

Gülen and his institutions have organized numerous gatherings and exchanges between groups that are normally distant from each other such as Alevis and Sunnis, secular and pious people, Kurds and Turks. In Europe and the US, Hizmet followers have played the same role, welcoming respected figures from various religions to engage in exchanges in an effort to develop a common understanding.

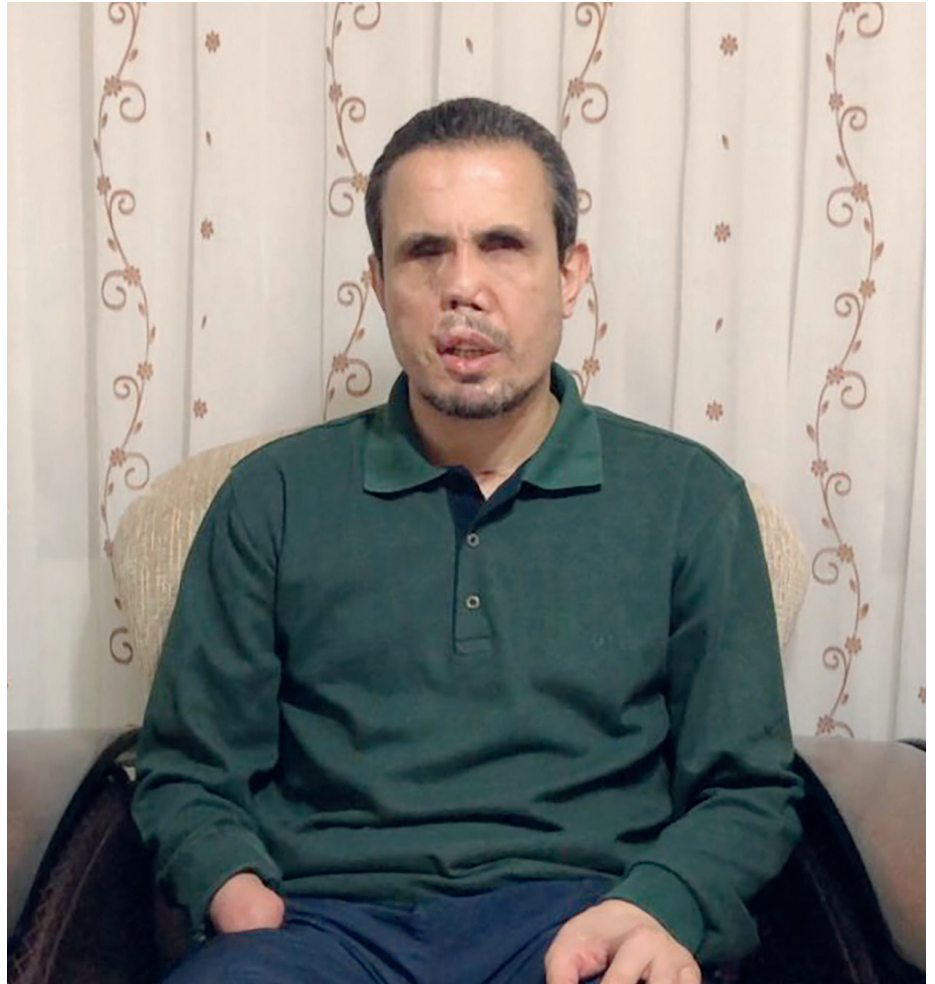
Hizmet schools and universities are located in a number of countries, but not a single student from these schools and universities has been accused of engaging in terrorist activities. In the last five years, dozens of Gülen-linked schools and other educational institutions have been shut down in Turkey and abroad. It appears that Kyrgyzstan is now Erdoğan's next target. He seems to say non-stop that Hizmet followers may become involved in terrorist activities. However, the Hizmet schools are the best schools in Kyrgyzstan and have been there for three decades, and their graduates work at top companies. The Kyrgyz people are peace-loving and known for their pluralistic attitude. Unlike countries that have reacted positively to Erdoğan's demands, the rule of law is very strong in Kyrgyzstan. It remains an open question as to how the government of Kyrgyzstan will respond to Erdoğan's baseless accusations. **TURKISH MINUTE**

*\*Dr. Kashif Hasan Khan is director of the Silk Road Research Center, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. He writes on Central Asia, India and the European Union.*

# Turkish court upholds terrorism conviction of bomb disposal expert blinded in an explosion



*“I fear for my life in here,” said disabled former bomb disposal expert Bilal Konakçı in a letter he wrote from his prison cell in Turkey’s western Izmir province. The letter, published by Bold Medya, said life had become unbearable as he was unable to take care of himself due to his severe disabilities. “Prison conditions are endangering my life as I can’t walk, use the bathroom or eat on my own,” he said.*



“I fear for my life in here,” said disabled former bomb disposal expert Bilal Konakçı in a letter he wrote from his prison cell in Turkey’s western Izmir province. He has been imprisoned on a terrorism conviction. The letter, published by Bold Medya, said life had become unbearable as he was unable to take care of himself due to his severe disabilities. “Prison conditions are endangering my life as I can’t walk, use the bathroom or eat on my own,” he said.

Konakçı was a decorated police officer whose life was upended in 2009 after a bomb left in front of a school detonated while he was trying to defuse it. Besides losing his eyesight and right hand, he also lost some of the fingers on

his left hand. He has difficulty walking as well as hearing loss.

Konakçı was arrested after the coup attempt on July 15, 2016 for alleged links to the Gülen movement, a faith-based group inspired by Turkish cleric Fethullah Gülen.

He was accused of terrorism for having an account at Bank Asya, a commercial bank founded by businessmen affiliated with the Gülen movement, and for using the ByLock messaging app. He was released and put under house arrest after remaining in police custody and jail for more than a month.

He was re-arrested in February after Turkey’s Supreme Court of Appeals upheld the conviction and sentence handed down on the charge of mem-









## OPINION

# The dramatic fall in academic performance of Turkish universities



**DR. SALIH YUCEL**

There is no doubt about the importance of higher education, which can lead to many benefits including a prosperous economy and a better social life. The quality of education is based on qualified lecturers, freedom, support of philanthropies, the state education policy and good management. Since the failed military coup on 15 July, 2016 the academic performance of universities in Turkey has sharply declined. According to QS World University Rankings and Times Higher Education 2018, 2019 and 2020 elaboration, Turkey fell behind Latin America and many Muslim countries such as Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Indonesia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Lebanon and Egypt. The evolution of rankings is based on academic peer

review, faculty/student ratio, citations, employer reputation and international students/staff ratio. Turkey used to have at least six universities among the top 500 world universities prior to the failed military coup. There are no Turkish universities in the top 500 universities in the world in 2018. Since 2018, none of the state universities was among the top 500 universities on world rankings. The statistics show the dramatic falls of performance of Turkish universities.

Koc University in Turkey ranking was 451 and fell behind American University of Beirut (244), Oman Sultan Qaboos University (376), The American University in Cairo (395).

Turkey is behind all mentioned countries.



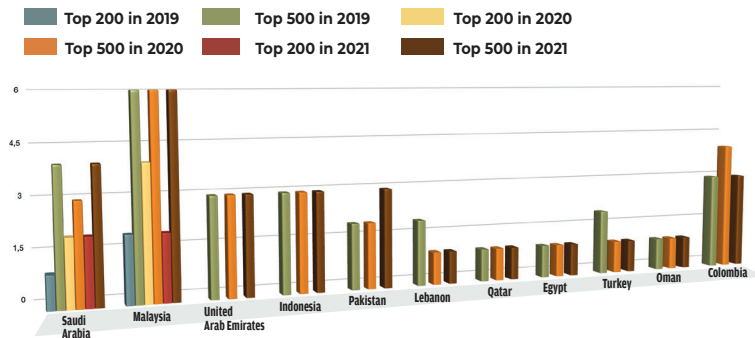
## QS World University Rankings in 2019, 2020 and 2021

Country	Top 200 in 2019	Top 500 in 2019	Top 200 in 2020	Top 500 in 2020	Top 200 in 2021	Top 500 in 2021
Saudi Arabia	1	4	2	3	2	4
Malaysia	2	6	4	6	2	6
United Arab Emirates		3	--	3	-	3
Indonesia		3	-	3		3
Pakistan		2		2		3
Lebanon		2		1	-	1
Qatar		1		1		1
Egypt		1		1		1
Turkey		2		1		1
Oman		1		1		1
Colombia		3		4		3

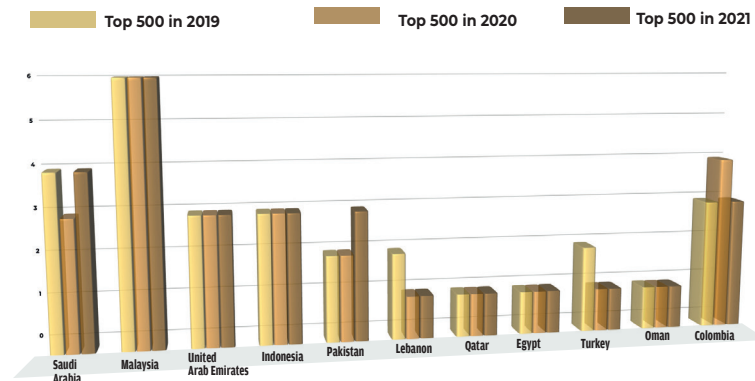
## The Times Higher Education World University Rankings in 2019, 2020 and 2021

Country	2019 top 200	2019 top 500	2020 top 200	2020 top 500	2021 top 200	2021 top 500
Saudi Arabia	1	2	-	2		3
Malaysia	2	1	-	1		2
United Arab Emirates		2	-	2		2
Indonesia		-	-	-		-
Pakistan		-	-	1		-
Lebanon		1	-	1		1
Qatar		1	-	1		1
Egypt			-	2		2
Turkey			-	2		2
Oman		2	-	-		-
Colombia		-	-	1		1

## QS World University Rankings in 2019, 2020 and 2021



## QS World University Rankings in 2019, 2020 and 2021



According to the Time Higher Education rankings in 2019, 2020 and 2021 regarding Turkish universities', academic performance fell behind Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, United Arab Emirates and Egypt. However, it was better than Qatar, Lebanon, Oman, Indonesia and Colombia. The causes of the low academic performance since 2018 is the current regime's politicization of higher education, dismissal of highly qualified academics and lack of freedom. According to the a BBC report, since the failed military coup, 15 universities were closed in Turkey and 8,535 academic personnel were dismissed due to their political views. About 1,500 of them were arrested and imprisoned. Some academics in the best universities of Turkey received positions overseas and left the country.

According to academic research, academic publications related to education "gained a significant acceleration between 2008 and 2016 from 1856 to 2679." After the failed military coup in 2016, it dropped to 1,182 in 2019.

The future of a country is based on education, particularly higher education. Regrettably, higher education performance in Turkey is now lower than many Muslim and Latin American countries.

\*1- <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-dunya-45937704>

\*2 - Deniz Gülmez, İrem Özteke, Sedat Gümmüş, Overview of Educational Research from Turkey Published in International Journals: A Bibliometric Analysis, Education and Science, Vol 46 (2021) no 206, pp. 213-239





# Turkey blacklisted more than 100,000 students from kindergarten to 12th grade over Gülen links

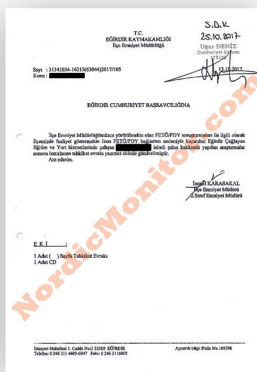
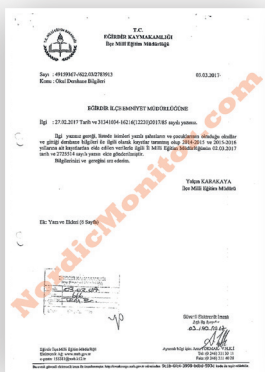
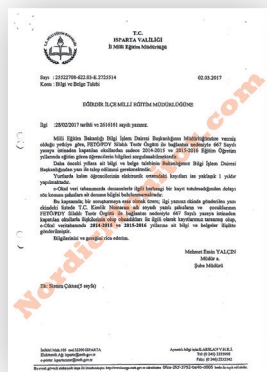
The Turkish government secretly blacklisted well over 100,000 students from kindergarten to 12th grade because they were enrolled in schools owned and operated by a dissident group critical of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

The database identifying some 138,000 students from K through 12 was compiled by the Ministry of Education, which targeted the country's one-time best-performing school

network affiliated with the Gülen movement, inspired by Erdoğan foe Fethullah Gülen.

According to government documents obtained by Nordic Monitor, the Directorate for Information Processing in the Ministry of Education set up a special database listing all students who were studying at Gülen schools from kindergarten through 12th grade. The database was aimed at helping Turkish authorities identify government critics and opponents from the group by tracking their children who were enrolled in such these schools.

The identification of children in a special database and sharing their information with the police without an explicit mandate in Turkish law and certainly no court review raises concerns that these children would likely be stigmatized, denied government jobs in the future on national security pretexts and even face possible criminal probes based on their background







in these schools when they become adults. A standard question in police interrogations is whether the suspects had attended Gülen schools in the past.

It is not clear how many students were named in the database as it was kept secret, but there were some 138,000 students at all levels when the government closed down 1,069 private schools linked to the Gülen movement in 2016. The document indicated that the student list was compiled from multiple years, meaning the actual number in the database must have been far higher than the enrollment figure for 2016.

Turkish President Erdogan branded the group as a terror organization in the aftermath of December 2013 corruption investigations that incriminated him, his family members and his business and political associates in an Iran sanction-busting scheme. He accused the movement's leader, Gülen, of initiating the graft probes, an accusation that Gülen denied. The cleric, fiercely opposed to Iran's mullah regime and highly critical of Erdogan for aiding and abetting radical jihadist groups, has been living in self-exile in the US since 1999.

The government's identifying of children by compiling such lists to be used in criminal investigations shows

the extent and scope of the crackdown the Erdogan government has been pursuing against one of the major opposition groups in Turkey. It also confirms the government's blatant disregard for due process, presumption of innocence and fair trial protections for its citizens.

It further shows that Erdogan is bent on abusing the criminal justice system to hunt down critics and their families in a country where the rule of law has been suspended for some time.

A document dated March 2, 2017 was written by Mehmet Emin Yalçın,

department head at the provincial education board in the southwestern province of Isparta. He informed the district education board about the authority to use the database from the 2014, 2015 and 2016 school years in order to determine the connection of parents and their children to the schools. The database for the years prior to 2014 was maintained centrally at the Ministry of Education in Ankara, and requests for a probe for those years had to be directed to the ministry, he noted.

In other words, the Ministry of Education had compiled all the names of







students who attended Gülen schools since the beginning and devised a special database but only allowed it to be used at the provincial level for the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years.

The document came with five pages of attachments that listed the names of 16 students who attended Gülen schools as well as the names and ID information of their parents. Apparently, the provincial board was asked to release this information on a select group of parents who were subject to a criminal probe.

On March 3, 2017 the district edu-

cation board in the city of Egirdir forwarded the names of the 16 students to the police department in the district. Apparently, their parents were under criminal investigation, and district police chief İsmail Karasakal asked for the enrollment information from the education board on October 13, 2017. The criminal investigation was supervised by prosecutor Uğur Deniz.

The unusual compilation of children's names in a special database by the government means well over a 100.000 youngsters in Turkey were marked just because their families opted to enroll them in Gülen schools,

which were licensed to operate at the time.

In addition to 1,069 private schools, the Turkish government also shut down 15 universities, 301 tutoring centers, 848 student dormitories and 19 unions - including education and teachers' unions - over links to the Gülen movement in 2016. Most of the schools were converted into religious middle and high schools (imam-hatip) as part of the Erdoğan government's campaign to spread political Islam among the younger generation. When Erdoğan came to power in 2002, the number of students enrolled in religious middle and high schools was only 71,000. This figure had increased to 1,494,606 in 2020, according to government statistics.

On July 15, 2016 the very limited mobilization in the military was orchestrated as a false flag plot by President Erdoğan and his intelligence and military chiefs to create a pretext for a state of emergency that led to an "imperial" presidency, suspension of the rule of law and military incursions into Syria. Erdoğan immediately accused Gülen of being behind the coup but failed to present any evidence to incriminate Gülen and support his government's extradition request for him from the US. Gülen has repeatedly denied any involvement in the attempt and asked for an international inquiry into coup events, a request Turkey refused to accept. **ABDULLAH BOZKURT**





# Turkish student combat pilot, top in his class and awarded by the US Air Force, was condemned to life in prison on bogus charges

*Baldan is one of hundreds of combat pilots who were purged and/or imprisoned by the Islamist government of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in the aftermath of a false flag coup event in 2016, leaving the Turkish Air Force crippled by a huge shortage of pilots.*



Turkey jailed one of its the best and brightest lieutenants who was on his way to becoming a top-gun combat pilot after receiving multiple awards from the US Air Force for his excellent performance in a training program.

Buğra Baldan, a 30-year-old lieutenant who was condemned to life in prison on bogus charges, made the headlines in Turkey in 2015 when he collected three awards - Top Stick (flight performance and flight scores), Distinguished Graduate (for academic training, flight discipline and basic military qualifications) and the Air Training Commander's Trophy - in the US.

Recognized for his outstanding performance in the Euro-NATO Joint Jet Pilot Training Program (ENJJPT), he accepted his awards at a special ceremony held at Laughlin Air Force Base, located in Del Rio, Texas, on August 14, 2015. ENJJPT is the world's only

multi-nationally manned and managed flying training program chartered to produce combat pilots for NATO. The program is run by the 80th Flying Training Wing at Sheppard Air Force Base in Texas and trains about 200 student pilots annually.

Baldan is one of hundreds of combat pilots who were purged and/or imprisoned by the Islamist government of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in the aftermath of a false flag coup event in 2016, leaving the Turkish Air Force crippled by a huge shortage of pilots. Four in every five pilots in the Turkish Air Force were dismissed and/or jailed by the government, which carried out unprecedented dismissals of pro-NATO and pro-Western officers in NATO's second largest army.

Graduating at the top of his class at the Air Force Academy in 2013, Baldan scored very well in the language competency exam conducted by the



Buğra Baldan at Laughlin Air Force Base, located in Del Rio, Texas, was given three awards in the pilot training program: Top Stick, Distinguished Graduate and the Air Training Commander's Trophy.





Buğra Baldan finished the Air Force Academy first in his class, receiving his diploma from Turkish President Abdullah Gül in 2013.

Office of Defense Cooperation Turkey (ODC-T), which is a US Security Assistance Organization (SAO) to Turkey. In April 2014 he was sent to Laughlin US Air Force Base for a pilot training program and completed it with an excellent record. Laughlin nominated him as pilot of the year, which was approved by the US Air Force, according to Baldan's testimony.

He returned to Turkey in February 2016 and continued his training in flying F-16s at the Ankara 4th Jet Base Command, located at Akıncı Air Base, the alleged center of the putschist attempt, according to the government. As a trainee pilot for six months, Baldan had worked hard to keep up his excellent track record and was about to finish the last part of his training as an F-16 combat pilot in Ankara.

The morning of July 15, 2016 was not unusual for him when he went to the base at 8am. and spent the entire morning studying for an exam scheduled for Monday. He planned to spend the weekend with his girlfriend in Konya, some two hours by train from his base. He bought a ticket for 6:40pm. train and told the love of his life that he was looking forward to seeing her again.

After the flag ceremony at 1:30pm which was standard for trainee pilots on Friday afternoons, they were asked

to stay for a social gathering by the fleet commander, Maj. Mustafa Azimeti. Baldan thought this was like the many cocktail parties he had attended in the past to acknowledge the performance of pilots in training such as successfully pulling 9G - a high-speed stress trial on a jet that translates to more 2,000 pounds of stress on the pilot's body.

While they were waiting for the event, all pilots were scrambled as part of a counterterrorism (Terörle Mücadele Harekatı, or TMH) mission. Veteran combat pilots who had already left the base or were on leave were recalled on emergency orders to fly warplanes in the mission. In past TMH missions, trainee pilots were allowed to remain to observe maverick pilots, learn the procedures and if needed help with errands on the ground. They were not allowed to fly any planes for actual missions. As a result, Baldan and the other students stayed at the base.

For Baldan, this was the first TMH mission he would observe. He was assigned to what he called a desk unit that functioned as an internal system for members of the 143rd fleet to reach out to one another. His job was to make announcements from the mic when needed. He had been at the desk for 40 minutes and never made an announcement. For the remainder of his stay, he wandered around, watched

"The Dark Knight" in the mess hall with his buddies to kill the time and slept for few hours.

In the meantime, his angry girlfriend, who did not know what was happening in Ankara, was waiting at the Konya train station for Baldan's arrival and thought she had been stood up. As mobile phones were collected for the security of the mission at the base, Baldan was unable to call his girlfriend to let her know that he couldn't make it. His phone kept receiving angry messages from her, but he was unable to read them. In his defense, Baldan displayed the train ticket he bought that day to prove that he had no prior knowledge of what would happen at the base that night.

He was not involved in any of the chaotic events on the night of July 15 or the early morning hours of the next day. He stayed clear of what was happening and had to spend the entire night at the base trying to make sense of what was unfolding. At his young age, he had never before seen a coup and thought his commanders were handling and managing the developing situation.

In the morning, he went home and checked in every day with his commanding officer, who asked them to stay at home for the time being. On July 27, he was asked to come into the

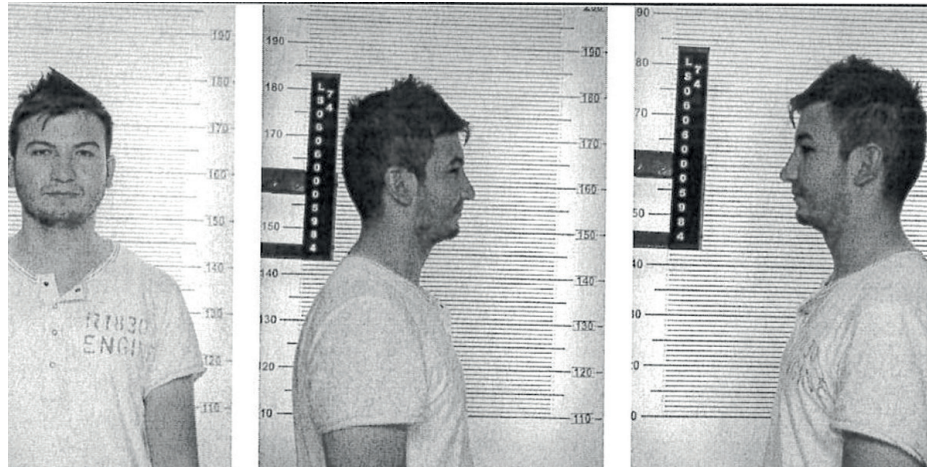


base and give a statement on what he had experienced on July 15. He never thought he would be a suspect when he reported to the base. With no questions asked, the police detained him and took him to the football field of a police academy located in Ankara's Kızılay neighborhood. He was subjected to abuse and ill-treatment for 10 days in the field. At the end, he was formally arrested at arraignment.

The evidence presented against him by the prosecutor to support the charges of coup plotting, membership in a terrorist group and manslaughter lacked credibility and was totally unconvincing. Phone calls he made to Kazakhstan on July 16 and 17, 2016 were found by the prosecutor as suspicious and entered into evidence against him to support the coup conspiracy.

In his defense statement at the Ankara 4th High Criminal Court on November 7, 2017 Baldan explained that the phone numbers in the court records actually belonged to his father, who has been living as a migrant worker in Kazakhstan for the last 10 years. An accountant by profession, his father was working away from home and sending remittances to the family back in Turkey. Baldan even submitted the phone bills of his father's cell phone from Kazakhstan to prove his point while expressing dismay at the prosecutor's lack of due diligence in drafting the indictment.

Photos extracted from CCTV recordings at the base were more evidence. Baldan said it was normal for him to be at the base where he had been going through a combat pilot training program. He said he did not understand why the prosecutor put photos of him walking in the halls of



**The mug shots of Buğra Baldan, an Air Force lieutenant who was taken into custody on August 4, 2016. He was imprisoned under fabricated coup charges that dashed his hopes of becoming a top F16 combat pilot.**

the building assigned to trainees as criminal evidence.

Another piece of evidence against him was a WhatsApp group set up by the 2009 graduates of the prestigious Kuleli Military High School in order to stay in contact. The prosecutor alleged that the communications were part of the coup plot when Baldan did not even have access to his phone during the July 15 events. His helping out a buddy who was short on cash after purchasing a new car was also presented as criminal evidence against him.

He maintained his innocence during the trial, but his calls fell on the deaf ears of the three judges that oversaw the proceedings. The prosecutor alleged he was a Gülenist, a group that is critical of President Erdoğan on a range of issues from pervasive corruption in the administration to Turkey's aiding and abetting of armed jihadist groups. Being a highly successful student and well versed in foreign language was one of the criteria applied to identify alleged Gülenists in the Turkish military. He said he had worked hard to get where he was and had nothing to do with the group.

Despite the lack of solid evidence to warrant any charges against him, the court in November 2020 convicted him and sentenced him to life in prison at the end of a sham trial.

As a result, the Air Force lost one of the best student pilots. But he was not an exception to the terrible story. Even before the purge, the Air Force was experiencing a pilot shortage that has only become worse since then.

According to the Air Force internal

report dated January 19, 2016, the military needed 554 new pilots including 190 combat pilots to reach its normal level. Departures had already brought the ratio of pilots to aircraft to 0.65, which is dangerously low, in 2014. The commanders urged the government to take immediate measures to raise the ratio and delay departures from the force by adopting incentives, extending compulsory service and offering other attractive options.

As of May 2016, the Air Force had 1,275 pilots in total with 378 combat pilots who were assigned to fly F-16s and F-4s. However, the mass purge in the aftermath of the false flag coup dealt a further setback to the air force. The government did not officially announce how many pilots it had purged from the Air Force in the aftermath of the failed putsch, but the figures reported in the Turkish media ranged from 600 to 716. This means the Air Force had a shortage of 1,154 pilots by January 2017, and there was no way to compensate for such a huge loss. The ratio of pilots to aircraft dropped to 0.37.

The Turkish defense minister admitted in July 2018 that one pilot had to carry out the assignments of five because of the acute shortage. Turkey tried to recruit Pakistani pilots as trainers on F-16s, but that was rejected by the US, which has the right to approve third-country access to F-16s based on bilateral contract terms. **ABDULLAH BOZKURT**



**Buğra Baldan is seen in this 2015 photo with his family, who came to Laughlin Air Force Base to attend his graduation and share his happiness over the three awards he received in the training program.**



# Huge seizures of assets

*After all this time,  
I dream that  
I'm stuck in my  
hometown of Istanbul  
and trying to escape.  
This trauma was one  
of the reasons I took  
a break from active  
reporting for Turkish  
Minute and pursued  
a different path to nor-  
malize my life.*



Reports prepared regarding the assets seized during the State of Emergency show the scale of what has happened in Turkey since July 15, 2016.

Attorney Ali Yıldız, who researched the seizure of assets, spoke to journalist Cevheri Güven from Bold Media.

The latest target of the recurring practice of seizing private assets and making them state controlled in Turkey is the Hizmet Movement. In addition to property, which was mainly educational institutions owned by the community directly through associations and foundations, businessmen close to the community lost their assets.

With blocked bank accounts, real estate transferred to the National Real Estate, factories seized and sold by the National Wealth Funds, the value of the property rights violation and

property transfer in Turkey is claimed to be at least USD32 billion.

London Advocacy, which works on human rights and property rights violations, has prepared a comprehensive report on the subject thus far. The Platform for Peace & Justice (PPJ) and London Advocacy Cooperation, attorney Ali Yıldız, Leighann Spencer from the Charles Sturt University Center for Law and Justice, along with the supervision of Oxford University academic Rui S Verde, collaborated to produce this report.

## CONFISCATION AGAINST THE LAW

According to the report, the value of possessions that had illegally been seized or now forcibly state owned is known to be at least USD32 billion. Bill Browder, a world-renowned human rights advocate known for his defense of victims that have had their assets illegally confiscated by the Russian government, detailed the report as follows. "This report reveals that Erdogan is no different from Putin. Along with imprisoning anyone who disagrees with him, he also illegally confiscates property.

This report has detailed a total of USD32.2 billion of illegally confiscated property in Turkey."

The report includes the illegal

confiscation of the properties of individuals and institutions by the State of Emergency-KHK and SDIF/Penal Judgeships of Peace with important details regarding the extent and monetary compensation of property rights violations in the last four years.

## ALİ YILDIZ: AT LEAST USD32 BILLION

Attorney Ali Ali Yıldız, who was part of the collaborative team, underlined that the calculation was based on the data and lists announced by the Republic of Turkey. Regarding the seized assets and that there may be companies and properties that were not included in the lists, he said, "It is impossible to determine and calculate the brand value, market share, future profits, intellectual and industrial rights of the confiscated companies.

If these are taken into account, the value may be two or three-fold.



ALİ YILDIZ





We based our calculations on the square meter unit values determined by the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization. Furthermore, it is stated in a Parliamentary report that a 7.2 million square meter enclosed area is now controlled by the State Treasury. Considering the minimum price given by the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization (IV. A, B, C, 915 TL / square meter), the construction cost of these buildings can be estimated as TL6.73 billion (USD2.23 billion of 07/23/2016). This minimum rebuild cost and current market value could be 2 or 3 times that.”

### **THE MAIN TARGET IS THE GÜLEN MOVEMENT, BUT CONFISCATION IS MORE PREVALENT**

Yıldız said that although those whose property rights were violated under the state of emergency were mostly related to the Gülen Movement, the assets of the Kurdish and Left groups were also confiscated on the basis of media outlets and associations.

### **THE OTTOMAN TRADITION: POLITICAL MURDER WITHOUT JURISDICTION**

Ali Yıldız, reminds us that, in the past, Armenian, Greek and minority properties were also confiscated



through different means, citing that this was a tradition inherited from the Ottoman Empire:

“Confiscation of property is actually a tradition inherited from the Ottoman Empire. In the Ottoman Empire, when dismissed public officials were executed, their properties were also confiscated. Political murders, seizures under the State of Emergency were also made politically, there is no judicial decision, it can be said that it is post-modern political murder.”

### **IS COMPENSATION POSSIBLE?**

Referring to the issue of whether compensation will be possible for seized assets made before the international law, Ali Yıldız stated the

Constitution also states that measures to overcome the State of Emergency cannot be taken and the right to property is guaranteed by international law:

“In international law, there are rules that we call jus cogens. Although jus cogens are not regulated in any contract, they are universal, superior and imperative rules that bind states. For example, the prohibition of torture is one of them. The obligation to pay a price for confiscation is also a jus cogens rule. It is against the law to confiscate it by administrative action without paying a price. Free and indefinite confiscation within





the scope of the state of emergency is definitely in accordance with Article 15 and Annex of the Convention. It is contrary to Article 1.

### A COMMON PROBLEM IN TURKEY

In the report, which examines property rights violations in Turkey from the past to present, it is emphasized that 31 percent of the violations of rights given by the Constitutional Court are in relation to property rights violations.

### ASSOCIATIONS TAKEN OVER

With emergency decrees, 1,419 associations were closed for good and their assets were transferred to the Treasury. According to the 15 July Coup Attempt report of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, 1,326 of these associations had 69,926 members, 81 cars and 178 real estate assets.

### SOCIETY BUILDINGS TAKEN OVER

With the emergency decrees, 145 societies were closed indefinitely and their assets were transferred to the General Directorate of Foundations (VGM). 2,214 permanent properties belonging to these societies were transferred to the VGM. 123 of these societies had assets of TL2.3 billion (USD826 million, as of 07/23/2016), including 1,531 real estate assets.

### AMOUNT OF CASH SEIZED

According to the statement made by Naci Ağbal, Minister of Finance at the time, in 2016, cash and cheques held by legal entities amounting to

TL472 million (USD163.5 million as of 07/23/2016) were transferred to the Treasury.

### REAL ESTATES TAKEN OVER

According to the report; at the request of the administrative and judicial authorities, measures controlling the use of 213,696 permanent properties were put in place by the government.

### PRIVATE SCHOOLS

During the state of emergency, 1,060 schools with a capacity of 400.000 students as of 2016 were closed indefinitely and their assets were transferred to the Treasury.

According to the announcements of the Public Procurement Agency, the construction of a school with 24 classrooms is tendered for an average of TL7.5 million. Based on this data, the value of the schools closed is TL7.95 billion (USD2.76 billion, as of 07/23/2016).

### STUDENT DORMITORIES

According to the 15 July Coup Attempt report of the Turkish Grand

National Assembly, 841 dormitories with a capacity of 86,397 students were closed and their assets were transferred to the Treasury.

According to the announcements of the Public Procurement Authority, the construction of a dormitory with a capacity of 1,000 students is tendered for a minimum of TL27 million. Based on this data, the value of the closed dormitories is TL2.3 billion (USD806 million, as of 07/23/2016).

### MEDIA INSTITUTIONS

151 media institutions, including 34 television, 38 radio, 73 newspapers and magazines, and 6 news agencies, were closed and their assets were transferred to the Treasury. The İpek Media Group, which consisted of 2 TV channels, 2 newspapers and 1 radio channel among other closed media outlets, had a total worth of USD250 million as of December 2015.

Considering that Doğan Media, which consists of 3 newspapers, 1 news website, 2 TV channels and 1 news agency, was sold for USD1.1 billion in March 2018. It is estimated that the value of the 151 media outlets that were closed cannot be less than USD1 billion.

### HOSPITALS AND HEALTH INSTITUTIONS

With the Decree Laws 667 and 689, 47 hospitals, health centers and clinics were closed and their assets were transferred to the Treasury.

Nine of these health institutions had a bed capacity of 2,052. According to the 2016 statement of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, the annual turnover of 21 of these institutions was TL400 million. The total value of 47 health institutions that were closed was USD1.29 billion.







## PRIVATE COMPANIES

According to the information report sent by the Ministry of Customs and Trade to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, 1,075 companies were closed down completely. In addition, 998 companies were delegated to the SDIF, and their assets were transferred to the Treasury.

While the value of the companies transferred to the SDIF was announced as TL58.94 billion (USD 20.4 billion, as of 07/23/ 2016), there is no data on the total value of 1,075 companies that were closed and their assets transferred to the Treasury.

## BUILDINGS TAKEN OVER

In addition to the 2,214 properties transferred to the General Directorate of Foundations (according to the statement of the Minister of Finance, Naci Ağbal), 4,351 properties were transferred to the Treasury. Of these, 3,361 were buildings. These buildings, according to the same description, have a closed area of 7.2 million square meters.

Considering the minimum cost circular of the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization (IV. A, B, C, 915 TL/square meter), the construction cost of these buildings was TL6.73 billion (USD2.23 billion as of 07/23/2016).

## UNIVERSITIES

Following State of Emergency decrees, 15 universities and their 7 hospitals were closed and their assets were transferred to the Treasury.

As of the day of closure, there is no data on the value of the universities with 64,533 students and 2,808 academics. However, it has been reported that the value of eight of these universities (Turgut Özal, Fatih, Zirve, Mevlana, Melikşah, Gediz, Süleyman Şah and İpek University) is at least USD1.5 billion as of 07/23/2016.

## AT LEAST USD32 BILLION

The report states the value of assets seized through the State of Emergency decrees and Anti-Terror Laws was at least USD32.24 billion as of 07/23/2016, when the State of Emergency was declared.

## EXCLUDING COMPENSATION

These confiscation proceedings were carried out without a trial nor in accordance with the principles of fair trial and without payment of compensation.

The report further states that these proceedings were against Customary International Law, UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (art. 17), UN Convention on Civil and Political Rights (art. 4), ECHR (art. 15), ECHR 1st Additional Protocol, Constitution,

(art. 13-35-38) -46-47), Turkish Penal Code (art. 54), State of Emergency Law and Constitutional Court jurisprudence.







#### MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER

##### 2<sup>nd</sup> INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

The freedom to express ourselves and to embrace diversity is what makes Australia one of the most successful multicultural societies in the world.

For more than 40,000 years Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people cared for this country. There are the oldest continuing cultures on earth.

Today, people from around the globe live here together in remarkable harmony – Australia is home to people from nearly 200 countries.

Our national identity is not defined by a single race, religion, or background, but by shared political values, a marvellous fusion of cultures and languages and the understanding that our differences should be celebrated.

Standing together is central respect.

Celebrations such as the International Festival of Language and Culture are a powerful reminder that we are greatly enriched by this diversity.

As you gather for this year's event, I wish you, your family and friends, an enjoyable festival.

*Malcolm Turnbull*

The Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP  
Prime Minister of Australia

17 February 2016

# iflc 14<sup>th</sup> international festival of language & culture Colours of the World Australia



## My reflections on Post-Kemalist Turkey



**ZIA AHMAD**

*Just recently, Turkey's National Intelligence Organization (MIT) abducted Turkish-Kyrgyz educator Orhan İnandı, who went missing in Bishkek on the night of May 31, due to his alleged links to the Gülen movement. Human Rights Watch (HRW) had previously called on Kyrgyz authorities to investigate the disappearance of İnandı, who is a dual Turkish-Kyrgyz citizen.*

Being of Indian Muslim origin, I am very much familiar with Turkish heritage, culture and language. Many modern Turks are not aware of the fact that the Indian Muslim rule that spanned for almost 1,000 years, was largely led by Turkish rulers. This rule ended with almost 350 years of Mughal rulers who were also of Turkish descent.

My mother tongue, Urdu, is from a Turkish word meaning army. Urdu developed with the confluence of Muslim Arabs, Turks, Persians and native Indians, and is a mixed language consisting of almost a quarter each of Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Sanskrit.

During the Muslim rule, the main court and administrative language in India was Persian. The Ulama scholars used Arabic, but the rulers spoke, read, and wrote in Turkish within their royal surroundings.

Indian Muslims, although not part of the Ottoman Empire, respected Ottoman rule and the seat of the Khalifah, and supported the Ottomans

during WWI against the British. After the formal abolition of the Caliphate by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk during the early 1920's, Indian Muslims founded the Khilafah movement. This was to restore the Caliphate and was also supported by Mahatma Gandhi.

Although not happy with the radical Westernization of modern Turkey, Indian Muslims still admired Turkish people and their culture. Turkey was the only Muslim country that was never colonized and maintained its pride and self-respect. This contrasted with other national states within the Arab world.

I arrived in Australia almost half a century ago, towards the end of 1971. As a young man, along with my father, I had to engage with the two main Muslim communities in Sydney at the time. These two communities were the Lebanese and Turkish ethnic groups. I dealt with these two groups to organize Muslims, especially in and around Sydney.

I found the young Turks to be very nationalistic, to some extent anti-Arab



**Hon Bill Shorten**  
former leader of the  
Labor Party



and largely conservative. Within this group, was a small cohort of elites who were highly Westernized. During the seventies, we had a few sessions with Milli Gorus members. We somehow identified with them as they were ideologically inspired by Said Nursi.

We supported the Turkish community in the establishment of Erskineville Mosque, where the first formal five daily prayers and Jumah prayers were established. Later, we also helped the Turkish community with the establishment of our local Bonnyrigg Mosque, and we used this mosque for our own Islamic activities.

It was only after 2000 that my imagination caught up with the Turkish community again. I saw a new breed of young Turks, either born or raised here. They were at the forefront of establishing face to face and eye to eye contact with the mainstream community and engaged the diverse Australian community in their programs and innovative institutions.

This was a new trend as opposed to other sections of the Muslim community that were largely insular - engaged within their own ethnic community and their suburban mosques.

I was curious as to where this new energy among the young Turks in Australia came from. I later found out that they were inspired by Fethullah Gülen's global educational movement. They used his extraordinarily success-

ful methodology of engagement with mainstream civil society irrespective of religious, ethnic, and ideological affiliations.

I attended a highly productive study tour of Turkey together with my wife, daughter, and niece, which was organized by this group of Turks. We visited several cities including Gallipoli, where we attended the Anzac Day dawn service in April 2012 and engaged with diverse groups of Turkish civic society movement members. This included academics, religious scholars, health professionals, educationists, and journalists, and this completely transformed my view of Turkey.

I found that post- Kemalist Turkey had shed its indifference with Islam and

there had been a rapid Islamization of the Turkish society during the last two decades. I had the impression that the Kemalist forces were on the run and Turkey was again ready to take on the leadership of the Muslim world. This entailed a return to Islamic roots and establishing a modern, Islamic civil society.

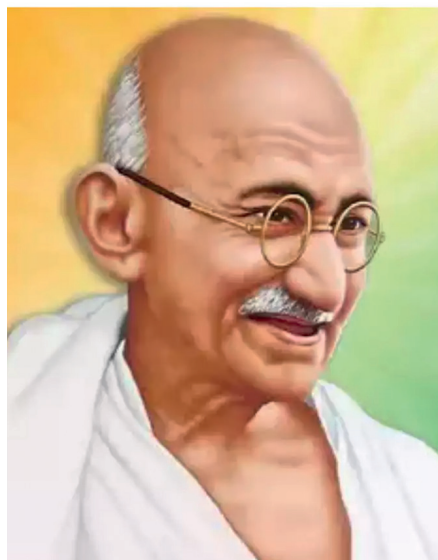
However, my dreams and hopes were soon dashed when I realized that the Islamophilic forces that were transforming Turkey from Erbakan to Erdogan had major issues. The Islamic grassroots movements inspired by Said Nursi and with Milli Gorus and the Gülen movement were having splits from within.

Then came the July 15, 2016 coup attempt against the Turkish government in general and against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. This was carried out by a faction of the Turkish Armed Forces. These forces had a track record of conducting coups from time to time against elected governments in Turkey.

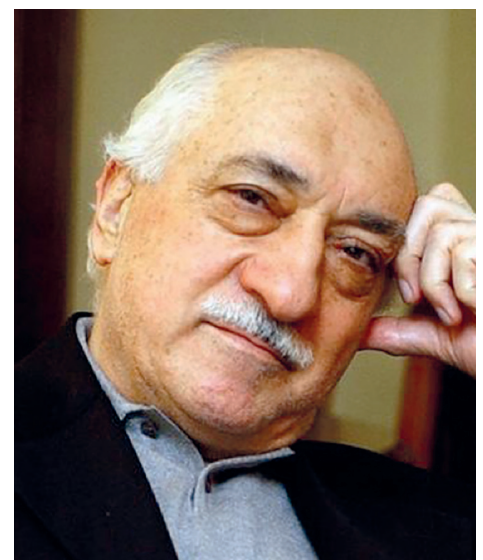
The coup attempt failed miserably with minimum loss of life and damage to Turkish institutions. However, it brought disastrous impacts on the Turkish society afterwards, leading to gross human rights violations on a mega scale.

The government blamed the Gülen movement, which was earlier designated as a terrorist organization by the Republic of Turkey.

Communist style purges, unexpected in a democratic Muslim country, resulted in immediate mass arrests following the coup. This accompanied



**MAHATMA GHANDI**



**FETHULLAH GÜLEN**





ORHAN İNANDI



nearly 100,000 arrested, including 4,463 judges and over 300 journalists.

So far more than 500,000 people have been investigated and over 150,000 dismissed from their jobs based on reports of their connections to Gülen. Over 3,000 educational institutions (primary, secondary and tertiary institutions) that had any association with the Gülen movement, were shut down while over 6,000 academics lost their jobs.

All educational, health, aid, media organizations and institutions were either closed or taken over by the government. This was especially true of any group with formal or informal association with the Gülen movement. This also included those in many other countries under pressure by the Turkish government.

Just recently, Turkey's National Intelligence Organisation (MIT) abducted a Turkish-Kyrgyz educator Orhan İnandı, who went missing in Bishkek on the night of May 31, due to his alleged links to the Gülen movement. Human Rights Watch (HRW) had previously called on Kyrgyz authorities to investigate the disappearance of İnandı, who is a dual Turkish-Kyrgyz citizen. According to HRW, allowing İnandı's rendition to Turkey would violate Kyrgyzstan's obligations under



the "Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment".

While on a visit to various cities in USA in 2018 and in Ethiopia, Kenya, and South Africa in 2019, I had first-hand experience of high numbers of victims of oppression by the Erdogan government. This group was made up of men and women, extraordinarily successful businessmen, academics, educationists, and journalists. All had been the victim of these purges and fled Turkey to avoid persecution and are now living as refugees and asylum seekers outside their home country.

As a non-Turk, it makes me feel incredibly sad, where just a decade ago I had a vision of Turkey providing a viable leadership for uniting the fractured Muslim world. Now these hopes have not materialized because of internal division, corruption, and the gross violation of human rights.

Wellington, 19 May 2016

**INFORMATION NOTE**

The Turkish Embassy understands that an invitation sent out for an "İftar Dinner" organized by the Pearl of the Islands Foundation at the Parliament on 14 June 2016.

The Embassy would appreciate it very much if the information given below on the organizer of the said event be taken kindly into account in considering this invitation.

- Turkey has a long and strong tradition of respect for different religions and cultures. We are also staunch supporters of international initiatives which promote tolerance, inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue such as Alliance of Civilizations, established by the initiative of Turkey and Spain. We therefore, appreciate the strong sense of inclusiveness and multi-cultural nature of New Zealand society and support all initiatives aiming at further strengthening better understanding between different cultures.
- However, it is publicly known that Pearl of the Islands Foundation (PIF), organizer of this dinner at the Parliament on 14 June 2016, is one of the World-wide groups of "Gülen Organization" whose leader, Fethullah Gülen is a fugitive and on Turkey's most-wanted terrorist list. Fethullah Gülen Organization is outlawed in Turkey. Therefore, Turkish Embassy does not have any dealings with PIF or support its activities. They certainly do not represent the small Turkish community in New Zealand.
- The charges range from espionage to funding and managing armed gangs to topple the Turkish Government.
- The process for his extradition from the US is about to be completed soon.

- As was done in the past similar functions in New Zealand, the members of the PIF will be preaching and praising their leader. It is very regrettable that even the month of Ramadan which is a holy month for all Muslims will be used once again by this foundation.
- Apart from other serious charges, some of the followers of the Fethullah Gülen organization in Turkey were found guilty by the courts for their clandestine actions which include fabricating evidences to implicate and imprison hundreds of innocent civilians, bureaucrats, journalists and military officials in order to further their own agenda. Some of the court cases are still continuing.
- Moreover, the network of Gülen organization's influence extends far beyond Turkey, funding hundreds of Islamic schools, and think tanks and media outlets, from Kenya to Kazakhstan, from Australia to the US. Their activities are based in some of the central Asian countries and their charter schools were closed down due to their unlawful dealings.
- It is not only their ideology and indoctrination, but their lack of financial and legal transparency in their dealings is the most troubling characteristics of this organization.
- It has become public in recent years that the FBI has started an investigation in Utah, Texas, Georgia and some other US cities and found out the shabby dealings of the movement's charter school boards. It was proven that the public funds, hundreds of millions of dollars from the local communities given to the charter schools run by this movement were donated to Gülen affiliated organizations, contractors and used to pay the cost of bringing followers to the US. This is a well-known common practice of the movement to fund their world-wide operation.

MELBOURNE  
10 May, 2017

Distinguished Federal/State Member

I am writing to you about my concern regarding the partner organization at the "State Parliament Dinner" to be held on June 02, 2017 in Melbourne.

I would like to advise you about the failed coup attempt staged in Turkey in July 2016 which aimed at overthrowing the democratically-elected legitimate Turkish Government. However the whole Turkish nation, standing firm and united, killed this heinous attempt by paying a heavy price: 247 people lost their lives and more than 2,000 people wounded. Turkey has appreciated the invaluable support extended by Australia and the State of Victoria for Turkish democracy in this critical time.

There is plenty of evidence that the Gülenians were behind that bloody coup attempt. In fact this link has further been confirmed by the testimonies of the army officers who were involved in the attempt. The trial process for coup plotters is already ongoing.

It is commendable that the Parliament of Victoria is acknowledging a great Islamic tradition by holding an "İftar" dinner in a bipartisan form. However I sincerely believe that the Australian Interfaith Society (AIS), the only partner in this event, is not an appropriate one at all, due to its links with a group that staged a coup attempt in a friendly country, which is a close ally and partner of Australia. For this very same reason, the AIS, as a controversial body, has no capacity to represent neither the Turkish nor the Muslim community in Victoria.

I am of the opinion that more representative and inclusive partners determined through comprehensive consultations with wider community leaders may better serve to further enhance social harmony and multiculturalism.

I take this opportunity to also raise that the same organization (AIS) and its affiliate Society have an event scheduled on 14 May 2017 entitled "Colours of the World: International Festival of Language and Culture".

A copy of the invitation letter and a flyer about these two events are attached herewith for your easy and quick reference.

I humbly request that due consideration be given and any invitation to attend both events be reconsidered for the points stated above.

Yours sincerely

Mehmet KUÇUKSAKALLI  
Consul General

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## OPINION

# Enes Kanter: Turkey's international campaign of persecution and kidnappings must be stopped

**ENES KANTER**  
THE WASHINGTON POST

*Enes Kanter is a center for the Portland Trail Blazers of the National Basketball Association and a human rights activist.*

At around 2:30am, I woke up to loud bangs on my hotel room door in Indonesia, where I went to hold a basketball camp for schoolchildren back in 2017. “We have to leave the country immediately,” my manager told me frantically.

It appeared that Turkish intelligence agents were on their way to capture me and send me back to Turkey. Three hours later, we were on an emergency flight to Singapore, and then to Romania. Turkey missed its chance to arrest me but canceled my passport and forced me to remain stranded in Romania.

But I was lucky, unlike Orhan Inandi, a Turkish educator in Kyrgyzstan who was kidnapped by Turkish agents last month and is believed to

be kept in the Turkish Embassy in the country's capital. Despite international pleas, Inandi's fate is still a mystery.

This Jamal Khashoggi-style detention is part of Turkey's global campaign to locate, kidnap and bring back Turkish dissidents.

Former national security adviser Michael Flynn was offered millions to help forcibly remove the Turkish cleric Fethullah Gulen in 2016.

Gulen resides in rural Pennsylvania, and the Turkish government blames him for all the country's woes. Last month, Turkey said its intelligence agents captured Gulen's nephew, a schoolteacher in Kenya, and brought him back to Turkey.



The Turkish government has requested the extradition of Gulen from the US for many years, but Washington says Turkey failed to present any evidence of tangible wrongdoing by Gulen.

Inspired by the teachings of Gulen, Turkish educator Inandi went to Kyrgyzstan after the collapse of the Soviet Union to start what are today known as the most successful science-based schools in the country. No wonder tens of thousands of people in Kyrgyzstan, including lawmakers and officials, have mobilized to find and free the kidnapped educator.

Inandi's plight is similar to that of more than 100 Turkish citizens who were kidnapped and brought back to Turkey to face certain arrest and possible torture. According to Freedom House, Turkey has performed illegal renditions from more countries in the past six years than any other country in the world.

Since the failed military coup attempt in 2016, Turkey's diplomatic missions around the world have been largely focused on spying on its citizens, keeping tabs on their activities and organizing the kidnapping of dissidents. Failure of the international community to display a unified response to these renditions has given impetus to the Turkish government to continue with these global illegal activities.

It is astonishing that Turkey, which had been at the forefront of international outcry when Khashoggi was killed in the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul, is engaging in similar criminal activities in many countries in the world, including the US.

Once one of the closest US allies, Turkey has drifted away from the West in the past decade and has increasingly been cozying up to Russia. It was not a surprise that President Biden decided to call his Turkish counterpart, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, three months after he became the president to express his displeasure about Turkish political matters.

Most of this soured relationship is thanks to Erdogan's massive crackdown on the opposition to transform Turkey into his own image. More than a quarter-million people have been sentenced on terrorism charges



since 2016, thanks to a vague Turkish law used to punish the opposition, in Erdogan's bid to consolidate power. The crackdown is so relentless that it recognizes no boundaries, and Turkish dissidents abroad, including me, have felt the pressure of Erdogan's long arms.

When Belarus forced a Lithuania-bound plane to change its course last month and snatched an outspoken journalist, the European Union displayed a united front and imposed sanctions on Minsk. This was a significant measure to underscore red lines when it comes to international criminal activities. This type of tangible international reaction has been missing where Turkey is concerned with its unceasing

global campaign of renditions.

Thousands of Turkish dissidents have fled Erdogan's oppressive regime in the past five years, and every single one of them is living in fear that they could be the next to be kidnapped. Not only does it create a fearful environment for Turks who found a safe haven in foreign countries, but it also undermines the sovereignty of these host countries.

It is time for the US to take the lead and marshal international support against such renditions, no matter who is doing it. Ignoring Turkey's illegal actions in other countries only encourages other dictators to follow suit.





# How a failed coup destroys democracy?!



**ABDÜLHAMİT BİLİCİ**

*Just 8 days after failed coup, the Erdogan government, not generals, raided the homes of reporters, editors, designers, columnists including mine as the last editor-in-chief of banned Zaman daily and arrested them with the claim that they supported the coup attempt by their publications, which were taken over by the same government 5 months before July 15.*

There are many unanswered questions about the July 15 coup attempt, which lead many independent observers to conclude it was not a real coup but a staged one like Hitler's Reichstag fire that gave him the excuse to wipe out opposition and create one man rule.

Questions like how Chief of Intelligence and Chief of Staff preserved their positions, even promoted if they were unable to inform Erdogan, who claimed to have learned about the coup attempt from his sister's husband? Or Erdogan replied with 4 different versions about the first time he learned the coup was on that evening? Or how the general who was praised for his role in preventing the coup attempt was later portrayed as the leader of the coup?

Or what was the logic behind starting a coup at prime time on a summer evening when people are chilling all around instead of an early morning when people were deep in their sleep

(universal and Turkish coup time). Or what was the rationale behind closing one way traffic at one of Istanbul, bridges while leaving all media intact? Or what was the sense of bombing the parliament building if coup plotters reported the aim was to restore democracy and especially doing that after it became clear that attempt failed? Or why and how can a political leader describe a coup attempt targeting himself as a gift from God?

Or why Erdogan's Intelligence Chief and Chief of Staff rejected to respond to questions from members of parlia-







mentary committee investigating the attempt. Or why Erdoğan abruptly stop this commission from completing its investigation? Or why did the incomplete report of that commission disappeared? Or why whoever questioned the official version of the coup attempt were silenced like jailing opposition leader Selahattin Demirtaş who described July 15 as the conspiracy of century by Erdoğan and critical journalist Ahmet Şık who found himself in jail after questioning the official July 15 narrative?

Though each of these is a very critical question mark, they are still less mind boggling compared to the question at the headline of this piece: How could a failed coup destroy a democracy? If July 15 was a real coup attempt and failed, why did Turkey lose its democracy instead of celebrating and strengthening it?

Turkey was never a full fledged democracy and it has always been hard for anyone not considered loyal to the regime under the ultra secularist and nationalist ideology of previous establishments, but destruction of democratic rights were not crashed even after previous 'successful' coup attempts to the extent of the July 15 failed coup.

I was an editor at Aksiyon weekly during the February 28 post-modern coup, which forced the elected government to resign as a result of immense pressure and threats from the

Turkish military. Generals who were behind that attempt had categorized our media group in the enemy camp, but their suppression had been limited to condemnations, some minor court cases and revoking our accreditations to cover any military event including press briefings of Chief of Staff and military maneuvers. In total contrast to the July 15 failed coup, which shutdown my newspaper, news agency, our news magazine, tv and radio stations altogether.

Just 8 days after the failed coup, the Erdoğan government, not generals, raided the homes of reporters, editors, designers, columnists including mine as the last editor-in-chief of the banned Zaman daily and arrested them with the claim that they supported the coup attempt by their publications, which were taken over by the same government 5 months before July 15. I left Turkey after the Erdoğan government occupied and silenced my newspaper, so their attempt to arrest me fortunately failed, but most of my colleagues who were arrested in that raid have been in prison for the last 5 years.

Even Erdoğan's kangaroo courts were not able to establish any evidence linking these journalists to the failed coup but that did not prevent giving long prison sentences, even life time punishments, for some articles or tweets of journalists.

The media group that I was part of had two big sins. First, it was accused for being affiliated to the Hizmet or Gülen Movement, which the Erdoğan regime blamed for the failed coup. Its second sin was to be an outspoken critical voice exposing the corruption of government and opposing its Islamofascist political ideology.

In contrast to widespread perception, suppression of the media under the Erdoğan regime did not start after or in reaction to July 15 and it was not limited to Hizmet affiliated press. On July 21, six days after the failed coup, instead of celebrating the relief, Erdoğan's ruling AKP approved a bill declaring a state of emergency allowing the government to rule by decree. On the same day, Erdoğan suspended the European Convention on Human Rights. On July 27, the government published a decree to shut down over 200 critical media outlets, which had nothing to do with the coup or the Gülen group.

As a result of these policies, Turkey has become the worst jailer of journalists in the world, even worse than China and Iran. The Freedom House put Turkey into the category of 'not free' countries. According to the Reporters Without Borders World Press Freedom index last report, Turkey ranks 154 in 180 countries after Venezuela, Honduras and Bangladesh.

Silencing critical media was a vital component but was not the limit. With the excuse of July 15, Erdoğan purged the judiciary by firing or jailing more than 5.000 judges and prosecutors including two members of the Supreme Court and several judges of the highest level courts. The new regime also used July 15 to change Turkey's political system from parliamentary to presidential, which eroded the controlling power of the legislative over the executive branch. As a result, Erdoğan established his one man rule by eliminating the most crucial three check and balance mechanisms of a normal democracy: parliament, media and judiciary.

Currently, Turkey has a political environment where 95% of media, judiciary, parliament and executive is controlled by one man. This may be the answer to the questions why and how a failed coup destroys a democracy and why a political leader names a coup targeting himself as a gift from God.





# Turkish critic and US resident, abducted in Kenya by Turkish spies, questioned over union membership in Turkey



**ABDULLAH BOZKURT**  
STOCKHOLM

Turkey's notorious intelligence agency MIT abducted a teacher from Kenya to interrogate him about his membership in a teacher's union that was established by critics of the Islamist government of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

According to the interrogation report, classified as secret by the investigating prosecutor and obtained by Nordic Monitor, Selahaddin Gülen, 30-year-old teacher, was asked why he became a member of the Pak Education and Science Employees Union (Pak Eğitim-İş) when he was in Turkey.

Selahaddin, a US resident who took

a teaching job in Kenya, is a nephew of President Erdoğan's arch foe Fethullah Gülen, and his kidnapping in Kenya and imprisonment in Turkey were part of campaign of intimidation waged by the Erdoğan government to punish critics, opponents, and dissidents. Dozens of Fethullah Gülen's relatives were jailed







in Turkey on what appeared to be dubious charges and sham evidence.

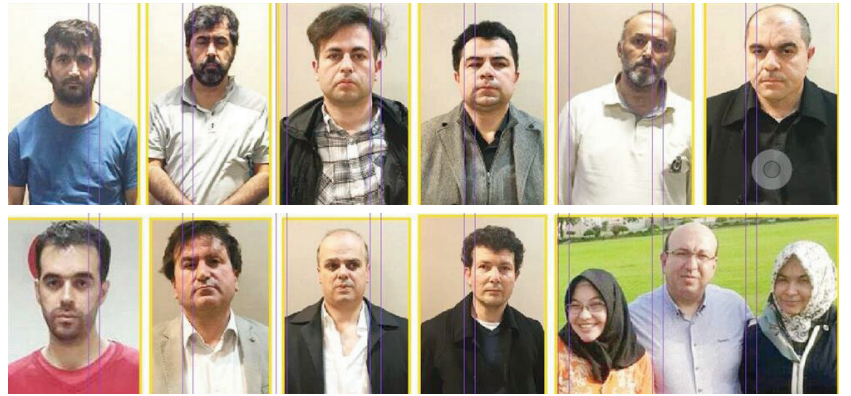
Selahaddin's membership in the teacher's union was listed as criminal evidence sufficient to warrant his false imprisonment although the union was duly authorized and licensed to operate by the government at the time. In fact, the Education Ministry had sent an official letter to 26 governor's offices and provincial education directorates advising them to freely promote the union among public and private schools.

The assets of thousands of people with alleged ties to the Gülen movement were also confiscated or frozen by the government. According to a report by Brussels-based human rights group Platform for Peace and Justice (PPJ), the total value of confiscated or frozen assets is \$32 billion.

Critics of the Erdogan government abroad, especially members of the movement, have also been facing surveillance, harassment, death threats and abduction since President Erdogan decided to blame the group for his own legal troubles.

In a joint letter UN reporters accused the Turkish government of engaging in the systematic practice of state-sponsored extraterritorial abductions and forcible returns to Turkey. This included at least 100 Turkish nationals from multiple states including Afghanistan, Albania, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Cambodia, Gabon, Kosovo, Kazakhstan, Lebanon and Pakistan who were removed to Turkey.

In a number of cases the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) concluded that the arrest, detention and forced transfer to Turkey of Turkish nationals were arbitrary and in violation of international human rights norms and standards.



(CMK MD. 147)

İfadenin Alındığı Yer : TEM ŞUBE MÜDÜRLÜĞÜ  
Soruşturma C. Başsavcılığı : Ankara CBS 2021/111095 Başlama Saati: 11:30  
İfadenin Alındığı Tarih : 03.06.2021 Avukat : Zahide UYSAL  
İfade Vermede Müdafî : Ankara Barosu

Kimliğime ilişkin soruları doğru olarak cevaplamam gerektiği, doğru cevap vermemem veya yanlış bilgi verdiğim takdirde hakkımda cezai kovuşturma yapılabileceği söylendi. (147/1-a)

İfade Veren Kimliği :  
Adı ve Soyadı : Selahaddin GÜLEN  
TC Kimlik No : [Redacted]  
Baba Adı : Seyfullah  
Ana Adı : Mükafat  
Doğum Yeri ve Tarihi : Erzurum - 1991  
Nüfusa Kayıtlı olduğu İl-İlçe : Erzurum - Yakutiye  
Cinsiyeti : Erkek  
Devamlı İkamet Adresi ve Telefonu : [Redacted]  
Eğitim Durumu : Erzurum  
Mesleği/Rütbesi : Lisans  
Son İş Adresi ve Telefon No : Öğretmen  
Medenî Hali : Azizeye Koleji Erzurum  
Çocuk Sayısı : -  
Sabıka Durumu : -  
Gelir Durumu : -  
Elektronik Posta Adresi : [Redacted]@gmail.com  
İmzadan İmtina Nedeni Varsa : -  
İnat edilen suç : FETULLAHCİ TERÖR ÖRGÜTÜ KURMA VEYA YÖNETME

Bana isnat edilen suç anlatıldı. (147/1-b) Müdafî seçme hakkının bulunduğu ve onun hukuki yardımından yararlanabileceğim, müdafînin ifade veya sorgusuna hazır bulunabileceği, müdafî seçecek durumla değil isem bir müdafî yardımından faydalanmak istediğim takdirde baro tarafından bir müdafî görevlendirileceği (147/1-c), yakalandığımı yakınlarımdan istediğim birisine derhal bildirebileceğim (147/1-d) tarafıma bildirildi. Bana isnat edilen suç hakkında açıklamada bulunmamla haklım olduğuna söylendi. (147/1-e) Bana şüpheden kurtulmam için somut delillerin toplanmasını talep edebileceğime hatırlatıldı. Aleyhime var olan şüphe sebeplerini ortadan kaldırmak ve lehime olan hususları ileri sürmek imkânı verildi. (147/1-f)

Müdafîli 30821 sicil sayılı Ankara Barosu Avukatı Zahide UYSAL İfade Alma Yönetmeliğinin 23. Maddesinin (d) bendinde belirtilen:





# Erdoğan's war on books and publishing houses

*Turkey's paranoia over books knows no boundaries. But this is certainly no laughing matter. If you get caught with any of these books that were sold and distributed freely in Turkey for decades, you will be accused of terrorism.*



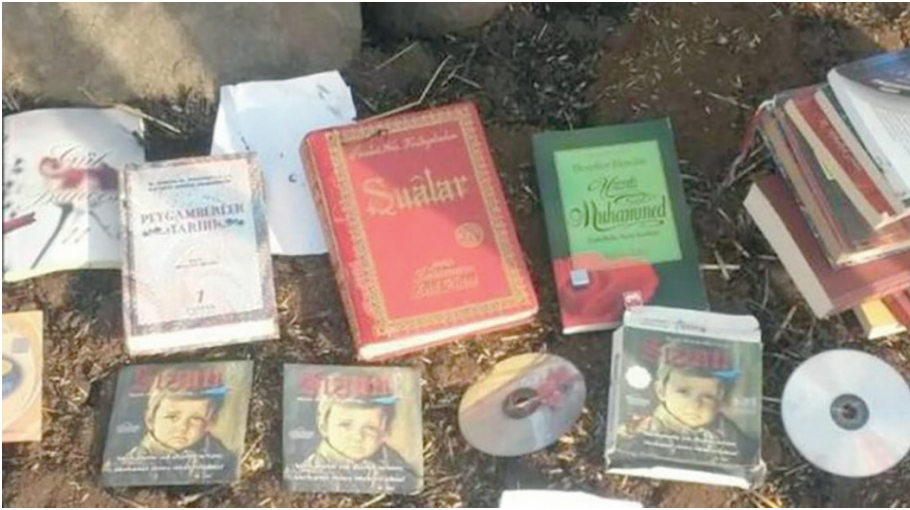
The untold part of the story about the unprecedented attack on freedom of the press in Turkey is the toll the crackdown, launched by the Islamist government of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has taken on the publishing industry. Very little has been written about the authors, publishers and copy editors whose voices were silenced when the government seized and shut down publishing houses and distribution companies on false pretenses.

This practice stands in sharp contrast to publishing houses and bookstores that sell jihadist books in promoting the narratives and ideologies al-Qaeda and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) without much hindrance. In fact, the Erdoğan government specifically targeted publishing houses that offer a perfect panacea to the poisonous narrative of these violent jihadist groups and undermined the intellectual and analytical work that would help build a much-needed counter-narrative in this predominantly Sunni nation of 81 million. The seizure and later shuttering of Kaynak Holding, the owner of Turkey's largest publisher which also

prints and distributed mainstream Islamic books that strongly rejected violence, is a perfect example that explains the motivation on the part of the Erdoğan government.

Kaynak Holding, seized by the government on November 18, 2015 and shut down altogether in July 2016, included a publishing giant named Işık Yayıncılık, which owned eight publishing houses under its groups Işık Yayınları, Define Yayınları, Nil Yayınları, Şahdamar Yayınları, Yitik Hazine Yayınları, Kaynak Yayınları, Muştı Yayınları and Kuşak Yayınları. The publisher had 2,972 books for sale in the marketplace at the time and had contracts with 714 authors. The themes of the books ranged from works of literature such as novels, poetry and biographies to travel books and books catering to the younger generation. Işık was also printing and distributing non-Turkish books, especially volumes in English, French, Spanish, Russian and Arabic, in Turkey and abroad. It had 893 non-Turkish books in book market circulation. It also enjoyed a healthy share of the publishing industry that focuses on the subject of religion.





The fact that Işık had published dozens of books written by Fethullah Gülen, a US-based Islamic scholar who became a vocal critic of the Erdoğan regime, made the company a prime target for Erdoğan, who did not want anybody to challenge his political Islamist ideology, which offered nothing but corruption, violence and crony capitalism in Turkey. The company also had two monthly magazines (Sızıntı and Gonca), one bi-monthly (Yağmur) and one quarterly (Yeni Ümit), with a total circulation of 662,000 at the time the government seized it in 2015. The first thing the government caretakers sent by Erdoğan to run the publishing house did was to halt the publication and distribution of magazines. The same happened to foreign-language magazines such as The Fountain, Hira, Noviyya Grani, Cascada and Ebru.

The major distributor for Işık was the NT Bookstore chain, which accounted for 69 percent of Işık's sales in many stores across Turkey. However, NT was also seized by the government. In other words, the Erdoğan government not only went after publishers but also distribution and sale networks to suffocate the entire supply chain of publishing businesses that did not toe the line of government policy. In fact, the same tactic was used in 2016 when the government seized major distribution network Cihan Dagitım, which was delivering national dailies every day to the homes of subscribers including those of the Zaman newspaper, which was selling 1.2 million copies on a daily basis at its peak.

Işık had turnover of TL 58.4 million

(USD21.5 million) as of November 2015. It posted TL 81.4 million (USD60.6 million) in revenue in 2014, when it first came under pressure from the government. The takeover by government trustees was supposed to keep the company afloat until the investigation into the publisher was completed. In other words, the seizure was supposed to be an interim decision, and the government caretakers needed to ensure that the company continued its business activities without any damage to profitability. The opposite happened because Erdoğan had no interest in sustaining a business that he saw as a threat to his transformation project for Turkey, which is apparently quite hostile to critical thinking and analytical views. As a result, in the first four months under government management in 2016 revenue dropped by 80.2 percent to TL 6.2 million from the TL 31.3 million it had posted for the same period a year earlier. Even if the government had not shut it down in July 2016, its

business was already in the red, and it would have been very difficult to survive without an injection of a fresh capital.

When Işık was shut down, 228 people instantly became unemployed, another sad part of the crackdown on the publishing industry. Many talented people who were involved in the publishing industry were thrown into the abyss just like trash paper. I wanted to write about Işık in detail to give a real picture of what happened to 41 other publishing houses that were summarily and arbitrarily closed by government decrees issued in July 2016 and then under a state of emergency that the government used to destroy all critical news media, publishing houses, schools, associations and foundations.

But apparently that was not enough. The books that were printed and stored in warehouses by publishers were ordered to be burned, while the Culture Ministry issued a circular to all 1,130 public libraries across the nation to pull all the books ever printed by these shuttered publishers and destroy them immediately. In 2017, the government withdrew 169,141 books that were printed by these publishers from the shelves of libraries. The titles of the books were removed from the digital archives and websites of the libraries as if the government wanted to erase all traces that might suggest the books ever existed. At the same time, the government targeted individual authors as well. For example, a penal judge of peace in İstanbul's Bakırköy district issued







an overarching ban on 672 books and other works by Gülen and ordered the collection of all his books currently for sale in bookstores.

The Erdoğan government did not stop there, either. Seizing the assets of publishing houses, shutting them down and forcing their workers into unemployment on dubious and fabricated charges did not satisfy the rulers of Turkey. The managers and employees of Işık were also prosecuted on false terrorism charges, and many of them were arrested. For example, on March 7, 2018 the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office issued detention warrants for 60 employees of Işık, of whom 41 were detained. On March 23, 2018 fresh detention warrants were issued for 55 employees of Işık in a second wave of arrests targeting employees of the shuttered publishing house. The detentions were intended to feed the climate of fear in Turkey and send a clear message to every employee - no matter in what capacity one worked at a publishing house.

The Erdoğan government's attack on books was not limited to shuttered publishers. In May 2017 police raided the Belge Publishing House in Istanbul and seized a total of 2,170 books.

In September 2017 the Education Ministry recalled thousands of books that were distributed to seventh grade students because the books had a chapter on press freedom that discussed the significance of the media and briefly mentioned the situation of the media in Turkey. It was estimated that it cost taxpayers some TL 50 million (USD16 million) in 2016 alone to destroy books weighing 13,000 tons.

More examples can be cited as to how the Erdoğan government is imitating the Mongols of the 13th century who burned valuable and precious books in Baghdad. The hostile campaign against books has reached a new peak in Turkey. In December 2016,



Turkey's Education Ministry destroyed 892,000 textbooks that included the word "Pennsylvania" on the basis of it promoting "terrorist propaganda." The government's premise was that Erdoğan's chief critic Gülen lives in the US state of Pennsylvania and the word recalled the Muslim scholar even though there was no reference to the critic at all. In fact, the textbook was about American author James Michener, who mentioned Pennsylvania as his place of birth.

In October 2016, an Education Ministry bureaucrat suggested the

government remove the phrase "Milky Way" from textbooks in order to avoid any resemblance to the names of schools linked to the Gülen movement. Many science-focused schools affiliated with the movement across Turkey bore the name Samanyolu, which translates into Milky Way, until they were confiscated by the government in 2016. In another case, the government banned mathematics textbooks due to questions involving the initials of Fethullah Gülen in a way that reads "... from point F to point G ..." **TURKISHMINUTE.COM**

**Subject: Human Rights Violations in Turkey**

# 3<sup>RD</sup> INTERNATIONAL ART CONTEST ON Instagram

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**Certificates for the best 10 artists.**

**All varieties of art will be acceptable submissions**

**Dimensions must be at least 17 x 11 inch landscape (not portrait)**

**Send your art work to [art@silencedturkey.org](mailto:art@silencedturkey.org)**

\*\*\*You retain your rights to your art work; however, by entering the contest, you grant the Advocates of Silenced Turkey and its affiliates a royalty-free, world-wide, perpetual, nonexclusive license to publicly display, distribute, reproduce and create derivative works of the entries, in whole or in part, in any media now existing or later developed, for any purpose.




On behalf of 9 year old Nurehan Teke who died in the Maritsa river on March 4th, 2021 while fleeing from the persecution in Turkey.

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# Turkey's post-coup crackdown



**150,348**

dismissed



**500,650**

investigated



**96,885**

arrested



**3,003**

school, dormitories  
and universities  
shut down



**6,021**

academics  
lost jobs



**4.463**

judges, prosecutors  
dismissed



**189**

media outlets  
shut down



**319**

journalists  
arrested

**since July 15, 2016**

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