The Failed Military Coup in Turkey
&
The Mass Purges
The Failed Military Coup in Turkey & The Mass Purges
This report has been written in response to recent events in Turkey — the attempted coup of July 15, 2016 and the extraordinary purges that are continuing in its aftermath. With the current government crackdown on the media in Turkey, it is difficult to extract an objective account of events on the night of the failed coup and establish responsibility for them. For that reason, here we examine the Turkish government’s official account of events and some of the difficulties with it. We also present a number of alternative conclusions about events from academics and experts from across the political spectrum. We document the alarming rise in wholesale human rights abuses for which the failed coup appears to be a pretext. We then show how the Turkish government or its supporters are also instigating similar abuses within the borders of Europe.

In the hope that the reader will be able to form an educated and objective opinion about the current state of affairs in Turkey and its effects beyond Turkey’s borders, we have provided plentiful references to supporting evidence in the form of newspaper articles and reports from official bodies or human rights organizations. At the time of going to press all the links given in the footnotes were available. However, given the Turkish government’s determined attack on freedom of expression, it is possible that those links which are based on servers in Turkey will not remain available for very long.

The report was initiated by the Alliance for Shared Values in the United States and the Dialogue Platform in Brussels. Scholars from the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, and Holland have contributed to the text.
The failed coup attempt of July 15 was an historic moment for Turkey. Turkish society and the world celebrated the fact that the people had prevented an anti-democratic intervention in the government. The Turkish government has every right to pursue these individuals within the law. Those suspected of planning and carrying out actions against the elected government should be investigated and brought to justice.

The actions of the government in the immediate aftermath of the coup, however, do not constitute a proper or lawful investigation. On the night of July 15, several hours before details of the coup attempt emerged, President Erdoğan declared Fethullah Gülen, a 77-year old reclusive preacher living in Pennsylvania, to be its mastermind.

The official story told by the government about the failed coup attempt is that a group of military officers who are Gülen-sympathisers learned that they would be dismissed following the upcoming August meeting of the High Council of the Military, and they staged a coup to save themselves and gain control of the government. The official story is not based on an investigation, evidence, or a court verdict, and it leaves many questions unanswered.

Within days of the coup attempt, police detained not only the officers accused of taking part in the coup, but also thousands of soldiers who did not take part in the coup and tens of thousands of civilians. Amnesty International has reported “credible evidence” of serious abuses of detainees including beatings, torture and rape.

On the night of the coup attempt President Erdoğan said, “This uprising is a gift from God to us because this will be a reason to cleanse our army.” He is using the failed coup as a golden opportunity to completely re-engineer the military structure, including the education of cadets to bring the military under his tutelage, and furthermore to completely silence all opposition to his rule, and to accelerate the persecution of the Hizmet movement and confiscate private property owned by Hizmet sympathizers.

Individuals and organisations sympathetic to the Hizmet movement are not the only victims of the post-coup purges. Liberal, nationalist, Kurdish, leftist and Alevi individuals and organisations have been targeted as well.

The common denominator among more than 110 media organisations shut down by the government after the coup is not affiliation with the Hizmet movement but being independent voices critical of the Erdoğan regime. Many of the arrested journalists are known to be liberal, leftist, pro-Kurdish or nationalist. Some of the arrested military officers are known as hardline Kemalists. As well as closing down all the private schools run by Hizmet sympathisers, on September 8, 2016 the government announced the suspension of 11,500 Kurdish teachers for alleged links to a terrorist organisation. An atmosphere of fear is being perpetuated to silence all democratic dissent.

The Turkish government has so far failed to produce any evidence to link Gülen with the coup attempt. James Clapper, U.S. Director of National Intelligence, has stated that they did not see evidence of Gülen’s involvement in the coup attempt in their intelligence.

1 http://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-primeminister-idUSKCN0ZV2HK
2 https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/a-reality-check-on-the-middle-east-from-
Many independent experts argue that it is objectively very unlikely that the driving force of the coup attempt was Gülen-sympathisers. A more plausible account provided by independent observers says that the attempt had a much broader base, including hard-line Kemalists and neo-nationalists. President Erdoğan was informed of and expecting this attempt and his allies moved to cripple it and turn it into an opportunity for Erdoğan to emerge as the hero. The active role of General Mehmet Dişli, brother of AKP vice chairman Şaban Dişli on the night of the coup, along with other evidence presented in this report, tends to confirm this view.

The government’s continuing strategy of arresting journalists and closing down media outlets, along with wholesale violation of human rights is facilitating the AKP’s suppression within Turkey of information that contradicts the official narrative of the coup. A great many journalists of note have been arrested, fled the country, or have been frightened into compliance with the official story. The AKP is thus able to prevent any discussion of the fact that many of the officers involved in the coup attempt are known as Kemalists or neo-nationalists and their testimonies conflict with the official story of the involvement of Fethullah Gülen.

President Erdoğan is exploiting the atmosphere of fear and his domination of the media in order to pursue a strategy of disinformation on the Turkish public. The surviving elements of the media are strongly biased toward the ruling party and are using horrifying scenes from the coup attempt to create emotional outrage, which their presenters and commentators then link to the Hizmet movement in particular, but also to any other public figure who dares to doubt the official story. This unproven link is then employed to justify in the public eye the vilification, purging and persecution of Hizmet sympathizers and all other opponents of the current regime.

These developments fit a pattern of scapegoating, purge and power grabbing which Erdoğan has displayed throughout his political career. It may not be possible to learn the facts about the coup for some time because of widespread and severe human rights abuses and the atmosphere of fear in Turkey. However, although what exactly happened on the night of July 15 is still not clear, it is known that the mass purges have targeted mostly civilians and left tens of thousands of families suffering, while President Erdoğan has benefited by consolidating all power in his hands and positioning himself, according to the New York Times, as the new mythical savior of the Turkish nation like a twenty-first century Atatürk.

President Erdoğan has publicly expressed disappointment and even rage at world reaction to the failed coup. While showing solidarity with the Turkish government in its effort to identify and prosecute coup-plotters, world leaders and human rights monitoring organisations have criticized the government’s targeting of civilians in a mass purge. Although these criticisms are valuable, they are insufficient to protect basic human rights and freedoms in Turkey or to stop the AKP government from targeting civil society. The only hope for the victims of the mass purge is the ending of the State of Emergency and the re-establishment of the rule of law, humane detention conditions and access to legal representation.

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On Friday, July 15, a group of middle-ranking Turkish soldiers attempted a coup. Their focus was on Ankara and Istanbul; they took control of Istanbul’s bridges and airports, the Turkish parliament, and some police stations. The attempted coup was ill planned and badly executed. The police and public thwarted their efforts. Sixty-two police officers, five soldiers, and 173 civilians were killed. More than 1,500 people were wounded. The government has blamed the coup on its “default scapegoat”, Fethullah Gülen. Some government ministers have also accused the U.S. administration of supporting the abortive coup attempt to topple Erdoğan through the Gülen movement. Immediately after the coup attempt, 3,000 soldiers and 2,800 judges were arrested. Around 100,000 civil servants, bureaucrats, academics have been fired, 42,000 people have been detained, and 23,000 arrested.

**Attempt to Justify Mass Purges**

The official story told by the government about the failed coup attempt of July 15, 2016 is the following: A group of military officers who are Gülen-sympathisers learned that they would be eliminated in the upcoming August meeting of the High Council of the Military, so they staged a coup to save themselves and to gain control of the government. Only three hours after public signs of the coup attempt emerged, on a FaceTime call to CNN-Türk Erdoğan, declared the attempt the work of a group of Gülen-sympathisers within the military.

**Fethullah Gülen’s Reaction**

Fethullah Gülen has condemned the coup attempt. In the early hours of the attempt, the Alliance for Shared Values, an organisation that speaks on behalf of Gülen, condemned it. This was followed by a personal statement by Gülen, and by unconditional condemnation from Gülen-inspired organisations. The world press picked up Gülen’s condemnation. In various op-eds and press briefings, Gülen emphasized that he is against military intervention. He said, “My philosophy — inclusive and pluralist Islam, dedicated to service to human beings from every faith — is antithetical to armed rebellion.” In his op-ed published in French daily Le Monde, he called for an international investigation into the failed putsch in Turkey.

Gülen has given many interviews to the international press since the coup. Asked whether this was a hoax coup staged by Erdoğan, Gülen replied that he cannot say this as he has no way of knowing but that this must be within the realm of possibility. However, Gülen’s statement should not be misconstrued. When asked if any of his followers were involved, he gave a similar response, saying, “I cannot know who all my followers are; how can I say no one that is inspired by me was involved? Let it be investigated by an international body and I’ll accept their findings.” By saying this, he is being consistent in keeping that within the realm of possibility also.

**Broad Base of Coup Plotters**

The representation of the coup by government officials presents three problems:

1. They completely ignore the broad base of the actual or potential coup plotters and focus on alleged Gülen sympathisers.
2. They fail to explain apparent contradictions and holes in the story.
3. They attempt to justify mass purges by emphasising the horrible actions of the

The failed military coup in Turkey

An airforce officer informs MIT (National Intelligence Organization) of coup attempt. (He is later expelled from military).

MIT informs military chief. Does not inform or protect President or Prime Minister.

MIT chief meets with military chief.

Military units block one direction of Bosphorus bridge.

President Erdogan learns about the coup from his brother-in-law.

PM Binali Yildirim declares the coup the work of a fringe.

State-run Anadolu News Agency declares that military chief has been taken hostage.

A declaration is read on behalf of coup plotters on state-run TRT TV.

Erdogan appears on CNN Turk, blames Gülen for the coup, calls people to streets.

Erdogan leaves the vacation place where he has been residing.

Erdogan lands in Istanbul’s Ataturk airport and gives a press conference. Claims movement in military was detected in the afternoon.

Military chief is taken hostage.

Coup plotters issue a statement from the office of military chief of staff.


General Akar, chief of staff, is released.

MIT chief declares coup attempt over.

2745 judges and prosecutors are fired, many arrested.

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13:00</td>
<td>An airforce officer informs MIT (National Intelligence Organization) of coup attempt. (He is later expelled from military).</td>
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<tr>
<td>16:00</td>
<td>MIT informs military chief. Does not inform or protect President or Prime Minister.</td>
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<tr>
<td>18:00</td>
<td>MIT chief meets with military chief.</td>
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<td>20:00</td>
<td>Military units block one direction of Bosphorus bridge.</td>
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<td>20:00</td>
<td>President Erdogan learns about the coup from his brother-in-law.</td>
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<td>23:05</td>
<td>PM Binali Yildirim declares the coup the work of a fringe.</td>
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<td>23:30</td>
<td>State-run Anadolu News Agency declares that military chief has been taken hostage.</td>
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<td>00:04</td>
<td>A declaration is read on behalf of coup plotters on state-run TRT TV.</td>
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<td>00:37</td>
<td>Erdogan appears on CNN Turk, blames Gülen for the coup, calls people to streets.</td>
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<td>01:00</td>
<td>Erdogan leaves the vacation place where he has been residing.</td>
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<td>02:00</td>
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<td>08:30</td>
<td>General Akar, chief of staff, is released.</td>
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<td>13:35</td>
<td>MIT chief declares coup attempt over.</td>
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<td>14:55</td>
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coup perpetrators, such as the targeting of civilians and the bombing of the parliament building.

During his thirteen years in power, first as prime minister and then as president, Erdoğan has caused a great deal of resentment within the Turkish military. It is probably safe to say that the vast majority of the officer corps either dislike or outright hate President Erdoğan. The reason for this attitude is two-fold. The Turkish Military has been the bastion of the official ideology of the Turkish Republic based on the ideals of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founding father of the republic. In his second and third terms in power, Erdoğan undermined key elements of Atatürk’s legacy, such as the western orientation of Turkey and the separation of powers, but the activity that was most offensive was his mixing of religion and politics. Atatürk was staunchly against the appearance of Islam in the public arena, but Erdoğan has used religious language and symbols for blatantly political purposes throughout his career, especially so in the last five years.

Furthermore, during the 2008–2010 trials of military officers for involvement in coups or coup planning, even the military chief of staff was arrested and imprisoned, on terrorism charges, a first in Turkish history. The police detective who was in charge of the investigation of former Chief of Staff İlker Başbuğ, for funding anti-AKP web sites with public funds, told audiences on a TV program that Erdoğan knew about the probe and insisted that Başbuğ be arrested. This was grossly embarrassing for General Başbuğ and attracted strong resentment from the whole military officer corps. Erdoğan later claimed that the arrest was the work of Gülen sympathisers in the judiciary who went after the generals, but the military did not forget his statement during the trials that he was “the prosecutor for these trials” and that he gave his full political support to the judiciary throughout.

Indeed the information that has surfaced about the leading figures in the coup attempt in July suggests a broad base, pointing to Kemalist and neo-nationalist officers, as well as those who were expecting early retirement. Multiple sources, including independent experts who have no sympathy for the Hizmet movement, have pointed to the presence of officers with Kemalist and neo-nationalist orientations among the arrested military officers:

- In an interview with Deutsche Welle Turkish, journalist Ahmet Şık stated that among those who were detained there were neo-nationalists and people staunchly opposed to the Hizmet movement.6
- Former Chief of Staff İlker Başbuğ has spoken of the presence of three groups, while Ahmet Zeki Üçok, a retired military judge, has said there were about five groups including opportunists.
- Gareth Jenkins, a non-resident senior fellow at Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies, suggested that “there are problems with the AKP’s simplistic narrative that the putsch was a purely Gülenist affair — not least because at least some of the officers who have confessed to playing an active role are known to be hard-line Kemalists.”7
- Svante Cornell, Director of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Program of Johns Hopkins University, suggested, “it has long been assumed that Gülenist cliques were present in the military at mid-career ranks.

6 http://www.dw.com/tr/ahmet-C5%9F%C4%B1k-darbeciler-birbirini-satt%C4%B1/a-19409115

It is probably safe to say that the vast majority of the officer corps either dislike or outright hate President Erdoğan.
But no one believes that Gülenist officers had risen to the ranks of three- or four-star generals. Thus, while it is very likely that Gülenist officers were involved, it is equally obvious that they could not have carried this out on their own. The more senior generals apparently involved do not seem to have any Gülenist affiliations; and that “the coup may have been carried out by an unholy alliance between a faction of old-school Kemalist and Gülenist officers. If this is the case, it would mean that while Erdoğan allied with the top military brass against the Gülenists, another military faction allied with the Gülenists against Erdoğan.”

8 Michael Rubin of the American Enterprise Institute stated that Gülen has never had a powerbase in the military because “the Turkish General Staff has long vetted officer candidates to prevent Gülen’s followers from rising through the ranks.”

9 Rubin discussed the possibility of Kemalist officers other than the ones Erdoğan handpicked being among the coup plotters.

10 Umit Cizre, Professor of Political Science at Istanbul Şehir University, talked about “three cliques” among the coup-plotters, citing comments by Kadri Gürsel of Al Monitor and research by the Institute for Study of War.

11 Other intellectuals such as İsmail Beşikçi and Cemil Gündoğan reiterated the view that neo-nationalist and Kemalist commanders were involved.

12 An editorial in the UK’s Guardian, which references an article in the Times, states, “Few outside observers believe that the plotters were not for the most part old-fashioned secularists in the tradition of the Turkish armed forces.”

13 Dr. Eric Jan Zurcher a Dutch expert on Turkey who returned the Medal of High Distinction given to him by Turkish government, due to Erdoğan’s dictatorial governance, disputes the official Turkish government story. He suggests that other groups involved in the attempt are probably swallowing Erdoğan’s story for self-protection.

As to whether some Gülen sympathisers might have been involved in the attempt, even though they may not have been the driving force, Gülen’s response was that he condemned the coup in the strongest terms and said, “If somebody who appears to be a Hizmet sympathiser has been involved in an attempted coup, he betrays my ideals.”

Examining the Official Claims

Gareth Jenkins once criticised Turkey’s infamous Ergenekon indictments on the grounds that they were “products of ‘projective’ rather than deductive reasoning, working backwards from the premise that the organisation exists to weave unrelated individuals, statements and acts into a single massive conspiracy.” Other than being a far more extreme example of “projective” rather than “deductive reasoning,” how is the Turkish government’s and its media’s attempt at connecting Turkey’s failed coup with Fethullah Gülen and the Hizmet movement he inspires is no different?

President Erdoğan has been projecting Gülen

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8 http://www.martenscentre.eu/blog/botched-coup-and-turkeys-descent-madness
10 http://www.merip.org/mero/mero081016
12 http://sendika10.org/2016/07/darbe-icin-ne-dediler-hulya-yetisen
14 https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2016/07/28/erdogan-kanzijn-gang-gaan-a1513733
and Hizmet onto almost every development in Turkey since the corruption investigations of December 2013\textsuperscript{17}. From the Gezi protests\textsuperscript{18} to the downing of the Russian jet,\textsuperscript{19} almost all past, present and even potential future impediments to the wishes of the ruling party are pinned on Gülen. Consider the night of the coup; within two hours of the tanks rolling, President Erdoğan called into CNN Turk.\textsuperscript{20} He said that he was unaware of the whereabouts of his chief of staff, that the national intelligence services had not only failed to intercept intel on the coup and inform him of it before it had happened but that he was unable to reach his head of national intelligence even after the coup was underway; so much so, that despite the overwhelming state machinery in place, President Erdoğan was informed of the coup as it took place by none other than his brother-in-law.\textsuperscript{21} Yet despite not being privy to the necessary facts, and as the events were still unfolding, President Erdoğan pinned responsibility squarely on Gülen and Hizmet. The willingness of the Turkish intelligentsia to uncritically internalise the President's accusations is disappointing, especially those who rightly criticised the evidentiary failings of the Ergenekon and Sledgehammer trials.\textsuperscript{22} Should they not be the very people to caution the country now against this collective rerun?\textsuperscript{23}

What exactly is the weight of evidence linking Gülen to the coup? Where is the judicial due process that has determined the culpability of Gülen and Hizmet?

Gülen and Hizmet have not only been pre-judged but are being punished even before any preliminary judicial investigation into the coup. It is possible that by the time the judicial investigation into the failed coup is complete, there will be no Gülen or Hizmet left to prosecute. The use of the term “FETO” (Fethullah Terror Organisation) when there is no court ruling on its existence demonstrates disregard for due process and the rule of law. When the Turkish government supported the Ergenekon trials, pundits were forced to refer to it as “the alleged Ergenekon organisation” to avoid being sued by the suspects. Those who claimed to defend the Ergenekon and Sledgehammer suspects in the name of justice and due process are betraying those same principles and positions today.

It is essential now in Turkey to defend due process, the rule of law, judicial independence and the right to be heard in the face of overwhelming power. The plight of Gülen and Hizmet is only symptomatic of defects in these areas. In the light of the tsunami of arrests and dismissals of journalists in Turkey, the cancellation of their press cards and passports, and arrests of family members when the journalists themselves cannot be found, who is now able to challenge the Turkish government’s narrative about the attempted coup? Who can challenge the working assumptions within the executive, judiciary and intelligence services in Turkey? Civil society and the media are unable now to offer an alternative perspective to that of the government. Al Jazeera’s “Gülen’s fingerprints in Turkey’s failed coup”\textsuperscript{24} is one example among many compliant articles. The piece lists uncritically the government’s most commonly cited five “pieces of evidence” to incriminate Gülen and does not provide a critique or right to reply. These five pieces of “evidence” are being repeated in Turkish and in some foreign media, so they merit evaluation.

The pieces of “evidence” as laid out by Al Jazeera are listed below in italics and evaluated in turn by posing questions and counter-perspectives. Finally, there is evaluation of a sixth claim, which has been making the rounds since

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{17}] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2013_corruption_scandal_in_Turkey
\item[\textsuperscript{18}] http://www.sabah.com.tr/yazarlar/kutahya-li/2016/06/01/gezideki-feto-provokasyonunun-kanitlari
\item[\textsuperscript{20}] https://www.theguardian.com/world/video/2016/jul/15/erdogan-facetime-turkey-coup-attempt
\item[\textsuperscript{22}] https://twitter.com/rezaaslan/status/755163940905115649
\item[\textsuperscript{23}] twitter.com/rezaaslan/status/755163940905115649
\item[\textsuperscript{24}] www.aljazeera.com.tr/haber/gulens-fingerprints-turkeys-failed-coup
the Al Jazeera piece was published, and a seventh, which was common well before the events of July 15.

Claim 1 – Police officers were found among putschist soldiers

The first sign of “Gülen’s connection” with the coup came from the streets on the night of the coup attempt: Among the ones, who participated in the coup attempt along with the putschist soldiers, were ‘police officers who were prosecuted as part of the investigations regarding the Gülen’s organisation’s parallel structure but could not be found’. One of those under prosecution, former police chief, Mithat Aynacı was captured in an armoured vehicle in front of the Istanbul Police Department. The fugitive police chief was in military camouflage when he was caught.

There were other police chiefs among putschists that night as well. Wanted former police chiefs Lokman Kırcalı and Gürsel Aktepe were among the soldiers captured in front of the Ankara Police Department. In his statement, Gürsel Aktepe said he has sympathy for Fethullah Gülen, adding that ‘he had gone to the U.S. on a mission as part of his career, that he had stayed in Gülen’s house for two days there and attended his conversation gatherings’. Stating that he received a monthly financial support of 4,500 Turkish liras after he was ostracised from profession, Aktepe said that on the night of the coup he received a message telling ‘everyone to go to their former places of duty’ and so he went to the front of the Ankara Police Department. Aktepe said “It is impossible for the coup attempt on the night of July 15th to have taken place without the knowledge and order of the top leader of this organisation, Fethullah Gülen.”

Evaluation

The claim is that three “Gülenist” police officers were apprehended while supporting the coup and that this proves the link between Gülen and the coup. If Hizmet wanted to support the attempted coup by reinforcing it with current or former policer officers, should there not have been thousands of such police officers involved, especially if we accept the government claim that “Gülenists” overrun the nation’s police force?25 Note that the government had purged 45,000 police officers and 2,500 judges and prosecutors by 2015 (and more since, until the failed coup of 2016 when it began a new wave of purges).26 How is it that of these 45,000 police officers, dismissed, wanted or still active, only three were identified as supporting the putschists?

The piece mentions the three police officers by name: Mithat Aynacı, Lokman Kırcalı, and Gürsel Aktepe. It claims these officers were “prosecuted” for being part of the “Gülen’s organisation’s parallel structure.” This is factually incorrect. Firstly, any prosecution alleging any link to Gülen or the movement is still on-going and so far no court has given a ruling on any charge incriminating Fethullah Gülen, Hizmet or on any alleged association with either. Therefore, suggesting that these police officers have been “prosecuted” and, by implication, found guilty, is grossly misleading. Furthermore, according to media reports, Mithat Aynacı was dismissed, not prosecuted, from the police force on November 1, 2014 for being a member of the so-called FETO/PDY.27 Mithat Aynacı is re-

26 https://www.ecoi.net/local_link/295276/430284_de.html

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ported to have taken the matter to court, which ruled in his favour and reinstated him as a police officer. Therefore, at the time of his arrest on the night of the coup, Mithat Aynacı had no investigation or judicial decision against him proving his link to any organisation whatsoever.

Secondly, there had been any evidence, circumstantial or otherwise, on Mithat Aynacı’s connection to Hizmet, he would have been dismissed immediately after the December 2013 corruption investigations and not approximately a year later. Thirdly, when eventually dismissed in November 2014, he would have been prosecuted and not just dismissed, as others are being, and fourthly, the government would have countered his claim for unfair dismissal in court.

Moreover, neither of the terms (FETO or PDY) has any legal standing. FETO is an acronym for “Fethullah Gülen Terrorist Organisation”. According to Turkish law, an organisation can only be designated as being “terrorist” by a high court (Yargıtay) decision and there is no such court decision. PDY is an acronym for “Parallel State Organisation”; again there is no court decision that has ruled on the existence of such an organisation. In its absence, the Turkish government passed a cabinet decree on June 29, 2015, many months after Mithat Aynacı’s dismissal, recognising “PDY” as an “enemy of the state”, that proves nothing about Aynacı.

As for Lokman Kırcalı, and Gürsel Aktepe, the Al Jazeera piece states that these officers were wanted at the time of arrest on the night of the coup but does not state on what grounds they were wanted. Given the explanation above on FETO and PDY, it is very unlikely that these police officers were formally dismissed on the basis of links to the Hizmet movement if they were investigated prior to June 29, 2015. In any event, no court has yet ruled on any FETO or PDY charges, and therefore there is no established link between the two police officers and Hizmet.

What links the three police officers to Gülen is the popular assumption that the dismissals of police officers following the 2013 corruption investigations were based on links to Gülen. However, it is well documented that following the corruption investigations of 2013, the Turkish government purged 60,000 police officers, prosecutors and civil servants to disrupt the judicial investigations into government corruption and prevent new investigations from surfacing. Unless we concede that the government profiled 60,000 people prior to the 2013 corruption investigations, then we must assume that these were blanket purges of positions considered sensitive by the government. For example, immediately after the corruption investigations, the government purged all financial crime and organised crime units across the country’s police force – the very units that are responsible for investigating government corruption and money laundering charges. Without more evidence, we cannot assume that the police officers purged following the 2013 corruption investigations – including Mithat Aynacı, Lokman Kırcalı and Gürsel Aktepe – were linked to Gülen. Based on the above, the safest assumption is that Mithat Aynacı was purged as a non-loyalist (to the ruling party). We know from the current wave of purges, that people of all persuasions and walks of life are being purged under the wave of purges, that people of all persuasions and walks of life are being purged under the

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Intercultural Dialogue Platform
pretext of being Gülenist. When these people resurface elsewhere, are we simply to assume that they were all Gülenists, because they were hanged with the same rope?

Nevertheless, the discovery of an off-duty police officer in a tank on the night of the coup is an important lead. If nothing else it suggests collusion between the putschists and that particular police officer. However, despite his importance, there have been a number of news reports\(^3\) by pro-government media outlets that Mithat Aynaci committed suicide while in custody. Reports of Mithat Aynaci’s suicide also coincided with pro-government media reports that Gülen had ordered\(^4\) the assassination of key witnesses held in custody. Conceivably, these latter reports were run to cover up the number of “suicides” occurring in custody. However, soon after, Yeni Safak ran a new story, this time claiming that Mithat Aynaci was alive\(^5\) and had attended court without providing any accompanying footage to prove its claim or its source. Given Amnesty’s report\(^6\) of detainees being tortured, beaten and in some cases, raped, coupled with unverified reports of the death of at least half a dozen detainees, it is possible that Mithat Aynaci did in fact die while in custody as originally reported by pro-government media. If that is the case, the question that must be asked is, given his importance as a suspect and material witness, why was Mithat Aynaci allowed to commit suicide, if that is in fact how he died? If Mithat Aynaci’s arrest proved the government’s allegation, as suggested by pro-government media and indeed this Al Jazeera piece\(^7\), then why was he not guarded and supervised around the clock to prevent any harm from coming to him? The death and/or torture of Mithat Aynaci disprove the argument that his arrest was a key piece of evidence for the government. It further proves that the authorities are not interested in investigating this failed coup in a manner and form that provides a verdict that meets the standards of international law.

**Claim 2 – Confessions of Akar’s aide, Lieutenant Colonel Levent Türkkan**

One of the most important developments, which reveals Gülen’s connection with the coup, took place within the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK). Statements by the Chief of General Staff Hulusi Akar’s aide, Lieutenant Colonel Levent Türkkan have once again exposed this connection. Türkkan was the leader of the group which detained the Chief of General Staff that night. Türkkan, who names himself a member of the Gülen organisation, said that there was an “older brother” named Murat who was in charge of him. Adding that he was the child of a poor family and met with Gülen organisation’s older brothers while he was at junior high school, Türkkan also said he had been given the exam questions before he entered the Işıklar Military High School’s admission exams in 1989. He also told that while he was serving as the Assistant Adjutant of the former Chief of General Staff Necdet Özel, he planted a bugging device, “which Brother Murat gave him”, in Özel’s room.”

Claim 2 and 3 are evaluated together since both relate to so-called confessions. Please see below.

**Claim 3 – Brigadier General Sağır:**

I had served the organisation for 10 years

Another statement revealing the Gülen organisation’s connection with the coup came from a brigadier general. Commander of the 5th Infantry Training Brigade in Sivas and Garrison Commander Brigadier General Faith Celaleddin Sağır, confessed his connection with the Gülen organisation. In his statement, Sağır said “I had been going to the [Gülen organisation’s] houses and dormitories between


1988-1992, attending all their gatherings. I had served the Gülen organization for 10 years. After 2007, especially with the Sledgehammer and Ergenekon operations, I started to move away. I suspended my relationship with them."

Evaluation

Lieutenant Colonel Levent Türkkan's statement was released to the press with a number of photographs. It is claimed that Levent Türkkan wrote his statement by hand. In the accompanying photographs, Levent Türkkan is shown with extensive bandages covering both hands and his entire waist, consistent with reports that his hands and ribs were broken. What is more, his face shows multiple bruises and swelling. Coupled with Amnesty's report, it appears likely that Levent Türkkan was tortured while in custody. As a result, his "confession" would not serve to convict himself, let alone Gülen or anyone else. That Al Jazeera has used his statement as an "important development, which reveals Gülen's connection" is deplorable. At the very least, they most certainly should have pointed out the significant possibility of torture given the accompanying photographs served by the pro-government media.

Amnesty's report, the number of deaths in custody, and the images and footage shown by the Anadolu Ajans state news agency showing detainees bearing the bruises and marks of physical assault, all suggest that there is ample ground to have these statements dismissed when they eventually reach an independent court of law. Furthermore, we are accessing these statements through the pro-government media, which is not renowned for its scrupulous reporting. It is wrongful and naïve, therefore, to determine culpability for the coup on the basis of these statements. This applies to the statements of former police officer Gürsel Aktepe and Brigadier General Sağır too.

Why is the government parading detainees whose appearance corroborates claims of torture, beatings and inhumane treatment? By using these tactics, the government proves that it is focused on scaring the court of public opinion and dissent into line, rather than making a case in any independent court of law. That it has opted out of the European Convention for Human Rights, in an attempt to elude the international court's oversight on rights such as article 3 on the absolute prohibition of torture or degrading treatment, and article 6 on the right to a fair trial, further supports this view.

President Erdoğan and Prime Minister Yıldırım announced Fethullah Gülen and Hizmet as the mastermind of the coup while the coup was still underway and before any official judicial investigation had been launched. Given that the coup failed, it is highly likely that the putschists are tempted to point the finger elsewhere to protect their own affiliations and ideologies. As Erdoğan has already identified the mastermind of the coup, it is convenient for these putschists to corroborate the President's narrative.

It is reported that thousands putschists have been detained so far. How many of those interrogated have "confessed" their link to Gülen? How is it that Gülen was pre-judged as the mastermind of the coup without such information?

Claim 4 – Task list discovered on putschist general

One of the most notable information exposing the Gülen organisation's connection

42 https://www.theguardian.com/world/video/2016/jul/15/erdogan-facetime-turkey-coup-attempt
43 http://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/basbakan-binali-yildirimdan-darbe-girisimi-sonrasi-aciklama
with the coup attempt was a name on the putschists’ tasking list. That name, which the public had already been familiar with, was Brigadier General Hamza Celepoğlu. Although he is currently in prison as part of a case regarding the stop-and-search of Turkish intelligence agency trucks, Celepoğlu was on the junta’s ‘tasking list’. Next to his name it says ‘Gendarmerie General Command, Department of Inspection’ as his post-coup place of duty. The indictment prepared against him stated that Celepoğlu “was acting as part of the Gülen organisation”, which reveals ‘Gülen’s connection’ not only with the coup attempt, but also with the stopping of the Turkish intelligence agency trucks.

Evaluation

A number of questions emerge in relation to this claim. For example, on whom was the “tasking list” discovered? How was it determined to be a task list for the failed coup? Has it been tested for fingerprints and authenticity? Why would the putschists not commit those names to memory but risk getting caught with a list? Why did the putschists not destroy the self-incriminating list when they realised that the coup was failing?

On the coup statement being Kemalist in tone and language, some have argued that this does not preclude the coup plotters from being Gülenists, as Gülenists like to hide their true identities behind others.45 But that statement can equally apply to others, especially when attempting a coup, which, should it fail, would have dire consequences for those behind it. Based on that logic, the task list could have been a decoy, in case the coup failed. The coup looked like it was failing from 1 a.m. local time; if not prepared before, could the list not have been prepared as a decoy then?

Let us imagine that this was a genuine task list, envisaging Brigadier General Hamza Celepoğlu as head of intelligence. How is that connected with Gülen?

The Al Jazeera piece suggests Celepoğlu is in prison standing trial for the stop-and-search of Turkish intelligence agency trucks and that the indictment against him for this states that “he was acting as part of the Gülen organisation.” According to Al Jazeera, that is sufficient to link Celepoğlu with Gülen. The problem with this proposition is that the said trial is still on-going, so the indictment proves nothing. Former editor-in-chief of secular Cumhuriyet newspaper Can Dündar is also being charged in relation to this incident; are we to concede that he is “Gülenist” also? Therefore, that there is an indictment alleging a Gülen connection is indicative of nothing other than a government crackdown.

Claim 5 – Chief of Staff Hulusi Akar to be put in touch with Gülen

One of the most striking information about ‘Pennsylvania’s connection’ with the coup can be found in Chief of General Staff Hulusi Akar’s statement. According to the statement Akar gave to the prosecutor, the putschists asked him to sign the coup declaration that night and told him ‘If you want, we can get you in touch with our opinion leader, Fethullah Gülen’. In his statement, Akar said the person who made this proposal to him was Brigadier General Hakan Evrim, the commander of the Akinci Air Base, the command center of the attempted coup.

Evaluation

Al Jazeera describes this as the “most striking information” connecting Gülen to the coup. Its power comes from the fact that the statement is made by Hulusi Akar, Turkey’s Chief of Staff. However, this accusation is contradictory. Akar claims that putschist Brigadier General Hakan Evrim told him that he could be put in touch with Fethullah Gülen over the phone. The purpose of this offer is to convince the Chief of Staff to join the putschists. Why would an alleged crypto-Gülenist, sworn to secrecy, who has infiltrated the military ranks through stealth, patience and cunning, volunteer the most impor-
tant piece of information regarding the coup, the mastermind behind it, to none other than the Chief of Staff, who has claimed that he was adamantly against joining the putschists?

Those that argue that “Gülenists” masterminded the coup explain the Kemalist tone and language of the coup statement as a ploy by “Gülenists” to hide behind a Kemalist cloak. But why would a group go to such lengths to cover its tracks, and then volunteer its affiliation to no less than the Chief of General Staff?

Wouldn’t the putschists know that a call connecting Turkey’s Chief of General Staff from Turkey with Gülen in Pennsylvania, on the night of the coup, would be intercepted by foreign intelligence agencies, thereby alerting them as to the real mastermind behind the coup? Could they be so cunning and so stupid at the same time? Instead, according to Focus magazine, within half an hour of the start of the coup, the UK’s GCHQ detected government communications stating that the coup would be pinned on Gülen and the purges would start the next day; it was, in Erdoğan’s words, “a gift from God.”

The alleged offer to connect Hulusi Akar to Gülen over the phone was made at the air base to which the Chief of Staff was transferred after being held in Ankara for some time; that is, after the coup attempt started to look as if it was failing. Is it not possible, therefore, that the putschists attempted to mislead Hulusi Akar by offering to connect him to Gülen and thereby protect their true allegiances? Why is this taken at face value, but the coup statement, which points at a Kemalist leadership, not viewed in the same way?

Hulusi Akar’s claim is not supported by the witness statements of the other people that were allegedly with him on the night of the coup. Brigadier General Hakan Evrim himself rejects the accusation and says he has nothing to do with Gülen or his movement.

The Chief of Staff is a staunch secularist; he is likely to be against the Gülen movement and indeed the ruling party of Turkey. Since the government pinned the failed coup on Gülen, it makes sense for the Chief of Staff to corroborate this and thereby eliminate a group that the Turkish military have traditionally opposed. There are multiple problems with Hulusi Akar’s position and many unanswered questions, which at best make him incompetent and, at worst, implicate him as the missing leader of the failed coup. For example, we now know he was informed of the coup at 4 p.m., six hours before the coup took place. Why could he not avert it? Why did he not immediately discuss this life-threatening intelligence with the President and Prime Minister, when, after all, they were the ones being overthrown? Given that Hulusi Akar is an “interested party” in this coup, his statements merit far greater scrutiny.

Claim 6 – Adil Öksüz, “imam” of coup, found at Akıncı Air Base

The challenge in addressing the Adil Öksüz allegation is that everything that we know about him, his alleged involvement in the coup and his denial are all based on government sources and pro-government media. There is no information in the public domain beyond that; nor have we heard his side of the story from him directly. There is no clear evidence whether this man has ever been affiliated with Hizmet or not. However, since Gülen categorically denied involvement in the coup in a series of interviews with both broadcastand print media outlets over a number of days, it is unsurprising that he has not come forward again to deny this alleged collusion with Öksüz. As a result, the analysis below is based solely on government and pro-government media sources.

It is alleged that the Akıncı Air Base was the

47 http://www.focus.de/politik/ausland/titelthe-ma-macht-wohn-erdogan_id_5753730.html
49 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DklcsbDUqTM
headquarters of the failed coup. It is where senior putschist figures were captured and where the Chief of Staff was held captive until the airbase was re-taken by the regular army, following exchange of fire, at approximately 10 a.m. on July 16. Of the 98 people arrested at the airbase, Öksüz was the only civilian (an assistant professor of theology); he had no permit or acceptable reason for being on site. Öksüz was kept in detention for two days. He was formally questioned and made a statement on the morning of July 18. Öksüz denied all charges and claimed that he was never at the airbase and that he was detained at a nearby place where he was inspecting a plot of land for sale and brought back to the airbase. He also claims to have been beaten by police while in detention.51

According to the prosecutor, his answers were wholly inadequate and untrue52. The prosecutor asked the court to “charge and remand” Öksüz. Judge Köksal Şahin refused and ordered his release. The prosecutor appealed to the Court of Second Instance, where Judge Çetin Sönmez upheld the decision of the first court on the grounds of insufficient evidence and, for the second time that day, ordered Öksüz’s release. Security footage shows Öksüz leaving the courthouse in a calm manner and bidding his lawyer farewell.53 Media reports claim that he flew to Istanbul the same day and visited his in-laws the following morning.54 He is thought to have then travelled to Sakarya with no further reports in the media as to his movements thereafter.55 An arrest warrant for Öksüz was issued some time later.

The first set of questions about the government’s claims relate to why Öksüz was at the Akinci Air Base in the first place, given the substantial risk of blowing his cover if he was indeed the head of the coup. The putschist generals were allegedly the ones who had spent three days planning56 the coup and were naturally the ones to lead it, not Öksüz. So why was he on site? Those that claim that Gülen orchestrated this coup suggest that “crypto-Gülenists” work with extreme caution and care. They write their notes on digestible paper, keep to themselves even in ordinary life, and work in a cell-like fashion to prevent one group of crypto-Gülenists from knowing another.57 That description is at odds with Öksüz making himself available at the headquarters of the coup. Could a man of such caution not consider the possibility of failure? And what of the other 97 military officers on site: were they all Gülenists in whom Öksüz had complete trust? Would an infiltrator not consider the possibility of double agents in the ranks? Was that not the entire purpose of their supposed cell structure in the military?

In his statement to the prosecutor, Öksüz strenuously denies all allegations and claims that he was never at the airbase but detained nearby.58 However, we are now told that there is CCTV footage proving that Adil Öksüz was at the base on the night of the coup.59 How is it that such a secretive man heading such a daring coup does not ensure that the security cameras recording his every move on site are not disabled? This is a man who allegedly avoids being photographed even at his perfectly legal day job (assistant professor).60 How is it conceivable that the same man would be so accepting of being recorded at the airbase? It was clear that the coup was beginning to fail from 1 a.m. local time. Adil Öksüz was

arrested at approximately 10 a.m. If he did not have the cameras disabled before arriving on site, why did he not have the security footage deleted in the intervening nine hours? More importantly, why did he not use those nine hours to leave? Surely, being caught anywhere else, if at all, was far preferable to being found as the only civilian at the epicentre of the coup.

The Turkish government is very sensitive to the alleged “infiltration” in the Turkish judiciary. They have been purging the Turkish judiciary since 2013.61 The day after the coup, the Turkish government suspended, and have since dismissed, 2,745 judges and prosecutors. They have not just been purging but also appointing people to the judiciary. In 2014, they introduced a new breed of handpicked ‘super judges’ with extraordinary unilateral powers to whom all politically sensitive cases have since been referred.62 In fact, Judge Köksal Şahin, who released Öksüz, was one such super judge, meaning he had been strictly vetted for government loyalty.63 Pro-government pundit Abdulkadir Selvi swears by the judge’s loyalty to the government.64 We know from past practice that the government ensures that cases involving critical suspects are assigned to only the prosecutors and judges they find most trustworthy. The Turkish authorities have even ensured that the state-appointed lawyer for Gülen is a self-proclaimed anti-Gülenist.65

So if he had been discovered as the only civilian at the coup headquarters and with a wholly inadequate explanation, how could the Courts of First and Second Instance have both ruled in favour of Öksüz’s release? When journalists and academics are being detained for “subliminally influencing public opinion in favour of the coup”,66 how can this man, an assistant professor of theology, have been allowed to walk free? It is at odds with the current practice in Turkey.

Yet, the prosecutor did not protest immediately, inform the Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK), or even go directly to the press. If for no other reason, a sense of self-preservation should have compelled the prosecutor to take extraordinary measures to prevent the release of Öksüz. (There are also media reports by pro-government newspapers that Öksüz was suspected of being a “Gülenist” as soon as he was detained at the airbase and was referred to the prosecutor on those grounds, contradicting the prosecutor’s claims.67) There is precedent for this type of scenario in Turkey’s judicial process. For example, the prosecutor and prison services director unlawfully refused the release order for Hidayet Karaca (director of Samanyolu TV) following his successful bail application; instead, the two judges who granted him bail were suspended within two days, and arrested and charged, within four days.68 A more recent example involves a panel of judges who were immediately replaced when three out of four of them decided that a group of 28 academics should not be charged for lack of evidence.69 Needless to say, the renewed court of judges ruled unanimously in favour of charging all the academics on terror-related offences. How can this “system” of forcing through decisions fail in one of the most strategically composed court houses which hears applications concerning the most critical of suspects? The prosecutor claims that Öksüz was released because there was no intelligence against him.70 How could the absence of intelligence on Adil Öksüz matter, if he was found on a military base with no good rea-
son in the middle of a coup attempt?

It is reasonable to expect that he President Erdoğan was informed of the release of the only civilian detained at the putschist airbase. If not at the time, then surely when the first news report on Öksüz was published on July 19. The Diken news report should have alerted Erdoğan and his government to the apparent “treachery” of those responsible for Öksüz’s release. This would normally have led to the immediate dismissal, detainment, asset seizure, passport cancellation and licensing practice revocation of the two judges (and prosecutor and possibly others) involved. Yet the two judges were only suspended almost a month later on August 16. In the interim, the two judges continued adjudicating on critical suspects. Furthermore, none of the punitive measures above have been taken against these two judges.

For Adil Öksüz to be overlooked and released, for it to take so long for this apparently monumental decision to register with the powers that be, for the prosecutor and judges involved in his release to be shielded from all kinds of punitive action that would ordinarily follow, cannot be explained by human error (or alleged Gülenist meddling) but only by strategic intervention from the government.

A More Credible Account

Just as it was wrong for Erdoğan to accuse Gülen without evidence of masterminding the coup, so it is wrong to accuse Erdoğan without evidence. However, there is an alternative story hinted at by veteran Turkish journalist Cengiz Çandar that deserves investigation. According to this story, Erdoğan did not organize the coup attempt, as he also doesn’t have enough supporters in the military to foment such a coup. But Erdoğan expected the coup, learned about it early on, and through the officers loyal to him in the military forced the coup attempters to start action early and hence stumble, and through his allies inserted actions into the attempt that did not help the coup but further infuriated the public. Thus he executed a counter plan to turn the attempt into an opportunity to re-design the whole system of military structure and training.

Writing for Al Monitor, Çandar recalled telling New York Times correspondent Sabrina Tavernise two weeks earlier of a “Faustian bargain President [Recep Tayyip] Erdoğan made with the military, which therefore, in my opinion, opened the way for a coup or a coup attempt to take place in Turkey within the upcoming two years.” Çandar observes that despite the fact that thousands of officers were arrested in the immediate aftermath of the coup, including a large number of generals who commanded the combat units of a NATO army, “it is quite bizarre that no security bureaucracy from the military intelligence to the National Intelligence Organisation, the General Directorate of Security and Special Forces Command had a clue that a coup was being hatched at such a magnitude.” The swift action of the government in rounding up thousands of military officers led Çandar to the conclusion that “Erdoğan and the government were prepared for a coup attempt and had ample intelligence as to who in the state system would be associated.”

Despite the mounting evidence that the coup attempt had a broad base that included Kemalists and neo-nationalists, President Erdoğan was determined to blame it on Gülen sympathisers and the government swiftly began a campaign of mass detentions, arrests and various forms of harassment against them.

Indeed, Hizmet sympathisers had been targeted by the Erdoğan regime for the previous two years, including media smear campaigns, criminal prosecution, shutting down institutions and businesses, and confiscations of private property. Erdoğan repeatedly demanded the extradition of Gülen from the United States and used hate speech that resembles the rhetoric of fascist regimes of the twentieth century.

73 www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/07/turkey-military-coup-attempt-more-questions-than-answers.html
Turkey’s ruling party, under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, came to power by promising further democratisation of Turkey, moving forward with the bid to join the European Union, enhancing freedoms, ending the decades-long government profiling of citizens and the era of military coups. By calling itself a “post-Islamist” party, the AKP was able to gain the support of Turkish liberals and the West. However, after victory in the June 2011 elections, Erdogan made a complete U-turn from the democratising path his party had promised when it first came to power, and began following an authoritarian and repressive path with increasing Islamic and anti-Western rhetoric during his third term.74

Western observers refer to this style of government as either illiberal democracy or competitive authoritarianism, where democracy is reduced to unfair or rigged elections. Erdoğan has been gradually expanding his power and control over Turkey through the same strategy since before 2013. His tactic of blaming his opponents and presenting himself as a victim after an incident in order to increase his power is apparent in the aftermaths of the Gezi Park protests, the corruption scandals, and the coup attempt.

Andrew Finkel, author of “Turkey: What Everybody Needs to Know (Oxford University Press, 2012) notes: “Indeed, many would argue that Turkey was already in the throes of a slow motion coup d'état, not by the military but by Erdoğan himself. For the last three years, he has been moving, and methodically, to take over the nodes of power.”

Extending Control over the Media

Throughout his time in power, Erdoğan has gradually gained influence over the media. In 2004 the Star daily newspaper, owned by Erdoğan’s political rival Cem Uzan, was seized by government regulatory agency, the Savings Deposit and Insurance Fund (TMSF), and eventually acquired by pro- Erdoğan businessman Ethem Sancak. Sabah daily newspaper and ATV channel were confiscated by government’s regulatory the TMSF and sold to pro- Erdoğan Turkuvaz Holding managed by CEO Berat Albayrak, Erdoğan’s son-in-law, in 2007. In 2009, excessive tax penalties (nearly $2.5 billion) were levied on Doğan Media group, which forced it into financial difficulty and it consequently sold its Milliyet daily to a pro- Erdoğan businessman. Meanwhile, in 2011, Erdoğan tied his promise of a new constitution to his ambitions for executive presidency, and in 2012, the AKP submitted a formal constitutional proposal in which parliamentary investigations and votes of confidence are abolished and the executive president has the authority to dismiss the parliament. In 2013 the media assets of Çukurova Holding were seized by the Savings Deposit and Insurance Fund (TMSF) and sold to pro- Erdoğan businessman Ethem Sancak, who publicly expressed his “love” for Erdoğan. The assets of Türkmédya group include daily newspapers Aksam and Güneş, digital pay-TV operator Digitürk and news broadcaster SkyTürk 360. Another important media outlet of the Çukurova Group, Show TV, was sold to Ciner Group in June after being seized by the TMSF.

Media control is a crucial step in Erdoğan’s path to becoming an authoritarian executive president with no checks and balances. His take-
The failed military coup in Turkey

The failed military coup in Turkey

Figure 2: Erdoğan’s tactic of blaming his opponents

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<th>Incident</th>
<th>Gezi Park (Summer 2013)</th>
<th>Corruption Investigations (December 2013)</th>
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<td>Over of the Turkish media aims to silence rising opposition and criticism. Erdoğan succeeded in limiting freedom of speech and the media in Turkey by taking over 70 per cent of the media, while the government regulates and blocks the Internet and social media. In this way, he undermines democracy by limiting voters’ ability to make free and informed decisions.75</td>
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<td>Erdoğan’s control over media; suppression of freedom of speech and press; further polarization of Turkey</td>
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2013 Gezi Park Protests & Erdoğan’s Media Control

With the Gezi uprising, Erdoğan took the opportunity to expand his control over the media. In the summer of 2013, protests began against the destruction of Gezi Park to make space for a shopping mall, but when Erdoğan’s government reacted with brutality, the unrest grew into protests against Erdoğan personally.

The rallies demonstrated the extent of the urban middle classes’ frustration with Erdoğan and the government’s reaction worsened the situation, while also harming Erdoğan’s international standing.

After the protests, in which protesters faced excessive police brutality, Erdoğan expanded his power over the independent media and the freedom of expression by claiming the events were orchestrated to weaken Turkey by foreign powers, the international media, the U.S. Ambassador to Turkey, and interest rate lobbies. Pro-government newspapers and TV stations, such as NTV, aided the government in spreading conspiracy theories. Yeni Şafak, a pro-government newspaper, argued that American think tanks, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, and “the Jewish lobby” were behind the conspiracy.76

75 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/aydoaean-vatanda/why-erdogan-take-over-entire-turkish-media-b_9410758.html

76 http://bipartisanpolicy.org/library/turkey-transformed-the-origins-and-evolution-of-authoritarian-
Erdoğan took his seven-year-long efforts to suppress freedom of speech and press in Turkey to a new level during the Gezi uprising. The AKP pressured media outlets and journalists unapologetically, as waves of journalists were fired or forced to resign. It is difficult to approximate the number, but by July 26, 2013 at least 59 journalists had lost their jobs during the protests for criticising the government, and the numbers increased in the aftermath up until the autumn. Media groups such as Doğan Media Group were too intimidated to speak out. For example, during the mass protests on the first day of June, CNNTürk, a Doğan media outlet, confined itself to broadcasting a documentary on penguins. Meanwhile, pro-Gülen media outlets reported the government’s brutality against protesters and restrictions on freedom of expression in a critical light, leading Erdoğan to target them as plotters against the government.

In the aftermath of the Gezi protests, Erdoğan not only targeted the media, but also businesses and civil society. While the police were attacking protestors with tear gas, the nearby Divan Hotel, owned by Koç Holding, allowed the fleeing crowd to take refuge and receive medical care in its lobby. This enraged Erdoğan, leading him to attack the business group and accuse the hotel owners of harbouring terrorists and criminals. A few days later, the Finance Ministry raided Koç Holding’s major assets in the energy industry, and by September this had escalated into a witch hunt. Erdoğan went as far as to indicate that Koç Holdings had supported the military intervention of February 28, 1997. Using similar rhetoric, he blamed certain sects within Turkey in order to portray himself as the ultimate protector of conservative Sunnis from those out to destroy Turkey. Other than the “interest rate lobby” and “Jews”, Erdoğan also implied that “Alevis”, probably working for Syria and Iran, and secular leftists, who “attack women in scarves”, were organising the protests.

He managed to rally public opinion on his side by using the media and conspiracy theories to intimidate civil society by further polarising Turkey.

The Gezi protests and the 2013 corruption investigations were both demonstrations of Turkish society against Erdoğan’s growing authoritarianism and corruption. In both cases, Erdoğan reacted with paranoid conspiracy theories accusing his opponents in order to eventually seize more power and silence his opposition.

2013 Corruption Probe & Erdoğan’s Judiciary Control

Erdoğan has also extended his control over the judiciary since December 2013 in order to “derail the corruption investigation” and “to stifle criticism in the media and on the Internet.” After the December 2013 corruption scandal involving cabinet ministers, their relatives and...
tives, and bureaucrats, the AKP depicted it as a plot against the government and quickly began making changes to gain more control. Erdoğan, blaming the “conspiracy” on the Gülen movement, labelled it a “parallel state” and promised to “destroy them.” The government began a purge and “started criminal proceedings against pro-Gülen officers in July and August 2014 in order to cover up the corruption charges.”

The AKP government changed the powers of the Constitutional Court and the High Council of Judges and Public Prosecutors (HSYK), gradually moving toward authoritarianism. A new law shifted the power to appoint members to one of the chambers from the Plenary of the Council to the Minister of Justice, who transferred two anti-government members to other chambers and appointed two pro-government members in their place. Afterwards, mass reassignments and demotions began to occur, as judges and public prosecutors involved in the investigations were replaced with pro-government colleagues. In February, a new law restructured the HSYK to “tie it closer to the executive” and, in July, a new category of Criminal Courts of Peace was created for the criminal investigations. These Courts of Peace, which had jurisdiction over the conduct of criminal investigations, increasingly came under government control. With the October 2014 HSYK elections, “the government clearly dominates the new HSYK and, through it, obtained the power to control the entire judiciary.”

From the moment these changes happened, the likely consequences were apparent. Ergun Özbudun, professor of political science and constitutional law at Şehir University, claimed that “the AKP government’s establishment of its control over the judiciary will certainly lead to a wider use of a selective application of the law.” Nils Muižnieks, the Council of Europe’s Commissioner for Human Rights, said that the government’s increasing control of the legal system will “significantly increase the influence of the executive, raising more concerns about undue political interference on the judiciary.”

**Erdogan’s Accusations and Attempt to Dominate the Military**

Similarly, Erdoğan blamed the coup attempt of July 15 on Gülen followers within the military, using it as a golden opportunity to redesign and restructure the Turkish military. By claiming to remove Gülen followers, Erdoğan was able to begin a mass purge in Turkey to gain more power and support while eliminating his opponents and perceived threats.

On the day after the coup attempt he said, “This uprising is a gift from God to us because this will be a reason to cleanse our army.” He immediately began firing thousands of military officers before the details of the coup attempt could be revealed or the judicial process established. His lists were ready. His next steps left no doubt about his intentions: he abolished military high schools and established a mil-

With the October 2014 HSYK elections, “the government clearly dominates the new HSYK and, through it, obtained the power to control the entire judiciary.”

25
itary university in their place. Historically the majority of military officers went through the military high schools, whose curriculum inculcated Atatürk’s ideology in their students. By abolishing these schools Erdoğan is taking a step toward eliminating Kemalist ideology and allowing his loyalists to rise in the ranks of the military. His second action was to allow non-elite (“Kurmay”) officers to be able to rise higher in rank. This removed a mechanism that was used previously by the military to filter officers who are not deemed worthy of promotion due to deficiency in commitment to Kemalist ideology or other defects as judged by their superiors. Through this change, Erdoğan is planning that more officers sympathetic to his worldview can rise into the military’s top ranks.

The military police command has been separated from army, navy and air force and brought under the minister of the interior. The force commanders have been brought under the minister of defence. The draft of soldiers into the military police has been ended and the personnel will now consist of professional officers only, potentially giving the minister of the interior influence in the process of hiring. But more importantly, hundreds of commanders serving in key positions have been purged to be replaced with names hand-picked by Erdoğan. Among the purged names are commanders who reportedly resisted Erdoğan’s push for a military presence in Syria. While such an action has the potential to be helpful in the fight against ISIS, it is not clear whether that is Erdoğan’s intention, and as a vehicle for turning Erdoğan into a military hero, it may lead Turkey into a long-term adventure with catastrophic consequences in Syria.

Historically, the military has been largely a secular, post-Atatürk democratic body, so Erdoğan viewed it as a threat to his Islamist authoritarianism. He has been moving towards cleansing the military since 2007, dismissing 400 officers between 2007 and 2010 and retiring the chief of the general staff and the commanders of the Turkish navy, land force, and air force. The coup attempt has allowed Erdoğan to complete his mission to take the military under his control. Erdoğan justified the purge by alleging the victims were Gülen supporters, rather than that they directly participated in the coup attempt. The security forces detained 10,000 service members, including 143 general officers and admirals, one third of the officer corps, in the first week alone.

In their place, Erdoğan is promoting his loyalists to senior positions within the military and government. Through the purge after the failed coup, he is centralising his authority and removing any resistance in all areas in Turkey.

**Why Erdoğan is Obsessed with Gülen**

The reason for this has a pragmatic and a historic component. Erdoğan is singling out Hizmet to blame for the coup attempt and is carrying out a huge cover-up in order to limit the reaction to his growing authoritarianism. In this way, he is trying to sustain the support of the military ranks that were ready to join the coup but betrayed their comrades at the last minute or were simply waiting to see if the attempt would succeed. In the government’s campaign to blame coup plotters it is clearly avoiding any talk about participants known to be Kemalists or neo-nationalists. Focusing on one “enemy” group for vilification is also a well-known tactic of propagandists.

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94 www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-idUSKCN1081HT
95 voxpopulisphere.com/2016/05/06/joseph-goeb
The historic reason for Erdoğan’s obsession with pursuing Gülen requires an examination of the history of Muslim-majority societies. Historically, in Muslim-majority countries the political rulers have always sought and often demanded the support of influential Muslim figures. In order to establish legitimacy in the eyes of Muslim subjects the political rulers always want influential Muslim figures to be loyal to them, praise them and condone their actions publicly. Of course, for an authentic Muslim scholar or preacher, it would be unconscionable to pledge unconditional loyalty to a political ruler. They should praise what is praiseworthy, condone what is permissible and criticize what is wrong. Since this is unacceptable to most rulers, they have sometimes coerced the towering figures of Islam into submission through intimidation, imprisonment, and sometimes torture.

At the bottom of Erdoğan’s wrath against Gülen lies the same issue of control. Despite the fact that the Turkish Republic is a secular state, President Erdoğan’s voter base consists mainly of religiously observant Turks. Erdoğan often uses religious identity to polarize society and solidify his voter base. He cannot tolerate criticism from an influential Muslim figure. So Gülen faces the same conundrum as his predecessors.

Erdoğan’s desire for control and Gülen’s commitment to remaining independent led to a turning point in the relationship around 2010—2011 when Erdoğan began publicly voicing his desire for an executive presidency. The draft constitution submitted by the AKP to parliament in October 2012 called for establishing an executive presidential system in which the president would be able to dismiss the parliament, he would not need the approval of the cabinet, and he would be free of parliamentary investigations. The reasoning from Erdoğan’s circle was thus: the people already elect us, so there is no need for other checks and balances. When Erdoğan sought Gülen’s public support for this system and Gülen refused, this was the decisive moment for the split between the two: Erdoğan understood that he could not subjugate Gülen to his wishes; Gülen understood that Erdoğan was not interested in democracy for its own sake, but only as a vehicle for consolidating more power.

As Erdoğan gathered more and more power, Gülen had to make a choice: pledge complete loyalty to Erdoğan and enjoy government favours or remain independent and face Erdoğan’s wrath. He chose the latter to maintain his integrity, and he is still paying the price of independence, along with hundreds of thousands of Hizmet participants.

There are many elements of opposition to Erdoğan in Turkey, but what makes Gülen particularly disturbing to him is the fact that Gülen is an inconvenient mirror to Erdoğan. Erdoğan can dismiss many of his critics easily. He can dismiss Kemalist critics by claiming that they have a problem with religion itself. He can claim that the Alevi have a grudge against Sunnis and the liberals are western puppets. But Gülen is an observant Muslim. He has not always been critical of Erdoğan, but began to criticize him only after public corruption became widespread and Erdoğan’s authoritarian actions completely eroded previous democratic reforms. So Erdoğan cannot claim that Gülen has always been a critic or he has an ideological problem with Islam. It is not easy to dismiss Gülen.

An element of Erdoğan’s enmity and rage arises from the fact that he thought he was invincible, even as he and people around him engaged in systematic corruption. The 2013 probe startled Erdoğan and, in the same way as he accuses those within the military today, he ac-

Erdoğan often uses religious identity to polarize society and solidify his voter base. He cannot tolerate criticism from an influential Muslim figure.
cused Gülen-sympathisers within the judiciary, although there is no indication that the members of the judiciary involved did anything other than the requirements of their job.

President Erdoğan's conduct shows a pattern of conspiracy theories, counter-factual statements and accusations. When environmental protestors gathered at Gezi Park in June 2013, Erdoğan accused the “international interest lobby” in conjunction with the American ambassador to Turkey of being behind the events. He made claims that polarized the nation but turned out to be false. He claimed that Gezi Park protestors assaulted a covered woman and that the protestors drank alcoholic drinks in a mosque. Surveillance video and witness testimonies falsified both claims.

After a public corruption probe involving members of his cabinet and an Iranian businessman surfaced in December 2013, Erdoğan immediately blamed Gülen sympathisers. The probe revealed evidence of bribery, fraud and money laundering to help Iran evade international sanctions. Erdoğan claimed that the probe was in effect a judicial coup, aimed at toppling his regime by embarrassing his administration via trumped-up charges. The government dismissed the prosecutors in charge of the case, shuffled thousands of members of the judiciary and the police force, and even jailed prosecutors and judges. But some months later, U.S. prosecutor Preet Bharara charged the same Iranian businessman; the charges were based in part on evidence from the Turkish probe into money laundering and helping Iran evade sanctions. The businessman is now in the custody of U.S. authorities in New York.

**Anecdotes to Justify Purges**

The Turkish government has been using psychological warfare to render their citizens emotionally defenceless against its propaganda. The logic, or the lack thereof, goes like this:

1. We suffered a terrible coup, civilians were murdered, parliament was bombed.
2. Gülen’s sympathisers are responsible (without proper investigation and due process).
3. Therefore everybody sympathetic to Gülen is guilty until proven innocent.

Such a logical fallacy could be amusing under other circumstances but the Turkish government is actually implementing draconian measures to persecute Hizmet sympathisers and the post-coup purges in Turkey have drawn international criticism.

Here is the counter argument to the government propaganda:

1. Yes, Turkey suffered a terrible coup, civilians were murdered, parliament was bombed. It is the right of the government to investigate and try accused officers through a fair trial.
2. But the accused officers have not been investigated properly. Instead many officers were threatened, beaten and tortured, making it impossible to obtain sound information from them.
3. Regardless of the identity and motivation of military officers responsible for the coup, it is against the international legal principles of presumption of innocence and individual responsibility for crime and morally wrong to target civilians who have not collaborated with those officers.

In the following pages we give some examples. A more up-to-date account of violations of human rights is available on Turkey-Purge.com.
Figure 3: Categories of Human Rights Abuses

- Violations of family
- Violations of right to shelter
- Violations of right to travel
- Violations of right to private
- Physical verbal harassment outside of detention
- Denial of right to due process and legal defense
- Defamation, humiliation and smear
- Denial of lawful employment

Inhumane detention conditions, torture
ince the coup attempt, human rights have been under great threat, and, in the words of Graham E. Fuller, the author of The New Turkish Republic (U.S. Institute of Peace), “Immediately thereafter Erdoğan has unleashed massive Stalin-style purges and arrests across the country of anyone suspected of any connection with Gülen, or indeed of anyone of any ideology who opposes Erdoğan.”

According to Amnesty International’s report on Turkey, at least 208 people died and more than 1,400 were injured on the night of the coup d’etat. Of those killed, 24 people were called ‘coup plotters’ by the authorities and some were lynched as they tried to surrender.

The number below summarizes the categories of abuses under the state of emergency declared by Erdoğan government.

**Freedom of Speech and Media**

Restrictions on freedom of speech and media censorship have been already noted in many human rights reports on Turkey; however, Erdoğan and his government are making use of the failed coup to discredit any civil and political opposition by arresting and detaining journalists and academics.

Referring to the journalists that were arrested, Zeynalov said, “These journalists were diverse – young, old, conservative, left-wing, novelist, economist, military geek. This represented the wide variety of journalists being put in jail and proved that the broad spectrum of Turkish society is being silenced.”

A 72-year-old veteran journalist and former parliamentarian, Nazlı Ilıcak, has been charged with “membership of a terror group”, according to the Anadolu news agency. In another incident, authorities detained the wife of a Turkish journalist, Bulent Korucu, who has been critical of the government. Dilek Dündar, the wife of exiled Turkish journalist Can Dündar, was not permitted to leave the country. Security officers at Istanbul’s Atatürk Airport confiscated Dilek Dündar’s passport and prevented her from boarding a plane to Europe, where she was to visit him. Ahmet Altan, a former newspaper editor, and his brother Mehmet, a prominent academic, have been taken into custody for ‘subliminal messages announcing the military coup’ in a TV interview on 14 July, the day before the coup attempt. Novelists, Nobel laureates, professors and publishers condemn government vendetta and demand Altan brothers’ immediate release.

102 http://platform24.org/en/articles/396/world-astra
student and journalist, was recently deported from Turkey. She was taken into custody over tweets about President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. During detention, she “was deprived of food and water, denied medical care and the right to contact [her] family and lawyers.”

On 28 September 2016, 12 TV and 11 radio stations were closed down. Police teams raided the offices of the Hayatın Sesi TV and İMC TV television stations and Özgür Radyo, they were among 33 TV and radio stations removed from Türksat by government decree on September 28. The banned channels are owned or operated by Kurdish people or members of the Alevi religious minority. Zarok TV, a station broadcasting cartoons dubbed in Kurdish, such as the Smurfs, Garfield and Sponge Bob, was among those shut down. TV 10, a pro-Alevi TV channel, was also among the banned stations.

Ahmet Altan, a former newspaper editor, and his brother Mehmet, a prominent academic, have been taken into custody for ‘subliminal messages announcing the military coup’ in a TV interview on 14 July, the day before the coup attempt.
Many human rights organisations, world leaders and journalists have criticized the post-coup purge and human rights abuses in Turkey. Emma Sinclair, the Turkey Director at the Human Rights Watch, says “The government crackdown is on media outlets and journalists it accuses of being linked to the Fethullah Gülen movement, which it blames for the foiled military coup. In the absence of any evidence of their role or participation in the violent attempt to overthrow the government, we strongly condemn this accelerated assault on the media, which further undermines Turkey’s democratic credentials.”

Furthermore, Nina Ognianova, the CPJ Europe and Central Asia Program Coordinator said, “Turkish authorities have subjected Özgür Gündem’s staff to relentless judicial harassment for years. July’s failed military coup in no way justifies closing this pro-Kurdish newspaper or detaining journalists for their work. We call the authorities to release all of the journalists taken into custody and allow the newspaper to publish freely.”

After the Turkish journalists and human rights defenders Şebnem Korur Fıncancı, Erol Önderoğlu, and Ahmet Nesin were detained, Freedom House issued a statement:

“Imprisoning journalists and human rights defenders for ‘terror propaganda’ shows just how vague and overly broad Turkey’s laws are,” said Daniel Cailingaert, Executive Vice President. “This decision is a stark reminder to the European Union that it should not compromise on its values in negotiations with Turkey over visa liberalisation. The EU should stand firm against the Turkish state’s abuse of the law to silence critical voices. Turkey should release Fıncancı, Önderoğlu, and Nesin immediately.”

Leader of the main opposition Republican People’s Party (CHP) Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu said that it is not right to try to jail all government critics by capitalising on government decrees that have the power of law and the emergency rule that was declared following a the failed military coup.

The post coup crackdown poses serious threats to the freedom of speech. According to many liberals and secularists, “Turks have never been so scared of words.” Erdoğan’s government has used the State of Emergency law to close 29 publishing houses. According to the Turkish Publishers Association, these closures “carry the risk of human rights violations, the stifling of freedom of thought and expression and also irreparable financial and moral losses”

**Silencing Academic Freedom**

On July 19, 2016, Turkey declared a State of Emergency that would enable the government to cleanse state institutions. The widespread purges of state institutions reaches down into educational institutions and extends into to the whole education sector: colleges, primary schools, kindergartens, universities, and the ministry of education. In addition to the sus-

108 https://www.ft.com/content/9e7a3e42-6ec4-11e6-a0c9-1365ce54b926

“Imprisoning journalists and human rights defenders for ‘terror propaganda’ shows just how vague and overly broad Turkey’s laws are,”

Intercultural Dialogue Platform
The failed military coup in Turkey

The failed military coup in Turkey

...pension of education ministry officials and the revocation of schoolteachers' licenses, Turkish academics have been removed from private and public universities. Academic freedom in Turkey has been shrinking in recent years as a result of the drift from democracy towards authoritarianism. The coup attempt has become an opportunity to wholly control government institutions and academia. The deliberate erosion of academic freedom was already happening prior to the coup attempt, but July 15 has accelerated the scope of the purge in academia and the education sector. It has become an opportunity for Erdoğan to consolidate his power by controlling every sector that may turn against him.

Turkey's Higher Education Council has demanded the resignation of 1,577 university deans. In addition to the purges the government announced a travel ban on all academics. On July 23, 2016, 15 universities were shut down. The closure of universities has left 61,382 students in Turkey in academic limbo. They are unsure whether they can continue their studies and worried about any kind of stigmatisation because their universities were Gülen-affiliated. Academics purged from these universities number 2,759, some of them held in custody. The former rector of Turgut Özal University, Professor Abdulkadir Şengün is among the academics jaled after the attempted coup. The concern is not only about the freedom of speech,

On July 23, 2016, 15 universities were shut down. The closure of universities has left 61,382 students in Turkey in academic limbo.
but academics’ fear of imprisonment. After a second governmental decree, 2,346 more academics were removed from universities. This number includes the academics who signed a peace petition in January 2016. Turkish academics have to choose between remaining silent or losing all. More than 100 academics are in jail now on baseless allegations.

Torture and Inhuman Treatment

In its report, Amnesty International says that it has “credible reports that Turkish police in Ankara and Istanbul are holding detainees in stress positions for up to 48 hours, denying them food, water and medical treatment, and verbally abusing and threatening them.” “In the worst cases some have been subjected to severe beatings and torture, including rape.”

Many judges and prosecutors are now in pre-trial detention on suspicion that they are members of a terrorist organisation or were involved in the coup attempt. “Jailing judges without even the pretence of due process will cause profound damage to Turkey’s justice system for years to come,” says Emma Sinclair-Webb, Turkey director at Human Rights Watch.

Journalist Lale Kemal, who was in detention,

112 https://freedomforturkishacademics.wordpress.com/category/situation-in-turkey/
113 https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/03/16/turkey-academics-jailed-signing-petition
115 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/my-father-academic-arrested-in-turkey-purge_us_57a8fb19eb02251db3f529
117 https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/08/05/turkey-judges-prosecutors-unfairly-jailed

faced the risk of dying in prison due to on-going health problems. Lale Kemal was arrested with former Zaman columnists Ali Bulaç, Ahmet Turan Alkan, Nuriye Akman, Mustafa Ünal and Şahin Alpay on July 30. Journalist Emre Soncan, who has been behind bars since July 26, suffers from kidney disease. His colleagues warn that he is not receiving proper treatment in prison. Haşim Söylemez, a journalist who was arrested on July 29 with 16 colleagues, was just recovering from a second brain surgery he had undergone a short time before being imprisoned.

Prize-winning novelist and journalist Aslı Erdoğan, who was arrested on August 19, said the treatment she has been receiving in prison could inflict permanent damage to her body. “They have not given me my medicine for five days. I am a diabetic, and my disease is about to worsen. I must have a special diet, but I can just eat yogurt... They are treating me in a way that could inflict permanent damage on my body. If I had not been determined to resist, I would never have withstood these conditions,” she said.

Briefly detained for taking photos of the street next to Istanbul’s Gayrettepe Police Station, journalist Tuğba Tekerek has talked about her time in detention, shedding light on what people jailed as part of the government’s ever-increasing crackdown on the Gülen movement suffer behind bars.

“The inmates are mainly between 25 and 30 years of age. Most of them have babies. A 7-month-old baby was brought to its detained mother from Sultanbeyli, a district two hours away, twice a day for breastfeeding. But she is among the luckiest ones because the other women, even if they have 15-month-old babies, are not allowed to see their children. Whenever this woman sees her 7-month-old baby, others sit back and weep softly. They think of their children or mothers as missing themselves. There was a pregnant woman who often stayed

“In the worst cases some have been subjected to severe beatings and torture, including rape.”
out of the conversation, dealing with her own problems.”

**Expropiating Property and Businesses**

Turkish business owners are being intimidated for being close to or supporting the Gülen movement. The police are targeting business people, and dozens of executives are being arrested as Erdoğan accuses them of aiding the Gülen movement.

Speaking to the state-run Anadolu news agency (AA), Minister for Environment and Urbanisation, Mehmet Özhaseki, said, "a total of 2,514 properties have been transferred to the Treasury and 2,083 properties to the Directorate General of Foundations. Property valued at approximately TL 12 billion has been transferred to the Treasury." According to AA, the number of firms confiscated as part of operations targeting the movement exceeded 200 as of September 26. Many business owners have been detained and jailed.

Fatih Aktas, chairman of Akfa Holding, a privately held multinational company with interests across construction, healthcare and technology, was among 50 executives detained. Three executives at Boydak Holding, one of Turkish largest conglomerates, were detained as part of the crackdown. The group has firms in energy and finance as well as furniture. On August 18, Anadolu Agency reported that the chief prosecutor in Istanbul issued orders for the confiscation of the property of 187 suspects, including Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists (TUSKON) Chairman Rızanur Meral, Aydınlı Group Chairman Ömer Faruk Kavurmacı and two brothers who run two separate Güllüoğlu Baklava chains. A typical example is the BOYDAK group. The owners were arrested on charges of financial assistance to Gülen and a guardian appointed by the state is managing the group. These are the large-scale companies that Erdoğan is targeting. Many small- and medium-scale businesses are also being destroyed and confiscated since the coup attempt, as bookshop owner Mustafa Orakçı’s statement reveals:

“My bookstore and stationary business had been operating since 1983 in Turgutlu, the biggest town of Manisa province, but because of recent events, it was closed down. As I am a founder member of Turgutlu Körfez College Preparatory School (established 1994), on Tuesday, July 19, 2016, I was detained by the police in my store and taken for interrogation. After four hours in police custody, I was let go. I fled the country the following day in fear of persecution. Later, I learned that on the evening of Friday, July 22, 2016, the police had raided my home and my store simultaneously. My employee, C.E., went to the store after hearing the store alarm. He was detained as well, just for being an employee at my bookstore. They have seized and shutdown my business and it is no longer in operation. My employee C.E. was kept in custody for two weeks and later arrested illegally.”

Another confiscation story is Arif Dik’s story. He was running a Pharmacy in Turgutlu-Manisa. He was the president of Turgutlu Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TUSIAD). For that, a local court issued an arrest warrant for him after the coup attempt. He had to flee the country. His pharmacy has been closed, and his licence as a practising pharmacist has been cancelled.

“A 7-month-old baby was brought to its detained mother from Sultanbeyli, a district two hours away, twice a day for breastfeeding.”

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120 https://www.ft.com/content/38b7b636-63cd-11e6-a08a-c73acc04ef00aa
121 http://turkeypurge.com/human_tragedies_m-o
S ccompanying the concerted effort by the Turkish government to demonise the Hizmet movement inside Turkey, there has been a systematic campaign against Hizmet-affiliated individuals, organisations, and sympathisers in Europe. This campaign appears to be locally and regionally coordinated.123

Since July 15, the Turkish presidency has established a telephone hotline which anyone can use to inform on those who “betray” the state. This number is being publicised especially by Turkish-origin Erdoğan supporters in Europe. The Ministry for Turks and Related Communities Abroad (YTB) has prepared brochures in many different languages about the “FETO terror organisation” and is distributing them abroad.

The systematic spread of Turkey’s troubles to cities abroad is particularly worrying. Not only is it further polarising Turkish-speaking communities outside Turkey, but it also has the makings of further trouble and unrest. Members of Turkish political parties and employees of Turkish embassies have targeted Hizmet participants and sympathisers among the volunteers and organisers of associations, federations, and charity foundations which organize activities in various fields, such as social integration, living together and active citizenship.

The campaign includes verbal and physical assaults, hate mail, threats via text messages, defamatory mailshots to Muslim email groups, and profiling and boycotts of a list of Hizmet-sympathising businesses in Europe.

Posts which incite violence are being shared on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, while informal communications such as conversations at community events are also used to spark hate and violence. People are being asked to openly declare whether or not they support Gülen. By calling for boycotts and creating “blacklists” this hate campaign is targeting ordinary people and has already resulted in physical violence, damage to property, and death threats, some examples of which are listed below.

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123 A list of attacks on Hizmet-inspired organizations, businesses and people in Europe since July 15, 2016 in reverse chronological order and updated daily can be found at www.hizmetstudies.org/hizmetwatch; hizmet-purge.wordpress.com; www.facebook.com/repression-Hizmet.

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**July 24, UK: Mosque accused of treason and threatened with punishment**

Mevlana Rumi Mosque in Edmonton, North London is accused in a Tweet of betraying its country (Turkey), exploiting religion for its own gain and threatened that they will pay for this with punishment in tweet.

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@MevlanaRumiMosq vatana ihanet eden ve dini istismar ederek duygulari somurenler cezasini bulacak insallah merak etmeyn

Translate from Turkish

12:30 a.m. · 24 Jul 16
July 23 UK: A UK citizen of Turkish origin threatens to report Hizmet sympathisers

A UK citizen of Turkish origin accuses UK based Hizmet participants of being pro-coup and threatens to report anyone who has ties to the Hizmet movement to the Turkish authorities in order to start legal proceedings. This is a message that was left on another UK residents Facebook page.

July 18, France: Angry mob attacks and damages youth hostel

A Hizmet-affiliated hostel was attacked by an angry mob of demonstrators shouting slogans in support of President Erdoğan and threats and abuse against Fethullah Gülen and Hizmet sympathisers. The mob staged two marches. On both occasions they unlawfully entered the hostel and its grounds causing substantial damage. Images show damage to the entrance of the hostel, smashed windows and doors, fences pulled down and a number of vehicles smashed and overturned. On the second occasion, the police arrested one individual.
Several people in the UK with close links to Hizmet have received the same threatening text message sent to their private mobile telephone numbers. This message was sent as a separate text message to each recipient between on July 16 and 17, 2016. The text message was sent from a UK mobile telephone number. The English translation of the text message: “May God curse Fethullah and his bastard followers in the army that have done this to our country. May God open the eyes of [the movements] sincere followers. Amen. From, the Angel of Death for Fethullah [that will take his life], Special Forces and Operations, UK for Turkey’s National Intelligence Service.”

Facebook post calling on everyone to boycott businesses owned by people sympathetic to Hizmet in Amsterdam. We have seen several ‘boycott lists’ like this for several European cities. The post is in Turkish. The list was circulated by Facebook account users in Amsterdam. Translated, the first part of the post reads: ‘THE FETO [derogatory term] SHOPS in AMSTERDAM… Time for BOYCOTT… NOT A PENNY FOR THEM ANYMORE…’ The next part of the post lists names of shops to be boycotted.
Several Facebook posts have been created and shared online. The one below is one example. It brands Fethullah Gülen a terrorist, claims that he was behind Turkey’s coup attempt, states that the person sharing the post will inform on the movements UK organisations to the Turkish government and calls on recipients to boycott its schools in the UK. The post provides details of schools and charities to be boycotted in the UK.

This message was received by some people in Europe. It has also been posted on social media. We have also seen other versions of this text message. It calls on recipients to report Hizmet schools, organisations and donors, in and outside of Turkey, to the authorities providing the telephone and fax number for the Turkish Presidency Report Hotline. The English translation of the text message is as follows:

"WE MUST REPORT THE ORGANISATIONS OF THE FETO TERRORIST ORGANISATION, BOTH IN AND OUTSIDE OF TURKEY. THEIR TERROR HOMES OPERATING UNDER THE GUISE OF SCHOOLS, THEIR FINANCIAL SOURCES AND SUPPORTERS, THEIR SYMPATHISERS AND THOSE THAT GIVE AND COLLECT DONATIONS FOR THEM! PRESIDENCY REPORT HOTLINE [tel and fax numbers given]. LET’S CIRCULATE THIS MESSAGE IMMEDIATELY."

FETÖ TERÖR ÖRGÜTÜNÜN . YURT İÇİ VE YURT DIŞI KURUM VE KURULUŞLARINI.EĞİTİM DERSHANELERİ ADI ALTINDA TERÖR YUVALARINI. FİNANŞAL KAYNAKLARINI VE YANDAŞLARIINI.YALTAKLIK YAPAN SÖZÜM ONA HİMMET PARASI VERENLERİ VE TOPLAYANLARI. İHBAR EDİYORUZ.!

CUMHURBAŞKANLIĞI İHBAR HATTI:
Tel : 0090 (312) 525 55 55
Faks : 0090 (312) 525 58 31
BU MESAJI BİRAN EVVEL YAYALIM
**July 16, Belgium: Hizmet building vandalised with hateful messages**

A Hizmet organisation was vandalised on 16th July in Gent Belgium with a series of abusive and hateful messages written on the doors with permanent markers. The messages were written in Turkish referring to Hizmet-inspired people with the derogatory phrase ‘FETO’ which has been popularised by the Turkish government. It is an acronym for ‘Fethullah Terrorist Organisation’. The English translated messages read as follows:

- ‘FETO’S, GET LOST, WE DO NOT WANT YOU, YOU DOGS’
- ‘FETO’S, BASTARDS, GET THE HELL OUT OF THIS NEIGHBOURHOOD. YOU DOGS.’

**July 16, Germany: 150 supporters of Turkish President attack youth centre**

In Gelsenkirchen, western Germany, about 150 supporters of the Turkish president attacked a youth centre with ties to the Hizmet movement, smashing two windows. None of the people inside the building were injured. Part of the attack was captured on video and show on Twitter. The incident also featured in a number of media outlets, including the Guardian.
On 16th July, a post was created and circulated among Facebook users based in Denmark, calling for people to boycott Hizmet schools in Denmark. By using the acronym ‘FETO’, the post refers to the Hizmet movement as a terrorist organisation. It also includes a list of schools to be boycotted. The boycott message is prefaced with the following, translated into English:

- ‘Protect your country, save your children from the FETO schools!’
- ‘Schools of the Fethullah Gülen group in Denmark’

[As reported in the Guardian]: In Beringen, Belgium, a building used for meetings by leading members of the Belgian branch of the Gülen movement was attacked and covered in graffiti by Erdoğan supporters on Friday night. On Saturday night, 500-600 members of the Turkish diaspora in Belgium descended upon the so-called "White House" and reportedly tried to set fire to the building. Beringen, a town of 45,000 in the Limburg province, has about 7,800 inhabitants with a Turkish background. Approximately 10% are thought to be sympathisers of the Gülen movement.

1 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/18/turkish-diaspora-eu-erdogan-failed-coup
July 16, Netherlands: Cultural centre in Rotterdam pelted with stones

[As reported in the Guardian]: "16 Jul, Netherlands: Turkey’s failed coup has also raised tensions in the Netherlands emigrant community. A cultural centre in Rotterdam run by the Nida Foundation, which is affiliated to the Gülen movement, was pelted with stones for two nights in a row over the weekend."

1 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/18/turkish-diaspora-eu-erdogan-failed-coup

July 16, France: Mobs gathered in Beizers threaten to ‘hang’ Hizmet sympathisers

Following the attempted coup in Turkey, angry crowds spurred on by provocateurs gathered in Beizers, France, targeting individuals and organisations linked to the Hizmet movement, threatening to “hang” those involved. B.Y, one of the managers at a mosque informed an educational establishment known to be linked with the Hizmet movement that he can not control the crowds warning them that the people do not want them here. Following this warning the educational establishment informed the police and sought seeking protection and the mosque called the institution manager for a meeting.

On July 16, the night of the incitement, the police prevented a mob in a fleet of 10 cars from attacking the educational institution. A group gathered outside the mosque, hurling abuse, and streamed live videos of their attack on Facebook. One individual, V.A, seen in the video, insults and curses Hizmet people, waving AKP flags, chanting that they will ‘hang them’ and ‘will not let them live here’ as well as voicing their support for President Erdoğan. In a seventeen-minute video uploaded to the internet, the manager of the educational establishment is threatened and a user, E.T., comments that these people should be “slaughtered”. In videos uploaded by other mob members, obscenities, abuse and threats hurled at Hizmet people are heard.

As the police take members of the educational institution to the police station for protection phrases like “FETO’s dogs hide behind police” are heard. Locals and neighbours who live near the educational building have opposed these attacks and have been informed by the police that they will immediately arrest anyone who causes a physical threat.

1 https://www.facebook.com/698053100245892/videos/1194270537290810
2 http://www.facebook.com/698053100245892/videos/1194273513957179
July 16, France: Attackers attempt arson attack of Hizmet school

A group of pro-AKP supporters defaced the sign of Educ’active School in Paris with the word “traitor”. They further exchanged comments on Facebook suggesting that they should “burn down” their institutions, while others agreed that they should “get rid” of this particular Hizmet-inspired school, calling Hizmet people terrorists and blaming them for the attempted coup in Turkey on July 15, 2016. Officials have notified the police and have also stated that they will start legal proceedings against the culprits.

July 16, France: Abuse and threats made to education centre

On 16 July an individual went to Etude Plus Education Centre in Annecy and called the mobile number of its director blaming him and Hizmet for the attempted coup in Turkey and the events that followed. He used threatening language so the police were called in to investigate. The following day from 6pm onwards a group organised on Facebook protested outside the education centre under police surveillance, shouting slogans and damaging property with graffiti and obscene slander.
On the evening of 15 July, moments after the attempted coup was broadcast on state TV channel TRT, a group named ‘Yurta Sulh’ (translated as Peace in the Nation), blamed Fethullah Gülen for the coup despite there being no evidence. Despite organisations and media close to the Hizmet movement condemning the attempted coup outright early on, the Turkish Government and pro-AKP media targeted Hizmet as those responsible. Groups amalgamated with the help of social media and spurred on by provocateurs, took action into their own hands by violently attacking several cultural and educational centres, as well as other institutions across France breaking and smashing windows causing substantial damage.

A similar group attacked and set alight a cultural centre in Sens, South-east of Paris, known as the Rumi Sens Cultural Centre which has been serving the local community for several years, providing educational services. On 16th July a mob entered Rumi Centre by forcefully breaking down the front door and tried to set the building on fire. The whole building was damaged by smoke and soot and the perpetrators are being investigated by the police.
July 15, France: Angry mob attacks community centre in Mulhouse

At approximately 1 a.m., a large group of protestors descended upon the Horizon community centre in Mulhouse, France. Chanting slogans in support of Erdoğan and against Gülen, the mob began smashing the doors and windows of the centre causing extensive damage. A police investigation into the attack is pending. Police advised that the staff and students vacate the premises. The police did not allow the mob to attack the premises for a second time when they returned. Hizmet-sympathising shop-owners in the nearby town centre stated that they were receiving threatening calls. Owing to the level of threat and attacks to date, Hizmet-affiliated education and community centres in Mulhouse are under 24-hour police protection.
Concluding Remarks

The coup attempt of July 15, 2016 was stopped in its tracks thanks to a combination of social media, people’s support for democracy and the ineptitude of coup plotters. Innocent lives were lost and democracy was threatened. Turkish government has every right to go after military officers who are suspected of having played a role. They should be investigated, brought to justice and receive a fair trial and, if found guilty, suffer the consequences.

However, this is not what is happening in Turkey now. A mass purge was started after the coup, tens of thousands of civilians have been targeted, and they continue to suffer under inhumane conditions. To justify these mass purges the Turkish government is pursuing a misinformation campaign. By blaming the coup on Gülen sympathisers and suppressing the information on participants in the coup who have Kemalist or neo-nationalist inclinations the government has successfully made the Hizmet movement a scapegoat. By focusing on Hizmet for vilification the government has eliminated all voices of opposition to its authoritarian rule. In today’s Turkey, it is insufficient to stand against the coup and for democracy. Anyone who refuses to blame Hizmet for the coup is accused of being a coup-sympathiser and is being targeted. Tens of thousands of families with no connection to the coup whatsoever are suffering under the Erdoğan regime’s systematic persecution, including inhumane detention conditions, torture, verbal and physical abuse, harassment and humiliation, and denial of the rights of residence, lawful occupation, travel and expression. Erdoğan is successfully using the scapegoat that he has produced to consolidate power and silence all of his critics. Even opposition parties are afraid to voice concerns about human rights abuses.

No domestic dynamic stands between President Erdoğan and his ambition for an elected autocracy. If world leaders and international organisations do not take action, President Erdoğan will completely eliminate a peaceful civil society movement, and in the process will establish totalitarian control that makes it impossible to oppose him through democratic means.
The failed military coup in Turkey

Illustration:
stockphotosecrets.com
Appendix:
Questions and Contradictions
Left Unanswered by the Official Story

There is no question that some officers of the Turkish military intended to stage a coup and acted on that intention. This attempt cost many innocent lives, among military, police and civilians, and deserves nothing but condemnation. It is the right of the Turkish government to investigate the accused officers and identify those who willfully participated in the coup attempt. However, many observers note that the official story of the coup offered by Turkish government appears too simplistic. The official story generates more questions than answers. Here are some of the questions that still await answers:

1. President Erdogan was nowhere to be seen 48 hours prior to the coup. He did not speak to the media and his whereabouts were not known. Rumors of an Erdogan-staged coup that would strengthen his hold on power, make him a national hero and facilitate his designing the military have been circulating for months.

2. Pro-Erdogan media and Military Chief of Staff’s July 19 statement said that National Intelligence Agency (MIT) informed the military chief of staff about the coup attempt around 4pm. However, besides sending a general memorandum to halt flights of military aircraft and the movement of heavy armored vehicles, no other precautions were taken to stop the attempt. Chief of staff of the military did not ready regular troops or special ops teams to counter coup supporters. The security around the office of the chief of staff was not increased which allowed the coup plotters to take him hostage around 9pm, some 5 hours after first being informed of the attempt.

3. Neither the chief of national intelligence nor the military chief informed President Erdogan or Prime Minister Binali Yildirim. Erdogan reported that he called but could not reach the intelligence chief until 10 pm. So, the intelligence chief, despite being alerted to the coup attempt in the afternoon and despite informing the military’s chief of staff around 4pm never called the president or sought to secure him against a possible hostage taking situation. When Erdogan was asked by France24 TV host about whether the intelligence chief has submitted his resignation, his response was that there were intelligence failures in previous incidents in Europe such as the Paris attacks.

4. President Erdogan gave conflicting accounts of when and how he learned about the coup attempt. He initially told Reuters that he learned about the attempt from his brother in law around 4-4:30pm, and that called but could not reach either MIT chief or military chief by phone. He later changed his timing to 8pm in an interview to CNN and then to 9:30pm. At the press conference at the Istanbul airport around 1 am, however, he said that he was aware of movements within the military as early as the afternoon.

5. General Abidin Unal, commander of the airforce initially reported that he learned about the coup from his wife, who learned it from the wife of another officer around 9:30pm while attending a wedding ceremony. He later changed his account to say that he received the information through military channels before 7:30pm. Neither him nor commander of the military police Gen. Galip Mendi, who was also attending a wedding cere-
The failed military coup in Turkey

mony at the time returned to their commands to take precautions.

6. A small military unit blocked one direction of the Bosphorus bridge traffic around 8-9pm in the middle of rush hour traffic. While this public action of the coup was ongoing and was being reported by media, the coup leaders did not secure Erdogan, who freely traveled to the nearby airport to take an aircraft. Bosphorus bridge lies within the area of 1st army, whose commander pledged loyalty to Erdogan and invited him to Istanbul. However, he did not attempt to stop the bridge closing.

7. Coup plotters sent small units of soldiers to take control of government-run TRT, which carries little significance in current Turkey. There are many tens of channels, many of which with larger viewership than TRT. The coup plotters did not seek to secure any of the pro-Erdogan TV channels. One of these channels' headquarters was a few blocks away from the bridge that was partially blocked by coup plotters. But they left pro-Erdogan channels to continue to air programming throughout the failed coup attempt.

8. Berat Albayrak, Erdogan's son-in-law was very comfortable and even smiling before reporters while the coup attempt was still in progress and Erdogan was talking about pro-coup airplanes circling the airport. Why was he so confident that the attempt would fail?

9. The execution of the coup attempt was remarkably incompetent in a way to make the coup plotters look bad and exacerbate public reaction. The actions taken were completely contrary to previous coups. In previous attempts, political leaders were secured first, TV and Radio stations were secured next, political leaders were humiliated, and the coups were staged while most people were asleep. Previous coup perpetrators took care to avoid civilian casualties. During the July 15 attempt neither Erdogan nor PM Yildirim were secured, pro-Erdogan TV/Radios were left alone, the coup started during rush hour when most people were awake, parliament building was bombed and civilians were killed. These are actions that don't help the coup but aggravate public reaction.

10. Anadolu Agency reported that the military chief Hulusi Akar was rescued from the coup attempters with a special operations team. Later reports revealed that coup attempters actually gave him a helicopter when they realized the attempt was failing.

11. General Gökhan Şahin Sönmezates, commander of the unit that stormed the hotel said admitted willful participation in the coup but denied any relationship with Gülen.

12. The retired air-force commander Akin Ozturk who was initially charged with having links with Hizmet and being the mastermind of the coup denied those allegations. Later he was declared a hero for trying to stop the coup by the office of military's chief of staff.

13. General Mehmet Disli, who is the elder brother of AKP vice chairman Saban Disli, was accused of being one of the leaders of the coup. His role was never made clear. Military chief of staff and his testimonies conflict each other. Military chief claimed that Disli was with the coup team, while Disli said that he was coerced to speak with military chief. Commanders of military units from around the country reported that they received facsimile commands from the central command signed by Gen. Disli to participate in the coup. Gen. Disli did not respond to these accusations.

14. In the immediate aftermath of the attempt, before any investigation, lists of thousands of military personnel, tens of thousands of non-military personnel, including 2700 judges and prosecu-
tors were ready to be dismissed and/or charged.

15. Erdogan’s circles accused the air force to be the leading participant. The commanders arrested after the coup had hundreds of fighter jets under their command but none of them flew to intercept or harm the aircraft carrying Erdogan. Greek Air Force refuted Erdogan’s claims that F-16s harassed his aircraft.

16. According to pro-AKP sources, an air force officer identified with initials H.A. informed the national intelligence about the coup in the early afternoon. Instead of being declared a hero and given a national medal of honor for helping stop the coup, he was dismissed from the military because his name allegedly appeared on the list of the coup plotters. Was he dismissed because of alleged links to Hizmet movement? In that case, doesn’t Hizmet movement deserve to be credited just as it was willified?

17. The whereabouts of the commander of the Army, General Salih Zeki Colak raised questions marks. He reported to have been at the military headquarters and then have left to be summoned later. The question of why he or chief of military staff did not inform the force commanders was not answered. Gen. Colak is known to be a sympathizer of ultranationalists. He attended the funeral of Ergenekon suspect Muzaffer Tekin alongside Maoist leader Dogu Perincek.

18. General Hakan Unver, who was accused of trying to put the military chief of staff Hulusi Akar on the phone with Gülen, denied the accusation and said he did not know Gülen.

19. The commander of the 2nd army, Gen. Adem Hudutu, who was arrested after the coup claimed that he fought against Gülen-sympathizers in the past. He was known for leading the military’s campaign against the PKK in southeast Turkey that cost resulted in civilian casualties. Several of the commanders arrested after the coup or killed during the coup, including Gen. Adem Huduti, were known to resist Erdogan’s ambition to stage a land-based military operation into Syria.
This report has been written in response to recent events in Turkey — the attempted coup of July 15, 2016 and the extraordinary purges that are continuing in its aftermath. With the current government crackdown on the media in Turkey, it is difficult to extract an objective account of events on the night of the failed coup and establish responsibility for them. For that reason, here we examine the Turkish government’s official account of events and some of the difficulties with it. We also present a number of alternative conclusions about events from academics and experts from across the political spectrum. We document the alarming rise in wholesale human rights abuses for which the failed coup appears to be a pretext. We then show how the Turkish government or its supporters are also instigating similar abuses within the borders of Europe.