

14 July 2017

Fethullah Gulen’s Message on the Anniversary of the Coup Attempt in Turkey

This Saturday (15th July) is a sad moment in Turkish history as it marks one year since the deplorable coup attempt that resulted in the death of hundreds and injuries of thousands. On this occasion I reiterate my condemnation of the despicable putsch and its perpetrators, and extend my sincere condolences to the families and loved ones affected by this horrible tragedy.

Unfortunately, in the aftermath of this tragic incident the lives of far too many innocent people have been darkened. They have been unlawfully fired from their jobs, arrested, jailed, and even tortured – all under the government’s direction. They are being deprived of their livelihoods, dignity and human rights while the government conducts a witch-hunt to weed out anyone it deems disloyal to President Erdogan and his regime.

The last year has taken a toll on me as hundreds of thousands of innocent Turkish citizens are being punished simply because the government decides they are somehow “connected” to me or the Hizmet movement and treats that alleged connection as a crime. Accusations against me related to the coup attempt are baseless, politically motivated slanders. The government’s treatment of innocent citizens during the past year is dragging Turkey into the category of the countries with the worst record of democracy, the rule of law and fundamental freedoms in the world. On this day, I reiterate my call for an independent international investigation to fully examine what occurred on July 15 and to bring the coup perpetrators to justice. I stand by my pledge to accept its ruling and return to Turkey if the commission finds me responsible for the coup attempt.

Instead of answering why they have failed to convince world leaders about their accusations against me, Turkey’s leaders are feeding conspiracy theories to Turkish audiences through the media outlets that have become mouthpieces for government propaganda. Unfortunately, unable to hear any different narratives about the horrific incident, the Turkish people are being rallied en masse around hate messages. Very few people are able to stop and notice the alarming resemblance of the current scapegoating of Hizmet participants to the scapegoating of certain groups by fascist and communist totalitarian regimes of the 20th century.

Democracy cannot be achieved or protected through violent means. Even if elected political leaders persecute their own citizens by trampling over fundamental human rights, their removal through anti-democratic means cannot be condoned. Despite having being subjected to persecution unprecedented in Turkish history in terms of its methods and scale for a year now, no Hizmet participant has even raised a fist against his or her persecutors. Instead, they are continuing to pursue their rights through legal and peaceful means. I think anyone who still doubts their commitment to nonviolence, peace and the rule of law despite this track record is blinded by prejudice.

It is my hope that Turkish intellectuals will raise their voice and stand in solidarity with all victims of the persecution, and the members of the judiciary will resist political pressures and uphold universal principles of justice. I pray to God, the Most Compassionate, to save this blessed land from the present darkness and deliver to an atmosphere of peace and tranquility.

About Fethullah Gülen

Fethullah Gülen is an Islamic scholar, preacher and social advocate, whose decades-long commitment to education, interfaith dialogue and altruism has inspired millions in Turkey and around the world. Gülen is the honorary president of the Intercultural Dialogue Platform.

About Intercultural Dialogue Platform

IDP is a non-profit organization located in Brussels. The association acts as a mouthpiece for the European dialogue institutions associated with the Hizmet/Gülen movement. The platform also serves as the main information channel of Hizmet and Fethullah Gülen, who is the honorary president of the association.