

THE FAILED MILITARY COUP IN TURKEY
&
THE MASS PURGES
A CIVIL SOCIETY PERSPECTIVE





Alliance for Shared Values (AfSV) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization based in New York. Together with our local affiliates and partners we aim to help eliminate false stereotypes, prejudices, fear and hatred, and serve peace and social harmony. Our local affiliates include:

- Peace Islands Institute (New York, NY)
- Rumi Forum (Washington, D.C.)
- Niagara Foundation (Chicago, IL)
- Dialogue Institute of Southwest (Houston, TX)
- Pacifica Institute (Los Angeles, CA)
- Atlantic Institute (Atlanta, GA)

Founders and supporters of AfSV include participants of the Hizmet Movement, a civil society movement that aims to bring citizens together around high human values such as empathy, mutual respect, commitment to the dignity of every human life and service to community.

Quoted views in this document reflect the opinions of their respective authors, not the official position of the Alliance.

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Photo: Getty Images

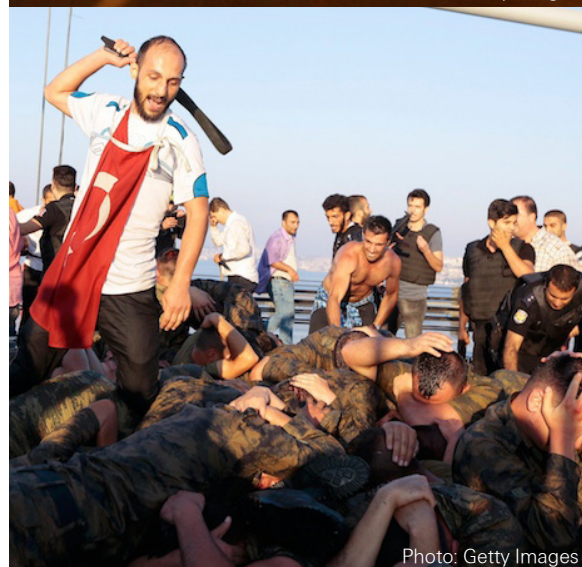
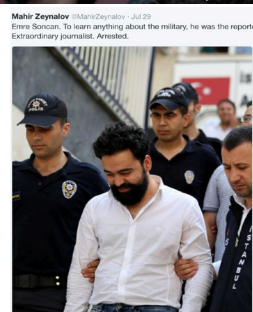


Photo: Getty Images



Mahir Zeynalov (@MahirZeynalov) · Jul 29
Bulent Eralp, Veteran court reporter. Reviled & reviled, made enemies because she never stopped writing. Arrested.



Mahir Zeynalov (@MahirZeynalov) · Jul 29
Enis Sencan. To learn anything about the military, he was the reporter to read. Extraordinary journalist. Arrested.



Composite: Mahir Zeynalov / Twitter

Executive Summary

The failed July 15th coup attempt was a historic moment in Turkish history. Both Turkish society and the world celebrated the fact that an anti-democratic intervention in the government was prevented. The military officers suspected of planning and carrying out actions against the elected government should be investigated and brought to justice. The Turkish government has every right to pursue these individuals, using all the methods the law allows.

The actions of President Erdogan's government in the immediate aftermath of the coup, however, constitute a mass purge rather than a proper investigation. In addition to the officers who were accused of taking part in the coup, thousands of soldiers who did not take part in the coup, as well as tens of thousands of civilians including journalists, teachers and judges were detained and arrested within days of the attempt.

Amnesty International reported¹ "credible evidence" of serious abuses of detainees including beatings, torture and rape. President Erdogan used the failed coup as a golden opportunity to accelerate the persecution of the Hizmet movement and the government's confiscation of private properties owned by Hizmet sympathizers. He also used the coup as an excuse to

completely silence all opposition and completely re-engineer the military structure, including the education of cadets. This allowed him to bring the military under his tutelage. On the night of the coup attempt, he said, "This uprising is a gift from God to us because this will be a reason to cleanse our army."²

On the night of July 15, several hours before details of the coup attempt emerged, President Erdogan, speaking on a smartphone to CNN-Turk declared Fethullah Gulen, a 77-year old reclusive preacher living in Pennsylvania, to be its mastermind. The official story told by Erdogan government about the failed coup attempt is that a group of military officers who sympathized with Gulen learned that they would be eliminated in 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. While this story sounds appealing, it is not based on an investigation or a court verdict. The official story leaves many questions unanswered and the government has so far failed to produce any evidence to link Gulen with the attempt.

U.S. Director of National Intelligence James Clapper stated that U.S. intelligence services did not see evidence of Gulen's involvement in the coup attempt.³



US Director of National Intelligence James Clapper stated US intelligence showed no link between Gulen and the coup attempt.



Gulen's books are confiscated as evidence in post coup purges.

Turkey Purge @TurkeyPurge 9/7/16
 Turkey seizes assets of another 41 businessmen over Gulen ties | turkeypurge.com/turkey-seizes-...



Turkeypurge.com keeps track of the victims of the post coup purges

Many other independent experts have argued that it is objectively very unlikely that Gulen-sympathizing officers were the driving force of such an attempt.

Certain independent observers are telling a more plausible tale. According to this story, the attempt had a much broader base, including hardline Kemalists and neo-nationalists. President Erdogan was expecting such an attempt and his allies moved to cripple it and turn it into an opportunity for Erdogan to come out as a hero. The active role of Gen. Mehmet Disli, brother of AKP vice chairman Saban Disli on the night of the coup, along with other indicators, underlie this view.

In order to justify their purges and power grab, the Turkish government is using a strategy of emotional appeals and disinformation, all of it based around a logical fallacy. To support their actions, the Turkish government is displaying horrifying pictures and videos of civilians being targeted by soldiers, creating an emotional outrage. They avoid any discussion of arrested officers who are known as Kemalists or neo-nationalists,

and suppress information emerging from officer testimonies that contradict the official story. This disinformation strategy leaves the alleged Hizmet sympathizers in the military as the only perpetrators. The combination of media domination by Erdogan and the fearful atmosphere this media has created leaves the society with only the government narrative. It helps vilify the Hizmet movement as a whole. And it helps justify the government's logical fallacy: that unproven accusations against the Hizmet movement justify the mass purges.

The targeting of tens of thousands of non-military personnel including judges, journalists and teachers, without due process or a proper investigation constitutes a classic example of guilt by association.

Individuals and organizations sympathetic to the Hizmet movement are not the only victims of the post-coup purges. Liberal, nationalist, Kurdish, leftist and Alevi individuals and organizations have been targeted as well. The common denominator among the **more than 110 media organizations shut down** after

the coup is not affiliation with the Hizmet movement but being independent voices critical of the Erdogan regime. Some 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. The government announced on September 8, 2016 suspension of 11,500 Kurdish teachers for alleged links to a terrorist organization. **An atmosphere of fear is perpetrated to silence all democratic dissent.**

Because of human rights abuses and because of the fearful atmosphere that was created after the coup, it may not be possible to learn the facts about the coup—at least for a long while. But regardless of what happened on the night of July 15th, the mass purges in its immediate aftermath have targeted mostly civilians and left tens of thousands of families suffering. President Erdogan is using the coup attempt to consolidate all power in his hands and position himself, according to New York Times, as the new mythical savior of the Turkish nation, a 21st century Atatürk.⁴ The world's reaction to the failed coup attempt left President Erdogan disappointed. While showing solidarity with the Turkish government in its effort to identify and prosecute the coup-plotters, world leaders and human rights monitoring organizations criticized the government's targeting of civilians via a mass purge. While these criticisms are valuable, as they help protect basic human rights and freedoms in Turkey, they are insufficient to stop

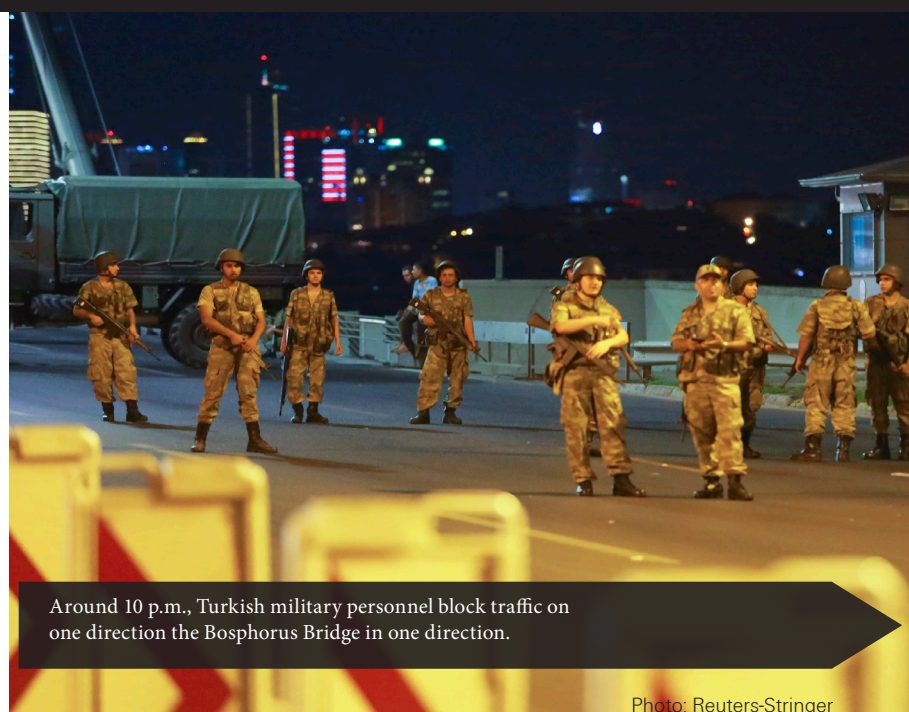
Erdogan's government from targeting civil society. **The ending of the state of emergency and the re-establishment of the rule of law, as well as humane detention conditions and access to legal representation are necessary to help the victims of the mass purge.**



Yamanlar High School in Izmir is one of the 1,284 schools that were founded by the Hizmet participants and confiscated by the government after the coup. A violent mob destroyed the school sign after an executive was assigned by the government.



Middle East Medical Center is one of the 35 hospitals that were founded by the Hizmet participants and shut down after the coup.



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'état itself. Of those killed, 24 people were called 'coup plotters' by the authorities.

Soldiers were lynched as they tried to surrender in the morning of July 16.

The Coup Attempt and Post-Coup Purges

On Friday, July 15, a group of Turkish officers and soldiers under their command attempted a coup. Their focus was on Ankara and Istanbul. They tried to take control of Istanbul's bridges and airports, as well as the Turkish parliament, and some police stations. Their attempted coup was either ill-planned and badly executed, or it was a much broader-based plan and some groups deserted those who acted early on, leaving the latter's actions incomplete and ineffective. Despite the government's claims that a fringe group within the military organized the attempt, more than one third of the generals and thousands of soldiers were arrested. The inaction of the broader military for hours pitted the police and civilians against the pro-coup forces.

According to government sources five soldiers, 62 police officers, and 173 civilians were killed. More than 1,500 people were wounded. 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'état itself. Of those killed, 24 people were called 'coup plotters' by the authorities and some of whom were lynched as they tried to surrender.

The government has blamed the coup on its 'default scapegoat', Fethullah Gülen, a retired preacher who has been living at a retreat center in Saylorsburg, Pennsylvania since 1999. Some government ministers have also

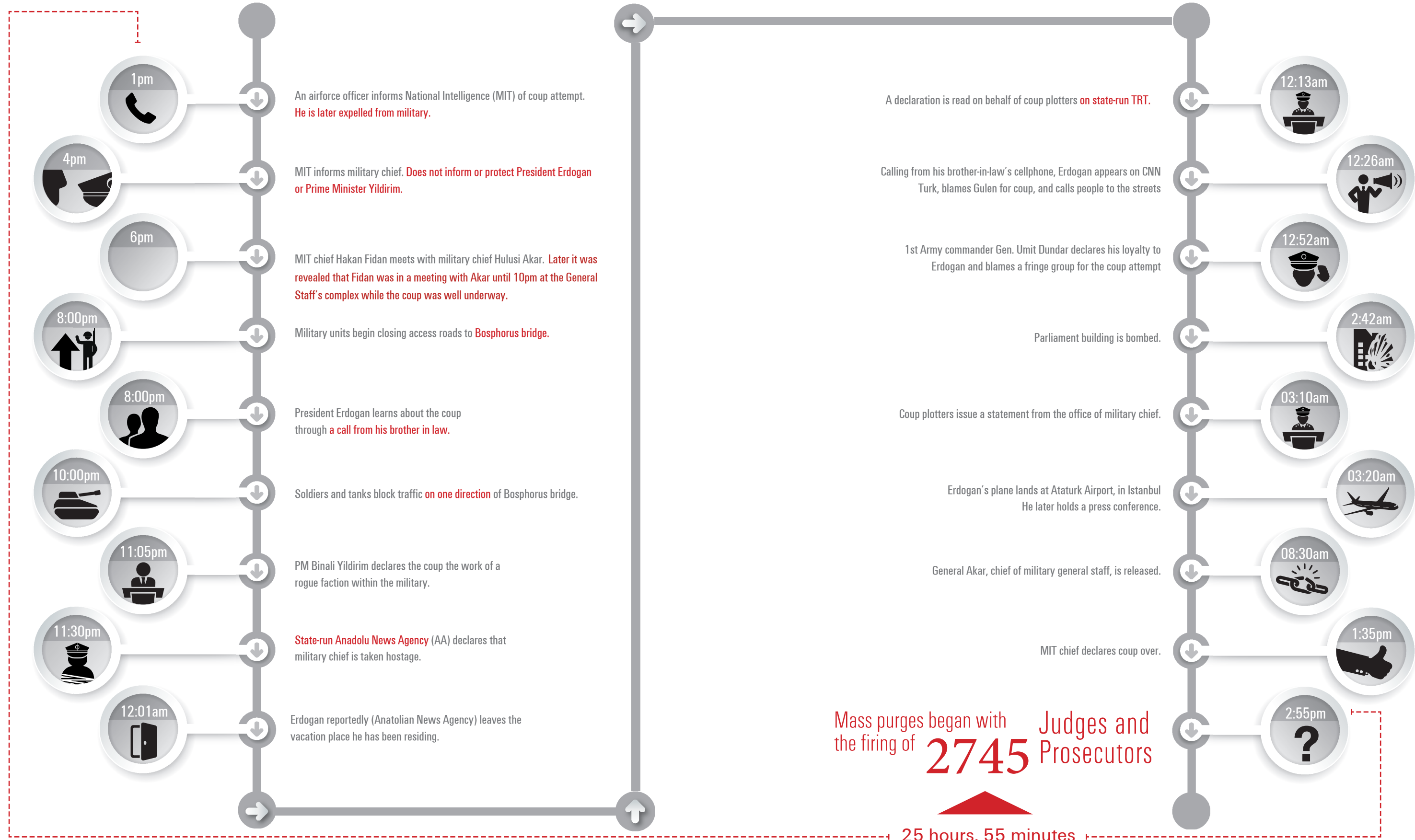
claimed that the US administration, working through the Gülen movement, supported the abortive coup attempt to topple Erdoğan.

Dr. Henri Barkey of the Wilson Institute, who was in Istanbul for a workshop at the time, was named as the CIA's man supervising the coup. General John F. Campbell, a former U.S. commander of the International Security Assistance Force was also accused by pro-Erdogan papers⁵ of being an organizer of the coup.

The public signs of the coup attempt emerged around 8pm when military units began to divert traffic from Istanbul's Bosphorus Bridge. Around 10pm, one direction of traffic was blocked on the Bosphorus Bridge, in an unprecedented and unexplained move by the alleged coup plotters. In fact, the execution of the coup attempt was incompetent in ways that exacerbated public reaction.

- The actions taken were completely contrary to previous coups. In previous coups of 1960, 1971 and 1980, 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 Erdoğan nor PM Yıldırım 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 actions did not help the coup attempt; they undermined it.

Timeline of the Coup



Mass Purges **in Numbers**

Since July 15, 2016



180
MEDIA OUTLETS
SHUT DOWN



120
JOURNALISTS
ARRESTED



3,531
JUDGES &
PROSECUTORS
DISMISSED



159
HIGH RANKING
GENERALS
DISMISSED



5,266
MILITARY OFFICERS
ARRESTED



1,254
NON-PROFITS
SHUT DOWN



50,979
DETAINED



27,239
ARRESTED



5,070
ACADEMICS
DISMISSED



2,084
SCHOOLS & DORMS
SHUT DOWN

104,914 PURGED

As of October 5, 2016

Source: www.turkeypurge.com and Turkish Armed Forces July 2016 Statement



Ali Bulac - Columnist
 Ahmet T. Alkan - Columnist
 Sahin Alpay - Columnist
 Composite: Mahir Zeynelov / Twitter



Veteran journalists of all political orientations have been arrested during the post-coup purges. Others, including housewives, senior citizens, the handicapped, teachers, cooks, truck drivers, and nurses have also been arrested.

Photo: turkeypurge.com



Orhan Kemal Cengiz - Human Rights lawyer



Some victims of the post coup purges

Post-Coup Purges

The actions of the Turkish government after the failed coup attempt amount to collective punishment without due process. Convictions are handed down on the basis of guilt-by-association. In the words of David Phillips of Columbia University's Institute for the Study of Human Rights, after the failed coup attempt, President Erdogan's "inner Stalin" was unleashed "turning Turkey in to a giant Gulag".⁶

The government has effectively silenced the free media by ordering the closure of 131 newspapers, news agencies, publishers, television, and radio stations.⁷ Moreover, within days the government had purged 104,676 people, detained 44,206, arrested 24,118, including 120 journalists, shut down 1,284 schools and dormitories, as well as 15 universities, 1,254 associations and foundations, and 35 hospitals.⁸

Hizmet-affiliated institutions were among the hardest hit. They were attacked by angry mobs of demonstrators shouting slogans in support of President Erdogan and threats against Fethullah Gulen and Hizmet sympathizers.⁹

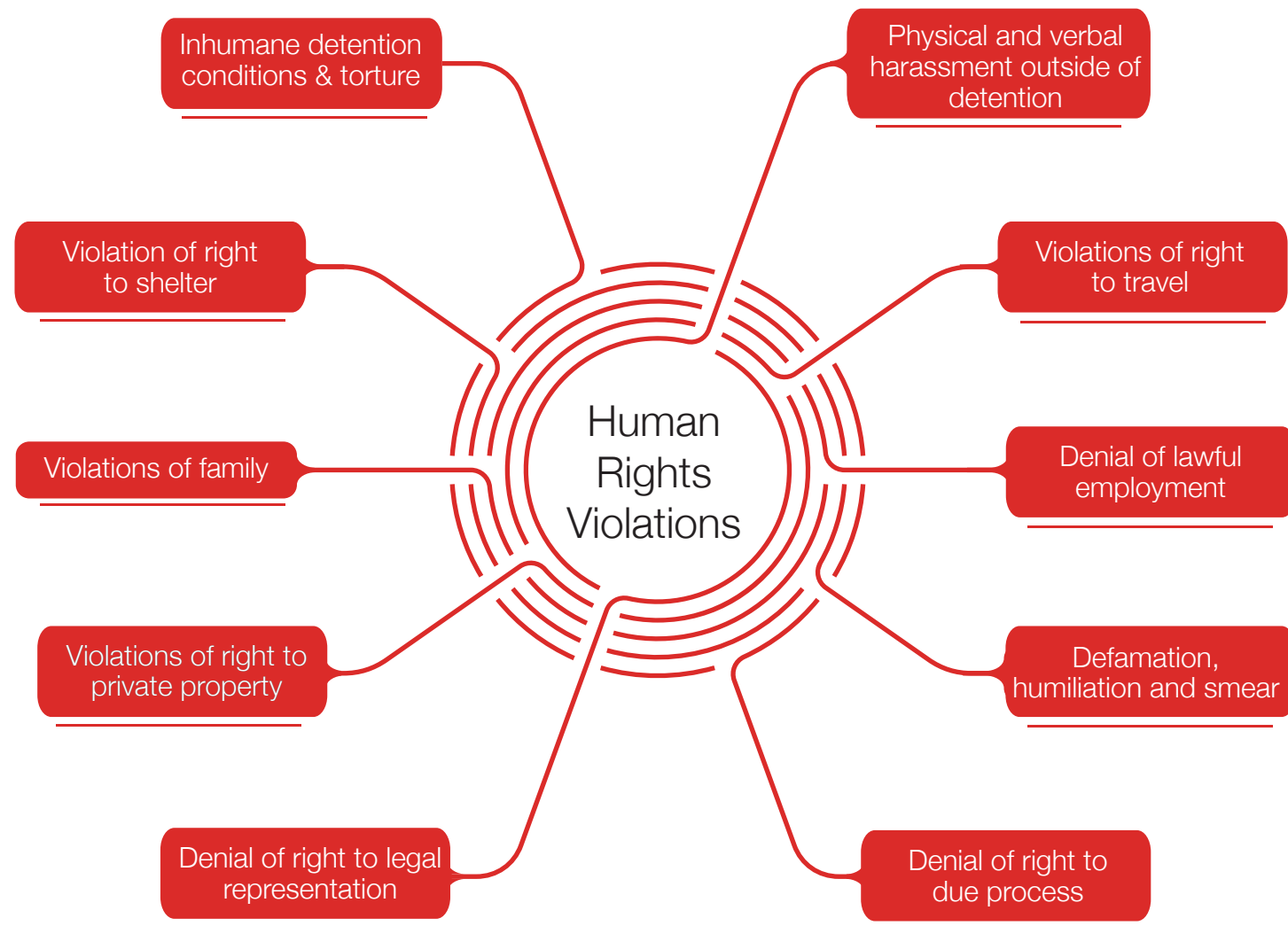


Munip Ermis, deputy chairman of Contemporary Lawyers Association, Antalya, was detained as police raided his offices. Because of raids to law offices and detention of lawyers, victims of the mass purges cannot find lawyers to represent them.¹⁰

What were their "roles" in the coup attempt?

- **Y.A. - Janitor at Religious Affairs Directorate in Balıkesir.**
- **Y.E.K., dancer at Ministry of Culture and Tourism in İzmir**
- **C.A. - Veterinarian at Ministry of Food and Livestock in Iğdır**
- **A.D., archeologist at Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Antalya**
- **N.D. - Miner at Ministry of Energy in Zonguldak**
- **T.T., truck driver at Turkish Coal Enterprises in Çanakkale**
- **S.D. - Warehouse keeper at Disaster Management Authority in Antalya**
- **H.G., truck mechanic at Turkish Coal Enterprises in Kütahya**
- **F.H.E.- Midwife at Health Ministry in Isparta**
- **M.Ç., cook at Prime Ministry in Ankara**

Source: Turkish Official Gazette / www.resmigazete.gov.tr



Categories of Human Rights Violations

The types and severity of human rights abuses during the mass purges continue to increase. The categories and examples of abuses include the following:

1. Inhumane Detention Conditions and Torture: Denial of medicine, medical treatment, food, and access to personal hygiene. The piling of a high number of detainees into small spaces. Credible reports of torture including, beating and rape.
2. Verbal and physical abuse outside of detention centers.
3. Violation of Right to Travel, including passport cancellations.
4. Denial of Lawful Employment: Government employees are fired without an investigation and they are denied positions in any other government agency. Private companies offering employment to such individuals are monitored and threatened. Professional licenses of teachers and other professionals such as doctors and academicians are canceled. School diplomas of professionals are invalidated.
5. Defamation, Humiliation and Slander: Smear campaigns against foundations, companies and individuals by President Erdogan and other state officials continue on pro-Erdogan media and other platforms. Police are irresponsive to physical attacks and public harassments.
6. Denial of Right to Due Process: The requirements of the due process according to the Turkish legal code are violated during the prosecution of Hizmet sympathizers.
7. Denial of Right to Legal Defense: Lawyers agreeing to defend Hizmet-sympathizers are routinely threatened, detained and arrested. Their offices are raided.
8. Violations of Private Property Rights: Private properties of Hizmet sympathizers are taken away through multiple mechanism such as the appointing of trustees, confiscation, and sale to third parties without consent of owner.
9. Violations of Family: Family members of wanted individuals, including wives, mothers and fathers are detained and sometimes arrested. Children are threatened. Parents are threatened with placing their children in government orphanages despite the presence of relatives.
10. Violation of Right to Shelter: Apartment building governing boards are pressured to evict Hizmet sympathizers.
11. Violation of Right to Information: Information about detained or arrested individuals are denied to other family members.

Victims and the World

Reaction

Hizmet-sympathizers have been the focus of post-coup purges. However, the purges are by no means limited to them. Kemalists, Alevis,¹¹ Liberals, Kurds and other groups who are not Erdogan-loyalists have also been targeted. Emin Colasan, a prominent columnist for *Sozcu Daily* noted that among the detained and arrested military officers, there are Kemalists whom he knew personally.¹²

Slogan-shouting groups were seen in Alevi-majority neighborhoods¹³ and a pro-Erdogan newspaper claimed that the BBC was trying to galvanize Alevis against the government after the failure of the coup attempt.¹⁴ The elimination of Alevi members of the judiciary prior to¹⁵ and in the aftermath of the coup was reported by the media.

On September 8th, the Turkish government suspended 11,500 Kurdish teachers for alleged links to a terrorist organization.¹⁶ Nationalist and leftist media outlets, journalists and government employees have been affected as well. The figure on the next page shows the groups who are victimized.

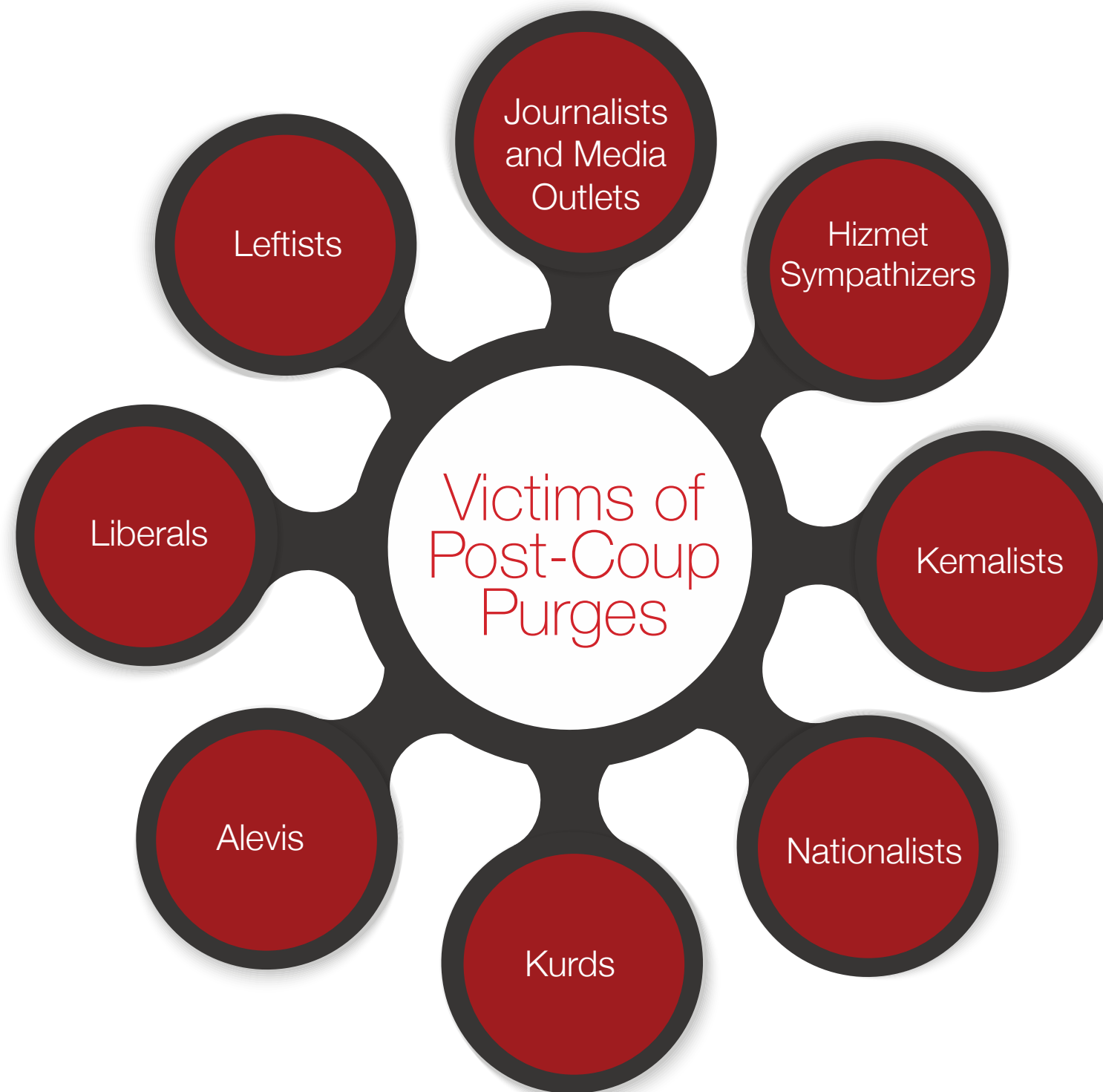
Media Outlets - More than 120 media outlets were shut down. The *New York Times* likened the crackdown on journalists and media outlets to "President Obama's issuing arrest warrants for conservative journalists, closing television and radio stations and censoring dozens of news-related websites."

The media outlets that were shut down include TV and radio channels, newspapers, and magazines. Nina Ognianova, the Europe and Central Asia Program coordinator for the Committee to Protect Journalists said in a statement that "The scale of this rout of the media is staggering."

Journalists - Journalists and media outlets were among the first targets of the post-coup crackdown. Referring to the journalists who were arrested, *Huffington Post* and former *Today's Zaman* columnist Mahir Zeynalov, who himself was deported from Turkey earlier by Erdogan, 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".¹⁷

Among the journalists arrested was a 72-year-old veteran journalist and a former parliamentarian, Nazli Ilıcak, who was charged with "membership of a terror group," according to government-owned *Anadolu* news agency.¹⁸

In another incident, Turkish authorities detained the wife of a Turkish journalist, Bulent Korucu, who has been critical of the government. According to *Turkish Minute*, "Korucu's situation shortly jumped onto the national debate on the social media, with activists and critical journalists blasting the government for emulating mafia tactics in a state that is supposed to be ruled by the law."¹⁹





Beatriz Yubero, a Spanish student and journalist, was also deported from Turkey. She was taken into custody over tweets about President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. During detention, she “was deprived of food and water, denied medical care and the right to contact [her] family] and lawyers.”²⁰

The post-coup crackdown on journalists and media outlets was only a continuation of a terrible track record for President Erdogan when it comes to silencing critical voices in media. The type of measures against independent journalists include criminal prosecution, cancellation of yellow press cards, media smear campaigns, black listing journalists from government events, and punitive fines against owners of critical media outlets.

Judges and Prosecutors - 3,465 judges and prosecutors were fired from their positions and over 2,000 of them were arrested in the immediate aftermath of the coup. The *New York Times* likened these to suspending every state judge in California, Texas, New York and Georgia. The arrested members of the judiciary include two members of the country’s Constitutional Court, the equivalent of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Ms. Nesibe Ozer, a member of the Higher Council of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK), who was removed from her post and jailed, started a hunger strike after being moved into solitary confinement. A famous pro-AKP Twitter account promoted

moving all alleged Gulen-sympathizers into solitary confinement so that it would be easier to target them in the event of a prison riot. The government immediately began hiring new judges, presumably party loyalists, without sufficient training.

Teachers and Schools - 21,000 private school teachers were not only suspended but their licenses to teach were revoked. In a separate wave of purges, the government fired 11,000 Kurdish teachers for alleged ties to the PKK.

The government has shut down 2099 educational institutions, including hundreds of K-12 schools and universities. According to media reports, 138,000 school children had to move to a different school, and were sometimes bullied for having being transferred from a school with links to the Hizmet movement.

Academics - The government forced all the deans from every Turkish university, 1,500 deans in total, to resign without an investigation or an indication of whether they could later return to their jobs. While some academics were forced to resign based on their alleged Hizmet links, others who signed a petition in protest of the security forces crackdown on the PKK, which has taken a heavy civilian toll were also suspended from their jobs.

Business Owners - Hundreds of business owners were targeted through measures such as unfair inspections, punitive fines, the forced appointment of “trustees” to run their companies and the confiscation of whole businesses. When he fled the country, businessman Akin Ipek lost 18 companies worth billions of dollars after fleeing the country. In his absence, his mother was harassed as the new security company assigned to her residence denied her entry to her home. Members of the Boydak family, who owned the largest furniture manufacturing company in the city of Kayseri were jailed for making charitable donations to Hizmet movement NGOs. Mustafa Torer, a businessman, who suffered from diabetes, died in detention when he was denied access to proper medical care.



Veteran liberal democratic journalist, Nazli Ilıcak, 72, arrested.



Military officers including Levent Turkkan, aide de camp to the Turkish Military Chief, show signs of torture.



Teacher Gokhan Acikkollu died in detention having been denied access to medical care for his diabetes.



Agnostic, socialist columnist and professor Sahin Alpay arrested.



Businessman Mustafa Torer who has been suffering from diabetes, died while in detention due to a heart attack.



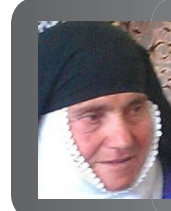
18 companies of business owner Akin Ipek seized by government due to ties to Hizmet movement.



Renowned novelist and pro-Kurdish activist Asli Erdogan arrested and denied access to medical supplies after her media outlet shut down.



Police arrested wife of journalist Bulent Korucu and threatened his children to force him to turn himself in to police.



Police detained Dudu Cakir, 86-year old mother of lawyer Muhammet Cakir, to force him to surrender to police.



Defamation of Gulen at AKP rallies openly employ hate speech.



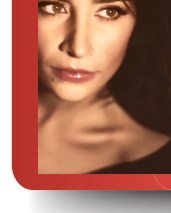
A stallholder in the city of Konya displays a banner that says “Members of Gulen’s terrorist network cannot shop here.”



Passport of Dilek Dunder, wife of Can Dunder, former editor in chief of *Kemalist/secular Cumhuriyet* daily, is confiscated.



Columnist brothers Ahmet and Mehmet Altan are denied access to lawyers.



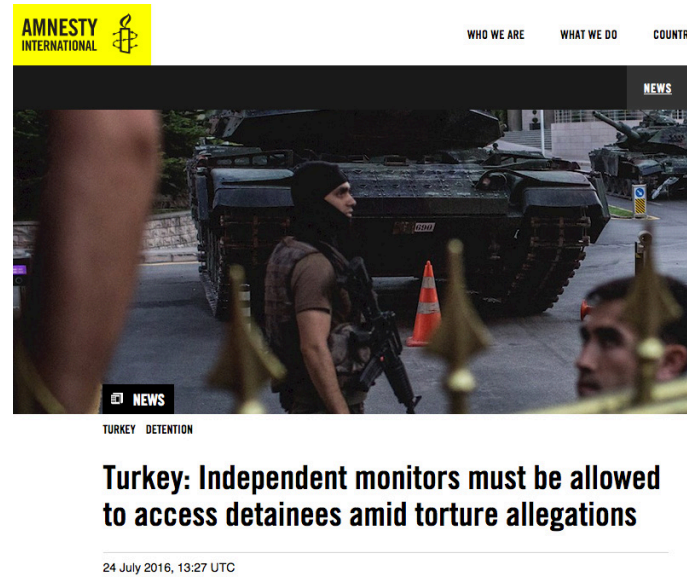
Singer SILA lost contracts and was subjected to a media smear campaign after refusing to perform in a pro-Erdogan rally.

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.” Also: *“In the worst cases some have been subjected to severe beatings and torture, including rape.”*^{22,23}

Numerous human rights organizations, world leaders and journalists have criticized the post-coup purge and human rights abuses in Turkey. **Emma Sinclair Webb, the Turkey director at the Human Rights Watch**, said, *“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.”*²⁴

On the other hand, **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 on authorities to release all of the journalists taken into custody and allow the newspaper to publish freely.”*²⁵

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



Amnesty International reported serious abuses of detainees including beatings, torture and rape.¹



Emma Sinclair Webb
Senior Turkey Researcher
Human Rights Watch

Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein
UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

Federica Mogherini
High Rep. of the European Union
Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

John Kerry
68th Secretary of State of the U.S.

“Imprisoning journalists and human rights defenders for ‘terror propaganda’ shows just how vague and overly broad Turkey’s laws are,” said **Daniel Calingaert, 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 liberalization. The EU should stand firm against the Turkish state’s abuse of the law to silence critical voices. Turkey should release Fincancı, Önderoğlu, and Nesin immediately.”*²⁶

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, also urged Turkish authorities to uphold human rights, as is evident in the statement issued by him: *“I deplore the loss of so many lives in Turkey over the weekend, and offer my sincere condolences to the families of those who were killed. The Turkish people bravely took to the streets to defend their country against those who sought to undermine its democracy. I urge the Government of Turkey to respond by upholding the rule of law, by strengthening the protection of human rights and by reinforcing democratic institutions. Those responsible for the violence must be brought to justice with full respect for fair trial standards. In the aftermath of such a traumatic experience, it is particularly crucial to ensure that human rights are not squandered in the name of security and in the rush to punish those perceived to be responsible.”*²⁷

Although Erdogan’s government has been supported by Western countries, the humanitarian tragedy and post-coup purge is not something that

has been approved of by many. **US Secretary of State John Kerry** said, *“We stand squarely on the side of the elected leadership in Turkey. But we also firmly urge the government of Turkey to maintain calm and stability throughout the country. We will certainly support bringing the perpetrators of the coup to justice but we also caution against a reach that goes well beyond that.”* Also, in a reference to Fethullah Gülen, **Kerry** asked Turkey to provide evidence *“that withstands scrutiny,”* rather than allegations.²⁸

Federica Mogherini, the EU foreign policy chief, has also insisted that Ankara “avoid steps that would damage the constitutional order.”²⁹

After a phone call with Mr. Erdogan, **NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg** said, *“It is essential for Turkey, like all other allies, to ensure full respect for democracy and its institutions, the constitutional order, the rule of law and fundamental freedoms.”* **Steffen Seibert, the press secretary of German Chancellor Angela Merkel** remarked, “any move by Mr. Erdogan to reinstate the death penalty, something he has floated, could kill Turkey’s decade-old EU membership bid.” Moreover, Seibert said during a news conference in Berlin, “A country that has the death penalty cannot be a member of the EU. The implementation of the death penalty in Turkey would thus mean the end of membership talks.”³⁰

Unfortunately, Erdogan seems unfazed by the flood of criticism and condemnation coming his way and has continued the post-coup purge with increasing severity.

The Official Story

Questions and a More Plausible Alternative



Gülen's response was that he condemned the coup in strongest terms and "If somebody who appears to be a Hizmet sympathizer has been involved in an attempted coup, he betrays my ideals."

The official story told by the Erdoğan government about the failed coup attempt is the following: A group of military sympathetic to Gülen learned that they would be eliminated in the upcoming August meeting of the High Council of the Military and 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 face time call to CNN-Turk, Erdoğan declared that the attempt was the work of a fringe group, loyal to Gülen, within the military.

Fethullah Gülen has condemned the coup attempt while it was still in progress.³¹ In the early hours of the coup, the Alliance for Shared Values, an organization that publishes messages by Gülen, condemned the coup attempt. This was followed by a personal statement by Gülen, and by leading Gülen-inspired organizations all of whom condemned the coup unconditionally. Gülen's condemnation was picked up by the world press. In various op-ed's and press conferences, Gülen reiterated his consistent stance in support of democracy and against military interventions. In a *New York Times* opinion piece he said " my philosophy — inclusive and pluralist Islam, dedicated to service to human beings from every faith — is antithetical to armed rebellion."³² In his op-ed published in the French daily *Le Monde*, he called for an international investigation into the failed putsch in Turkey and pledged to abide by its findings.³³

When asked about the possibility that some Gülen sympathizers might have been involved in the attempt, though not as the driving force, Gülen's response was unequivocal: he condemned the coup in the strongest terms and, "If somebody who appears to be a Hizmet sympathizer has been involved in an attempted coup, he betrays my ideals."³⁴

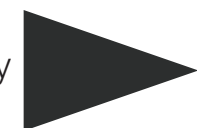
Turkish government officials' simplistic presentation of the coup story and their attempts to justify the post-coup purges has three problems

1 They **completely ignore** the broad base of the **actual or potential coup plotters** and just focus on alleged Gulen sympathizers.

2 They **fail to answer** the questions and **contradictions** raised by the story.

3 They **attempt to justify the mass purges** by emphasizing horrible **actions of coup perpetrators**, such as the targeting of civilians and the bombing of parliament building, **a logical fallacy.**

Let us address these issues individually



A Disinformation Strategy Which Ignores the Coup's Broad Base

The Turkish government is systematically **avoiding** talking about arrested officers who are described by independent observers as hardline Kemalists and neo-nationalists. At the same time, they are amplifying the questionable information about suspected Gulen-sympathizers, information that has been obtained under torture and threats. They are confusing association with the movement with willful participation in the coup. The government is suppressing any information coming from the testimonies of interrogated officers that does not corroborate the official story.

Attorney-client privilege is revoked under the state of emergency, and detainees are routinely tortured and threatened. The combination of Erdogan's media domination with the suppression of counter stories leaves most Turkish citizens and foreign observers based in Turkey with only one story to discuss. Anybody who does not echo the official story, even though they might be pro-democracy and against the coup, is depicted as a coup-supporter. *Individuals are forced to pronounce the acronym FETO, the government's political designation for Hizmet movement as a terrorist organization, as a litmus test of loyalty. An atmosphere of fear is perpetrated to silence all democratic dissent.*

President Erdogan has created a broad base of discontented citizens. He has caused a great deal of resentment within the Turkish military during his 13 years in power, first as Prime Minister and then as President. The Turkish Military has been the bastion of the official, secular ideology of Turkish Republic, based on the ideals of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the leading founding father of the republic. In his second and third terms in power, Erdogan

undermined key elements of Ataturk's legacy, such as Turkey's western orientation and the separation of powers. But the military was most offended by the government mixing religion with politics. Ataturk was staunchly against the use of the religion of Islam for political purposes. Erdogan has been blatantly using religious language and symbols blatantly for political purposes throughout his career, but more so during the last five years.

Furthermore, during the 2008-2010 trials of military officers for their alleged involvement in coups or coup planning, even the military's chief of staff was arrested and imprisoned on terrorism charges, a first in Turkish history.

The police detective who was in charge of investigating this former chief of staff, Ilker Basbug, for funding anti-AKP web sites with public funds, told audiences on a TV program that *Erdogan knew about the probe and insisted that the former chief of staff be arrested.*

This was grossly embarrassing for the chief of staff and triggered strong resentment throughout the whole military officer corps. Erdogan later claimed that it was the work of Gulen sympathizers in the judiciary who went after the generals, but his statement during the trials that he was "the prosecutor for these trials" and his full political support for the judiciary was not forgotten by the members of the military.

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



I live in a state of uncertainty, hoping to find a haven, as a journalist in exile, in a society that embraces the rule of law. But as I look on at my homeland and the failure of Turkey's intelligentsia, I find it hard not to despair....

Sevgi Akarcesme, Former Editor in Chief of Today's Zaman which was confiscated by Erdogan Government.



Ahmet Şık
Turkish Journalist & Author

In an interview to *Deutsche Welle Turkish*, journalist Ahmet Şık stated that among the names who were detained, there were people who are neofascists and staunchly against the Hizmet movement.³⁵

01



Ret. Gen. Ilker Basbug
the 26th Chief of the General Staff of Turkey

Former military chief of staff Ilker Basbug talked about the presence of three groups while Ahmet Zeki Uçok, a retired military judge, talked about five groups including opportunists.

02



Svante Cornell
Director of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Johns Hopkins University

Svante Cornell, Director of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program at Johns Hopkins University, suggested that "it has long been assumed that Gülenist cliques were present in the military at mid-career ranks. 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 Erdogan allied with the top military brass against the Gülenists, another military faction allied with the Gülenists against Erdogan."³⁷

04



Gareth H. Jenkins
Non-Resident Research Fellow, Silk Road Studies Program, Institute for Security & Development Policy, Johns Hopkins University

Gareth Jenkins, a non-resident senior fellow at Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & 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 hardline Kemalists."³⁶

03



Michael Rubin
Resident Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute

Michael Rubin of American Enterprise Institute stated that Gulen has never had a powerbase in the military because "Turkish General Staff has long vetted officer candidates to prevent Gülen's followers from rising through the ranks."³⁸ Rubin discussed the possibility of Kemalist officers other than the ones Erdogan hand-picked being among the coup plotters.

05



Eric-Jan Zürcher
Professor of Turkish Studies at Leiden University, the Netherlands

Dr. Eric Jan Zürcher a Dutch expert on Turkey who returned the Medal of High Distinction given to him by Turkish government due to Erdogan's dictatorial governance disputed the official Turkish government story.⁴³ He suggested that other groups involved in the attempt are probably swallowing Erdogan's story for self-protection.

07

The Guardian view on Turkey: beware an elected dictatorship
Editorial

A brutal and indiscriminate reaction to the failed coup would threaten the values that defeated it



08

An editorial by the UK's *Guardian* said "Few outside observers believe that the plotters were not for the most part old-fashioned secularists in the tradition of the Turkish armed forces."⁴²



Ümit Cizre
Professor of Political Science & International Relations at Istanbul Sehir University

Ümit Cizre, Prof. of Political Science at Istanbul Sehir University, talked about "three cliques" among the coup-plotters³⁹, citing comments by Kadri Gursel of *AI Monitor* and research by Institute for Study of War.⁴⁰

06

Other intellectuals such as Ismail Besikci and Cemil Gundogan reiterated the view that neofascist and Kemalist commanders were involved.⁴¹

09

Reasons Erdogan Has Singled Out Gülen



There is a pragmatic reason behind singling out Gülen-sympathizers the coup plotters. By focusing on one group for vilification, the government is able to keep other groups in self-protection mode and hence silent. But there are also other reasons behind Erdogan's obsession with Gülen, such as his failure to turn Gülen into a pro-Erdogan mouthpiece and his conviction that 2013 public corruption probe was the work of Hizmet sympathizers. There is also a historic control-related reason behind Erdogan's obsession with Gülen.

Historically, in Muslim majority regions the political rulers always sought and often demanded the support of influential Muslim figures because of a lack of separation of religion and politics. In order to establish legitimacy in the eyes of Muslim subjects the political rulers always wanted influential Muslim figures to be loyal to them, praise them, and publicly condone their actions publicly. Those who refuse have been subjected to intimidation, imprisonment, and sometimes torture. At the bottom of Erdogan's wrath against Gülen lies the same issue of control. Despite the fact that the Turkish Republic is a secular government, President Erdogan's voter base consists mainly of religiously observant Turks. Erdogan uses religious identity to polarize Turkish society and solidify his voter base. He cannot tolerate criticism from an influential Muslim figure. There are many elements of opposition to Erdogan in

Turkey but what makes Gülen particularly disturbing is the fact that Gülen is an inconvenient mirror to Erdogan. Erdogan can easily dismiss many of his critics. He can dismiss Kemalist critics by claiming that they have a problem with religion. He can claim that the Alevis have a grudge against Sunnis and the liberals are western puppets. But Gülen is an observant Muslim and he has not always been publicly critical of Erdogan. Gülen began to criticize him only after public corruption became widespread and Erdogan's authoritarian actions completely eroded previous democratic reforms. In particular, Gülen refused to publicly support Erdogan's drive for an executive presidency out of concern for the lack of checks and balances. Since Erdogan cannot claim that Gülen has an ideological problem with Islam or that he has always been a critic, it is not easy to dismiss Gülen.

Questions and Contradictions Left Unanswered by the Official Story



A policeman protects soldiers from the mob after troops involved in the coup surrendered on the Bosphorus Bridge on July 16, 2016 in Istanbul, Turkey. Reuters/Murad Sezer

There is no question that some officers in the Turkish military intended to stage a coup and acted on that intention. This attempt cost many innocent lives among the 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. The questions and contradictions can be grouped around five themes:**

1. Inconsistent and self-contradictory claims about who learned about the coup and when.

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,**⁴⁴ and that he called but could not reach either the MIT chief or military chief by phone. **He later changed his timing to 8pm in an interview with CNN and then to 9:30pm in another interview with ATV.** During his press conference at the **Ataturk Airport around 4:30 am, however, he said "as it is known, there was movement within the military in the afternoon."**

2. Lack of communication with, and security measures for, heads of government

- The military Chief of Staff's July 19th statement, reported in pro-Erdogan media, said that the **National Intelligence Agency (MIT) received an insider warning about the coup attempt on the afternoon of July 15th** and informed the military chief of staff 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.** The chief of staff 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 by 11:30 pm, seven hours after first being informed of the attempt.**
- **Neither the chief of national intelligence nor the military's chief of staff 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 had submitted his resignation, his response was that there were intelligence failures in previous incidents in Europe, such as the Paris attacks.

3. Testimonies and independent sources that contradict the government's story

- The retired air-force commander **Akin Ozturk who was initially charged with having links to Hizmet and being the mastermind of the coup, denied those allegations. Later, the military chief of staff's office declared Ozturk a hero for trying to stop the coup.**
- **General Hakan Unver, who was accused of having offered to put the military chief on the phone with Gulen, denied the accusation.**
- **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.⁴⁵ He denied the accusation but his role was never made clear. On this matter, the military chief of staff and his testimonies conflict each other. The chief of staff** claimed that Disli was with the coup team, while Disli said that he was coerced to speak with the 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.
- Erdogan's circles have accused the air force of being the leading participant in the coup. The commanders of all Turkey's air force bases were arrested after the coup. These commanders had hundreds of fighter jets under their command but none of them flew to intercept or harm the aircraft carrying Erdogan, though the government claims otherwise. But the **Greek Air Force refuted Erdogan's claims that pro-coup F-16s harassed his aircraft and others loyal to him protected it.⁴⁶ After the attempt a number of side stories were added to produce what a recent New York Times piece called "a founding myth of an Islamist Turkey"⁴⁷ with Erdogan as the savior hero. These side stories include the disputed assault on Erdogan's plane.⁴⁸**

- Testimonies from arrested soldiers indicate that the undersecretary of MIT, Hakan Fidan, was **in a meeting with Chief of the General Staff Hulusi Akar until 10pm at the General Staff's complex.** Major Akdemir, who was meeting with other officers in Cakmak Hall in the General Staff complex, explained that when he was ordered by Department Chief Cemil Turan to leave Cakmak Hall at 10pm on the night of the coup, **he did not only see soldiers with masks and guns on the corridor, but instead he saw MIT Undersecretary Hakan Fidan and his personnel, who were able to leave the place with ease.⁷⁵**

4. Government actions that contradict their own story

- **The commander of the 2nd army, Gen. Adem Huduti, who was arrested after the coup claimed that he fought against Gulen-sympathizers in the past.** He was known for leading the military's campaign against the PKK in southeast Turkey, which resulted in heavy civilian casualties. Several of the commanders arrested after the coup or killed during the coup, including **Gen. Huduti, were resistant to Erdogan's ambition to stage a land-based military operation into Syria.**
- According to pro-AKP sources, **an air force officer identified by the 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.⁴⁹ Was he dismissed because of alleged links to the Hizmet movement? In that case, doesn't the Hizmet movement deserve to be credited just as it was vilified?

- In the immediate aftermath of the attempt, before any investigation, lists of thousands of military personnel, and tens of thousands of non-military personnel, **including 2700 judges and prosecutors were made; the names on them were ready to be dismissed and/or charged. All independent experts agreed that these lists could not have been prepared based on participation in the coup.** But rather, they were prepared beforehand and were going to be used at the first opportunity.



5. Actions of military units that don't make sense.

- The execution of the coup attempt was remarkably incompetent, in ways that exacerbated the public's reaction. **Actions such as blocking one direction of traffic on Istanbul's Bosphorus Bridge during rush hour, bombing the parliament building, and the deliberate targeting of civilians were unprecedented actions that had not occurred in previous coup attempts.**
- **Military units stormed the hotel where Erdogan was vacationing five hours after tanks first appeared on the Bosphorus Bridge. Taking publicly visible actions before securing political leaders, which is contrary to all previous coups, makes no sense.**

The Logical Fallacy in Attempting to Justify Mass Purges

The Turkish government has been using psychological warfare tactics to render their audiences emotionally defenseless against their propaganda. The logic that emerges from pro-AKP publications and discourse, or the lack thereof, goes like this:

1. We suffered a terrible coup, civilians were murdered, parliament was bombed.
2. Testimonies show that officers with links to Gulen are responsible. This determination has been made without proper investigations and due process.
3. Therefore everybody sympathetic to Gulen and the Hizmet movement is guilty until proven innocent.

Such a logical fallacy could be humorous under normal circumstances but the Turkish government is actually implementing draconian measures to persecute Hizmet sympathizers and others critical of Erdogan's authoritarianism. Here is the counter argument:

1. Yes, Turkey suffered a terrible coup, civilians were murdered, parliament was bombed. It is the right of the government to investigate and try the accused officers through fair trials.
2. But the accused officers have not been investigated properly. Instead many officers were threatened, beaten and tortured, making it impossible to obtain healthy information from them. Their testimonies, taken under these

circumstances, cannot be trusted and don't prove anything in the legal sense. Only an independent court can decide who is responsible after a fair trial free of government interference.

3. Regardless of the identity and motivation of military officers responsible for the coup, it is against international legal principles, such as the presumption of innocence and individual responsibility for crimes, to target civilians who have not collaborated with those officers and who don't condone the coup. It is also morally wrong.

Under international principles of law and due process, a proper investigation -where military officers are not threatened or tortured, and they are not afraid of reprisals against themselves or their families - should be held. Such an investigation should be followed with by a fair trial. Even if some officers are found to be guilty at the end of such a trial, their sympathy for Gulen does not implicate him in the absence of evidence linking Gulen to the attempt. Certainly, civilians from the Hizmet movement who don't know these officers, who have not collaborated with them, and who don't even condone the idea of a military coup cannot be targeted under a democratic regime that upholds the rule of law. The figures below illustrate the government's logical fallacy and what should actually happen regarding the alleged perpetrators of the coup.

The logical fallacy that emerges from pro-AKP publications:



What should happen in a country that upholds the rule of law:



A More Plausible Story

The high number of unanswered questions, bizarre actions of alleged coup plotters and contradictions in government statements have led some observers to claim that Erdogan actually staged a hoax coup.⁵¹ The testimonies about the roles of Gen. Mehmet Disli, the brother of AKP vice chairman Saban Disli, and Hakan Fidan, the head of national intelligence on the night of the coup, as well as Erdogan's own conflicting statements about when and how he learned about the coup constitute circumstantial evidence that Erdogan's inner circle might have played a more active role during the days and hours leading to the coup than suggested by the official story. However, the possibilities are not limited to a coup staged by Gulen sympathizers vs. a hoax coup staged by Erdogan loyalists. There is a more plausible third alternative that emerges from the statements by multiple independent observers, in particular by veteran Turkish journalist Cengiz Candar. Such an option could be validated by an investigation.

Writing for *Al Monitor*, veteran **Turkish journalist Cengiz Candar** recalled telling *the New York Times* correspondent Sabrina Tavernise two weeks before July 15th of a "Faustian bargain President [Recep Tayyip] Erdogan 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."⁵¹ Candar observed 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**



Cengiz Candar



Can Atakli



Andrew Finkel



Selahattin Demirtas

intelligence to the National Intelligence Organization, 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 Candar to the conclusion that **"Erdogan and the government were prepared for a coup attempt and had ample intelligence as to who in the state system would be associated."**

Selahattin Demirtas, co-chairman of pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP), said while addressing party members that President Erdogan actually knew about the coup plan much earlier but rather than taking precautions to stop it, he waited until the plotters acted to turn the attempt into an opportunity to consolidate his power, a process which cost the lives of 225 people. He also claimed many people were talking about this "fact" in the corridors of the parliament but nobody was brave enough to speak from the lectern.⁵²

Can Atakli, a columnist for *Sozcu*, the secular Kemalist daily, speaking to HalkTV, said that "Erdogan's inner circle was aware of the planned coup attempt and after quashing the attempt, most probably, they staged a mega show for Erdogan."

Despite the mounting evidence that the coup attempt had a broad base including Kemalists and Neonationalists, President Erdogan was determined to blame it on Gulen sympathizers and the government swiftly began a campaign of mass detentions, arrests and various forms of harassment against them.

A fact not missed by Turkey observers is that this is not the first time President Erdogan is grabbing more power by blaming a domestic enemy of a conspiracy against his government.

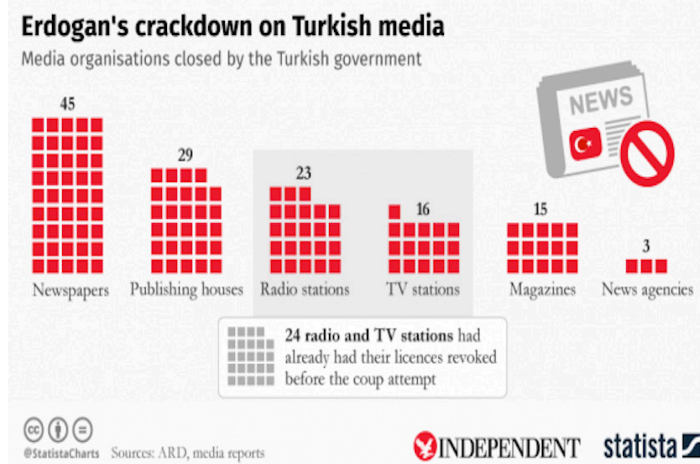
Erdogan's Pattern of Power Grabs

Turkey's ruling party, under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, came to power by promising to further democratize Turkey, moving forward with the country's bid to join the European Union, enhancing freedoms, and 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 his victory in the June 2011 elections, Recep Tayyip Erdogan made a complete U-turn from the democratizing path his party had promised when it first came to power, and began following an authoritarian and repressive path. His third term was marked by increasing Islamic and anti-Western rhetoric.⁵³

Western observers refer to this style of government as either illiberal democracy or competitive authoritarianism where democracy is reduced to unfair or rigged elections. Erdogan has been gradually expanding his power and control over Turkey using the same strategy since well before 2013. His tactic of blaming his opponents and victimizing himself 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) noted that, **"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."**

2013 Gezi Park Protests and Erdogan's Control of Media



Throughout his time in power, Recep Tayyip Erdogan has gradually gained influence over the media. In 2004 the *Star* daily newspaper, owned by Erdogan's political rival Cem Uzan, was seized by the government regulatory agency TMSF (Savings Deposit and Insurance Fund) and eventually acquired by pro-Erdogan businessman Ethem Sancak. *Sabah* daily newspaper and the ATV channel were confiscated by TMSF and sold to pro-Erdogan Turkuvaz holding, managed by CEO Berat Albayrak, Erdogan's son-in-law, in 2007. In 2009, excessive tax penalties (near \$2.5 billion) were levied against the Dogan Media group, which was forced into financial distress. The group consequently sold its *Milliyet* daily to a pro-Erdogan businessman. Meanwhile, in 2011, Erdogan tied his promise of a new constitution to his ambitions for an executive presidency, and in 2012, the AKP submitted a formal constitutional proposal where parliamentary investigations and votes of confidence were abolished and the executive president would have the authority to dismiss the parliament. In 2013, media assets of Cukurova Holding company were seized by TMSF and again sold to pro-Erdogan businessman Ethem Sancak, who publicly expressed his "love" for Erdogan.

Assets of Turkmedya group include daily newspapers *Akşam and Güneş*, digital pay-TV operator Digiturk and news broadcaster SkyTurk 360. Another important media outlet of the Çukurova Group, Show TV, was sold to Ciner Group, in June of 2013, after being seized by the TMSF.

Media control is a crucial step on Erdogan's path to becoming an authoritarian executive president with no checks and balances. His takeover of the Turkish media aims to silence rising opposition and criticism. **Erdogan has limited freedom of speech and the media in Turkey by taking over 90 percent of the media, while the government regulates and blocks the internet and social media. By doing so, he not only undermines democracy, but also limits the voters' ability to make free and informed decisions.**⁵⁴

In 2013, protests sprang up over plans to build a shopping mall on the site of Gezi Park, in Taksim. The protests were peaceful, but when Erdogan's government reacted brutally, the unrest grew into protests against Erdogan personally. The rallies demonstrated the extent of the urban middle class's frustration with Erdogan; the government's reaction worsened the situation, while also harming Erdogan's international standing. This response led Erdogan to expand his power over the independent media and freedom of expression by claiming the events were orchestrated by foreign powers, the international media, the US Ambassador to Turkey, and the interest rate lobbies to weaken Turkey. Pro-government newspapers and TV stations, such as NTV, were aiding the government on spreading conspiracy theories. *Yeni Safak*, a pro-government newspaper, argued American think tanks, The American Israel Public Affairs Committee, and the Jewish lobby were behind the protests.⁵⁵

Following the protests, **AKP pressured media outlets and journalists, and waves of journalists were fired or forced to resign. It is difficult to approximate the number, but on July 26, 2013 at least 59 journalists had lost their jobs during the protests for criticizing**

the government, and the numbers increased throughout the fall. Media groups such as Dogan media group were too intimidated to actually speak out. For example, during the mass protests on June 1st, CNNTurk, a Dogan media outlet, was broadcasting a documentary on penguins.⁵⁶ Meanwhile, pro-Gulen media outlets reported the government's brutality against protesters and restrictions on freedom of expression in a critical light, leading Erdogan to target them as plotters against the government.⁵⁷

In the aftermath of the Gezi protests, Erdogan not only targeted the media, but also businesses and civil society. While the police were attacking peaceful protestors with tear gas, the Divan hotel near Gezi Park, owned by Koc Holding, allowed the fleeing crowd to take refuge and receive medical care in its lobby. This enraged Erdogan, leading him to attack the business group and accuse the hotel owners of harboring terrorists and criminals. A few days later, the Finance Ministry raided Koc Holding's major assets in the energy industry, and by September it escalated into a witch-hunt. Erdogan went as far as to indicate that Koc Holdings supported the military intervention of February 28, 1997.⁵⁸

Using similar rhetoric, he blamed certain sects within Turkey for the unrest, trying to portray himself as the ultimate protector of conservative Sunnis from those out to destroy Turkey. Other than the "interest rate lobby" and Jews, Erdogan also implied that Alevis, probably working for Syria and Iran, and secular leftist, who attack women in scarves, were behind organizing the protests.⁵⁹ In both cases, he managed to rally public opinion on his side by using the media and conspiracy theories, thus allowing him to intimidate civil society by further polarizing Turkey.⁶⁰

The Corruption Probe and Erdogan's Control of the Judiciary

The Gezi protests and the 2013 corruption investigations were both demonstrations against Erdogan's growing authoritarianism and corruption. In both cases, Erdogan reacted with paranoid conspiracy theories, blaming those opposing him in order to eventually seize more influence and silence his opposition.⁶¹

Following the December 2013 corruption probe, Erdogan has gained control over the judiciary to “derail the corruption investigation” and “to stifle criticism in the media and on the Internet.”⁶² The AKP and their friends in the media depicted the corruption investigation as a plot against the government and instantly began making changes to gain power. Erdogan, blaming the “conspiracy” on the Gulen movement, labeled Hizmet as a “parallel state” and promised to “destroy them.”⁶³ The government began a purge of police and judges thought to be sympathetic to Hizmet and started criminal proceedings against pro-Gulen officers in July and August 2014, in order to cover up the corruption charges.”⁶⁴

The AKP government changed the powers of the Constitutional Court and the High Council Judges and Public Prosecutors (HSYK), continuing their gradual drift toward authoritarianism. A new law allowed the Minister of Justice to appoint judges. He then transferred two anti-government members to other chambers and appointed two pro-government members in their place.



After receiving a standing ovation from the members of the judiciary in the opening ceremony of the new judicial year, President Erdogan told reporters on his way to the G-20 Summit in China from İstanbul Atatürk Airport on Friday, September 2, that **the president is the head of the legislature, the executive and the judiciary in Turkey.**

Mass reassignments and demotions occurred, as judges and public prosecutors involved in the investigations were replaced with pro-government colleagues. In July 2014, a new category of Criminal Courts of Peace was created for the criminal investigations.⁶⁵ These “Courts of Peace”, as they were ironically called, have jurisdiction over the conduct of criminal investigations and are almost exclusively under government control.⁶⁶ With the October 2014 HSYK elections, “the government clearly dominates the new HSYK and, through it, obtained the power to control the entire judiciary.”⁶⁷

From the moment these changes happened, the likely consequences were apparent. **Ergun Özbudun, professor of political science and constitutional law at Sehir 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.”⁶⁸ 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.”⁶⁹**

July 15th Coup and Erdogan's Control of the Military

Similarly, Erdogan blamed the July 15th coup attempt on Gulen followers within the military, using it as an opportunity to redesign and restructure the Turkish military. By claiming to remove Gulen followers, Erdogan began a mass-purge in Turkey, all with the intent of gaining more power and support while eliminating his opponents and threats.

The July 15th coup attempt gave Erdogan a golden opportunity to achieve precisely that. On the night of the coup, he said, "This uprising is a gift from God to us because this will be a reason to cleanse our army."⁷⁰ He immediately began firing thousands of military officers before the details of the coup attempt could be revealed and the proper judicial process could be established. His lists were ready.

He was waiting for the occasion. His next steps left no doubt his intentions: Abolishing military high schools and establishing a military university in its place. Historically the majority of the military officers went through the military high schools whose curriculum inculcated Ataturk's ideology in its students.

By abolishing these schools Erdogan is taking a step toward eliminating the Kemalist ideology and allowing his loyalists to raise in the ranks of the military. His second action was to allow officers who are not elite ("kurmay") to be able to raise higher in ranks. This mechanism was also used by the military to filter officers who

were not deemed worthy of promotion due to deficiencies in their commitment to the Kemalist ideology. Erdogan is surely hoping this change will allow more officers sympathetic to his worldview can get into the military's top brass.

Different military institutions have also been brought under government control. The military police command has been separated from the army, navy and air force and been brought under command of the minister of the interior. The force commanders have been brought under the minister of defense. Soldiers will no longer be drafted into the military police and the personnel will now consist of professional officers only, potentially giving Erdogan's 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 officers hand-picked by Erdogan.⁷¹

Among the purged names are commanders who reportedly resisted Erdogan'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 Erdogan's intention. And as a vehicle for turning Erdogan into a military hero it may lead Turkey into a long term military adventure with catastrophic consequences for Turkey and the region.

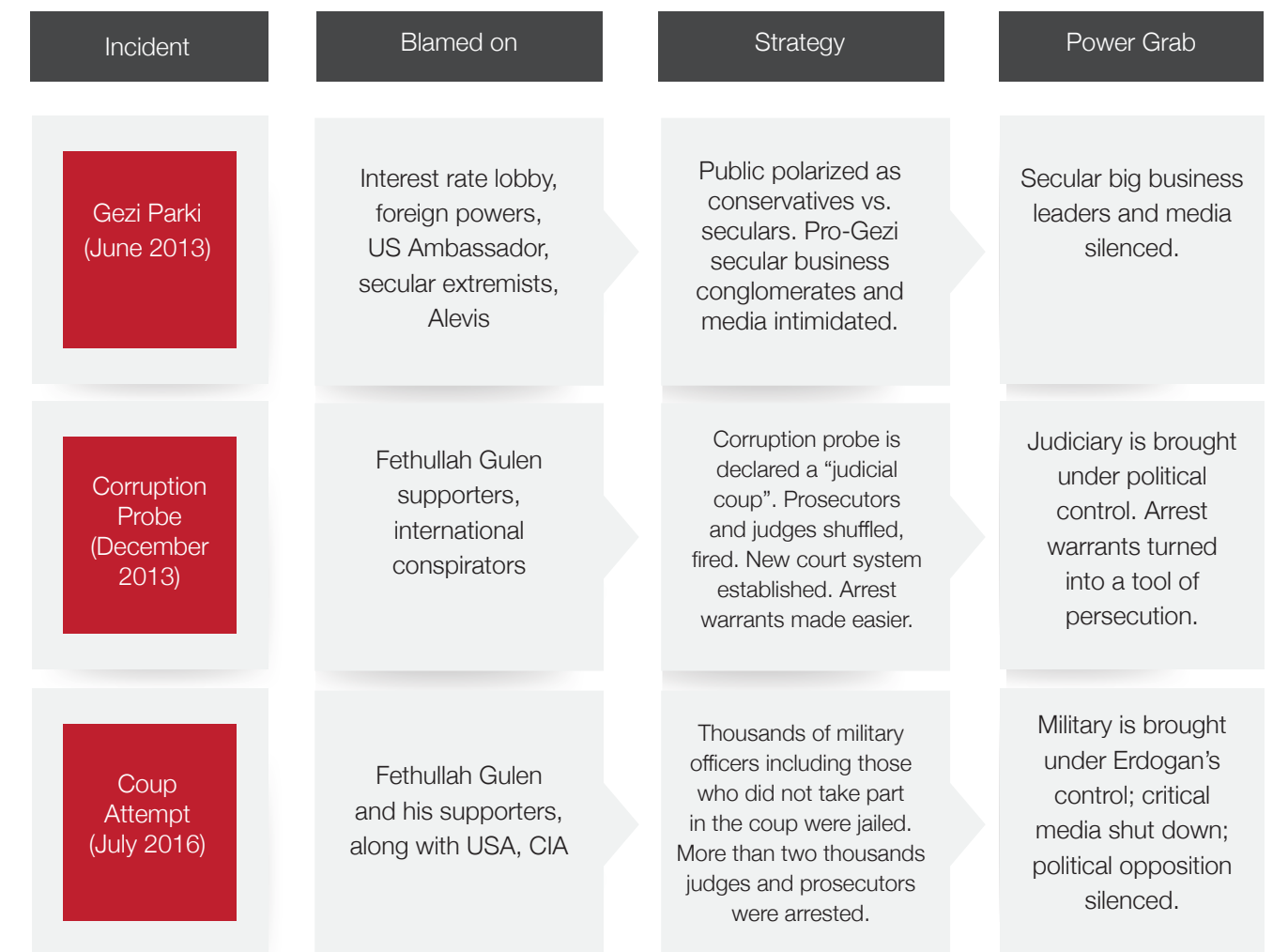
Historically, the military has been largely a secular, post-Ataturk democratic body, so

Erdogan 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 forcing the the chief of the general staff and the commanders of the Turkish Navy, Land Force, and Air Force to resign.⁷² The coup attempt has allowed Erdogan to complete his mission: to put the military under his control. Erdogan justified the purge in the name of eliminating "Gulen" supporters, rather than directly

participating in the coup attempt. Security forces detained 10,000 service members, including 143 general officers and admirals, and 1/3 of the officer corps, in the first week alone.⁷³

Instead, Erdogan is promoting his loyal followers to senior positions within the military and government. Through the purge that he is centralizing his authority and removing any resistance, be it Gulenist, Kemalist, leftis, or neo-nationalist.

Summary of Erdogan's Pattern of Power Grabs



Conclusion

The coup attempt of July 15th, 2016, was stopped in its tracks thanks to a combination of social media, people's support for democracy, and the ineptitude of the coup plotters. Innocent lives were lost and democracy was threatened. The 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. A mass purge was started after the coup and tens of thousands of civilians have been targeted and they continue to suffer under inhumane conditions. **To justify these mass purges, the Turkish government pursued a misinformation campaign. By blaming the attempted coup on Gulen sympathizers and suppressing the information on coup participants who have Kemalist or neo-nationalist inclinations, the government successfully made the Hizmet movement a scapegoat. Under cover of vilifying the Hizmet movement, the government has eliminated all 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 the Hizmet movement for the coup is accused of being a coup-sympathizer and is being targeted.** The case of the singer Sila is a striking case in point. When Sila refused to perform at an AKP-organized rally, despite having condemned the coup, she was defamed, slandered, and her contracts were canceled.⁷⁴ **Tens of thousands of families with no connection to the coup whatsoever are suffering under the Erdogan regime's systematic persecution including**

inhumane detention conditions, torture, verbal and physical abuse, harassment and humiliation, denial of the right to residence, lawful occupation, travel and expression.

President Erdogan is successfully using the scapegoat he has produced to consolidate power and silence his critics. Even opposition parties are afraid to voice concerns about human rights abuses.

The world reaction to the failed coup attempt left President Erdogan and his inner circle disappointed. While showing solidarity with the Turkish government in its effort to identify and prosecute the coup-plotters, world leaders and human rights monitoring organizations criticized the government's targeting of civilians in a mass purge. While these criticisms are valuable and help protect basic human rights and freedoms in Turkey, they are insufficient to stop the Erdogan government from targeting civil society. The state of emergency needs to end, and rule of law needs to be re-established; these would help the innocent victims of the mass purge.

If international observers were stationed in the country, it might provide long term relief from torture and inhumane detention conditions.

This international presence is needed, for no domestic resistance stands between President Erdogan and his ambition for an elected autocracy. If world leaders and international organizations remain silent, President Erdogan will completely eliminate a peaceful civil society movement, and in the process will establish a totalitarian control that cannot be opposed through democratic means.

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Turkish Government's Mass Crackdown in Numbers



180

**MEDIA OUTLETS
SHUT DOWN**



120

**JOURNALISTS
ARRESTED**



3,531

**JUDGES &
PROSECUTORS
DISMISSED**



27,329

ARRESTED*

TOTAL **104,914** **PURGED**
Since July 15, 2016 **& Counting**

Alliance for
Shared Values



* This number includes state officials, teachers, bureaucrats, military members, police officers, journalists, businessmen, judges, prosecutors, lawyers, college students, academics, doctors, nurses, bankers, religious clergy, housewives and their relatives.
As of October 5, 2016 [source turkeypurge.com](http://source.turkeypurge.com)