



# ASSAULT ON EDUCATION

IN TURKEY AND ABROAD

1284 SCHOOLS, 15 UNIVERSITIES, 823 DORMS, 738 PREP-SCHOOLS  
**SHUT DOWN IN TURKEY!**



2017

## CONTENTS

Summary	04
Closure Of Preparatory Schools	07
İmam-Hatip Schools (Imam-Preacher Schools)	12
Repression on Teachers and School Personnel	14
Assault on The Higher Education	16
Gülen Movement Affiliated Schools Abroad	18
Maarif Foundation	20
Conclusions and Key Recommendations	22

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## SUMMARY

Ever since the beginning of its rule, in particular since 2011, the AK Party embarked on a systematic effort to permanently Islamize Turkey's education system. During his final term as prime minister lasting from 2011 to 2015, President Erdoğan resolutely pursued his vision to materializing his so-called "pious generation" project, or the devoutly religious generation.



The reforms the AK Party embarked on since the beginning of its rule resulted in 932,000 students attending İmam Hatip schools in 2014–2015 school year - from 65,000 at the beginning of the AKP rule in 2002, roughly a 93.5 percent increase.

İmam-Hatip schools, crucial in their role to further political Islam agenda as a breeding ground for radical elements continue to receive extensive political and material support, including through unlawful seizure (theft) of thousands of closed private educational institutions and land – to only perform extremely poor in all state tests.

The mushrooming of İmam-Hatip schools, the current rise in homegrown radicalization - along with the surge in the number of terrorist attacks and victims caused by terrorism show that Turkey's social fabric is undergoing a very harmful change; with maybe an irreversible damage already inflicted to the traditional mainstream understanding of Islam in the country.

Efforts of the AK Party since 2004 aimed at eradicating the Gülen movement - a renowned movement combating extremism and radicalization by promoting quality secular education, both nationally and globally.



The December 2013 corruption scandal and the failed coup attempt of July 15, 2016 was followed by an unprecedented purge targeting citizens from all walks of life, in particular the alleged sympathizers of the Gülen movement in the education system, both in Turkey and abroad.

The large-scale assault against the movement after the scandal began with the introduction of a bill in 2013 to close preparatory schools, aiming at cutting off a “major source of revenue for the movement,” and to simultaneously increase AKP influence in the education system.



PHOTO BY BUSINESSINSIDER

In the late hours of July 15, 2016 a small faction of the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) that called themselves the “Peace at Home Council” attempted to overthrow the Government of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan by seizing control of several key places in Ankara, Istanbul and other locations. The so-called “Peace at Home Council” cited an alleged erosion of secularism, the elimination of democratic rule, a disregard for human rights, and Turkey’s loss of credibility in the international arena as reasons for staging the coup.<sup>1</sup>

As crowds of people took to the streets dozens of pro-coup soldiers abandoned their tanks and other military vehicles. Forces loyal to the government were able to defeat the coup plotters and the attempted coup was thwarted within approximately 12 hours. According to official sources at least 248 people were killed and 2,193 were injured during the attempt.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.haber3.com/asker-trt-binasinda-iste-darbe-bildirisi-3977124h.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Based on government statistics in the aftermath of the attempted coup.



Measures that followed under the state of emergency have had a devastating effect to primary, secondary and higher education, in particular on dedicated educators across the country from different backgrounds, regardless of their political and other convictions - who overnight became a suspected and oppressed class, with the swift government assault on education, relentless and increasingly expanding.

By the end of January 2017 the unprecedented assault on education has seen 6,986 academics purged from their positions, along with 41,667 teachers and employees of the Ministry of Education. Tens of thousands of educators across the country have been detained and arrested on very serious charges, with no evidence.

The assault on the principles of academic freedom and freedom of expression have already dismantled much of the existing structure of Turkish education; towards finalizing the process of asserting total control on educational institutions.

The repression on teachers and the assault on the Gülen movement inspired schools abroad, well-known for their excellence in education and among the largest and strongest rivals of radical Islamic trends around the world, is still ongoing.

In parallel, efforts by the Turkish government, inter alia, through its recently established radical subsidiary (Maarif foundation) to take over Gülen movement inspired schools aim at using them as a springboard in further contributing to youth radicalization and extremism in sovereign countries.

The unprecedented assault on education, both in Turkey and abroad and the Islamic transformation of the education system is likely to have long-term implications for Turkey and on the choices it will make on where it belongs politically.

Rise of radicalization will inevitably have its own cost and long-term negative social and political repercussions in Turkey, the volatile region and also countries where Maarif foundation would be successful in establishing itself.

## CLOSURE OF PREPARATORY SCHOOLS

The assault on the Gülen movement initially began during a National Security Council meeting on August 25, 2004, when preparatory schools were first allegedly targeted through a decision to implement an action plan against the institutions belonging to "Nurculuk Activities and the Fethullah Gülen Group." In implementing the decision it was agreed that "the Gülen group's domestic and international activities should have been followed closely by the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Turkish Intelligence Service and other related institutions, under the coordination of Prime Ministry Implementation Monitoring and Coordination Board (BUTKK).

### MİLLÎ GÜVENLİK KURULU KARARI Karar Sayısı: 481

1. Millî Güvenlik Kurulu, 25 AĞUSTOS 2004 tarihinde Sayın Cumhurbaşkanı'nı başkanlığında olağan toplantısını yapmıştır.
2. Kurulun bu toplantısında; 24 HAZİRAN 2004 tarihli MGK Toplantısı'nın gündem konularından biri olan "Türkiye'deki Nurculuk Faaliyetleri ve Fethullah Gülen" konusu gündeme gelmiş, yurt içi ve yurt dışı faaliyetlerine karşı bir eylem planı hazırlanması uygun görülmüş ve bu konudaki tavsiye kararının Hükûmete bildirilmesine karar verilmiştir.

Recep Tayyip ERDOĞAN  
Başbakan

Hilmi ÖZKÖK  
Orgeneral  
Genelkurmay Başkanı

Ahmet Necdet SEZER  
Cumhurbaşkanı

Abdullah GÜL  
Dışişleri Bakanı ve  
Başbakan Yardımcısı

Doç.Dr. Abdülkadir ŞENER  
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Cemil ÇİÇEK  
Adalet Bakanı

Vecdi GÖNÜL  
Millî Savunma Bakanı

Abdülkadir AKSU  
İçişleri Bakanı

Aytaç YALMAN  
Orgeneral  
Kara Kuvvetleri  
Komutanı

Özden ÖRNEK  
Oramiral  
Deniz Kuvvetleri  
Komutanı

İbrahim FIRTINA  
Orgeneral  
Hava Kuvvetleri  
Komutanı

M.Şener ERUYGUR  
Orgeneral  
Jandarma Genel  
Komutanı



Concrete actions and the open assault against the preparatory schools and in broader terms against all educational institutions affiliated with the Gülen/Hizmet movement intensified after the 2013 corruption scandal, which concluded with the detention of 52 individuals on December 17, 2013, connected in various ways with the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP).

## NEW SCANDALOUS VOICE RECORDING SHAKES TURKEY “SON, GET RID OF THE MONEY”



Following the scandal then-Prime Minister Erdoğan openly called to the public to boycott Gülen run schools and take their children out of the schools. “Special warnings” were addressed to members of the parliament from the ruling AKP party, along with serious consequences in case of non-compliance.

On November 14, 2013 now-closed Zaman newspaper was the first to report on a draft-law (then allegedly authored but denied by the Ministry of Education) - stipulating closure/conversion of all preparatory schools and learning centers by the end of the 2013-2014 school year.<sup>3</sup>

Hundreds of consultations called by Governors and other government officials with representatives from thousands of preparatory schools turned to be irrelevant and had no result, since most of them were abandoned by school representatives after most of questions and queries they had on the process were left unanswered.



<sup>3</sup> The February 28, 2014 law set September 1, 2015 as the deadline to close down the network of preparatory schools.





*Before and After: A town hall meeting between Ministry of Education officials and preparatory school representatives failed to proceed after representatives left the room in protest of the government's plans. Source: CIHAN*



On February 28, 2014 the Turkish Parliament passed the bill, which set September 1, 2015 as the deadline to close down the network of preparatory schools. In addition to adopting the law, the government resorted to immense pressure on parents, openly threatening them to withdraw their children from preparatory schools.



On July 14, 2015 the Constitutional Court of Turkey ruled the law closing down the preparatory schools was unconstitutional,<sup>4</sup> arguing in its judgment that “without introducing an arrangement of the specified nature and putting forward a compelling reason in respect of the order of a democratic society and without resorting to less restrictive means which shall accomplish the purpose of restriction as well, closure of private training centers with a completely prohibitive method was a restriction on the freedom of enterprise, which was disproportionate and not necessary in the order of a democratic society.”<sup>5</sup> Police raids, inspections and auditor controls on Gülen run preparatory schools throughout Turkey were reported immediately after the decision of the Court was announced.

In the beginning of August 2015 the Ministry of Education adopted a new regulation in an attempt to bypass the Constitutional Court’s ruling. The regulation was clearly an attempt by the Government to impose a ban on educational institutions not regarded as not pro-government. On September 18, 2015 the Council of State<sup>6</sup> declared invalid the Ministry of Education circular addressed to every governor’s office by the Ministry of Education, which demanded all operating university preparation schools known as “dershane” be closed and announcing that the ministry will take legal action against those currently in operation.



<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> The Constitutional Court of the Republic of Turkey, Annual report 2015. Pages 90-95. <http://constitutionalcourt.gov.tr/inlinepages/publications/pdf/annual-report2015.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> The Turkish Council of State (In Turkish - *Danıştay*) is the highest administrative court in the Republic of Turkey. The Court is located in Ankara and its role and tasks are prescribed in Article 155 of the Turkish Constitution.

Decisions by highest courts (Constitutional Court and the Council of State) did little to deter the Government from its intention in closing the preparatory schools. Non-implementation of the court rulings is a powerful testimony on the state of rule of law in Turkey, even before the coup attempt. Openly and unlawfully defying the authority of these courts, many governors across the country officially notified (ordered) preparatory schools operating in their territory to “immediately cease operations and close forever.”

Finally, Decree-Law No. KHK/667<sup>7</sup> of July 23, 2016 provided for disbanding all “private educational institutions and organizations as well as private student dormitories and hostels,” affiliated or connected with what the Government has unlawfully labelled as “pro-Fetullah [Gülenist] Terrorist Organization (FETÖ/PDY).”<sup>8</sup>

A decision by Turkey’s Constitutional Court in January 2017 ruled that government decrees, including those issued during a state of emergency targeting seizure of assets of individual’s are unconstitutional.<sup>9</sup> No government decrees on property rights can be issued according to the Constitutional Court, without a trial that requires a verdict.



Since their reinstatement in 1951 İmam-Hatip schools have been controversial in the debate about Turkey’s secular state, as they served as a tool to further political Islam agenda and raise an “Islamic generation.”

Legislation introduced in 2012 increased the number of compulsory years from eight to twelve and this redefined the education system into three levels - primary, lower and upper secondary education, each in duration of four (4) years (4+4+4). The extension was seen as a secondary aspect of 4+4+4; rather, the 4+4+4 plan foremost as code for the re-opening and boosting of İmam-Hatip middle schools zealously supported by President Erdoğan.

When the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in 2002, only about 2.6 percent of eligible children attended religious-based schools.<sup>10</sup> Ever since the AKP was elected in November 2002 it reversed that trend with several administrative decisions and other actions resulting to an annual increase of students to four-fold over the first nine years of AKP rule.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.epsu.org/sites/default/files/article/files/Turkey%20EN%20State%20of%20Emergency%20Law.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Information on raids against preparatory schools and the list of closed preparatory schools and dormitories is contained in Annex 3 and 4.

<sup>9</sup> The news was first published by *Birgün* daily.

<sup>10</sup> Rusen Cakir, İrfan Bozan, and Blakan Talu, “İmam-Hatip liseleri:Efsaneler ve gerçekler”, p. 68. [http://tesev.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/İmam\\_Hatip\\_Liseleri\\_Efsaneler\\_Ve\\_Gercekler.pdf](http://tesev.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/İmam_Hatip_Liseleri_Efsaneler_Ve_Gercekler.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> The number of students in İmam-Hatip Schools during the the 2011-2012 school year was 268,245.



## RISE OF IMAM-HATIP RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS IN TURKEY UNDER AKP RULE

School Year	Number of Imam-Hatip schools	Number of students in Imam-Hatip Schools	Percentage of Students in Imam-Hatip schools
2002–2003	450	64534	2.60%
2003–2004	452	84898	3.20%
2004–2005	452	96851	3.60%
2005–2006	453	108064	3.70%
2006–2007	455	120668	4.00%
2007–2008	456	129274	4.40%
2008–2009	458	143637	4.30%
2009–2010	465	198581	5.50%
2010–2011	493	235639	5.90%
2011–2012	537	268245	7.00%
2012–2013	1807	475238	9.60%
2013–2014	2215	714111	11.50%
2014–2015	2614	932273	12.90%

*Center for American Progress, Re-Educating Turkey, AKP Efforts to Promote Religious Values, in Turkish Schools, Alan Makovsky, December 2015.*

Other actions of the government from 2011 resulted in close to one million enrolled students in the Imam-Hatip schools during the 2014-2015 schools year.<sup>12</sup> The number of Imam-Hatip schools also surged to 1,597 middle and 1,017 high schools respectively.<sup>13</sup>

Since the end of 2013, then as Prime Minister and later in its capacity as President, Erdoğan had on several occasions called on officials in AKP run municipalities to seize “by any means necessary,” land and buildings belonging to individuals inspired by the Gülen Movement.

Despite the extensive support by the Government their overall performance remained extremely poor. Imam-Hatip schools performance on 40 Math questions test in 2015 was only 2.18. In comparison the performance of FEN Lisesi<sup>14</sup> on the same 40 Math questions test in 2015 was 28.42.

<sup>12</sup> In percentage the number of students represented 10.50% in Middle and 12.90% in High Schools.

<sup>13</sup> Hurriyet, “İmam hatibe ilgi 11 yılda 7 katarttı,” December 4, 2014, retrieved from <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/imam-hatibe-ilgi-11-yilda-7-kat-artti-27706500>.

<sup>14</sup> Science High school.

In the aftermath of the attempted coup the confiscated land and thousands of buildings belonging to the Gülen inspired schools, dormitories and hospitals were considered as “war spoils” and shared among pro-government individuals and companies. Equally worrisome, many of the facilities were transformed into religious education facilities (İmam-Hatip schools), with the ongoing State of Emergency contributing to further radicalization of the Turkish society.

One of the major effects of this change in the government policy towards its national principles through the education has been the damage already inflicted to the traditional mainstream understanding of Islam in Turkey, which had always been antagonistic to any form of extremism; in part also due to the efforts of educational institutions, such as the Gülen inspired schools.

The current rise in homegrown radicalization is another sign that Turkey’s social fabric is undergoing a harmful change; reflected unfortunately in the number of terrorist attacks and victims caused by terrorism. There were no terrorist attacks in 2014 - four (4) attacks (149 victims) in 2015 and already twelve (12) attacks (causing 317 victims) from January to mid-December 2016.



Apart from serious concerns on the quality of education in İmam-Hatip schools, given the importance of Turkey and its unique geo-strategic position, the increasingly deepening radicalization poses a serious threat to Turkey’s democracy and security and also the security of other NATO member states.

## REPRESSION ON TEACHERS AND SCHOOL PERSONNEL



History teacher  
Gökhan Açikkollu died on  
Aug 5 under torture while  
in police custody.

There are around  
7.000 teachers in Turkey  
prisons.

41.667

Teachers permanently  
dismissed

Issues related to inadequate funding the education process, the inability to upgrade the quality of education, irrational and political interventions to the educational curricula, the continuous introduction of extreme elements among other factors continue to be a major threat to the children's right to education. These factors are also clearly increasing social tension.

While the presumed link between Turkey's trade unions and any real or perceived terrorist organization has yet to be established - the authorities have repeatedly used every possible opportunity to refer to such an alleged link as an excuse for harsh treatment, arbitrary detention and imprisonment.

The existing problems in the education system reached new unprecedented dimensions with tens of thousands of teachers either dismissed, had their teaching licenses revoked or even detained; and thousands of education institutions shut down under the state of emergency.



In a series of State of Emergency Decrees<sup>15</sup> from July 23 until November 2016 the government dismissed and/or revoked teaching licenses to approximately 41,667 teachers. Passports of thousands of teachers were also revoked with the stroke of a pen and no justification.

Along with their careers and their right to work, increasingly contributing to unnecessary precarious economic circumstances for hundreds of thousands of families – the future of approximately 1.5 million students and more importantly; the future of education in Turkey has been impacted irreversibly and in the most negative manner.

Deprived of any possibility of using their skills to financially sustain themselves and their families, dismissed teachers face extremely difficult psychological, financial and social circumstances.



21.000

Teachers got their  
licenses revoked

1.285

Schools

800

Dormitories closed  
down

In addition to the severe economic burden from being permanently dismissed from the profession, teachers have to also face an immense social pressure and stigma. In order to economically support their families teachers are now obliged to take any possible jobs they are not qualified for, such as physical jobs in construction sites, bazaars, etc.

Tens of thousands of teachers, in particular teachers working in private education institutions affiliated with the Gülen movement have been subject to unlawful detention and imprisonment - with abundant and serious accusations but no evidence.

Serious allegations of ill-treatment and torture on teachers have emerged following the failed coup, including severe beatings, rape, verbal and psychological abuse, as well as denial of food, water and medical treatment. Visible signs of ill-treatment and torture have been evident in several cases officially ruled as “suicide”. Reports indicate that children of those detained or purged also face constant discrimination, stigmatization and bullying from their peers and sometimes from teachers.

<sup>15</sup> No. 667 (July 23); No. 668 (July 25); No. 669 (July 31); No. 672 (September 1), No. 675 (October 29); No. 677 and 678 (November 22, 2016).

## ASSAULT ON THE HIGHER EDUCATION

The number of universities has dramatically increased during the last decade, with around 100 new universities established since 2006. As of September 2014, there were 176 accredited universities (104 state universities and 72 non-profit foundation universities), eight independent post secondary vocational schools not attached to any university and six other higher education institutes.<sup>16</sup> In 2014 the total number of students in higher education institutions was 5.449.961, with only 360.670 attending private universities and 5.089.291 state universities.<sup>17</sup> Due to limited spaces in state universities private universities emerged as a necessity and the preparatory schools contributed to meeting the needs.

In particular over the past three years, Turkish authorities have moved to retaliate against academics for expressing their political views - some merely for signing the “Academics for Peace”<sup>18</sup> petition criticizing human rights violations. Attacks against petition signatories included suspensions and terminations of academics from positions at universities, detentions and interrogation of faculty members by prosecutors, threats and attacks against signatories. By spring 2016 many of those not yet detained fled abroad, with an estimated one hundred (100) to hundred fifty (150) signatories finding refuge in Germany alone.<sup>19</sup>

In March 2016 President Erdoğan also proposed redefining Turkish anti-terrorism laws to include the activities of academics, journalists and NGO advocates, a move that threatened to permanently criminalize freedom of expression, freedom of association and academic freedom for literally anyone critical of the government.

In the first half of 2016 alone the Turkish government amassed a staggering record of violations of academic freedom and freedom of expression. The threat to academic freedom and higher education worsened dramatically in the aftermath of the failed coup attempt of July 15, 2016. By the end of January 2017, in total 6,986 academics were purged from their positions, along with 41,667 teachers and employees of the Ministry of Education.



Immediately after the coup attempt the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) suspended 4,225 academics and forced all 1,577 university deans to resign – staging a direct assault on the institutional autonomy of Turkey’s universities.

The government also imposed a travel ban on academics - reportedly “a temporary measure as accomplices of the coup plotters in universities were a potential flight risk.” Those who were abroad at the time of the attempted coup were ordered to return, facing sometimes investigations, detention or arrest once in Turkey. The Council of Higher Education (YÖK) further ordered each university to compile lists of faculty staff suspected of links to the Gülen movement.

The scale of detentions and arrest of academic staff, travel restrictions, suspensions and imposed resignations in the education sector go much farther than merely targeting individuals who might have had any connection to the attempted coup.

<sup>16</sup> In the beginning of 2016 the number of universities in Turkey increased to 178.

<sup>17</sup> Source: [istatistik.yok.gov.tr](http://istatistik.yok.gov.tr) (March, 2014).

<sup>18</sup> The petition was made public at an Istanbul news conference on January 11, 2016 and was initially signed by 1,128 academics (followed by more than 1,000 other academics). The petition, which declared that - “We will not be party to this crime,” condemned the government’s security operations against PKK youth movement in cities of southeast Turkey because of the disastrous impact on the Kurdish civilian population. The petition also called for a resumption of peace talks with the PKK.

<sup>19</sup> German broadcaster Deutsche Welle estimates.



The crackdown on the education sector is rather a purge of those deemed inadequately loyal to the current government, which has already damaged the structure and autonomy of Turkish higher education through university closures, asset seizures, freezing of bank accounts, mass suspensions of faculty and staff, investigations and detention of academics.

The troubling actions by the Turkish government represent further an unprecedented assault on the principles of academic freedom and freedom of expression and apparently seek to dismantle, with an accelerating and alarming speed, much of the existing structure of Turkish higher education through purges and restrictions; towards eventually finalizing the process of asserting total control on academic institutions.

Human rights and other prominent organizations focused on academic freedom in the world have never before experienced such a record number of violations of academic freedom and freedom of expression in such a short period - in the history of their activities.

Hard-won reforms in decades towards academic freedom were in their entirety reversed by the Decree-Law 676 of October 29, 2016. The Decree-Law provides for the power of the President to appoint all rectors, the top executive of all universities, including private run universities – in short, bringing all universities under the direct and full control of the President.

In the aftermath of the attempted coup fifteen universities engaging in total 2,808 academics and attended by 64,533 students, were closed and sealed as they were crime scenes. In addition 823 student dormitories were closed across Turkey.<sup>20</sup> The closure left 61,382 students in academic limbo, wondering if they could continue their studies and worried about the black mark of a “Gülen school” on their college record.

Ever since, the purge and deprivation of liberty of academics and other staff in higher education institutions have continued unabated. Credible reports point out at serious allegations of ill-treatment and torture against academics and other higher education personnel deprived of their liberty, including severe beatings, verbal and psychological abuse, as well as denial of food, water and medical treatment.

<sup>20</sup> Complete list can be found in the Annex.



The ongoing purge and repression against academics, taking place in an atmosphere of fear and paranoia, combined with a situation of a total absence of the rule of law - are contributing to a mounting psychological pressure on academics and other staff of higher education institutions.

Even before the coup, reports indicated that there were nearly 500 imprisoned students in Turkey. The current number of imprisoned students is not known.

## GÜLEN MOVEMENT AFFILIATED SCHOOLS ABROAD



The standards shared by Gülen affiliated schools abroad are built upon core principles, such as altruism, love and humility. The schools reject violence and radical interpretations of Islam, with the Gülen movement systematically rejecting the idea of using Islam as a political ideology and as a tool for political competition.

Mainly through the efforts of highly enthusiastic, altruistic and well-educated young Turkish teachers Gülen schools made positive social and economic impact in the countries where they were operating, including in the combat against radicalism, religious extremism and violence. As such Turkish Gülen inspired schools constitute one of the largest and strongest rivals of radical Islamic trends around the world.

Slowly and owing to enormous and constant efforts the Gülen schools phenomenon became a global socio-cultural entity that constructed a universal language of peace, coinciding with the culture of peace initiative of the United Nations.

Following the public exposure of the December 17, 2013 corruption scandal that implicated family members of AKP officials, including family members of then-Prime Minister Erdoğan, the government labeled the allegations of corruption - “a conspiracy to topple the government.” The government actively and zealously embarked upon a mission to discredit, criminalize and eventually liquidate the Gülen movement in Turkey and abroad for its perceived alleged role in the corruption investigations.

Since 2014 the government pursued a persistent, coordinated and systematic campaign against Gülen schools abroad by claiming that these schools were an extension of a “parallel state” – a term coined by Erdoğan to label individuals and civil society groups that refused to participate in government wrongdoings.

The July 15 attempted coup only served to intensify the Turkish government’s efforts, which started using the failed coup as a pretext to shut down thousands among the best secular schools in Turkey, none of which had any record of criminal activity. Turkey’s government further mobilized the nation’s diplomatic, economic and political power to hunt down members of the Gülen movement abroad, asking foreign governments to jail and deport their members, as well as shut down their institutions, including high-performing science schools.



From July 15 to November 18, 2016 Turkish diplomats met around 600 ministers, 1,444 foreign members of parliament, in addition to nearly 6,190 senior officials globally to explain the so-called “FETÖ structure and its vast network abroad.” The same source revealed that Turkish diplomats also contacted international media outlets 2,270 times, wrote 448 articles and letters, and organized 236 news meetings on the same issue.<sup>21</sup>

Passports of many teachers in several countries have been cancelled leaving their bearers in practical limbo, with Turkish diplomatic and consular missions unlawfully rejecting requests for birth registration from Turkish citizens.

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.worldbulletin.net/africa/180397/turkish-foundation-takes-over-feto-schools-in-chad>.

Decree-Law 680<sup>22</sup> of January 6, 2017 seeks to directly target teachers and academics teaching in top quality educational private institutions in more than a hundred countries, including their family members by revoking the citizenship of individuals abroad.

Turkey's government full-frontal assault day in and day out against the peaceful, open-hearted and humble members of the Gülen movement who have done nothing wrong other than volunteering their time, money and expertise to improve the lives of people around the world represents unfortunately further - an assault on the right to education and an "open invitation" for radical groups to readily fill the gap in many countries.

## MAARIF FOUNDATION

In June 2016 the government of Turkey established the Maarif<sup>23</sup> Foundation, tasked by the Turkish government to encourage foreign governments to seize Turkish educational foundations operating in respective countries, possibly targeting schools run by individuals close to the Gülen movement.



PHOTO BY DAILY SABAH

<sup>22</sup> Olaganustu Hal Kapsaminda Bazi Duzenlemeler Yapilmasi Hakkinda Kanun Hukmunde Kararname.

<sup>23</sup> Ottoman Turkish word for education, which comes from the Arabic word for knowledge or wisdom.



# Did you know?

- ➔ The Maarif Foundation is an organization fully controlled by the Turkish government.
- ➔ The Maarif Foundation considers itself as one of the most important facilitators of the Turkish foreign policy, in other words a tool in the hands of the government.
- ➔ The Maarif Foundation claims to ensure success in foreign countries when the Turkish government is highly unsuccessful in Turkey with its educational policies.
- ➔ The Principal of the first Maarif school<sup>24</sup> opened in Georgia on September 19, 2016 is the former Director of the Adiyaman Gerger Imam Hatip High School (M.K), serving in that post as the sexual abuses scandal unfolded (involving as many as 75 victims among students).<sup>25</sup>
- ➔ The Maarif Foundation is affiliated with a foreign oppressive government with a clear political Islam agenda, which seeks to contribute to further youth radicalization and extremism in the foreign countries.<sup>26</sup>
- ➔ The current government of Turkey has a disturbing track-record in gathering intelligence abroad through the Turkish Religious Affairs Directorate (Diyanet), amid reports that it had asked imams to spy and inform on individuals in more than forty countries.
- ➔ Apart of the Turkish government, other funders of the Maarif Foundation are the Saudi government and the Islamic Development Bank.
- ➔ The institutions the Maarif Foundation administers are doomed to failure should the current or future governments withdraw their financial, diplomatic and unlimited support to the Maarif Foundation.
- ➔ Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Batumi Turkish School could reportedly accommodate up to 170 students and 25 teachers. The school would follow the Turkish curriculum and be supervised by Turkey's National Education Ministry.

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.birgun.net/haber-detay/gerger-deki-skandalin-sorumlusuna-yeni-gorev-mudure-odul-gibi-atama-135586.html>

<sup>26</sup> A circular of September 20, 2016 by Turkey's Diyanet instructed Turkish missions and religious representatives abroad to profile Gülen movement expatriates living in their respective foreign countries.

<sup>27</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 17.

## CONCLUSIONS AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Consistent and ongoing reports of the assault by the government on the education in Turkey and abroad are a matter of serious concern. The cases documented in the extended version of the report are only illustrative of a much broader pattern of the Turkish government's assault on education, extensively documented by many organizations, including United Nations human rights and other mechanisms, since the attempted coup of July 15, 2016.

Efforts by the Turkish government will inevitably contribute to the rise of radicalization in the country and have its own cost and long-term negative social and political repercussions in Turkey, the volatile region and also countries where Maarif foundation would be successful in establishing itself.

The Maarif Foundation, which aims at taking over Gülen movement inspired schools abroad intends to use them as a springboard to further to the extent possible, the Turkish government political Islam agenda.

The Islamic transformation of the education system is likely to have long-term implications for Turkey and on the choices it will make on where it belongs politically in the future.

In the face of the unprecedented attack on education, key recommendations to the Turkish authorities include the following:

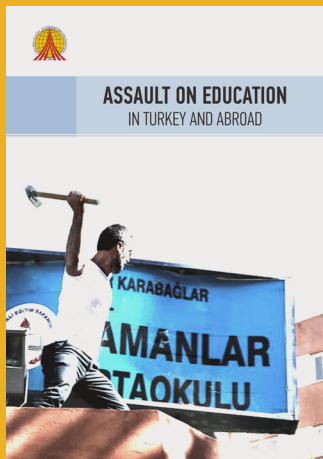
1. Immediate release of all academics, teachers, unionists, students, activists and others who have been detained and imprisoned on unlawful and illegal grounds.
2. Immediate reinstatement of all academics, teachers and other personnel to their positions, and end of repression on teachers, academics and other education personnel in the country and abroad.
3. Immediate reversal of all legal, administrative and practical measures, all policies and actions part of the assault on the education, both in Turkey and abroad.

Key recommendations to the international community include:

1. Strongly urge Turkish authorities to end the assault on education, both in the country and abroad.
2. Strongly urge Turkish authorities to end the state of emergency and fully abide by Turkey's obligations under international law and its own domestic legislation.
3. Prevent, in accordance with applicable international human rights law, any forcible return of Turkish teachers or academics at extreme risk to Turkey, or any other place where they face torture, ill-treatment or a real risk to their lives.

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