



**August 23, 2017**

**Fethullah Gulen’s Message on New Defamation Efforts by Erdogan Regime**

Having failed to convince the world of his baseless allegations against innocent Hizmet participants, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his government launched a new, nefarious defamation campaign. Despite the ongoing crackdown on civil society, his government's latest strategy, bolstered by a strictly controlled Turkish press, is to spread vicious, false rumors alleging violence to come by members of the peaceful Hizmet movement. This is not a new strategy, dictatorships throughout history have always used such tactics to smear the groups that they have targeted as scapegoats.

Their initial efforts started back in 2013 when the government called a corruption probe into public officials a “judicial coup.” Erdogan's administration has completely subjugated the Turkish judiciary since then and turned it into a political instrument of the ruling party. Thousands of members of the security and judiciary were purged and arrested. Last year, the government took advantage of the deplorable July 15 coup attempt to further silence its critics and consolidate more power in Erdogan's hands. After blaming Hizmet sympathizers for being behind the incident - - without any investigation -- Erdogan jailed tens of thousands of civilians including journalists, academics, and members of the judiciary. According to official records, the imprisoned include 17,000 women and more than 600 children who continue to live in prison with their mothers.

News reports from whistleblowers show that the administration has made plans for a series of assassinations, which the Turkish government will falsely blame on Hizmet sympathizers. They have proven once again that they are willing to use any means necessary, no matter how illegal and immoral, to present themselves as the victims and their critics as criminals. Unfortunately, due to Erdogan’s total control over the security forces, the judiciary and the appeal courts, it is impossible to hope for an independent investigation or a fair trial in today’s Turkey.

This is just another deplorable effort by the Turkish government to smear a community consisting of individuals who have spent their whole lives promoting peace through education and interfaith dialogue. This movement has proved itself as a leader in dialogue, mutual respect and peace throughout the past 50 years in Turkey and around the world. Since the 1990s, when the movement began growing globally, it has gained recognition by various countries around the world that have been observing closely.

Prior to the public corruption probe of 2013, Erdogan and the leaders of his party could not find enough words to praise the efforts of Hizmet sympathizers. His defamation efforts since 2014 are fooling no one and only demonstrate the extent to which he is willing to go to scapegoat this peaceful movement for his personal political ambitions.

For the record, I want to reiterate that engaging in any form of violence is against the core ideals of this movement. I have condemned all forms of violence countless times and would firmly stand against any form of violence in the future. The volunteers of this movement have once again proven through their dignified demeanor that they are devoted to peacebuilding despite the injustice and persecution directed against them.

I also condemn President Erdogan's reckless and immoral efforts to defame this peaceful movement that has dedicated itself to universal humanitarian values. I trust in the wisdom and fairness of world leaders to recognize this defamation campaign for what it is.

### **About Fethullah Gülen**

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

### **About Alliance for Shared Values**

The Alliance for Shared Values (AFSV) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that serves as a voice for cultural organizations affiliated with Hizmet, a civil society movement inspired by prominent preacher and peace advocate Fethullah Gülen. The Alliance strives to promote peace and social harmony by helping reduce misinformation and false stereotypes about any or all ethnic, cultural and religious communities. To learn more about the Alliance, please visit [www.afsv.org](http://www.afsv.org).

### **Media contact**

[media@afsv.org](mailto:media@afsv.org)

212-682-4278