



Alliance
for
Shared Values

AFSV Message on the Sixth Anniversary of Tragic July 15 Staged Coup

Today is the sixth anniversary of the horrific July 15, 2016, incident when a group of military personnel were mobilized in Turkey, in what appeared to be a coup attempt. More than 250 people were killed, and more than 2,100 people were injured in the event.

By using the horrific July 15 incident as a justification, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan implemented a massive purge and persecution campaign. According to the human rights tracking site TurkeyPurge.com, 597,793 people were investigated and 94,975 were arrested. 150,348 people were fired from their jobs and 3,003 educational institutions, including K-12 schools and universities, were shut down. 6,021 members of the academia and 4,463 members of the judiciary were dismissed from their jobs, and many ended up in prison after politically motivated sham trials. 189 media outlets were shut down and 319 journalists were arrested.

Since that terrible day, Turkey has gained, multiple times, the notorious title of the worst jailer of journalists in the world by the Committee to Protect Journalists and the worst perpetrator of transnational kidnappings by Freedom House. The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detentions, the Working Group on Enforced Disappearances and the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture issued decisions and reports against Turkey's pattern of domestic and transnational repression.

We still do not know what happened on July 15, 2016. The Erdogan government has propagated its claims about what happened that night, but no independent inquiry has ever been conducted. The Turkish parliament's own inquiry was initially delayed by Erdogan's party, and even after its hasty conclusion, its findings have never been released.

Erdogan has filled that vacuum with propaganda, falsely blaming it on exiled Turkish preacher Fethullah Gulen and adherents to the Gulen-inspired Hizmet movement. He has repeated his allegations ad nauseum but has never provided sufficient evidence to the United States to compel this country to extradite him to Turkey, even when he had the assistance of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Never mind that Gulen denounced the coup and its perpetrators as it was happening, has repeatedly and emphatically denied his involvement, called for an independent international tribunal and pledged to abide by its decision. President Erdogan has never responded to this call.

Yet Erdogan—who called the coup “a gift from God”—has used it as an excuse to persecute hundreds of thousands of innocent Turkish civilians, including firing, detaining, arresting, jailing, kidnapping, torturing and even killing people simply for association with a peaceful movement that promotes tolerance, education and humanitarian relief. AKP officials boasted of more than a hundred kidnappings of peaceful Hizmet participants from third countries. The

United Nations Working Groups on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances and the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention have issued multiple decisions against Turkey, including declaring such kidnappings as being in violation of international law. Freedom House recently called Turkey the worst offender in transnational repression from 2014-2020.

On the sixth anniversary of the tragic July 15 incident, which we believe was government-led (please see our report on the event: <https://afsv.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/July-15-A-Genuine-Attempt-for-a-Synthetic-Coup.pdf>), the following questions remain unanswered: Why were tens of thousands of civilians who had no connection to the event fired from their jobs, prosecuted and imprisoned? Why did the Turkish government fail to release the findings of their own Parliamentary Investigatory Commission on July 15? Why did President Erdogan never respond to Gulen's call for an independent international inquiry, and his pledge to abide by its finding? Why did Turkish courts and the parliament fail to hold accountable the chief of Turkish Intelligence and the Chairman of General Staff who failed to do their jobs? Why did Turkish courts and the parliament fail to hold accountable military force commanders who mobilized their subordinates on the night of July 15 only to abandon them to be prosecuted?

Turkey has an appalling human rights record and continues its authoritarian slide. On this sad occasion we renew our call for a stop to the defamation and political persecution of nearly a million peaceful Hizmet movement participants, for the release of tens of thousands of political prisoners and for the restoration of basic human rights.

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.

Media contact
media@afsv.org
212-682-4278