



Alliance  
for  
Shared Values

**July 15, 2023**

### **AFSV Message on the Seventh Anniversary of Tragic July 15 Staged Coup**

Today marks the seventh anniversary of the horrific night of July 15, 2016, when a group of military personnel were mobilized in Türkiye in what appeared to be a coup attempt.

During the incident, before any meaningful investigation could be conducted, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan began his accusations against Fethullah Gulen, the Turkish Islamic scholar who has been living in the United States since 1999. Gulen denounced the coup, categorically denied Erdogan's baseless allegations of involvement, and invited Erdogan to allow for an international investigation with which he promised to collaborate. Ignoring this invitation and lifting all safeguards against police abuse, Erdogan started a massive campaign of political prosecution and purges.

The Erdogan government's propaganda arms tried—and still try—to portray that night as a victory of democracy over military authoritarianism. But international observers should make no mistake: July 15 was the beginning of the demolition of the remaining pillars of the semi-democratic system of Türkiye and the turning of the country into a one-man regime. July 15 transformed the country into a party state that turned the judiciary into a punitive instrument of the Erdoğan government, investigating close to a million citizens, including teachers, doctors, journalists, lawyers and housewives, and imprisoning hundreds of thousands of them.

Human rights watchdogs around the world joined the United Nations in reporting gross human rights violations by the Turkish government through the last seven years. Human Rights Watch [declared that a "blank check"](#) was given by the government to police for torture in the aftermath of July 15. After Amnesty International published a report on torture in Türkiye, [Amnesty's own chair in Turkey was arrested](#). Reporters Without Borders declared Türkiye multiple times as the [worst jailer of journalists in the world](#). The European Court of Human Rights found Türkiye in violation of European conventions on human rights in numerous [cases](#) brought before it. The European Parliament suspended Türkiye's accession process in 2019. The [United Nations' High Commissioner for Human Rights declared](#) that the Erdogan government's actions—such as jailing pregnant women—were "simply outrageous, utterly cruel, and surely cannot have anything whatsoever to do with making the country safer."

The persecution of Erdogan's perceived enemies was not limited to the country's borders. Türkiye's National Intelligence Organization (MIT) conducted hundreds of operations, sometimes colluding with local authorities to illegally kidnap and transfer Turkish citizens living abroad. A [Freedom House Report in 2021](#) identified Türkiye as one of the worst perpetrators of international repression.

Human Rights Watch's [2022 country report on Türkiye](#) summarizes it best: "The authoritarian and highly centralized presidential government of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has set back Turkey's human

rights record by decades, targeting perceived government critics and political opponents, profoundly undermining the independence of the judiciary, and hollowing out democratic institutions.”

Seven years later, newly “re-elected” President Erdogan continues his unjust persecution campaign against critics, journalists, academics and, especially, participants of the peaceful Hizmet social movement. After his “re-election” in unfair elections, a new wave of arrests is targeting thousands of civilians whose only crime is their affiliation with a peaceful social movement.

There still has been no independent, credible accounting of that fateful night seven years ago. Instead, Erdogan has continued to demonize Hizmet participants and blame them without ever providing sufficient evidence to convince the United States or any other Western government. The Turkish Parliament did not release the report of the commission that was formed to investigate the events of July 15 out of the fear that the Erdogan government's rhetoric would be shown to be false and hundreds of thousands of people accused by the government would be proven innocent. All of this indicates a coverup of the true story of the coup attempt, which signs point to being government-led (please see [AfSV's report](#) on the event).

Days before the seventh anniversary of the July 15 incident, court testimonies of two high-ranking officers charged with involvement in the attempt [were published by a Turkish journalist](#). The commander of Erdogan's Presidential Guard and a former brigadier general who was mobilized by his commanders on July 15 both state the same view shared in our report, that this was an event planned and staged by the highest levels of the Erdogan government with the collusion of MIT and some high-level military commanders who never were questioned about their actions despite mobilizing units under their command.

Now that he has secured his next term as president—in a grossly unfair and completely opaque election process—Erdogan needs to realize that as long as his government continues persecuting innocent Turkish citizens, jailing journalists, and perpetrating transnational kidnappings, his and Türkiye's name will be associated with these oppressive measures. We urge the international community to require the Turkish government to take concrete steps to improve human rights, such as releasing women prisoners, prisoners of conscience, journalists, and political dissidents; stopping the intimidation and prosecution of lawyers; and allow citizens who are trying to escape persecution leave the country before providing any diplomatic or economic assistance to Türkiye.

### **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