



ERDOĞAN'S **LONG** **ARM** IN EUROPE

 **THE CASE OF
THE NETHERLANDS**

FEBRUARY, 27, 2017

Stockholm Center for Freedom (SCF) is an advocacy organization that promotes the rule of law, democracy and fundamental rights and freedoms with a special focus on Turkey, a nation of 80 million that is facing significant backsliding in its parliamentary democracy under its autocratic leaders.

SCF, a non-profit organization, was set up by a group of journalists who have been forced to live in self-exile in Sweden against the backdrop of a massive crackdown on press freedom in Turkey .

SCF is committed to serving as a reference source by providing a broader picture of rights violations in Turkey, monitoring daily developments on fact-based investigative journalism and documenting individual cases of the infringement of fundamental rights. The founders of SCF are top-notch journalists who had managed national dailies in Turkey and worked for leading media outlets before they were forced to leave. They have the expertise, human resources and network on the ground to track events in Turkey despite serious challenges.

INTRODUCTION

Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) government, rooted in political Islam and led by authoritarian leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has escalated its witch hunt persecution on critics to abroad using government institutions as well as front NGOs. As a result, the rights violations including physical attacks, profiling, discrimination, threats and hate crimes have gone beyond Turkish borders and become a problem in intergovernmental affairs when Turkish government was found to be interfering other countries' affairs, infringing upon international treaties and violating their national laws.

Although critics from all walks of life including Kurds and Alevis were targeted in general in this stigmatizing effort by the Turkish government, members of civic group called the Hizmet movement, which is inspired by US-based Turkish Muslim cleric Fethullah Gülen and is focused on science education, volunteerism, community involvement, social work and interfaith and intercultural dialogue, have borne the brunt of this major campaign of witch-hunt. Turkish embassies, government agencies including intelligence and non-governmental organizations affiliated with the AKP government have all involved in profiling and harassment of the Hizmet members.

SCF mapped out ways and methods of the Turkish government's intimidation campaign targeting critics and dissidents abroad and studied examined Netherlands, a European country that is home to over 400,000 Turks, as a case study to decode what is being called 'Erdogan's long arm' in Europe. Turkish president openly stated that no country in the world would be safe for members of Hizmet, vowed to pursue them wherever they are. This has led to physical attacks on lives and properties of critics, calls for boycott for their businesses, death threats and punishments of their relatives back in Turkey.

Turkey's Consulate General in Rotterdam created a spying-on" hotline for Turkish expatriates in the Netherlands in April 2016 and called on Turkish expats to report people who sent allegedly offensive e-mails or posted offensive messages on social media about president Erdogan. Turkish Imams were asked to gather intelligence on critics in Netherlands with the Turkish Embassy's Religious Affairs Attaché leading the campaign. The Turkish government news agency Anadolu publicly listed names and institutions in Netherlands, describing them as terrorists. Hundreds of complaints were filed by critics with the Dutch authorities over threats, prompting Dutch government to launch investigations into claims which resulted in detentions in several cases.

ERDOĞAN'S 'LONG ARM' IN EUROPE THE CASE OF THE NETHERLANDS

The escalating crackdown on and relentless persecution of critics and opponents by the Turkish government, led by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, are not necessarily confined to within the borders of Turkey. But rather, the rights violations including profiling, discrimination, threats and hate crimes have gone beyond Turkey. These violations, often in the form of a witch-hunt, are spreading rapidly to a number of countries where die-hard fans of Islamist President Erdoğan live in large numbers, particularly European countries.

The Turkish government's covert as well as overt operations abroad targeting vulnerable groups among Turkish expatriate communities that are not seen as supportive of Erdoğan and his ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) have especially targeted members of civic group the Hizmet movement, which is inspired by US-based Turkish Muslim cleric Fethullah Gülen and is focused on science education, volunteerism, community involvement, social work and interfaith and intercultural dialogue.

In pursuit of his critics, Erdoğan and his associates in the government have instrumentalized embassies and consulates, representation offices of public institutions and state-funded and/or controlled organizations and foundations that are disguised as nongovernmental organizations or independent groups. The government bodies that engage in profiling and witch-hunt activities primarily include the National Intelligence Organization (MİT), the Overseas Turks and Kin Communities Agency (YTB), the Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency (TİKA), the Religious Affairs Directorate, the Anadolu News Agency, the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT), the Yunus Emre Institute and the Maarif (Education) Foundation.

The second group consists of parallel structures supported, funded or organized by entities attached to the Turkish government and the office of President Erdoğan. Entities such as the Union of European Turkish Democrats (UETD), the Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA) and the Turkish Heritage Organization can be found among this group.

In addition to their main areas of activities, these organizations perform such functions as advocating for the ruling party abroad, consolidating support for the AKP among Turkish expatriates and occasionally working like an intelligence

service to profile and collect information about Turkish dissidents or critics in their respective countries.

No doubt that Ankara's harassment and intimidation tactics abroad violate not only international treaties and conventions regulating intergovernmental relations but also infringe on the national laws of the foreign countries in which these groups operate. This report examines the Netherlands as a case study to highlight rights violations and abuses perpetrated by the Turkish government and linked or affiliated groups and entities. It calls for due vigilance on the part of host governments against what is called the long arm of Erdoğan abroad.

THE ROLE OF AMBASSADORS IN THE 'WITCH-HUNT'


Diplomatic missions are supposed to safeguard the interests of their countries and citizens in their respective countries. This right has been guaranteed by a number of international conventions. In listing the functions of a diplomatic mission, Article 3 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of April 18, 1961 reads: "Protecting in the receiving State the interests of the sending State and of its nationals, within the limits permitted by international law." Similarly, under the Vienna Convention, diplomatic missions are required to comply with the laws of the countries receiving them and not meddle in their internal affairs. Despite this, Turkish diplomatic missions in many countries are faced with accusations of interfering in the internal affairs of the countries concerned.

In recent years, the Turkish government has been viciously targeting members affiliated with the Hizmet movement, arresting them in the tens of thousands, dismissing them from government jobs without any effective judicial or administrative investigation, restricting their right to lead a decent life, making it harder for them to survive under constant fear of threat. This threat has also been extended abroad and now applies to Turks who have been naturalized in their respective countries.

All these actors that work in line with the targets set up by the ruling AKP are involved in a widespread network of intelligence, profiling, pressure and threats for those who are trying to live an honest life abroad. They profile individuals and institutions, run smear campaigns, implement methods of psychological warfare, create spying-on hotlines, and intimidate and disturb people in their respective countries. When they are able to collude with the governments of those countries,

they make life intolerable for the groups they are targeting. In several instances, Turkish government agents abducted critics and repatriated them to Turkey with the help of oppressive host regimes.

For about four years, people who are affiliated with the Hizmet movement have been faced with various rights violations and attacks in a number of countries. The worst forms of violations include taking individuals into custody without any court decision and delivering them to Turkish intelligence, unlawfully deporting people or forcing them to leave the country. Likewise, in line with pressures and



The Turkish government and its affiliated entities meddle in the internal affairs of foreign countries when they target individuals and organizations that are affiliated with the Hizmet movement.

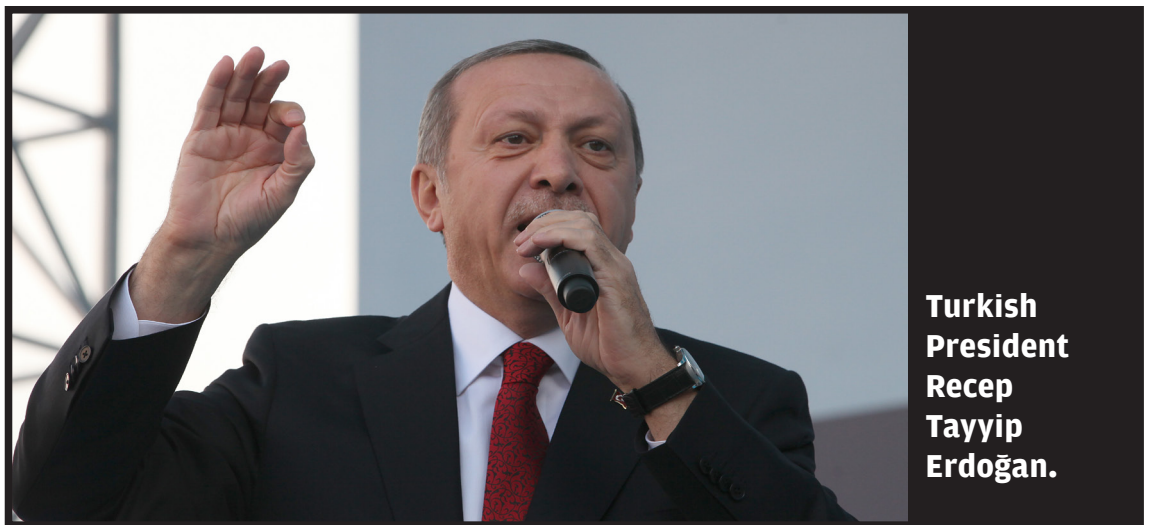
demands from the Turkish government, some countries shut down schools or institutions that are affiliated with the Hizmet movement or transfer their management to a foundation established by the AKP.

In European countries, threats and attacks by pro-Erdoğan political Islamist groups dominate the scene. Cases of battery against members of Hizmet, death threats leveled against some, physical attacks on their vehicles and even

arson are recorded by law enforcement agencies. The families who send their children to the schools run by the Hizmet movement are threatened; calls are made to boycott their businesses; and they are stigmatized via the media and social media, as reported by public authorities. In recent months, people affiliated with Hizmet are being refused attendance at certain mosques or are being profiled by mosque imams. The biggest threat to these people is the likelihood that their assets and properties in Turkey may be confiscated and their relatives there may be jailed or harmed. The Turkish government and its affiliated entities actually meddle in the internal affairs of foreign countries when they target individuals and organizations that are affiliated with Hizmet. Thus, the issues and polarization in Turkey have been exported to other countries, threatening their security and domestic stability.

The government started referring to the peaceful civic group Hizmet as a terrorist organization (namely, the Gülenist Terror Group, or FETÖ), following on the heels of major corruption investigations in December 2013 that implicated Erdoğan and his family members. Gülen has been a vocal critic of corruption in the Turkish government and is opposed to Erdoğan's aiding and abetting radical Jihadist groups in Syria since the civil war broke out in 2011. Erdoğan started targeting Gülen and his movement openly after the corruption was exposed, and even accused Hizmet of being behind the failed coup of July 15. Mr. Gülen,

however, rejects the accusations and has called for an independent international commission to be set up to investigate the failed coup. The Turkish government has failed to present any direct evidence linking the cleric or the movement to the abortive coup.



ERDOĞAN: THOSE WHO WENT ABROAD SHOULD NOT THINK THEY ARE SAFE

President Erdoğan has persistently voiced threats to those who have been forced to leave the country due to persecution and a witch-hunt. “No country or region around the world will ever be a safe haven for FETÖ¹ and its militants,” he said on Sept. 19, 2016.²

Elsewhere, on Oct. 14, 2016, he stated: “They are the elements of dissension inside us, like cancer cells. A comprehensive cleanup is required so that not the slightest trace of it is left behind. And that’s what we are doing right now. ... Those who fled abroad in the murky atmosphere of the coup d’état should never feel safe. ... We are currently working on a new initiative. We are calling on those who went

1] FETÖ is an acronym for the “Gülenist Terror Organization,” a moniker fabricated by the ruling AKP in the wake of the witch-hunt it launched against the Hizmet movement in Turkey. It is known that prosecutors use the term “FETÖ” in the investigations and indictments concerning the Hizmet movement. Erdoğan and his supporters prefer to use the term “FETÖ.”

2] ‘Hiçbir ülke FETÖ için güvenli sığınak değildir’ (No country safe for FETÖ), TRT Haber, 19.09.2016 <http://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/hicbir-ulke-feto-icin-guvenli-siginak-degildir-272161.html>

there to return. A deadline will be given to them. If they don't return, we will do whatever is needed. Indeed, the children of this country should return and tell whatever they know to the relevant authorities. If they don't, they'll pay for it. At any rate, we won't support them as our citizens. ... We will take due action when they are apprehended.”³

In a joint press conference with President of Kosovo Hashim Thaçi in Ankara on Dec. 29, 2016, he maintained: “Our crackdown on them both at home and abroad is under way and will continue to be the case in the future. Wherever they flee, we will be hot on the heels of the chieftains and militants of terrorist organizations.”⁴

He gave similar messages during the Annual Ambassadors Conference held in Ankara on Jan. 9, 2017. “Certain European countries welcome coup perpetrators, FETÖ members and bloodthirsty murderers and protect them as if they were victims. While they deny innocent Syrians, Arakanese victims and poor Afghan and African people the right of asylum, they offer it to FETÖ and PKK [Kurdistan Workers' Party] terrorists on a golden platter. I can hardly bring myself to call them ‘friends,’ but we are, of course, depressed to see this being committed by our so-called allies. I cannot accept the way they trample on European values,” he said.⁵

These quotes are only a small part of what Erdoğan has long been voicing as remarks regarding certain people abroad affiliated with the Hizmet movement. Erdoğan uses every opportunity to exert pressure on ambassadors and uses similar propaganda with the heads of state he meets.

ASSASSINATION THREAT

Certain pro-AKP journalists and government-sponsored social media trolls can freely issue death threats to people who are close to the Hizmet movement. Given the strong ties with the government and pro-AKP media, which have been an effective tool in Erdoğan's propaganda and the instigation of fear among critics, such threats need to be taken seriously.

3] Erdoğan: Türkiye istediğin zaman gelen istediğin zaman çıkan bir ülke değil (Erdoğan: Turkey is not a country you can come in and go out of at will), Milliyet, 14.10.2016

4] Erdoğan-Taçi Ortak Basın Toplantısı (Joint press conference of Erdoğan and Thaçi), Milliyet, 29.12.2016 <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/Erdoğan-taci-ortak-basin-toplantisi-ankara-yerelhaber-1745175/>

5] Erdoğan'dan ABD'ye sert sözler (Erdoğan lambasts the US), Sözcü, 09.01.2017 <http://www.sozcu.com.tr/2017/gundem/Erdoğan-buyukelciler-konferansinda-1612382/>



Cem Küçük @cemkucuk55 · 1sa
FETÖ'nün yurtdışındaki tüm
militanlarının öldürülmesi artık bu iki
devletin ortak gündemidir.

7 80 107

**Gov't propagandist calls for murder
of Gülen movement members abroad.**

After Russian Ambassador Andrei Karlov was brazenly assassinated in Ankara on Dec. 19, 2016, staunchly pro-Erdoğan journalist Cem Küçük tweeted, “It is now these two states’ common agenda [item] to kill all FETÖ militants abroad.”

Talking about Hizmet-affiliated people who were forced to flee abroad, Ersoy Dede, another spin doctor, referred to the 1980s when Turkey’s “deep state” assassinated ASALA [Armenian

Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia] militants abroad. ⁶

“I saw how this company finished off ASALA. I saw how [PKK leader Abdullah] Öcalan was kicked to the curb,” he said. He made these remarks during a live broadcast with another pro-AKP journalist, Hikmet Genç, on Kanal 24 on Aug. 10, 2016. ⁷

In the program they talk about the advice Tuncay Opçin, a journalist in the US, gave on Twitter for sympathizers of the Hizmet movement who sought to go abroad. Dede said: “One day, we will wake up to meet the scoundrels who were caught with false passports in the International Arrivals Terminal of Sabiha Gökçen Airport in Istanbul as they tried to enter into Turkey. The news bulletins will report it as: ‘Tuncay Opçin, Ekrem Dumanlı, etc., were caught as they tried to enter the country with false passports in order to say goodbye to their families.’ This will be Opçin and Dumanlı’s reaction: ‘Where are we now? What is this place? How come we ended up



**Gov't propagandists on TV talk
about abductions of critics abroad.**

6] Armenian terrorist organization the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) conducted attacks against Turkish diplomats between 1975 and 1985. It undertook assassinations. It carried out attacks on civilian targets other than Turks. Being listed as a terrorist organization by the US in those years, ASALA killed 42 Turkish diplomats. In response, Turkey adopted the tactic of combating non-state organizations. A ‘deep’ network, masterminded by the National Intelligence Organization (MİT), used ultra-nationalists to stage attacks against ASALA militants.

7] Pro-gov’t columnist issues death threat to dissident journos, turkeypurge.com, 12.08.2016
<http://turkeypurge.com/pro-govt-columnist-issues-death-threat-to-dissident-journos>

here?’ ... Can you get what I am trying to say?’,⁸ Then, his program partner, Hikmet Genç, said: “If you explain this by citing ASALA, I will listen to it from a different perspective...” Later, Ersoy Dede said, threateningly: “This Gülenist organization... how we finished off ASALA, how this state of the Turkish Republic finished off ASALA all around the world. That is, they should not have a sound sleep. Tuncay should not sleep safe and sound in his bed tonight.” Hikmet Genç added: “Emre Uslu should not sleep soundly. This is my call to them. Tuncay Opçin should not sleep safe and sound. Ekrem Dumanlı should not think that he has fled and gotten away.”⁹ (Ekrem Dumanlı and Emre Uslu are Turkish journalists in exile.)

THE NETHERLANDS AS A CASE STUDY: ERDOĞAN’S ISLAMIST BASE IN EUROPE

There had been frequent waves of labor migration from Turkey to Germany, the Netherlands, France, Austria, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Belgium and the like starting from the 1960s. The first generation immigrants were predominately poorly educated and conservative workers from the country’s rural areas. The migrant workers were unable to integrate fully with their respective countries. Rather, they gathered into ghettos by devising a type of solidarity through religious and cultural formations. Over time these ghettos grew stronger as a result of influences from political Islamist structures.

The political Islamist National View (Milli Görüş) movement, on which AKP politicians relied, mobilized strong organizations in Germany, the Netherlands and other European countries. This movement came to constitute the natural voter bank of the ruling party. Thus, it ensured that the AKP had a strong following in Europe. Political Islamist groups have long been nurturing typical antagonism against the Hizmet movement, which they see as agents of the West due to their emphasis on modern, science-based education as opposed to the madrasa model, consistent support for EU membership and interfaith activities embracing non-Muslims.

Coupled with Erdoğan’s “hate speech,” in the aftermath of the Hizmet movement’s recent public defiance against the authoritarian trajectory and corrupt practices, this antagonism paved the way to organized acts and actions that can hardly be reconciled with European values, including physical violence. The Netherlands,

8] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1W6H2oDZl8o> Accessed on Dec. 25, 2016.

9] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1W6H2oDZl8o> Accessed on Dec. 25, 2016.

which will be under the spotlight in this report, is a country with a large number of such acts and actions as well as efforts to curb them.

PAVING THE WAY FOR HATE CRIMES

According to the data provided from the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the number of Turks living abroad is around 5 million, more than 400,000 of whom live in the Netherlands, making the nation host to one of the largest Turkish-originated migrant populations. The attacks on scores of civil society organizations, media organizations, educational institutions, businesses, health-care facilities and individuals affiliated with the Hizmet movement have recently skyrocketed in the Netherlands.

In the wake of the graft and bribery scandals that became public on Dec. 17, 2013, implicating Erdoğan's family members and AKP politicians, then-Prime



Turkey's AKP gov't whips up its supporters abroad to spy on critics, opponents and dissidents. Hizmet Movement has been the prime target for such surveillance.

Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan accused the Hizmet movement of being behind the police operations that uncovered the country's biggest-ever corruption scandal and blatantly targeted it. He argued that there was actually no corruption but that the Hizmet members who had infiltrated the police department and the judiciary were attempting to overthrow the government. Dubbing the police operations as a "coup d'état," he claimed that the Hizmet movement had

established a parallel state structure. Thus, branding the Hizmet movement as a villain as well as a scapegoat, he tried to discredit the graft operations.

He declared the Hizmet movement to be "traitorous" and accused them of working with an international "mastermind" (üst akıl), which usually stands for the Judeo-Christian West in pro-government media discourse. He obsessively repeated this rhetoric in every statement he made. His goal was to discredit and hush up the corruption investigations by presenting them as a plot by a group inside the police and judiciary. By doing so, Erdoğan tried to radically change the positive perceptions Hizmet enjoyed in Turkey and abroad, marginalize the people affiliated with Hizmet and turn them into hated figures in the eyes of the general public.

Due to Erdoğan's ever-toughening speech with help from his unrelenting and virtually total control over the media landscape, the AKP's voter bank abroad

started to perceive the Hizmet movement as a “traitor” or “cat’s-paw for foreign powers.” After such a socio-psychological framework was created as a result of systematic hate campaigns by Erdoğan’s regime, there was a surge in instances of hate speech, hate crime, widespread threats and physical attacks against the Hizmet movement. Motivating its supporters with a so-called “national mission” and “holy war” or jihad, the ruling AKP assigned them the task of spying on, and penalizing, the Hizmet movement. To this end, it mobilized not only Turkish expatriates but also diverse Muslim groups.

The Netherlands has been one of the countries that experienced a spike in hate incidents against the people and organizations affiliated with Hizmet. Erdoğan’s hate speech against Hizmet was quickly transferred to the pro-Erdoğan masses in the Netherlands and started to breed violence and hate attacks, particularly in Rotterdam, where political Islamist groups have been dominant. People were forced to cancel their subscriptions to newspapers affiliated with the Hizmet movement and stop sending their children to the schools that are linked to the movement. There was increased activity of profiling, targeting and threatening people affiliated with the Hizmet movement via social media and newspapers supported by the ruling AKP and its extensions in the Netherlands.

TURKISH GOVERNMENT MEDDLING IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES



The AKP government’s efforts to increase its clout and control over Turkish expatriates started earlier than the campaign against the Hizmet movement. The most striking example of this was that in the run-up to the elections slated for Nov. 1, 2015, then-Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu sent propaganda letters to the addresses of Turkish expats in Europe, calling for their support. In the elections of June 7, 2015, the AKP was unable to secure the majority of seats in Parliament to form a single-party government, and therefore, decided to hold a snap election with a view to trying its luck for a single-party government once again.

Many commentators suggested that the AKP would do anything in order to get back its grip on power ahead of the elections slated for Nov. 1. Against this backdrop, it turned out that Davutoğlu had sent propaganda letters to Turkish expatriates in Europe.¹⁰ In this letter, he boasted about the government’s actions and called on expats to vote for the AKP in support.

10] Davutoğlu imzalı mektup, Avrupa’yı karıştırdı (Davutoğlu’s letter disrupts Europe), Yeni Asya, 18.10.2015 http://www.yeniasya.com.tr/dunya/davutoglu-imzali-mektup-avrupa-yi-karistirdi_363637

This letter created much uneasiness among both expatriates and the governments of their respective countries.¹¹ Indeed, it raised concerns about how the personal addresses of expats were obtained by the Turkish government. Claims that Turkish embassies unlawfully shared the addresses of expatriates with the Turkish government led to a debate over how privacy laws were breached.¹² One of the first reactions came from the Netherlands. The main opposition Socialist Party (SP) brought the issue to the agenda of Parliament. Numerous Turkish expats in the Netherlands filed official complaints for breach of the right to privacy. The Dutch government launched an investigation into the letter. The Dutch Data Protection Authority (CBP) decided to examine whether the AKP violated privacy laws in securing the addresses of Turkish voters.¹³ Under Dutch law, it is forbidden to share personal information without consent or a court order. CBP chairman Jacob Kohnstamm said: “It is not odd that people ask how a political party in Ankara can obtain people’s confidential information. This has raised my eyebrows as well.”¹⁴



The Dutch parliament called for condemnation of the letter for “violating the right to privacy of Dutch citizens.” In the face of mounting discontent, the Dutch government summoned Turkish Ambassador Sadık Arslan to the Foreign Ministry on Oct. 30, 2015.¹⁵ Foreign Minister Bert Koenders conveyed the Netherlands’ reactions and concerns on this matter to the Turkish ambassador.¹⁶

11] AKP’ye Avrupa’da seçim mektubu tepkisi (Election letter reaction to the AKP in Europe), BBC Türkçe, 16.10.2015, http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2015/10/151016_yusuf_akp_mektup

12] Başbakan’ın mektubu gurbetçileri zora soktu (Prime Minister’s letter gives hard time to Turkish expats), Zaman, October 24, 2015, <http://ahmetdonmez.com/?s=gurbetçi>

13] Hollanda: Davutoğlu imzalı mektuba soruşturma (Netherlands: Probe into Davutoğlu’s letter), BBC Türkçe, October 20, 2015

http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2015/10/151020_hollanda_sorusturma_davutoglu

14] Hollanda: Davutoğlu imzalı mektuba soruşturma (Netherlands: Probe into Davutoğlu’s letter), BBC Türkçe, October 20, 2015 http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2015/10/151020_hollanda_sorusturma_davutoglu

15] Hollanda’dan AKP’nin seçim mektubuna resmi kınama (The Netherlands officially condemns the AKP’s election letter), BBC Türkçe, October 31, 2015,

http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2015/10/151031_hollanda_mektup_kinama

16] The reaction was not restricted to the Netherlands. The Belgian Privacy Commission, too, launched an investigation into how addresses of Turkish expatriates were obtained. “AKP’nin mektubu kriz çıkardı... Belçika ve Hollanda harekete geçti” (The AKP’s letter escalated into a crisis... Belgium and the Netherlands take action), Zaman İngiltere, 30.10.2015, <http://www.zamaningiltere.com/haber/avrupa/2914/akpnin-mektubu-kriz-cikardi-belcika-ve-hollanda-harekete-gecti>

Turkey's embassy in The Hague and the Dutch Religious Affairs Foundation, which have information on the addresses of Turkish expatriates in the Netherlands, stated that they hadn't provided the AKP with the addresses. The AKP representative office in Amsterdam also said it did not send the letters and claimed it did not know who sent them out to Turkish expats in the Netherlands.¹⁷ The Dutch-Turkish Federation argued that the addresses of Turkish expats had been obtained using the "state's capabilities in Ankara."¹⁸

Voting stations had been set up at two representation offices in the Netherlands for the Nov. 1, 2015 election. According to official figures from Turkey's Supreme Board of Elections, the AKP secured 68.2 and 70.23 percent of the vote in Deventer and Rotterdam, respectively, with an average of 69.7 percent. These figures are well above the average for Turkey. It was the highest vote in Europe after Antwerp, Belgium, (74.56 percent), Münster, Germany, (71.05 percent), and Bregenz, Austria, (70.86 percent). In the Netherlands, the AKP had secured 64.3 percent on average in the elections of June 7, 2015.¹⁹

As a result of its investigation, the Dutch Data Protection Authority found no violation of the law.²⁰

ROTTERDAM TURKISH CONSULATE GENERAL'S CALL FOR SPYING

The second major diplomatic crisis broke out when Turkey's Consulate General in Rotterdam created a "spying-on" hotline for Turkish expatriates in the Netherlands in April 2016. The Consulate General called on Turkish expats to report people who sent allegedly offensive e-mails or posted offensive messages on social media about President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. To this end, the Consulate General drew up a letter and sent it from its official address, info.cgrotterdam@mfa.gov.tr, to Turkish civil society organizations (CSOs) in the Netherlands.

17] AKP'ye Avrupa'da seçim mektubu tepkisi (Election letter reaction to the AKP in Europe), BBC Türkçe, 16.10.2015, http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2015/10/151016_yusuf_akp_mektup

18] AKP'ye Avrupa'da seçim mektubu tepkisi (Election letter reaction to the AKP in Europe), BBC Türkçe, 16.10.2015, http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2015/10/151016_yusuf_akp_mektup

19] Hollanda 1 Kasım 2015 Genel Seçim Sonuçları (The Netherlands, Results of General Election of November 1, 2015) <http://secim.haberler.com/2015/hollanda-secim-sonuclari/>

20] CBP: Davutoğlu'nun Hollanda'daki Türklere gönderdiği mektup yasal (CBP: Davutoğlu's letter to Turks in the Netherlands is legal), turkinfo.nl, 17.11.2015

<http://www.turkinfo.nl/cbp-davutoglu-nun-hollanda-daki-turklere-gonderdigi-mektup-yasal/12988/>

Turkish Consulate General's letter asked people in Netherlands to report about insults towards President Erdoğan.

Kimden: Info CG Rotterdam <info.cgrotterdam@mfa.gov.tr>
Tarih: 20 Nisan 2016 17:14:21 GMT+2
Kime: Info CG Rotterdam <info.cgrotterdam@mfa.gov.tr>
Konu: E-posta, posta veya sosyal medya üzerinden ulaşan hakaret içerikli e-postalar.

Sayın Yetkili,

E-posta, posta veya sosyal medya hesapları yoluyla;

Sayın Cumhurbaşkanımıza, Türkiye'ye veya genel olarak Türk toplumuna yönelik aşağılayıcı, küçük düşürücü, nefret ve hakaret içeren ifadeler kullanan kişilerden, Sivil Toplum Kuruluşunuzun çalışanlarının, üyelerinin ve yakınlarının ya da çevrenizde bulunan vatandaşlarımızın sosyal medya adreslerine (facebook, twitter gibi) veya Sivil

The letter inquired if the CSOs had come across denigrating or demeaning messages or any containing hatred or insults towards President Erdoğan, Turkey or the Turkish community. It asked them to report such e-mails, social media messages and those who wrote them to the Consulate General by the close of business on Thursday, April 21, 2016.



The Dutch media had extensive coverage of this unlawful initiative that ran counter to diplomatic and democratic conventions. As this event soon came under the public spotlight, Turkey's Rotterdam Consulate General found itself up against the wall. The consular officials refused to comment on the event.²¹ The Dutch parliament reacted strongly to Turkey's diplomatic representatives' "call for spying" in the Netherlands. Lashing out at the initiative as a disappointment, Parliament and various political parties condemned the Rotterdam Consulate General's call.

The People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), a member of the coalition government, asked Foreign Minister Albert Koenders to summon Turkey's ambassador to The Hague and request an explanation. The parties in Parliament supported the move. The Labor Party (PvdA), another member of the coalition government, referred to the event as "worrisome." And the main opposition Socialist Party attributed this scandal to "yet another initiative by Ankara's long arm." Koenders called on people to immediately report such attempts to the police.

21] BBC Türkçe contacted the consulate for an explanation. However, no response was given.

"Rotterdam Başkonsolosluğu'ndan Türk toplumuna 'muhabirlik' çağrısı" (Rotterdam Consulate General's call on Turkish community for spying, BBC Türkçe, 21.04.2016

http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2016/04/160421_hollanda_konsolosluk

TENSION RISES AFTER TURKEY'S FAILED COUP

The tension that had been building since the graft and bribery scandals that went public on Dec. 17, 2013 was translated into actual attacks in the wake of the failed coup attempt of July 15. President Erdoğan and the ruling AKP accused the Hizmet movement of masterminding the coup attempt and stepped up the dose of hate speech. Individuals and organizations affiliated with the Hizmet movement at home and abroad started to come under physical attack. Hotlines were established to report on members of, or people close to, the Hizmet movement as ordered by President Erdoğan. People started to inform on their own family members, their friends and their rivals.



Hotlines set-up after Turkish president called for profiling.

In his public rallies, Erdoğan repeatedly voiced his “call for spying.” For instance, in a public rally he held on Aug. 10, 2016, he said: “You may have friends from that community, and I am telling you to inform on them. You have to report them to prosecutor’s offices. This is a patriotic duty. Intelligence and the police are not capable of monitoring everyone. They [members of the Gülen movement] are fleeing.”²² Then, a Presidential Report Hotline was quickly established and its official telephone numbers were announced publicly.

Both the call for spying and this hate speech were warmly embraced by supporters of the ruling AKP in the Netherlands. The individuals and organizations affiliated with the Hizmet movement were threatened. Lists of businesses to be boycotted were disseminated. There were attempts at burning down the buildings of certain newspapers and civil society organizations close to the Hizmet movement. Windows of buildings were broken and physical attacks against Hizmet followers increased.

The pro-AKP Turkish language Internet sites responded quickly to Erdoğan’s call for informing on other people and tried to mobilize the Turkish community in the Netherlands. “Turks of Europe should feel free to report Gülenists,” wrote

22] Erdoğan’dan FETÖ’cülerini ihbar edin çağrısı (Erdoğan’s call for denouncing FETÖ members), ensonhaber.com, 10.08.2016
<http://www.ensonhaber.com/Erdoğandan-fetoculeri-ihbar-edin-cagrisi-2016-08-10.html>

avrupaturkgazetesi.com, a leading pro-AKP news portal.²³ “Telephone numbers were announced so that those who collected money for the Gülenist Terror Organization [FETÖ] and those who gave money to the organization could be reported. Turks in Europe, too, were asked to inform on Gülenists without hesitation,” said the website.²⁴ The news portal also published the telephone numbers of the Presidential Report Hotline. “If the line is busy or you cannot reach it, you can send an e-mail with the necessary information to okur@avrupaturkgazetesi.com. Our staff will try to help,” said the site in an effort to lend support to the “reporting” campaign.²⁵

EIGHT ATTACKS ON BUILDINGS IN NINE DAYS

The organizations affiliated with the Hizmet movement came under attack by AKP supporters in the wake of the failed coup d'état of July 15. It's not clear if the attackers were organized by Turkish government agents or if they acted on their own. A group of 20 fanatics threw stones at the windows of the Zaandam Animo Foundation on the night of July 16.²⁶ The next day, the violence spread to the city of Rotterdam. A pro-AKP crowd gathered together in front of the Nida Foundation and threw stones at the building. The glass in the door to the foundation was broken. The police had to intervene as the group was creating an uproar. Attacks also occurred the following day.²⁷ Making a statement, Mayor Ahmed Aboutaleb urged the public to remain calm.²⁸ There were attacks on the Apeldoorn De Ijssel training center on July 20, 2016 and the Amsterdam Sara Burgerhart Activiteitencentrum (SBAC) training center on July 22, 2016.

On July 22, 2016, the Gouden Generatie Foundation was set on fire at midnight.

23] Önemli çağrı; Fethullahçıları bu numaraya ihbar edin (Important call: Report Gülenists to this number), avrupaturkgazetesi.com, 21.07.2016

<http://www.avrupaturkgazetesi.com/onemli-cagri-fethullahcilari-bu-numaraya-ihbar-edin/>

24] Önemli çağrı; Fethullahçıları bu numaraya ihbar edin (Important call: Report Gülenists to this number), avrupaturkgazetesi.com, 21.07.2016

<http://www.avrupaturkgazetesi.com/onemli-cagri-fethullahcilari-bu-numaraya-ihbar-edin/>

25] Önemli çağrı; Fethullahçıları bu numaraya ihbar edin (Important call: Report Gülenists to this number), avrupaturkgazetesi.com, 21.07.2016

<http://www.avrupaturkgazetesi.com/onemli-cagri-fethullahcilari-bu-numaraya-ihbar-edin/>

26] Ramen ingegooïd bij Turkse Stichting Animo in Zaandam, De Orkaan, 16.07.2016 <http://deorkaan.nl/onrust-bij-turks-cultureel-centrum-in-zaandam/>

27] Turkish diaspora in EU divided over Erdoğan following failed coup, The Guardian, 18.07.2016

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/18/turkish-diaspora-eu-Erdoğan-failed-coup>

28] <http://www.metronieuws.nl/nieuws/rotterdam/2016/07/turkse-stichting-belaagd-door-aanhangers-Erdoğan>



Assailants smashed windows of a building used by Erdogan's critics.



A foundation attacked with Molotov cocktails in the city of Apeldoorn.

Camera footage showing the arson was aired on many TV stations, but the attackers, who covered their faces, could not be identified. After the attack, the municipality of Deventer decided to install surveillance cameras on the buildings. It was announced that the police presence around the building would be intensified.²⁹ On July 24, an educational center in Eindhoven was pelted with stones. On the same day, the Unie van Betrokken Ouders (UVBO) foundation was attacked with Molotov cocktails in the city of Apeldoorn.³⁰ The foundation, which sought to prevent the radicalization of young people, came under attack for a second time in three days. On Dec. 3, 2016, coarse language was written in graffiti on the door of another organization affiliated with the Hizmet movement in Rotterdam.

ATTACK ON A FORMER IMAM AT A MOSQUE

Former imam Necmi Kaya, aged 54, is a person close to the Hizmet movement and has been living for 28 years in Haarlem in the Netherlands. On July 19, 2016, i.e., four days after the failed coup d'état in Turkey, he went to Selimiye Mosque, run by Turkey's Religious Affairs Directorate, for the noon prayer. He was attacked by two people in front of the mosque.³¹ He was badly beaten and his

29] Turkish foundation hit in arson, hizmetwatch.com, 26.07.2016

<https://www.hizmetwatch.com/alert/turkish-foundation-hit-arson-172/>

30] VIDEO | Poging tot brandstichting bij Turkse UVBO in Apeldoorn, De Stentor, 25.07.2016, <http://www.destentor.nl/regio/apeldoorn/video-1-poging-tot-brandstichting-bij-turkse-uvbo-in-apeldoorn-1.6219028>

31] 1- Journalist Zaman Vandaag bedreigd bij reportage, Villamedia, 20.07.2016, <https://www.villamedia.nl/artikel/journalist-zaman-vandaag-bedreigd-bij-reportage>

2- Turkse imam (54) in elkaar geslagen voor moskee, Hart van Nederland, 20.07.2016 <http://www.hartvannederland.nl/nederland/noord-holland/2016/turkse-imam-54-elkaar-geslagen-voor-moskee/>

clothes were torn. Kaya filed an official complaint regarding the attack.

Kaya told SCF: “This is a mosque I have been attending for years. As soon as I got there, they attacked me without saying anything, in the mosque’s courtyard. It was as if they had come solely to beat me. They shouted gross insults and used bad language. I know the attackers. They are affiliated with the AKP. Possibly, the ambassador encouraged them in the attack. I noted this allegation also in my official complaint. My story was published in newspapers and aired on TV in the Netherlands.”



Kaya indicated that he and his family were discriminated against and insulted by the Turkish community in the Netherlands in the aftermath of July 15. “This process had a huge effect on us as a family. My daughter divorced her husband. I feel anxious leaving home and getting in my car after this attack. I look around while walking. My family has been psychologically affected. They, too, are upset.”

ACCUSING JOURNALISTS OF BEING ‘CIA AGENTS’

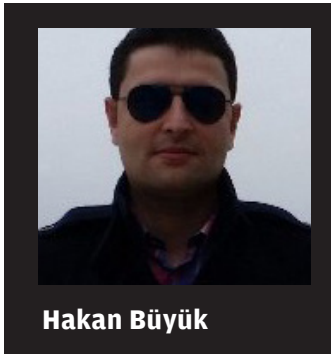
Journalists known to the public had their share of harassment and threats as well. These journalists were mainly Zaman Hollanda newspaper and Dutch language Zaman Vandaag newspaper manager Mehmet Cerit, Cihan News Agency Netherlands representative Basri Doğan and Zaman Vandaag editors Hakan Büyük and Hüseyin Atasever. In addition to journalists, businessmen and foundation executives who were known to be close to the Hizmet movement also came under attack.

Hakan Büyük, aged 29, who was born and raised in the Netherlands, was openly targeted by Turkish language news portals avrupaturkmengazetesi.com and avrupaturkgazetesi.com. Talking to SCF regarding the threats he received, Büyük said: “They portrayed me as a CIA agent or a terrorist. I received threats on Twitter.



They sent me a photo of a dead bloodstained woman. ‘Your end will be like this,’ they wrote beneath it. I filed an official complaint about it with the police. The investigation is under way.”

Hüseyin Atasever, aged 30, who was born and grew up in the Netherlands like Hakan Büyük, told SCF: “I have been working at Zaman Hollanda for five years. I am currently a master’s student at Leiden University. We, the people working at the newspaper, have been being seriously harassed since Dec. 17, 2013. Every day we receive insults like ‘traitors’ or ‘collaborators.’ Threats and harassment have intensified considerably, particularly after the abortive coup d’état of July 15. People are insulted publicly in the street. They receive threats via social media, by phone or in anonymous letters. In late August campaigns were launched against us on social media. Our names and photographs were published as reports to the authorities in Turkey. Our names and photographs were everywhere.”

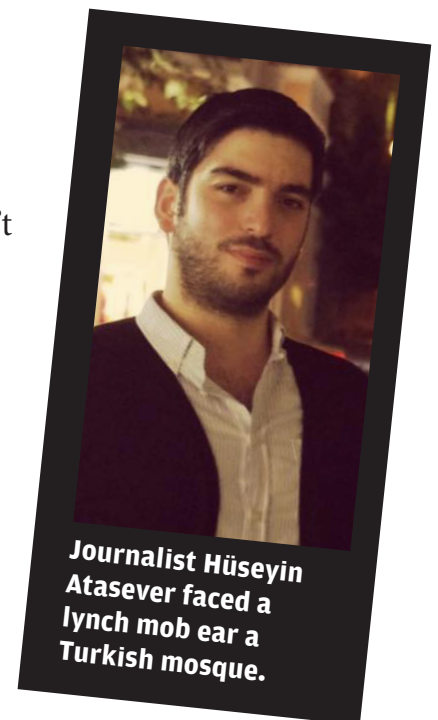


Hakan Büyük

POLICE SAVE JOURNALIST ATASEVER FROM BEING LYNCHED

The beating of Necmi Kaya in a mosque courtyard on July 19 also gave journalist Hüseyin Atasever a hard time. Learning about the attack as he was traveling to Amsterdam with his wife, Atasever went to the Selimiye Mosque, affiliated with Turkey’s Religious Affairs Directorate, in order to write a news story about the event. As he was interviewing Kaya, a group of AKP sympathizers surrounded them. Atasever told SCF: “When they learned that I was from Zaman, they encircled me. They started swearing and insulting. The atmosphere was growing tenser. They moved on to physically attacking us. But the police

intervened. They would have lynched me if it weren't for the police. Then, I filed an official complaint. When I got home, I continued to receive threats on social media. Our photographs were published. The repercussions of this incident continued for weeks. My wife was pregnant and she witnessed the incident. She was affected psychologically. My parents and my wife suffered from major distress after this event. Some called them 'traitors' or 'terrorists' on the street. Our Turkish neighbors started to keep their distance from me."



Atasever, whose ill-treatment in the mosque courtyard was covered by the Dutch media, said: "Everyone who has any ties with Gülen is in danger. AKP members or supporters are collecting information on dissidents in the Netherlands. These people are in jeopardy." ³²

DEATH THREAT TO JOURNALIST DOĞAN



The pro-AKP Twitter account under the name "Abdi Aciz" posted the following message addressed to Cihan News Agency Netherlands Representative and a reporter for the Zaman Hollanda, Basri Doğan: "Your blood will be spilled. You will be brought to account for it. Just as the throats of your traitorous soldiers were slit, your throats will be slit as well. It is permissible to spill your blood for this nation." A person named Abdulkadir Teoman Geylani, whose profile photo featured a gun on the Turkish flag, threatened Doğan on July 19 with the following message: "Traitors! Sons of bitches! You will be brought to account for what you did."

Mehmet Salih Kaya, who had once served as the Netherlands chairman of the pro-AKP Union of European Turkish Democrats (UETD), posted social media messages targeting the Hizmet movement. On July 20, he wrote on Twitter: "FETÖ members, Gülenists, Hizmet supporters, the Community supporters, Zaman

32] 1- Bedreigde journalist Zaman vreest escalatie in Turkse gemeenschap, Rijnmond, 19.07.2016, <http://www.rijnmond.nl/nieuws/144288/Bedreigde-journalist-Zaman-vreest-escalatie-in-Turkse-gemeenschap>

2- Journalist Zaman Vandaag bedreigd bij reportage, Villamedia, 20.07.2016
<https://www.villamedia.nl/artikel/journalist-zaman-vandaag-bedreigd-bij-reportage>

supporters, hay [pun on a Turkish word] supporters, etc. When they come to your door asking for your donations, do not give them anything. Do not let them come inside. Shut the door in their faces. This is my warning in advance.”

Doğan filed official complaints regarding this message and an article titled “Beardless Khomeini and his two disciples”³³ written by Yavuz Nufel, the editor-in-chief of the pro-AKP news portal sonhaber.eu, on July 23, 2016. Doğan maintained that this article targeted him and Köksal Yazar from Zaman Hollanda by specifically mentioning their names.

‘BRING HIM AND GET YOUR REWARD’



Necdet Sait Başaran, from the Zaman Hollanda newspaper, was one of the journalists who were specifically targeted by Erdoğan’s supporters. Certain Turkish newspapers published in the Netherlands launched a campaign against Başaran, who is accused of being one of the leaders of the Hizmet movement, which Erdoğan regime prosecutors label as “terrorist.” In particular, news portals avrupaturkmengazetesi.com and avrupaturkgazetesi.com called on their readers to report Başaran to the Turkish authorities, reminding that the ruling AKP announced a bounty of TL 4 million for Başaran. ‘On social media, people wrote, referring to fugitive terrorist Necdet Başaran: “Turks of Rotterdam, bring Necdet Başaran in and get TL 4 million,”’ the Avrupa Türkmen newspaper said on Oct. 26, 2016.

33] Sakalsız Humeyni ve iki müridi (Beardless Khomeini and his two disciples), Yavuz Nufel, 23.07.2016 <http://sonhaber.eu/yazarlar/sakalsiz-humeyni-ve-iki-muridi/>

LISTS OF NAMES PUBLISHED

The lists of individuals and organizations affiliated with the Hizmet movement were published on various social media accounts and Internet sites targeting Hizmet in the Netherlands.³⁴ On April 9, 2011, an Internet

site named turktores.com published a story titled “List of Certain Gülenist Individuals and Organizations in the Netherlands’ , providing highly detailed information about individuals and organizations including their addresses and officials in charge. People close to the Hizmet movement suggest that this list had been drawn up through the profiling efforts of Religious Affairs Directorate imams working at mosques in the Netherlands, possibly in collaboration with other Turkish intelligence assets.

Turkey’s state-run Anadolu news agency published a similar list on Aug. 29, 2016.³⁵ Thus, a public body specifically targeted the people and institutions that are known to be close to the Hizmet movement. The news story, titled “Here is FETÖ’s

Netherlands network,” also features an infographic.

On July 17, a Facebook user posted the list of businesses allegedly affiliated with the Hizmet movement and called on people to boycott them. “The pro-FETÖ shops in Amsterdam... Time to boycott them... No more pennies to them...” wrote the user, listing numerous businesses including restaurants and schools.³⁶

34] Hollanda’da Bazı Fethullahçı Kişi ve Kurumların Listesi (List of Certain Gülenist Individuals and Organizations in the Netherlands), TurkToresi.com, 09.04.2011, <http://www.turktores.com/viewtopic.php?f=93&t=5152>

35] FETÖ’nün Hollanda yapılanması (FETÖ’s Netherlands network), Anadolu news agency, 29.08.2016, <http://aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/fe-tonun-hollanda-yapilanmasi/637333>

36] July 17, 2016 Netherlands: Call to boycott businesses in Amsterdam, Center for Hizmet Studies http://www.hizmetstudies.org/149A31_7316-17-jul-netherlands-call-to-boycott-businesses-in-amsterdam.html

Turkish gov’t news agency published names of critics.

175 COMPLAINTS, 4 DETENTIONS

Hundreds of complaints were filed with the Dutch police regarding these incidents in the Netherlands. The complainants include Saniye Çalkın, the manager of Platform INS, a civil society organization that is close to the Hizmet movement, and Selma Ablak, an executive at Platform INS. Speaking to Dutch media outlets, the two female executives indicated that they felt themselves to be threatened. Çalkın noted that her address and telephone numbers were posted online. “For the first time in my life, I feel my security and freedom

restricted,” she said.³⁷ Ablak expressed concern over the posting of her photos on Facebook and other social media networks. She stated that she was afraid that someone who recognized her from those photos might attack her on the street.³⁸



Indeed, in early 2017, Ablak was the subject of profanities and targeted on social media. Ramazan Gündes, a Turk living in the Netherlands, posted profane language and insults against Ablak

on his Facebook account on Jan. 13, 2017. Sharing a YouTube video³⁹ showing Ablak giving an interview to a Dutch TV station, he wrote: “This woman lives in the Netherlands and protects FETÖ. Take a good look at this bitch! And this is a report to the state authorities: FETÖ’s imam [is in] the Netherlands... FETÖ’s imam for the Netherlands... The authorities are hereby notified... Take this bitch into custody... My homeland is hereby notified.” Ablak filed an official complaint about this message.

Following the incidents, four people, including Mehmet Demirel, the owner of Göreme Ayrıları in the Netherlands, were detained.⁴⁰ Taken into custody in early September, Demirel was accused of sedition, insult, hate speech, intimidation and vandalism in connection with some of his social media posts. So far no one has

37] Tegenstanders Erdoğan doen aangifte van bedreiging, RTL Nieuws, 19.07.2016
<http://www.rtlnieuws.nl/nederland/tegenstanders-erdogan-doen-aangifte-van-bedreiging>

38] Tegenstanders Erdoğan doen aangifte van bedreiging, RTL Nieuws, 19.07.2016
<http://www.rtlnieuws.nl/nederland/tegenstanders-erdogan-doen-aangifte-van-bedreiging>

39] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=beCHLgCiGUk&feature=share>

40] Mehmet D. wilde gülenisten op het rechte pad brengen, NRC, 09.09.2016
<https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2016/09/09/mehmet-d-wilde-gulenisten-op-het-rechte-pad-brengen-4209180-a1520722>

been arrested over the attacks on the Hizmet movement.

The Rotterdam Police Department announced that a special unit had been set up to deal with the incidents that occurred in the Netherlands in the wake of the coup attempt. This special unit launched investigations in connection with 175 criminal complaints filed with the police.⁴¹

STANCE OF THE TARGETED CSOs

Civil society organizations affiliated with the Hizmet movement held a press conference on July 29, 2016 due to the attacks, threats and insults against individuals and organizations in the Netherlands. In a statement they asserted that the attacks were unacceptable and that incidents that disrupt the peace of Dutch society create much concern.

Platform INS Manager Saniye Çalkın said: “The surging threats and attempts to set institutions ablaze in the wake of a failed coup d’état which we don’t endorse are unacceptable. It is unacceptable and obnoxious to be accused of being behind the coup. We are concerned about efforts by certain groups to transfer the events in Turkey to this country.”

Platform INS Secretary-General Alper Alasağ said: “Certain people here lent support to the hate speech and the called for destruction of the Hizmet movement in Turkey. There were attacks on the buildings of organizations affiliated with the Hizmet movement. In addition to physical attacks, some people have received serious threats. Calls were made to boycott certain businesses linked to the Hizmet movement. It is quite worrisome to transfer the problems in Turkey to here.”

“People who have been living on the same street in the Netherlands have become enemies,” educator and writer Alaattin Erdal said, as Young Businessmen’s

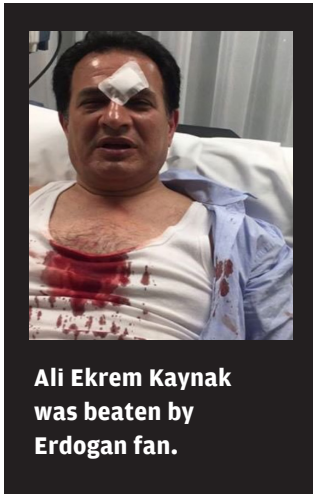


41] Arrestatie vanwege bedreiging na Turkse coup poging, NOS, 05.09.2016
<http://nos.nl/artikel/2130000-arrestatie-vanwege-bedreiging-na-turkse-coup-poging.html>

Federation of the Netherlands Secretary-General Ahmet Taşkan asked the Dutch government to immediately take harsh measures in the face of threats.

The incidents that occurred among the Turkish community in the Netherlands were also criticized by Mustafa Ayrancı, president of the Turkish Workers' Union in the Netherlands (HTIB, Turkse Arbeidersvereniging in Nederland), one of the oldest civil society organizations established by Turkish expatriates in the Netherlands. Ayrancı told the Zaman Hollanda newspaper on Aug. 20, 2016: "Everyone is concerned. People are afraid to speak. A serious tyranny is in place. 'Who will file an official complaint against me? When will they take me into custody?' ... There is such pressure on all people. And this pressure is continued with ever-increasing intensity... The fear in Turkey is spreading to this country. The state is intimidating people on this matter... It is wrong to raid businesses, beat people, raid homes or threaten people... The Netherlands is a serious state based on the rule of law. No one can get anywhere with threats or physical attacks."

CONSUL GENERAL'S HATE SPEECH



Turkey's Consul General in Rotterdam Sadin Ayyıldız invited selected Turkish journalists to his office on Aug. 9, 2016 to make a statement. "Active members of FETÖ, except our citizens who naively believed in FETÖ, should be carefully monitored," the newspapers reported him as saying.⁴² Like Erdoğan, Ayyıldız blamed the Hizmet movement for the failed coup d'état of July 15 in Turkey. "It is known that many FETÖ members fled to the Netherlands. We will work hard to ensure the extradition of these criminals in collaboration with Dutch authorities within the framework of bilateral and international agreements... We believe Turkish businessmen in the Netherlands will do their part in combatting businessmen and firms lending support to FETÖ."

42] Rotterdam Başkonsolosu Sadin Ayyıldız, vatandaşlara seslendi: 'FETÖ'ye safça inanmış yurttaşlarımızın dışındaki aktif FETÖ'cular dikkatle izlenmelidir' (Rotterdam Consul General Sadin Ayyıldız's call on citizens: 'Active members of FETÖ except our citizens who naively believed in FETÖ should be carefully monitored'), Yeni Haber Belçika, <http://yenihaber.be/roterdam-baskonsolosu-sadin-ayyildiz-vatandaslara-seslendi/48464/>

Only two days after Ayyıldız made these remarks, Ali Ekrem Kaynak, a businessman, was badly beaten by his business partner in Amsterdam. Photos showing his bloodstained face and head wrapped in bandages were posted on social media. Kaynak was running a restaurant in Amsterdam and was beaten by his business partner, Emin Duran. It was known within the Turkish community in the Netherlands that Kaynak was affiliated with the Hizmet movement, while Duran was an Erdoğan sympathizer. The relationship between the partners had started to deteriorate in the wake of the graft and bribery scandals that went public on Dec. 17, 2013. It became irreversibly worse after July 15. Duran argued that he attacked Kaynak due to disagreements over the business. However, people close to them told SCF that this incident stemmed from the tension between Erdoğan and the Hizmet movement. Victim Kaynak declined to give an interview.

CRISIS BETWEEN THE NETHERLANDS AND TURKEY OVER MEDDLING IN DOMESTIC AFFAIRS



The events pertaining to the safety and rights of Hizmet supporters in the Netherlands put the Dutch government on alert and exacerbated the tension between the governments of the two countries. Amsterdam announced that Turkey was meddling in the Netherlands' internal affairs, sowing discord among the public and committing criminal acts. In late August both Prime Minister Mark Rutte and Foreign Minister Koenders clearly expressed their discontent to their counterparts.

On Aug. 27, 2016, Dutch Prime Minister Rutte talked to President Erdoğan on the phone, and he posted an informative note about their conversation on his Facebook page. "Turkey cannot meddle with our freedom and internal affairs. External problems cannot be transferred to our country. We are concerned

about Turkey's efforts to reinstitute the death penalty. Turkey should comply with international agreements,' I clearly told Erdoğan." Rutte stressed that they wouldn't allow Turkey to interfere with the internal affairs of the Netherlands. "Do not set the communities of the Netherlands against each other. It is unacceptable to play certain communities against others in the Netherlands," he said.

Simultaneous with these developments, a crisis erupted over interference with domestic affairs in Rotterdam. Turkey's Consul General in Rotterdam Sadin Ayyıldız sent letters to Rotterdam and nearby municipalities advising them on how to treat the Hizmet movement and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). He told mayors to ban demonstrations by these groups. Rotterdam Mayor Ahmed Aboutaleb reacted harshly to Ayyıldız, saying the letters were not "diplomatic." The debate soon became a news agenda item in the country, and Aboutaleb indicated that the "Turkish consul went too far by meddling in the domestic affairs of the Netherlands."

In a statement he made ahead of his official visit to Ankara on Aug. 29, Dutch Foreign Minister Bert Koenders harshly criticized Ayyıldız, noting that it is not up to Ankara, but the Dutch government, to make decisions about the way of life in Dutch society. He expressed that Ayyıldız had overstepped his limits. "It is unacceptable for Ankara to meddle with demonstrations in our country," he said. Koenders gave similar messages while he was visiting Ankara.

AWARD OF COMPENSATION FOR 'TERRORIST' TAG

A school affiliated with Gülen movement targeted.



Erdoğan's hate speech against the Hizmet movement had its greatest impact on educational activities in the Netherlands and other parts of the world. Turkish government-affiliated groups and surrogates in Europe stepped up their attacks and pressure on schools run by the Hizmet movement. Parents and students were placed under constant pressure and in distress. Dozens of students were taken from the schools. Many teachers had to leave their jobs due to harassment. Campaigns that referred to these schools as "terror schools" or "FETÖ schools" and urged parents "not to send their children to the schools of terrorists" were launched.

Administrators of the De Roos primary school in Zaanstad filed lawsuits against certain parents over such insults. The Haarlem court handed down a decision on Sept. 16, 2016 holding that those who referred to school executives as “traitors” or the school as a “FETÖ school” or “terror school” be fined 1,000 euros for each instance of violation. Those who repeat such insults would be fined up to 10,000 euros.

The school’s lawyer Marcel Dekker said in court: “The four defendant Turkish families created a WhatsApp group to prevent other parents from sending their children to the De Roos schools. They also created a Facebook page. ‘Do not send your kids to the school of traitor and terrorist Gülen,’ they wrote on that page. Therefore, our school suffered tremendous financial losses.”

ESPIONAGE AND PROFILING BY RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS DIRECTORATE IMAMS

The Religious Affairs Directorate is one of the institutions to which Dutch politicians refer as “Erdoğan’s long arm.” Although it was originally established for the regulation religious affairs by the Turkish state, the Religious Affairs Directorate has recently been criticized for turning into a partisan organ and instrumentalizing religion in line with the AKP’s interests. Religious Affairs Directorate President Mehmet Görmez is accused of turning mosques into centers for the AKP’s propaganda. This applies to the Religious Affairs Directorate’s mosques and imams abroad as well.



The directorate has been providing religious services for Turkish expatriates since 1971. However, in recent years, it has been wielded by Erdoğan’s regime as a major domestic and foreign policy tool. The fact that the majority of officials in charge of ballot boxes abroad were imams,⁴³ some of whom openly campaigned for the AKP and attempted to cast multiple votes,⁴⁴ lends support to the argument that the Religious Affairs Directorate has been politicized. In addition, there are recent claims that mosques have been reorganized as intelligence centers and that imams are working like intelligence officers. The leaking of certain official correspondence that lent credence to these

43] İmamlar sandık başkanı oldu! (Imams in charge of ballot boxes), Yeni Hayat, 26.05.2015
<http://www.yenihayat.de/2015/05/26/imamlar-sandik-baskani-oldu/>

44] AKP’nin sandık hileleri başladı (AKP’s election fraud tactics have begun), Sözcü, 27.05.2015
<http://www.sozcu.com.tr/2015/gundem/akpnin-sandik-hileleri-basladi-834334/>

claims put the Religious Affairs Directorate behind the eight ball.

The Netherlands appears to be a battleground state where Erdoğan and his associates have been pushing the edge in its fight against critics, opponents and dissidents. Espionage and profiling activities by the Religious Affairs Directorate's imams were uncovered and led to a crisis between the two countries. The Religious Affairs Directorate has been sending imams to the Netherlands since 1982. At a time when the espionage and profiling activities by Religious Affairs Directorate imams were being debated, the "Buma Bill" was passed by the Dutch Parliament in September 2016. A bill introduced by main opposition Christian Democratic Party (CDA) leader Sybrand van Haersma Buma was adopted by Parliament on Sept. 27. The bill sought to prevent Turkey from assigning imams to the Netherlands and paying their salaries. It argued that the appointment of imams by the Religious Affairs Directorate to the mosques in the Netherlands and the payment of their salaries by the directorate had undesirable effects in the Netherlands. Due to the principle of separation of state and church, it noted, the salaries of clerics should be paid by local communities. It urged the government to take measures to prevent Turkey from financing places of worship in the Netherlands.

DEATH THREAT FROM TURKISH GOVERNMENT'S OFFICIAL IMAM

On Aug. 19, 2016, Young Businessmen's Federation of the Netherlands Secretary-General Ahmet Taşkan gave an interview to the *Algemene Dagblad* (AG) newspaper, drawing attention to the risky activities of the Religious Affairs Directorate's imams.⁴⁵ Taşkan talked about the profiling activities undertaken by the Religious Affairs Directorate and called on authorities to "deport these imams." As an example of the imams who gave sermons replete with hatred and animosity in mosques, Taşkan mentioned an imam in Dieren who threatened a person close to the Hizmet movement by writing on Facebook that he was "ready to kill and be killed in the path of God." An inquiry by SCF found that the imam in question flew to Turkey and didn't return after Dutch authorities launched an investigation regarding the Facebook post in question.

In December 2016, it turned out that the Religious Affairs Consultancy of Turkey's embassy in The Hague was conducting intelligence activities. This led to a number of scandals. It was understood that the Dutch Religious Affairs Foundation asked

45] 'Imams zijn geheim agenten van Erdoğan', Ahmet Taşkan, *Algemene Dagblad*, 19.08.2016
<http://www.ad.nl/dossier-nieuws/imams-zijn-geheim-agenten-van-Erdoğan~aa6b76e8/>

145 mosques in the country to draw up profiling lists and sent these lists to Religious Affairs Counselor Yusuf Acar in The Hague. Some victims interviewed by SCF stated that based on these profiling lists, Acar banned certain people from entering mosques and that these notices were hung on the doors of mosques.

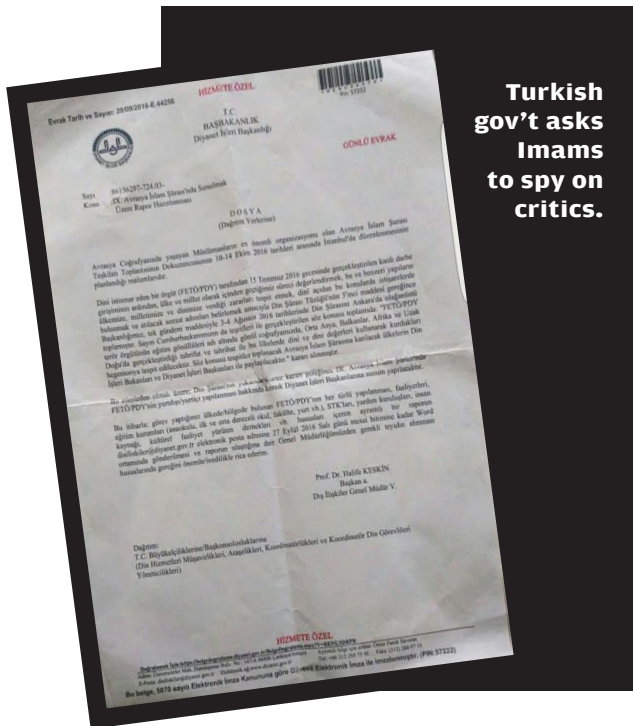
RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS DIRECTORATE OR INTELLIGENCE SERVICE?

The Religious Affairs Directorate scandal became public when the Cumhuriyet newspaper published a news story titled “Religious Affairs Directorate is like the National Intelligence Organization” on Dec. 8, 2016.

⁴⁶ The parliamentary Commission to Investigate the Coup of July 15 had requested that the Religious Affairs Directorate provide information on its activities regarding the Hizmet movement. In an effort to prove that it was combating the movement, the Religious Affairs Directorate acknowledged in the documents it sent to the commission that it had its religious officials prepare intelligence reports in 38 different countries.

The Religious Affairs Directorate had asked its representatives abroad to prepare reports to be submitted to the 9th Eurasian Islamic Council meeting, held in Istanbul Oct. 11-14, 2016. The letter to this end had been drafted by Deputy General Director of Foreign Affairs Prof. Dr. Halife Keskin on behalf of the president on Sept. 20, 2016. It had been sent to ambassadors, consuls general, religious affairs counselors, attachés and coordinating clerics in 38 countries in Central Asia, Europe, Africa and the Far East.

“I kindly request you to urgently send a detailed report containing information on the network / organization of the Gülenist Terror Organization/Parallel State Structure (FETÖ/PDY) in our region / country including its educational institutions (preschools, primary and secondary schools, faculties, dormitories, etc.), civil society organizations (CSOs), charities, human resources, cultural associations, etc., to the e-mail



**Turkish
gov't asks
Imams
to spy on
critics.**

46] Diyanet MİT gibi (The Religious Affairs Directorate is like the National Intelligence Organization (MİT)), Cumhuriyet, 08.12.2016 http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/641909/Diyanet_MiT_gibi.html

disiliskiler@diyanet.gov.tr by the end of the workday on Tuesday, Sept. 27, 2016,” it read.

The reports sent to the Religious Affairs Directorate contained the names and photos of individuals and organizations affiliated with the Hizmet movement and information on them. The directorate sent these reports to the parliamentary Commission to Investigate the Coup of July 15.

The news story published by Cumhuriyet on Dec. 8, 2016 contained passages from these reports: “The reports drawn up by mosque imams, mosque officials, religious coordinators and religious affairs counselors contained highly detailed intelligence about the schools, prep schools, businesses, associations, foundations and media organizations affiliated with FETÖ. Some 50 reports prepared in 38 countries included the names of the clerics who prepared the report as well as the mosques where they worked; others had the names of the coordinating religious clerics of the country in question. The reports

had such intelligence as follows: ‘They rarely attend Friday and eid prayers except for a few people’; ‘She is said to continue to be emotionally attached although she does not actively take part in any of its activities. She is a housewife.’”⁴⁷

Cumhuriyet wrote that among the documents sent to Parliament was a report by the Religious Affairs Directorate on Köln, Germany. The news story touched on this report as well. The documents titled “Köln Religious Services Attaché 2nd Region Mosques - Eurasian Council Reports” prepared by mosque officials read: “FETÖ’s only educational institution in Bergneustadt, subordinated to the district of Oberbergischer Kreis, where our mosque is located, is a prep school named ACTIVE LERNHILFE. This is considered to be the center / headquarters of the entire PDY network in Oberbergischer Kreis. Matters such as zakat (charitable giving to the less fortunate), sacrifice, subscriptions and human resources are managed there. All of its members and executives attend our mosque, and this den of mischief is permeated by the help of these people, and they spread unfounded allegations about mosque services and work in close collaboration with the German

47] Diyanet MİT gibi (The Religious Affairs Directorate is like the National Intelligence Organization (MİT)), Cumhuriyet, 08.12.2016
http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/641909/Diyanet_MiT_gibi.html

authorities and local media. N.S. Bergneustadt Central Mosque Religious Official.”

In the same report, another mosque official listed detailed information about the people affiliated with the Hizmet movement. Notes about these people included such descriptions as “in charge of the region,” “no change in position after the attempted coup of July 15,” “takes active part in sacrifice, zakat and other matters.” Signed by “H.A. Fürthen / Sieg Mosque Religious Official,” this report contained the following intelligence notes, inter alia:

-B.D. and C.D.: These people previously resided in this region and they were employed as trainers at the educational institutions in Köln. They are said to be currently working.

-T.Ö.: She stayed at the houses run by this organization while attending the university; she came to Germany as a bride. She is said to continue to be emotionally attached although she does not actively take part in any of its activities. She is a housewife.”

PROFILING ACTIVITIES BY RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS DIRECTORATE IMAMS IN THE NETHERLANDS

On Dec. 9, 2016, one day after Cumhuriyet published its story, the highest circulating De Telegraaf newspaper exposed the scandal as it related to the Netherlands. The paper published a story showing that the Religious Affairs Directorate undertook similar profiling activities also in the Netherlands. In the story, the Turkish Embassy’s Religious Affairs Attaché and Dutch Religious Affairs Foundation (HDV) President Yusuf Acar was accused of “espionage.” A report drawn up by Acar had been sent by the Religious Affairs Directorate to the parliamentary commission. “Acar listed many companies, charities, schools and other organizations ‘controlled’ by Islamic cleric Fethullah Gülen, which are considered a terrorist organization in Turkey,” the story said.

In their intelligence reports, the Religious Affairs Directorate’s imams also profiled Dutch politicians. For instance, they referred to the Christian Democratic Party (CDA) as the “stronghold of Gülenists” and noted that CDA deputies submitted bills against Turkey and the Religious Affairs Directorate. CDA leader Sybrand Buma said: “These slanders are ridiculous and false. They imply that Ankara has gone too far in terms of propaganda. It is yet another proof that the Turkish government is meddling in the domestic affairs of the Netherlands. This intervention is striking and unacceptable. The Cabinet should draw the ambassador’s attention to this matter.” On the same day, the HDV released a press

statement and denied the allegations.

The events were brought to the agenda of Parliament on Dec. 13, 2016. Dutch Deputy Minister of Social Affairs Jetta Klijnsma called on the profiled people to take legal action.⁴⁸ Klijnsma explained that Turkish expatriates may anonymously apply to Dutch judicial authorities concerning profiling activities by the HDV.⁴⁹ CDA Deputy Pieter Heerma called for an active battle against informant imams, referring to them as “Turkey’s long arm.” The CDA argued that Acar should be deported.⁵⁰

On Dec. 14, 2016, De Telegraaf published another story showing that the profiling was performed personally by Acar. “The head of the umbrella organization for mosques works as Ankara’s extension. The embassy is under fire,” was the headline of the story. “It turned out that it was the head of the Religious Affairs Directorate’s mosques who leaked the names of Gülen movement sympathizers in the Netherlands. This is what has been gleaned from De Telegraaf’s investigation. In response to our question, Yusuf Acar admitted it,” said the story, which noted that Acar acknowledged the profiling activities but refused to describe them as espionage. “I compiled the list using data on the Internet,” Acar said. He argued that 145 imams sent from Turkey to work at mosques in the Netherlands didn’t engage in any intelligence activities. “No call was made on imams in this regard,” he said. The Turkish Embassy did not issue a statement on the matter. The HDV released a press statement on the day De Telegraaf’s story was published and



48] Hollandia ‘muhibir imamların’ peşini bırakmıyor: Fişlenenler şikayette bulunsun (The Netherlands is persistent about ‘spying imams’: victims should report them), TR724.com, 17.12.2016 <http://www.tr724.com/hollanda-muhibir-imamlarin-pesini-birakmiyor-fislenenler-sikayette-bulunsun/>

49] Hollandia ‘muhibir imamların’ peşini bırakmıyor: Fişlenenler şikayette bulunsun (The Netherlands is persistent about ‘spying imams’: victims should report them), TR724.com, 17.12.2016 <http://www.tr724.com/hollanda-muhibir-imamlarin-pesini-birakmiyor-fislenenler-sikayette-bulunsun/>

50] Hollandia’da Türk din işleri ataşesinin sınır dışı edilmesi istendi (The Netherlands asked for deportation of Turkish religious affairs attache), BBC Türkçe, 15.12.2016 <http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-dunya-38332738>

denied the allegations.⁵¹ The statement read: “The recent news stories about mosque and religious officials spying on pro-FETÖ people are false. The strongest evidence is the document published in the press itself. No information about any attendee of the mosque has been requested from any religious official, and such a request

is unacceptable. The information in question is publicly available on the Internet. It is sad to see the efforts to portray our mosques and religious officials as ‘informants,’ ...”

Dutch government, disturbed by reports of illegal profiling and intelligence gathering activities by Turkish government and affiliated groups, has taken measures.

In the wake of these developments, the Netherlands protested the activities of the Religious Affairs Directorate.⁵² CDA leader Sybrand Buma asked Foreign Minister Bert Koenders to summon the

Turkish ambassador and have him account for the event.⁵³ Speaking at the Dutch House of Representatives on the same day, Foreign Minister Koenders referred to the developments as “worrisome” and “unacceptable” and he summoned Turkish Ambassador Sadık Arslan to the ministry and asked for an explanation of the intelligence activities by the Dutch Religious Affairs Foundation.⁵⁴ The Dutch House of Representatives called for a general discussion on the “intelligence activities by the imams in the country.”

Amid this hotly debated “spy imams” scandal, the Dutch Foreign Ministry reportedly prepared to declare Acar persona non grata. Koenders asked Acar to leave the Netherlands immediately.⁵⁵ Then, before he was deported, Turkey decided to withdraw Acar. Koenders indicated that the withdrawal decision was taken after consultation with Turkish officials. Then, Acar left the Netherlands.⁵⁶

51] Hollanda Diyanet Vakfı (İslamitische Stichting Nederland), 14.12.2016
<http://www.diyamet.nl/basin-bildirisi/>

52] Hollanda'dan Ankara'ya 'istihbarat toplayan imam' protestosu (The Netherlands protests Ankara over 'intelligence gathering imam'), BBC Türkçe, 14.12.2016

53] Hollanda, Türk Büyükelçisini Bakanlığa çağırdı (The Netherlands summons Turkish ambassador to the Ministry), Zaman Hollanda, 14.12.2016
<http://www.zamanhollanda.nl/haber/gundem/10439/hollanda-turk-buyukelcisini-bakanliga-cagirdi>

54] Hollanda Türk Büyükelçi'yi çağırdı: Kabul edilemez (The Netherlands summons Turkish ambassador: unacceptable), Turkish News
<http://www.turkishnews.com/tr/content/2016/12/16/hollanda-turk-buyukelciyi-cagirdi-kabul-edilemez/>

55] İmamlarla ilgili iddialar Hollanda'yı karıştırdı (Allegations regarding imams disrupt the Netherlands), Hürriyet, 16.12.2016
<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/imamlarla-igili-iddialar-hollandayi-karistirdi-40308476>

56] Türkiye, Lahey'deki Din İşleri Ataşesi'ni geri çekti (Turkey withdraws its Religious Affairs Attache in The Hague), BBC Türkçe, 21.12.2016
<http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-38397994>

NEW RESOLUTIONS AGAINST RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS DIRECTORATE FROM THE NETHERLANDS

The Dutch government introduced new and effective measures. On Jan. 19, 2017, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Social Affairs and Employment Lodewijk Asscher held a meeting with officials from the Dutch Religious Affairs Foundation (HDV). Minister Asscher conveyed the discomfort as well as decisions taken to the officials.⁵⁷ Being a country extremely sensitive to the principle of secularism, the Netherlands treated the event as a “political intervention by a foreign country.” Following the meeting, Minister Asscher’s office posted a press statement on the official website of the Dutch government, with the following highlights:⁵⁸

- “In the Netherlands, political and religious affairs are kept separate from each other. The HDV will strive to take measures so that a similar event does not happen again.”
- “The Dutch government will never permit ‘foreign political interventions.’”
- “Everyone living in the Netherlands including religious officials coming from outside is required to respect rights and freedoms in the Netherlands.”
- The next chairman of the HDV will be solely a religious official.”⁵⁹
- “A report on the financing of the foundation and Turkish religious officials will be submitted.”
- “The HDV and the relevant Dutch ministry will conduct joint efforts to ensure the integration of religious officials sent from Turkey with Dutch society.”

57] 1- Persverklaring minister Asscher over gesprek met Diyanet Nederland op 19 januari 2017, Hollanda hükümetinin resmi internet sitesi rijksoverheid.nl, 19.01.2017

<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/actueel/nieuws/2017/01/19/persverklaring-minister-asscher-over-gesprek-met-diyanet-nederland-op-19-januari-2017>

2- Hollandadan Diyanet’e ultimatom! (The Netherlands’ ultimatum on the Religious Affairs Foundation), aktifhaber.com, 21.01.2017

<http://aktifhaber.com/dunya/hollandadan-diyanete-ultimatom-h89059.html>

58] 1- Persverklaring minister Asscher over gesprek met Diyanet Nederland op 19 januari 2017, Hollanda hükümetinin resmi internet sitesi rijksoverheid.nl, 19.01.2017

<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/actueel/nieuws/2017/01/19/persverklaring-minister-asscher-over-gesprek-met-diyanet-nederland-op-19-januari-2017>

2- Hollandadan Diyanet’e ultimatom! (The Netherlands’ ultimatum on the Religious Affairs Foundation), aktifhaber.com, 21.01.2017

<http://aktifhaber.com/dunya/hollandadan-diyanete-ultimatom-h89059.html>

59] This article was interpreted to mean that the HDV president will not be given a diplomatic passport or granted privileges. See “Hollandadan Diyanet’e ultimatom!” (The Netherlands’ ultimatum on the Religious Affairs Foundation), aktifhaber.com, 21.01.2017

<http://aktifhaber.com/dunya/hollandadan-diyanete-ultimatom-h89059.html>

TURKISH EMBASSY AND RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS DIRECTORATE DECLINE TO COMMENT

On Jan. 10, 2017, written questions were sent by SCF to the Turkish Embassy in The Hague and the Dutch Religious Affairs Foundation regarding the allegations in this report. But no answer came.

The questions which the embassy failed to answer included: Why was Religious Services Counselor and Dutch Religious Affairs Foundation President Yusuf Acar recalled to Turkey? What was the purpose of the document Acar sent to the parliamentary Commission to Investigate the Coup of July 15 and which was known to the public as the “profiling report”? Did the embassy know or approve the profiling activities in the Netherlands? Is the allegation that the imams and mosques are used as spies and intelligence centers, respectively, in the Netherlands true? Is the allegation that certain Turkish expatriates in the Netherlands exert pressure on people affiliated with the Hizmet movement and that such discriminatory acts are organized with support from the embassy true?

Likewise, the allegations regarding the Dutch Religious Affairs Foundation, Yusuf Acar and mosques were left unanswered.

CONCLUSION

With a population of nearly half a million Turkish expatriates, the Netherlands is currently among the countries that have been severely affected by the political and social crisis in Turkey. The fact that an overwhelming majority of the Turkish community in the Netherlands are Erdoğan sympathizers who are ready to resort to any method including physical violence upsets the people who are affiliated with the Hizmet movement and who respect Europe's democratic values. As in other European countries, the Turkish community in the Netherlands suffers from integration problems, and this paves the way for the creation of a withdrawn and closed culture, i.e., a hotbed of religious radicalism and nationalism.

The beatings of people who are close to the Hizmet movement in mosque courtyards, the hanging of lists of “banned” people on mosque doors, the boycotting of their businesses, the pelting their schools and training centers with stones and Molotov cocktails and the arson attempts give a good idea about the current status.

In addition, certain Turkish newspapers in the Netherlands seem to solely serve the purpose of targeting and profiling certain people, and this adds to the concerns. Certain Turkish schools lost students due to pressure and threats, and the level of pressure and threats on the parents who send their children to these schools has skyrocketed, as result of which people have had to seek legal redress.

The Netherlands has been faced with an embryonic “Turkish problem” since July 15. The seriousness of the social upheaval is evidenced by the fact that a religious attaché had to be recalled in the end. The Dutch government, opposition and media have monitored these cases closely.

The Dutch government referred to the incidents as “meddling in domestic affairs” and discussed the profiling scandal quickly and thoroughly and decided to “deport” Dutch Religious Affairs Foundation President Yusuf Acar; called on all Turkish expatriates who felt themselves to be threatened to file lawsuits; and a Dutch court sentenced the Turks who lobbied against a Turkish school by referring to it as a “terror school” to pay heavy compensation. These are praiseworthy developments.

The Dutch government's uncompromising approach to hate crimes in its country and it coming up with harsh measures to deal with them set a good example for other European countries.

The Turkish government, embassies and consulates, organizations acting like the AKP's extensions in Europe, Turkish expatriates and the Hizmet movement have their own

responsibilities as well. In the first place, the ruling AKP and its extensions must jettison this hate speech that breeds crime and associated policies. It is essential that freedom of thought, the rule of law and the individuality of crime are the principles that must be urgently embraced by the ruling AKP. It is unacceptable for Turkey to stigmatize its own citizens as potential terrorists, criminals or coup perpetrators, hunt for them, order institutions, organizations and ordinary citizens to profile other people, harass people who are close to the Hizmet movement in their respective countries, manufacture collective crimes without providing any evidence and move on to destroy all members of a specific group. The ruling AKP must pay respect to universal values.

Embassies and consulates must refrain from acts which are defined as crimes in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and in international law. Likewise, the official or unofficial institutions that act like extensions of the AKP must refrain from complying with such instructions that amount to crime and ensure full compliance with the laws of their respective countries and international conventions.

The responsibility of the people who are linked with the Hizmet movement is to be aware of their rights and record all sorts of crimes against humanity targeting them and file complaints with judicial and administrative authorities in connection with them.

A significant portion of the people who are close to the Hizmet movement appear to be reluctant to seek legal redress or file official complaints about their victimization. This can be mainly attributable to the fear factor. The main cause of this fear is the ruling AKP and the unlawful style of government currently in place in Turkey. These people live outside Turkey, but they are still connected to Turkey as it is their homeland. Some of their family members and a majority of their relatives live in Turkey. They visit Turkey for funerals, weddings and other important events and generally spend their holidays in their homeland. Due to the profiling activities in question, many Turkish expatriates in Europe are afraid of being taken into custody or arrested if they return to Turkey. Numerous sympathizers of the Hizmet movement have decided not to go to their homeland for an indefinite period of time. They are even concerned that their family members or relatives may be victimized solely because of themselves. Indeed, this is not only due to fear; we have met people who personally experienced such adversities when they went to Turkey.

SCF calls on all citizens of the Turkish Republic living abroad to record discriminatory practices and hate crimes they have faced and report them to the relevant authorities.