



# ERDOGAN'S LONG ARMS:

Abductions in Turkey and Abroad

SEP, 2020



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## Advocates of Silenced Turkey: Our Story

*When the Turkish President declared in an infamous speech that “old Turkey no longer exists; this Turkey is new Turkey”, the story of Turkish authoritarianism took on a new character once and for all. Since July 2016, the Turkish government has been improperly imprisoning hundreds of thousands of homemakers, mothers, children, babies, teachers, NGO workers, academics, judges, prosecutors, journalists and countless other victims.*

*Once upon a time, the Republic of Turkey was lauded by insiders and outsiders for constituting a powerful model for democratization. In New Turkey, however, silence against the regime’s draconian laws, mass imprisonment, and frequent violations of universal human rights has become the sole norm.*

*The presiding government in Turkey ranks as the worst upholder of the rule-of-law in Eastern Europe & Central Asia, the most arbitrary jailer of journalists in the world, and a prime example of democratic backsliding as a result of unmitigated authoritarianism.*

*In New Turkey, liberal democracy and democratic safeguards have been sidelined and undermined in less than a decade:*

***In New Turkey, dissent is feeble and distracted,  
Human rights are unheeded and long forlorn,  
Respect for human dignity is absent.***

*In light of Turkey's deteriorating human rights record, we have decided to take action against the worst instincts of Turkey's oppressive regime. We are a group of lawyers, judges, academics, journalists, and hundreds of activists who cherish democratic ideals and universal human rights.*

*We are prisoners of conscience wanted by the Erdogan regime, relatives of political prisoners, and victims who have lost their jobs, property, and family members to the current administration which has been described as a Mafia State.*

*We are the Advocates of Silenced Turkey.*

*We, the Advocates, have made it our mission to champion the rights of Silenced Turkey until universal human rights and democratic governance are established and sustained as the utmost priorities of the Republic of Turkey.*



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## — EXECUTIVE SUMMARY —

### *The Origins of the Problem*

Turkey's struggle to draw the country more in line with the pillars of European Union faced a long and accelerating slide. The country's Freedom in the World score has been in free fall since 2014 due to an escalating series of assaults on the press, social media users, protesters, political parties, the judiciary, and the electoral system, as President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan fought to impose personalized control over the state and society in a deteriorating domestic and regional security environment.

Turkey's drift into the grip of authoritarianism began before the failed 2016 coup. The government's heavy-handed response to nationwide Gezi Park protests in 2013, the start of a purge against members Gülen community after the corruption investigation in December 2013 paved the way for the emergence of an illiberal government. Many observers and experts pinpoint this year, 2013, as the major turning point for Turkey's drift away from a liberal democracy. The steady descent into an autocratic system lead to the full breakdown of the rule of law, judicial

independence and corrosion of the integrity of Turkey's bureaucratic institutions following the sweeping purge after the failed coup attempt in 2016.

The signs of the conflict first came to surface after Erdoğan made clear his intentions to establish a more authoritarian rule with the powers vested by the 2011 referendum. The battle lines were drawn after the infamous graft operations of 17 and 25 December, in 2013, where prosecutors rounded up some politicians and businessmen who were under surveillance in a longitudinal investigation. Erdoğan said the corruption files were nothing but sham, perpetrated by the Gülen movement as a soft coup in line with the interests of the foreign powers, which were envious of the Turkish rise as a global power.

Hizmet had long been hailed as the soft power for the country with its huge focus on education and humanitarian aid activities as well as interfaith dialogue efforts. "Gülen schools portrayed Turkey as a mystical but adaptable and open-minded country, and became a place for building intimate connections with elites and their children in dozens of countries."<sup>1</sup> Erdoğan used the movement's international prevalence as a proof for his claim that it became the tool for the foreign powers.

## *When President Goes to War*

Erdoğan has vowed on many occasions to uproot the Gülen Movement wherever it is. He did everything in his capacity, banking on the state power and striking new partnerships with his old enemies against the Hizmet, which Erdoğan started calling the Parallel Structure. Erdoğan declared a "witch-hunt" against the movement, purging Gülen's followers from public services, crippling its media power, erecting red-tape obstacles, cowing its institutions and companies with interminable inspections, etc. Finally, on July 15, 2016, a coup attempt, which Erdoğan declared Hizmet as the main perpetrator and used this argument to justify his undemocratic measures.

Erdoğan said: "Neither in the East nor in the West is a single member of this organization comfortable as before, nor will they be. If not today, then tomorrow, one day every member of the FETO traitors' front will pay for his treason against the country and the nation."<sup>2</sup> FETÖ, the abbreviation for the Fetullahist Terror Organization, was chosen by him to demonize the movement.

## *A Cultural Genocide*

Erdoğan was not simply flapping his jaws. He has already been doing everything to make the life unbearable for the Gülen followers inside the country. The coup attempt, which the Hizmet never claimed involvement in and renounced from the first moment, gave him an unquestionable and unchallenged excuse to completely disregard the current laws, as well as some international laws like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, under a state of emergency. What ensued was a witch hunt at an unprecedented frantic intensity.

According to the research conducted by the AST as of February 2020, investigations have been carried out on more than **610,000** people. The number of people arrested as a result of these investigations has already gone above **160,000** and counting. Currently, about **63,000** political prisoners are behind bars in the Turkish prisons. A total of **780** children are inside these overcrowded prisons, where their mothers endure agonizing troubles to raise them. **6,021** academics were expelled from their universities; whereas **15** private universities, which had affiliations with the Hizmet were shut down. **3,003** schools and dormitories were closed, millions of books were burned. Roughly **200** media outlets were seized and were either converted to pro-government mouthpieces or muzzled completely. **161** journalists were imprisoned. **4,463** judge or prosecutors were dismissed from public service and some were incarcerated. Tens of thousands of police officers were axed. The licenses of **1,539** attorneys are currently under trial and **580** of them are in jail. **11** people died under arrest or during interrogation. **93** prisoners were killed due to torture and ill-treatment.



## *Globalizing the Theatre of War*

Erdoğan also attempted to convince countries through carrot and stick policies or more diplomatic means to join his personal fight and do the same to the Hizmet members within their borders without heeding too much about what the rule of law by its very own nature requires. Various governments didn't hesitate to jump on the bandwagon and yielded to the diplomatic pressure from Erdoğan to arrest and deport members of the Gülen Movement active in their countries. Angola, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bulgaria, Georgia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Morocco, Myanmar, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Turkmenistan are some of these countries. In some countries, like Myanmar, Kosovo, Kazakhstan and Sudan, the countries didn't even follow their own laws while carrying out the deportations. In some countries, the local intelligence agencies cooperated to seize Gülen followers, while in some others, Turkey's National Intelligence Agency (MIT) didn't even need to ask for permission to stage an operation.

In Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bulgaria, Malaysia, and Pakistan, the domestic authorities blatantly violated international laws by deliberately deporting or letting Turkish intel agents kidnap Erdoğan's opponents, who had applied for asylum or had UN protection against persecution.



## *Vicious Methods Inside the Country and Abroad*

Although ascertaining the exact number is not easy, an estimated total of **130** people (refer to AST's research) were abducted inside and outside Turkey through nefarious methods, brushing away even the most basic rights to fair trial and defense. Some of these people, whisked away abroad by clandestine operations, were under protection of the United Nations. They were subjected to heavy tortures, made to sign fake testimonies, turned into the living dead and even murdered. Ankara was even accused of exploiting the Interpol system by submitting extradition requests for over **40,000**<sup>3</sup> individuals with arbitrary terror charges, revoking passports of the dissidents who struggle to survive as expats, issuing arrest warrants on fake accusations, etc. MIT organized covert operations to abduct and bring to Turkey mostly people with alleged ties with the Gülen movement, sometimes in collaboration with the relevant authorities of the country and in some other cases without even bothering to inform them.

Inside the country, certain figures were abducted in broad daylight. **29** people (refer to AST's research) were registered as victims of enforced disappearance. A majority of these people were released, while some are feared to have been killed since no news has been heard from them for years now. Some of the survivors found the courage to tell the gory details of the torture they had been subjected to. Almost all of the people who were turned over to the police and were arrested show signs of heavy physical and psychological damage.

## *The Scope of the Report*

The report consists of three parts. The introductory part will first offer a consolidated approach towards the nature of the war Turkish State has initiated against Gülen movement, with an emphasis on Erdoğan's passion for vengeance which has exacerbated the conditions for the Gülen followers. A thorough discussion over the abductions and enforced disappearances within the framework of international law will also be presented in the first part.

The second part will shed light on how the Erdoğan administration extended its operations against the Gülen movement followers all around the world by stipulating and examining all known cases around the world. The third part will deal with the enforced abductions in Turkey, also called the Black Transporter cases.



## **PART I: INTRODUCTION**

It is no secret that Turkey's authoritarian political Islamist regime, headed by the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and its ruler Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has long been suppressing opposition in the country. Hand in glove with the shady elements of the country's former powerhouses, its fight against any kind of political dissent has been carried out through harsh measures that have often invoked the dark memories of the witch hunts of the Middle Ages.

As revealed in a myriad of incidents, the actions engaged by the Turkish state to squelch and muzzle the critics include a list of the most baleful forms of crimes against humanity. Hate crimes such as defamation and libel gush out in torrents every day from a colossal propaganda machine against any segment of the society that dares to position itself opposite the government. Once shunned as a despicable act even for the nation's intelligence agency, profiling has become a daily routine of not only state institutions, but also some non-governmental organizations. The profiling files are published in national media outlets as if it is a most ordinary thing. Open or covert threats, physical attacks and torture in the name of the state and for the "holy" purpose of saving the dignity of Erdoğan's position are no longer counted as crimes. Nor is this all: those who use force towards this aim are revered and rewarded.

Among all these sinister crimes, this report will attempt to throw light upon one of the most contemptible, one that the state has been relentlessly committing recently under orders of Erdoğan: forced disappearances, abductions and *quid pro quo* renditions of the dissidents in Turkey and abroad. It will also attempt to show how the autocratic regime has been employing state institutions as well as what appear to be non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as visible actors in the process of its persecutions.

Besides the fact that the magnitude of such efforts to silence, persecute the dissenting voices has not abated within the borders; the Turkish state has also escalated its cross-border operations against the dissenters. These unbridled and often reckless actions have caused in many cases problems in relationships with other governments, since such engagements are a clear violation of international treaties. Such actions are considered a direct interference in other countries' domestic affairs, as well as an unconcealed denial of their national sovereignty.

It goes without saying that these clandestine operations also pose a crime against humanity, and, as evident in the UN practices in similar cases, may become subject to international tribunal proceedings. Unfortunately, in this sense, Turkey has descended to become a part of the club of countries which hardly respect the foreign jurisdictions while conspiring against persons or communities they deem the enemy. North Korea stands out as a notorious example, as it uses enforced disappearances, abductions, renditions and assassinations of political opponents as an ordinary practice to eradicate the figures it finds “inconvenient” for its stability. How unfortunate it is to see the public indifference in Turkey as Erdoğan steers the country, which had once been a regional model for its seemingly successful combination of Islam and democracy, towards the path of the most oppressive regimes of the world, with such despicable and inhumane actions of enforced disappearances, torture and murder.

An enforced or involuntary disappearance is a direct assault on human rights, which cannot be legitimized on any grounds in terms of international law. Neither can it be conceivably acceptable in terms of humanity and conscience. The Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance provides a satisfactory definition for this crime. Proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in its resolution 47/133 of 18 December 1992 as a body of principles for all States, the declaration defines an enforced disappearance as incidents in which “persons are arrested, detained or abducted against their will or otherwise deprived of their liberty by officials

of different branches or levels of Government, or by organized groups or private individuals acting on behalf of, or with the support, direct or indirect, consent or acquiescence of the Government, followed by a refusal to disclose the fate or whereabouts of the persons concerned or a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of their liberty, which places such persons outside the protection of the law”.<sup>4</sup> How can one justify such a vicious act?

What is even worse is that the Turkish authorities have only rarely repudiated extreme and illegal measures to silence the opposition. On the contrary, the top government officials have boasted of them to win the favor of the masses for domestic political gains. Even bureaucrats from security and intelligence units have embraced such practices. The Turkish media, which has almost completely become a subservient tool of the government and a loyal amplifier to propagate Erdoğan’s messages to the masses, is brimming with success stories of how people are beaten and snatched in front of their children and wife or with “delightful” details of how these “bad guys” were whisked away from a foreign country -- with or without cooperation of the officials of that country -- as if they were not talking about the devastation of real lives, but rather narrating fictional spy thrillers.

This report aims to put a particular focus on these devastated lives: to examine abductions and enforced disappearances by the Turkish state inside and outside its borders. It tries to include as many cases as possible by resorting to open resources, as well as by trying to get access to the personal accounts of those who survived.



## — BACKGROUND —

The Erdoğan's regime has traditionally made capital of such shady methods to attack its enemies and the groups it sees detrimental to its core establishment. The Kurdish opposition, for instance, has long been a usual target for surreptitious assaults and assassinations. Likewise, leftist groups, communists and Alevites have also been subjected to similar underhanded actions. During its fight to exterminate the Kurdish separatist insurgency, thousands of victims were vanished, especially in eastern and southeastern Anatolia. Even today, two decades after their disappearance, the mothers of abducted and most likely killed children meet every Saturday in İstanbul to ask for at least a graveyard for their children. In recent years, however, the main victims of the extrajudicial practices have been the members of the Gülen movement, or Hizmet.<sup>5</sup>

Gülen movement's supporters mostly agreed with AKP's policies that strengthened country's democratic institutions while forcing the anti-democratic elements of the established state to retreat. However, as Erdoğan became increasingly more enthusiastic to fill the void left behind by the defeated *ancient régime* with his own dictatorial desires, the relations between the two groups deteriorated. Erdoğan accused Hizmet of perpetrating a plot to topple his government in December 2013 with two graft operations that implicated some businessmen close to him as well as a few members of his government and started a massive campaign against the movement.

Here, a paragraph must be inserted to briefly recall the dramatic overturn of the relations between the AKP and Hizmet, which also marks the time when the country started severing its already flimsy connections with the rule of law. When Erdoğan's network of shady relations was laid bare

by the corruption operations, the politician promptly declared that his government was under attack by the global powerhouses which didn't want Turkey's rise again as a regional actor, and that these secret organizations assigned Hizmet to finish off his party, the only hope for the revival of the old magnificence of the country. His declaration paved the way to justify his undemocratic measures and dark propaganda against members of the movement. In just a couple of days, he changed his rhetoric utterly from praising how aloof a movement of sincerity and devotion the Hizmet is, to how fiendish a demon it actually is and that it is responsible for all evil in the country. Erdoğan said Hizmet volunteered to become a puppet of the nation's foreign enemies and so it is also the enemy of the people and for this very reason, a total annihilation would be good for everyone. This reasoning, inspired suddenly by the corruption cases, interestingly convinced Turks, possibly owing to the extremely loyal media power Erdoğan has and to the general inclination of ordinary Turkish people towards accepting conspiracy theories. The further away the conspiracy theories are from reality, the more credible they become, especially when they are repeated by such a powerful figure as Erdoğan. The politician lost no time in hitting the roads and started public rallies all around Turkey, sometimes in three different cities in a single day, to tell the same lies to the masses, while every single message from his mouth was multiplied by the media to reach millions over and over again. At the same time, the prosecutors and law enforcement officers who had participated in the corruption operations were either demoted or assigned to insignificant units, contrary to current laws. Erdoğan's next step would be to seek cooperation against the common enemy with the former actors of the deep state, who had been forced to retreat after their coup plans were exposed.

A systematic and sweeping purge of the critical figures in the state bureaucracy ensued; the victims were largely the people affiliated with the movement. Following the failed coup of July 15 in 2016, which Erdoğan blamed on Hizmet and its leader, the purge became even more widespread, and the methods turned more vicious.

Hizmet had been labeled as a terror organization by Erdoğan's cabinet as per the recommendations of the National Security Council (MGK), a still powerful unit of the former regime, but a considerable portion of the domestic public opinion was still in favor of Hizmet, as the movement had always praised peace over violence, dialogue over conflict and education over everything else. Gülen had frequently maligned anyone resorting to terror in the name of Allah as non-believers and the most dangerous enemies of Islam; therefore, many were still shrugging off Erdoğan's

defamation campaigns and his continuous attributions of terror to Gülen and his followers. But after the July 15th botched coup attempt, with the help of a torrential flood of a one-sided narration of the coup details, it didn't take long until public opinion completely turned against Hizmet and its leader, even though they were disavowing the coup repeatedly from the first moment on. With the help of an enormous public outrage against anything and anyone related to the Gülen movement, Erdoğan found the strength and excuse to disregard any obligation to stick to laws, fairness and mercy. When he shouted in public rallies that all Hizmet followers must be exterminated, he got applause. When he ordered the plunder of the properties of Hizmet members, he got cheers. When he asked people to snitch on their relatives and friends from Hizmet, he got standing ovations.

Profiling and persecution of members of the Gülen movement was now not only a leisure pursuit of ordinary people, but also a task assigned to the state's institutions, government agencies, AKP bureaus, and elected and appointed local administrators from governors to chiefs of villages.

Embassies were also commissioned with coordinating the profiling and spying activities on the expat members of the Hizmet movement. These missions included a variety of operations from mere intelligence gathering and stalking to threatening, harassing and even physically assaulting the critics of Erdoğan. It is quite likely that embassies have also been actively involved in the preparation and logistics phases of abductions and renditions. The mastermind and executer of the operations was Turkey's main spy body, the National Intelligence Organization (MİT). The Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB), as well as the Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency (TİKA), were also active participants in the covert intel operations around the world.

Ironically, the Religious Affairs Directorate (Diyanet) also joined the lynch party as a voluntary contributor to the assignment by the MİT to identify people critical of Erdoğan within expat communities, in clear contradiction to the obligatory assignment by the religion to help these people become brothers and friends.

Turkish preachers from the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DİTİB) have been actively employed in these intelligence gathering activities at the government's request. Even though these were initially said to be "false media claims," Secretary General Bekir Albogha later confessed that "a few" imams provided information to the Presidency of Religious Affairs.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, as per later news, German police's investigations revealed that these accusations may only be the tip of the iceberg, meaning that such efforts could be taking place across Europe, such as the Netherlands, Switzerland and Belgium.<sup>7</sup>

State-run news companies, Anatolia News Agency (AA) and Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT), spared no effort to follow the dissenting figures and make sensational stories about them in the countries where they operated. The Yunus Emre Institute and the Maarif (Education) Foundation, which acted hand in glove with the Turkish government to forcibly seize the educational institutions built and operated by the Hizmet movement in various countries, were also active participants in the clandestine warfare against the Gülen movement across the world.

Last but not least, government funded private think tanks and organizations like the Union of European Turkish Democrats (UETD), the Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA) and the Turkish Heritage Organization, must be counted among the essential actors. They organized panels, conferences, and events, as well as issued a variety of publications, to disseminate ideas designed to bleach the government's extrajudicial, arbitrary and inhumane actions as inevitable measures taken at extraordinary times. They have also vied to garner support for Erdoğan and his party among Turkish communities while at the same time collecting information about the owners of the voices against Erdoğan within these communities.

Based on such underhanded investigations and espionage, the Erdoğan's regime would first ask rendition of its critics from the countries they were lawfully residing in. Depending on the nature of its relations with them, Turkey first asks through legitimate channels for the deportation of the people it is seeking. If this step proves unsuccessful, Turkey then attempts to offer bribes or use its influence to pressure these countries to hand over the wanted persons. The different milestones of this path are formulated in a report by the EU's Open Dialogue Foundation: "When non-democratic states do not succeed in attaining extradition by legitimate methods, extraprocedural forced expulsions (case of the employees of the Turco-Moldovian lyceum Orizont) or abductions (case of Vladimir Yegorov, Aleksandr Frantskevich, Murdali Khalimov) of the wanted persons often take place. Such actions are implemented on the basis of cooperation between the law-enforcement agencies and special services of both states, in secret, without observing lawful procedures, thus depriving persons of the opportunity to defend their interests in court (cases of Abdullah Büyük, Aminat Babayeva, Yusuf İnan, Salih Zeki Yiğit, Alma Shalabayeva, Muratbek Tungishbayev, Zhaksylyk Zharimbetov).<sup>8</sup>



## ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES IN INTERNATIONAL LAW

Enforced disappearances have universally been categorized as some of the most heinous crimes that can possibly be committed by malicious state actors. All relevant instruments of international law expressly forbid enforced disappearances, given that the act entirely circumvents avenues of due process while inflicting undue trauma upon both the abducted and the relatives of the abducted.

In a straightforward definition of “forced disappearance”, the Convention on the Forced Disappearance of Persons states, “forced disappearance of persons is... a grave and abominable offence against the inherent dignity of the human being.” The Convention also adds, “forced disappearance of persons violates numerous non-derogable and essential human rights” and reaffirms that the systematic practice of disappearance “constitutes a crime against humanity.” The International Criminal Court expands upon this definition of enforced disappearance, detailing it as the “arrest, detention or abduction of persons by, or with the authorization, support or acquiescence of, a State or a political organization, followed by a refusal to acknowledge that deprivation of freedom or to give information on the fate or whereabouts of those persons, with the intention of removing them from the protection of the law for a prolonged period of time.”

Finally, one of the most recent instruments of international law, the 2006 Convention on Enforced Disappearance, Article 1, provides an indubitably worded right to all persons:

**“No one shall be subjected to enforced disappearance.”**

A signatory to United Nations’ Conventions, the Republic of Turkey has violated international laws and human rights of its victims in all countries detailed in this report. Furthermore, the Turkish administration has utilized baseless national security arguments to justify its egregious behavior across the world. The Turkish’s government’s unabashed attempts to terrorize Turkish nationals across the world has violated the sovereignty of states in 16 known cases detailed here. International law prohibits the use of enforced disappearance under all circumstances as follows:

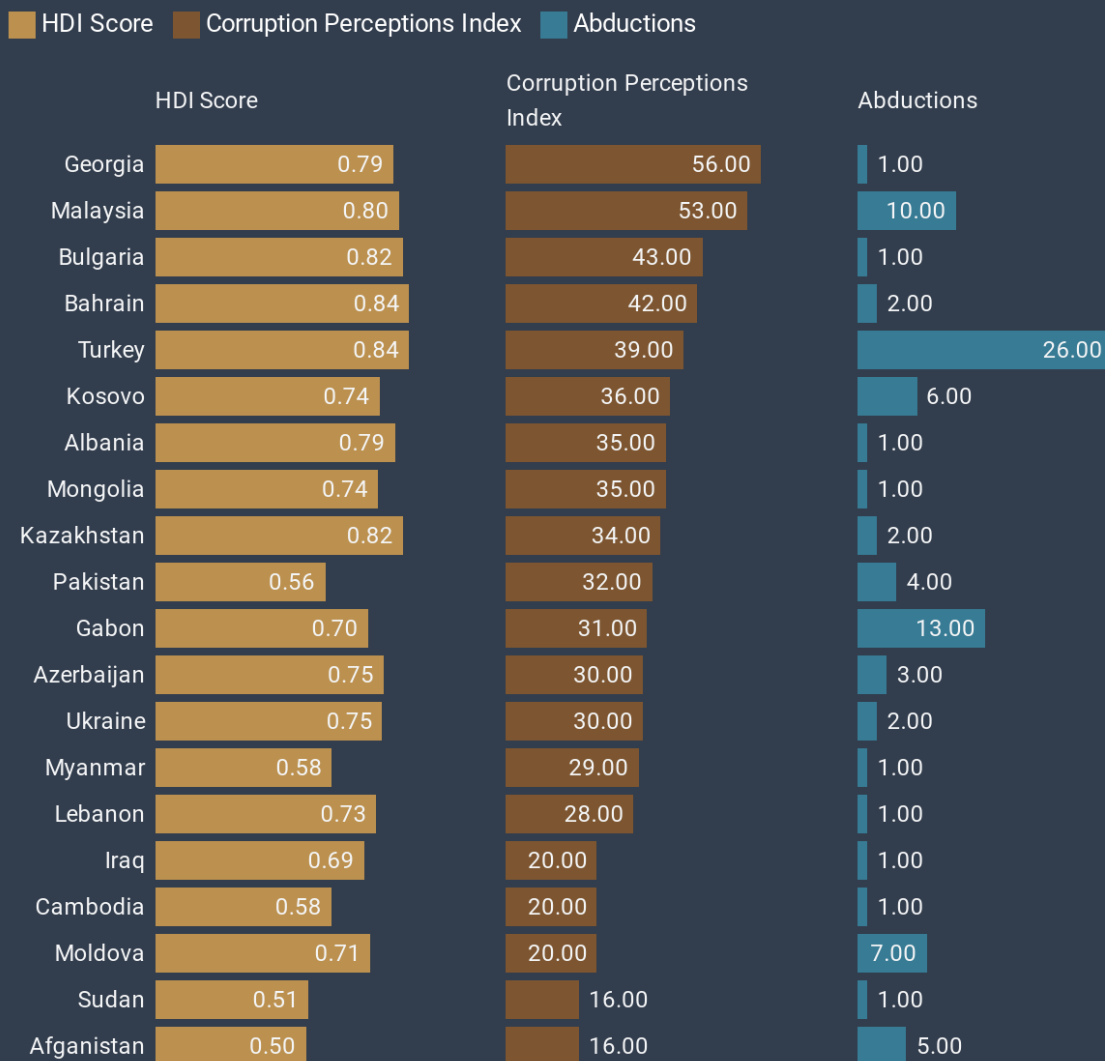
**“No exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification for enforced disappearance.”**

The Republic of Turkey, the current Turkish government overseen by Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and all relevant actors involved in the process of terrorizing, abducting, and transporting people around the world to further their objectives continually violate widely recognized international laws, national sovereignty of countries subject to such operations, and local rules and regulations of relevant countries. In sum, the Erdogan Regime and its constituent parts, especially members of the intelligence community taking part in worldwide operations have committed crimes against humanity. Crimes against humanity have no statute of limitations.

# TURKEY'S ABDUCTION RECORD

## Human Development & Corruption Perception Rankings

HDI and Corruption Perception data on a list of implicated countries where abductions have occurred



For comparison: Norway ranks 1st with the highest HDI of 0.954 (highest score 1.0); Denmark ranks 1st with the highest CPI of 88 (Highest score is 100)

Source: UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME & TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL & AST •  
Created with Datawrapper

Human Development<sup>9</sup> & Corruption Perception Rankings<sup>10</sup>

Turkey's extraterritorial incursions to kidnap dissidents and its similarly egregious actions in its own jurisdiction have been substantiated with many cases, and this report will attempt to shed light on as many cases as possible. Nonetheless, one needs to first examine the grounds the Turkish authorities base their actions on.

On April 17, 2014, the Turkish Parliament empowered the National Intelligence Organization (MİT) with the legal authority to conduct undercover missions outside Turkey's borders with a critical change in Law number 2937. Another important change was introduced in 2017 with the decree law number 694 that rendered the MİT subordinate directly to the presidency and the President was assigned as the chair of the National Intelligence Coordination Council (MİKK), which would become the main strategy-making body for MİT's moves outside Turkey.<sup>11</sup> MİT now became able to realize to-the-point operations without facing any impediments that could have arisen if parliament had not been bypassed by attaching the agency directly to the almighty presidential post.

As we will discuss in the proceeding parts, although the domestic reactions to the MİT's covert operations inside and outside the country have been limited, they garnered huge repulsion from certain states and international organizations, as its actions were perceived as a form of deprivation of liberty.

An individual's right to liberty can be compromised so long as it is in compliance with international law. Article 9 of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights and Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights clearly define the arbitrary deprivation of liberty as a lack of respect to grounds and procedures prescribed by law. Both articles provide in indisputable terms the conditions that any individual must be well informed, promptly or at the time of arrest, of the reasons for their arrest and of any charges against them in case of arresting. Furthermore, any individual must be brought before a judge or a similar judicial authority without delay.

However, in Turkey's practice, people are abducted without even knowing what their crimes are or who exactly has captured them. They appear in court only after months of heavy tortures, if they are lucky to live long enough. Indeed, they can't see even the faces of their abductors or torturers, much less their lawyers or families.

Turkey's abduction operations abroad have in some cases been in cooperation with the hosting countries, while in others, the Turkish operational units simply utilized underhanded methods, drawing strong reactions from those countries. For example, the Mongolian Deputy Foreign Minister Battsetseg Batmunkh denounced the abduction attempt of the Turkish teacher Veysel Akçay on the grounds that "it is an unacceptable act of violation of Mongolia's sovereignty and independence and Mongolia will strongly object it." The Turkish Ambassador in Ulaanbaatar would, without a moment to spare, reject any kind of knowledge or involvement in the operation.<sup>12</sup>



Another harsh backlash came from Kosovo after Turkey kidnapped five teachers and a medical doctor who had affiliations with the Gülen movement. Kosovar Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj fired his interior minister and spy chief for their alleged complicity. Kosovo's Foreign Affairs Ministry issued a stern statement in which it said, "the arrest and deportation of the Turkish citizens with a regular residence permit ... is ... in direct contradiction to international norms."<sup>13</sup> Erdoğan lambasted Kosovo's PM, who had said the followers of the Gülen movement "were not deported but were stolen," as if he was talking to one of his underlings or to any Turk who dared to question him, saying Haradinaj would "pay" for what he did. Enver Robelli, a prominent Kosovar journalist, told *Al Monitor* about Erdoğan's unbridled disparagement of the Kosovar PM: "People are irritated that Erdogan attacks the prime minister. Most [local] media [report that] Erdogan behaves as if he were the king of Kosovo."

Nate Schenkkan from the *Washington Post* wrote, "The idea that Turkish intelligence would brazenly abduct its citizens from a country with which it has putatively good relations is a shocking offense against both international human rights standards and bilateral norms."<sup>14</sup>

Schenkkan elaborated on Turkey's flagrant "transnational repression."<sup>15</sup> He asserted that Turkey has pursued an aggressive policy to silence its perceived enemies in at least 46 countries.

Additionally, he recounted the allegations that it was abusing the Interpol as a political tool to target its opponents. “Ankara has revoked thousands of passports, and achieved the arrest, deportation, or rendition of hundreds of Turkish citizens from at least 16 countries, including many who were under UN protection as asylum seekers. It has successfully pressured at least 20 countries to close or transfer to new owners dozens, perhaps hundreds, of Gülen movement schools,” he wrote.<sup>16</sup>

The regime’s blatant moves against the followers of the Gülen movement have also been registered in detail by the Human Rights Watch (HRW) in its annual country reports since 2017. The report wrote under the Torture and Ill-Treatment in Custody section in 2017: “Cases of torture and ill-treatment in police custody were widely reported through 2017, especially by individuals detained under the anti-terror law, marking a reverse in long-standing progress, despite the government’s stated zero tolerance for torture policy. There were widespread reports of police beating detainees, subjecting them to prolonged stress positions and threats of rape, threats to lawyers, and interference with medical examinations.”<sup>17</sup> The report mentioned the abductions by “unidentified perpetrators believed to be state agents” in at least six cases. The report for 2018 marked the continuation of allegations of torture, ill-treatment, and cruel and inhuman or degrading treatment in police custody and prison and the lack of any meaningful investigation into them as a source of deep concern. Furthermore, it would also lambaste the lack of any effective investigations into these serious assertions by the judiciary.<sup>18</sup>

The same report for the next year recorded only exacerbation in these sources of concern without any sign of progress.<sup>19</sup> Different from the previous reports, it would point to a pervasive culture of impunity for members of the security forces and public officials implicated. The report would also criticize in harsh terms Turkey’s barring of the publication of reports on the findings of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) in their two visits to detention places in Turkey. “Turkish authorities continued to seek the extradition of alleged Gülen supporters, many of them teachers, from countries around the world. Countries that complied with Turkey’s requests bypassed legal procedures and judicial review. Those illegally extradited in this way were detained and prosecuted on return to Turkey,” the report asserted.



## — CONFESSING ABDUCTIONS —

Despite undeniable evidence that the enforced disappearances were carried out openly or covertly by several state institutions, mainly by the intelligence and the security units, different government representatives and bodies have vehemently rejected accusations in their official statements. Despite that, their deliberate or on-impulse confessions are available even in the sources that are publicly accessible. Although it is universally accepted as a heinous transgression of the basic human rights and is widely shunned, Turkish authorities have interestingly defended abductions of dissidents in Turkey or abroad, not in blurted-out blunders but in deliberately stated confirmations. In the following paragraphs, some examples of such remarks will be highlighted.

Before proceeding with its abductions, Turkey first tried to capture the dissidents through formal mechanisms and within internationally approved norms, such as requesting the extradition of Gülen movement members. But as its demands were turned down in some countries, especially in the democratic world where the supremacy of law is respected, the Turkish government started to use extrajudicial ways like abductions to bring these people back.

## Thinly-veiled Threats by Politicians

Turkish president Erdoğan has encouraged his loyalists time and again to make life unbearable for Hizmet followers and ordered law enforcement units and intelligence officers to kidnap his critics and punish them, even hinting vaguely of their murders. For instance, in one of his speeches, he said: *“Some countries eliminate terrorists whom they consider as a threat to their national security, wherever they are. This means they accept that Turkey has the same right.”* He then hinted about his target: *“This includes the terrorists they shake hands with and praise. I hope we will have good news for the nation on this matter soon.”*<sup>20</sup>



R. Tayyip  
Erdoğan

In one of his early statements in September 2016, he would say that *“no country or region around the world will ever be a safe haven for FETÖ<sup>21</sup> and its militants.”*<sup>22</sup> The Turkish autocrat described the members of the Gülen movement as cancer cells that must be exterminated, leaving no remnants. *“Those who fled abroad before or in the murky atmosphere of the coup d’état should never feel safe. ... 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 wherever they are captured,”* he said.<sup>23</sup>

Similar comments would spill from Erdoğan’s mouth during a joint press conference with Kosovar President Hashim Thaçi in Ankara on December 29, 2016<sup>24</sup>: *“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 leaders and militants of terrorist organizations.”*

Former Deputy Prime Minister Bekir Bozdağ nonchalantly admitted that Ankara’s spy agency *“bundled up and brought back”* 80 suspects against their will, as part of their global response to so-called threats to Turkey’s security from the Hizmet movement. He also called the capture of Turkish dissident s from Kosovo, which had caused a serious commotion in that country, as *“a great success.”*<sup>25</sup>



Bekir  
Bozdağ

Hüseyin  
Aydın



Commenting on the Kosovo abductions on the state-run TRT radio, Erdoğan's lawyer Hüseyin Aydın also said similar abductions by the Turkish intelligence would continue. The Kosovo operation was not marking any "paradigm shift" for the MIT, and it wasn't the first of its kind, said Aydın. "Fugitive Gülenists will walk looking behind their backs all the time. The National Intelligence Organization will continue its operations everywhere. After the government's success at home, there was a need to carry out operations targeting the movement's overseas network," he threatened.<sup>26</sup>

Following suit, the other members of the Turkish government, as well as loyal followers of the president, have expressed similar thoughts. There have been repeated calls for kidnapping, killing and torturing of Gülen followers from these circles; nevertheless, even though these are heinous hate crimes, prosecutors simply turn a deaf ear to any such threats if they are leveled against Hizmet members. This is a public craze, an unfathomable intemperance that is hardly tolerated even under actual war conditions. Even warring sides try to avoid atrocities against civilians, especially children, the elderly and women. However, different units of the state and the civilians, chiefly Erdoğan himself and his zealot loyalists, have repeatedly called for abduction and torture, even murder, of any Hizmet member in Turkey or abroad -- even if they are elderly or women -- and the plunder of their properties.

Berat  
Albayrak



Erdoğan's son-in-law even publicly encouraged the AKP zealots to kill Gülen movement followers, saying he would butcher them wherever he sees them without even batting an eyelid.<sup>27</sup> While talking to a group of students that were granted scholarships to study abroad, Berat Albayrak said, "This gang of traitors is now pouring their poison and treason in cooperation with a disgusting 'diaspora network' all around the world to

smear and betray this nation and this religion abroad. ... If I were you, I would not have been able to restrain myself, I would have butchered them wherever I saw them. ... These fugitives, stateless traitors, live very normal lives," he added.

Erdoğan's spokesperson İbrahim Kalın, as he was answering questions from the press on September 21, 2018, said, "Now, look, it may be the US or some other places, other countries in which the FETÖ nested, or some other regions, the operations by our relevant units and institutions in these places will continue uninterrupted. Therefore, they will continue feeling the breath of the state of the



İbrahim  
Kalın

Turkish Republic on their necks. No one must ever doubt about this. Of course, I am not able to give you any details as to which countries, here or there, but anything may happen at any place. Let me express that our president has a clear order on this matter and that our units have been conducting professional efforts at the fullest possible extent. There may be operations in other regions, too, similar to the one in Kosovo. The Turkish Republic will not allow FETÖ to inhale a peaceful breath, everyone must know this."<sup>28</sup> The Kosovo operation he was referring to had stirred a huge backlash in the Balkan country as its Prime Minister stepped up to sack the internal minister and the head of the security forces for their negligence, which tainted the country's sovereignty and made Kosovo seem like an unchecked and unprotected field where the agents of other countries could freely do whatever they want.

Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu said on April 4, 2017, "We do not stop chasing after them [Gülen movement participants] at home and abroad. We are breathing down their necks. We won't give these traitors and dishonorable people room to breathe."<sup>29</sup> He would repeat the same threats over and over again by using the exact same words in a venomous tone as he spoke in Antalya in February 2019: "We are breathing down their necks. We will grab



Mevlüt  
Çavuşoğlu

their necks and bring them back to Turkey. We will make the whole world a dungeon for them. We are hot on their heels all across the world. We are closing their associations, schools. We are closing down them all, or we are making them closed down. Lastly, Pakistan Constitutional Court declared them a terror organization."<sup>30</sup>

Süleyman  
Soylu



In some other incidents, the Turkish authorities revealed their plans to resort to underhanded operations against the members of the Gülen movement. Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu, for example, asserted on March 2017 that the Turkish state units have plans to whisk away the opposition figures, who had escaped the AKP persecution and sought refuge in Germany as political asylees. “One day, these FETÖ terrorists may be shocked to see where they are located, you know.

I’m telling you from here, it is not that easy.”<sup>31</sup>

In one of the most famous such incidents that also kicked up a row in the US, the US President Donald Trump’s national security adviser Mike Flynn allegedly discussed with representatives from the Turkish government a \$15-million offer in exchange for delivering Fethullah Gülen to Turkey.<sup>32</sup> This single case alone depicts the exorbitant plots the Turkish government has schemed and ventured even in the US, much less the countries with less established democratic institutions. Within its own borders and abroad, the Turkish government will continue to round up and bring in the dissidents to fill its currently-under-construction 228 new prisons.<sup>33</sup>

## *Threats from Loyalists*

Aydın Ünal



Pro-government figures not only from politics, but also from the media, also encouraged abduction, torture and killing of government dissidents in Turkey and abroad. Erdoğan’s former speechwriter Aydın Ünal, for instance, penned threats bluntly against the Hizmet members in his column in a pro-government media outlet. The following quote is taken verbatim from his column in Erdoğan’s *Yeni Şafak* newspaper: “Certain Fetullahists

continuing to live does not serve the interests of neither Gülen nor U.S. intelligence. They should prepare for the extrajudicial organization executions approaching, rather than conduct an operation through the judicial theater.”<sup>34</sup> When he wrote these lines, he was also an MP of Erdoğan’s party. He claimed that the Hizmet would do something like this to journalists in exile since their lives would no longer “serve the interests of the movement.” These lines, however, were nothing but providing an early excuse for the MİT’s covert operations to assassinate these dissidents.

Another pro-government journalist, Cem Küçük, made an even direr statement. During a live television program, he insisted Turkish intelligence agencies kill family members of people who were arrested over their (alleged) affiliations with the Gülen movement. He was very critical even about the prosecutors, who had notoriously been very tough on the followers of the Gülen movement, accusing these prosecutors of being excessively lenient. He suggested that instead of asking questions and taking answers in the conventional ways, the detained people must be subjected to a variety of tortures during their enforced stays in prisons. One of his suggestions to effectively convince Hizmet members to confess their attributed crimes was to “to hang them out of the window by their legs.”<sup>35</sup>



Cem Küçük

Unfortunately, the Turkish state is already executing much worse cruelty against the alleged members of the movement. There are innumerable gruelling accounts of how Hizmet members are treated in prisons.<sup>36</sup>

The threats that come from Erdoğan’s zealot followers must also be noted. There have been countless physical assaults against members of the Hizmet movement inside Turkey, but there are concrete signs that the acts of intimidation and cannonade are being deliberately organized in other countries as well. For example, some German press outlets reported that AKP MP Metin Külünk was ostensibly providing funds for the Turkish “Ottoman Germania” gangs. There are surveillance camera records showing this politician in contact with the gang members while allegedly giving them money. A ZDF news reported evidence that Ottoman Germania was indeed assigned to carry out attacks on the Turkish dissidents living in the country.<sup>37</sup> A former member of the European Parliament Ozan Ceyhun wrote on social media, “Gülenists in Germany will have many sleepless nights. We owe that to our martyrs.”<sup>38</sup> Likewise, Dursun Baş, the chairman of the German branch of the Union of European Turkish Democrats (UETD), addressed two members of Stiftung Dialog und Bildung via Twitter, saying, “How do you dare to go out on the streets? For you there will be no easy death.”<sup>39</sup>



Metin  
Külünk



Ozan  
Ceyhun

**Sedat Peker**



Sedat Peker, a mafia leader who was released from prison by Erdoğan in 2014, openly threatened dissidents with death, but was acquitted by the court without even a slight warning, much less due punishment. Peker, who was embraced by Erdoğan on many occasions and has very close relations with the youth of Erdoğan's party, said, "We will force into the jails after hanging all of whomever we catch on the trees, flag poles. We will hang them in the jails as well. We will hang them on the poles from their necks," and the court accepted these words as nothing more than a normal expression of one's opinions.<sup>40</sup>

**Ali Ekrem  
Kaynak**



People quit attending mosques for regular prayers due to the fear of getting assaulted by partisans,<sup>41</sup> and their buildings were stoned or burnt by arson even in major European countries.<sup>42</sup> Turkish businessman Ali Ekrem Kaynak was killed in Amsterdam sometime after he was verbally and physically assaulted by Erdoğan loyalists over his proximity to the Hizmet movement.<sup>43</sup> There have been similar incidents in the US as well.<sup>44</sup>



## **PART II: ABDUCTIONS ABROAD**

This part will particularly shed light on the abductions of the dissidents of the Erdoğan regime outside Turkey and their deportations and renditions. Erdoğan attempted to convince countries through diplomatic or economic pressure or in some occasions through more diplomatic means to join his personal fight against the Hizmet members. As an example of such pressure, a businessman, who had lived and worked in Azerbaijan for more than a decade and had actively engaged in education activities as part of the Hizmet movement there, shared an anecdote with the AST: “The Azerbaijani administration was tolerant for us when Erdoğan waged a war against the movement after the corruption operations in 2013 despite his repeated and persistent demands to close down all institutions affiliated with the Hizmet. After a while, the Azerbaijani administration appointed a trustee overseeing the operation of the schools, but it seemed like this person was there to only put in an appearance occasionally. He was only rarely interfering in the actual running of the schools. It didn’t take long before the Turkish authorities realized it, and Erdoğan said, ‘are you playing us for a fool. I will end all relations if you keep protecting them.’ After this threat, our schools were closed.” Azerbaijan closed down the movement’s schools before the July 15 coup

attempt but didn't touch its university, Kafkas. In the days after the botched coup, the university was also closed down and a series of arrests followed.

Erdoğan had continuously been demanding the governments all around the world to join his fight against the movement; though he had been able to muster support only to a limited extent in only several countries. For example, The Gambia closed the schools known to have been affiliated with the movement in April 2014 and Azerbaijan and Tajikistan in 2015. But the coup provided him a leverage to become pushier. Governments, especially in the democratically and economically backward regions, yielded to the pressures and even some of them copied Erdoğan's aggressive stance. Arrest and deportation of members of the Gülen Movement ensued. According to the information from the Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu in April 2019, 22 countries closed down Hizmet schools and 18 countries seized these schools and transferred them to the Maarif Foundations, which was founded under the auspices of the Turkish government as a tool for this purpose. Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, The Gambia, Libya, Jordan, Dominic Republic, Haiti, Rwanda, Kuwait, Morocco, Tunisia, Montenegro, Maldives, Madagascar, Ivory Coast, Serbia, Senegal, Venezuela and Amman. The countries, which seized and transferred some or all of the movement's schools to Erdoğan-backed foundations include Guinea, Somalia, Niger, Sudan, Kongo Republic, Mauritania, Mali, Chad, Senegal, Gabon, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tunisia, Ivory Coast, and Venezuela.<sup>45</sup>

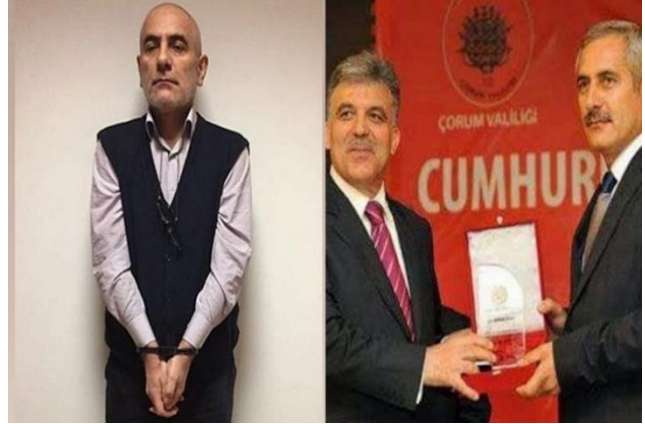
Apart from them, Angola, Bahrain, Bulgaria, Georgia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Myanmar, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkmenistan were some of the countries that actively supported Erdoğan's cause by persecutions and deportations against Gülen followers in their jurisdictions. In some others, like Myanmar, Kosovo, Kazakhstan and Sudan, the governments didn't even follow their own laws while carrying out the deportations. In some countries, the local intelligence agencies cooperated to seize Gülen followers while in some others, MIT didn't even need to ask for permission to stage an operation. In countries where democratic institutions are well established and the rule of law prevails, Erdoğan's constant demands to ignore laws for the sake of getting rid of the dissidents were not heeded. An EU member, Bulgaria, was unfortunately an exception. Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borissov would have to admit that the deportation of a software engineer in August 2016 was "on the edge of the law." This person had applied for asylum before the coup attempt. The Balkan country received massive domestic and international reaction for its extrajudicial act.

Angola, Pakistan and Qatar deported many followers of the Gülen movement after closing down their institutions. There have even been several cases (for example in Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bulgaria, Malaysia, and Pakistan) in which asylum-seekers, who must by definition and by international agreements be untouchable until their applications are in progress, were sent to Turkey.

Cases of abductions and unlawful deportations in certain countries will be reported below.

## SUDAN

**Memduh Çıkmaz:** Memduh Çıkmaz was a successful businessman who had been dealing with manufacturing and trade in Turkey and in Sudan for many years. He was an esteemed philanthropist, praised not only in this African country, but also in his own country; he was even rewarded by the former President Abdullah Gül for becoming the highest taxpayer in his home city in Turkey on June 4, 2010.



After pressure over his membership in the Hizmet movement, Çıkmaz decided to put more weight on the African leg of his business and moved there in 2016. However, he got his share of Erdogan's antagonism against the movement even there. The Turkish government, which saw the businessman as one of the important figures of the movement in this country, started to exert pressure on Sudan through its foreign affairs channels. Sudanese authorities turned down Turkish demands to hand over the man they knew well. But they were no longer able to resist these demands after the July 15th coup attempt, for which the Turkish state tagged the Hizmet movement as the main culprit. The Anatolia news agency reported that he was brought to Turkey from Sudan in a joint operation between the two countries' intelligence agencies<sup>46</sup>. Sudan's National Intelligence and Security Service was believed to have assisted in his arrest and repatriation.



He was incriminated as the “money safe,” a key financier of the Hizmet movement, which he denied outright. Çıkmaz claimed innocence, since he was living in Sudan before and during the coup and had no connection with the coup perpetrators. What is worse, he was not allowed to see his lawyer,

and his family’s petition that he had a rare protein related disease which may easily escalate to a life-threatening situation under prison conditions if not attended to properly, was not taken into consideration at all. The warnings about the torture and unfair treatment in Turkey also fell on deaf ears, and Sudan eventually delivered Çıkmaz to Turkey. As expected, the businessman was arrested and sent to prison. He was sentenced to 10 years<sup>47</sup>.

## GEORGIA

**Mustafa Emre Çabuk:** Living in Georgia since 2002, Mustafa Emre Çabuk was a teacher



at the Demirel College when he was detained on May 25, 2017, a day after the then-Prime Minister of Turkey Binali Yıldırım’s visit to this country. Based on a request from the Turkish side<sup>48</sup>, Çabuk was placed in pre-extradition detention for three months. His family members also started receiving threats from the pro-Erdoğan zealots in the country, and consequently, the Chief Prosecutor’s Office of Georgia decided to shelter them with a special protection program.

Deeply concerned about Turkey’s infamous practices of breaching even the most basic human rights as well as the cases of torture in Turkey, a prominent NGO, Transparency International Georgia, supported the Çabuk family in their plea against his extradition to Turkey: “We call upon the President of Georgia to, by way of exception, grant Georgian citizenship to Mustafa Emre Çabuk and his family members as well as to the teachers of Demirel College and Black Sea University who truly have merits to Georgia and who wish to become citizens of our country.

We believe that their rights will be better guaranteed and protected on the territory of Georgia as a result of such a step.”<sup>49</sup>

The same concerns would also be voiced by Amnesty International (AI), which called for an urgent action to be taken to prevent Çabuk’s expulsion before it was too late. “He could be extradited any minute and in Turkey he could be at risk of torture or other ill-treatment, unfair trial or other serious human right violations,”<sup>50</sup> AI asserted, warning also



that both international law concerning human rights and its national legislation alike render it totally illegitimate to return Çabuk to Turkey. “[The] detention of Mustafa Çabuk in given context has [a] clearly pronounced political connotation and is indicative of political loyalty of Georgian authorities towards the Government of Turkey,” the organization stated.<sup>51</sup>

But not only was his asylum application to Georgia rejected in July of 2017,<sup>52</sup> a court also extended his term in jail for another three months in August 2017.

Rebecca Harms, a member of the European Parliament and co-president of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly, closely attended the case and paid several visits to Georgia to show solidarity with Çabuk and his family, while also urging Georgian authorities to step back from their mistake while there was still time. She would be the first to announce the good news on her Twitter account on February 19, 2018, that Çabuk was freed on bail by a Georgian court.<sup>53</sup>

## KAZAKHSTAN

**Zabit Kiři:** “Life had no meaning anymore. I had set my heart on dying and I was no longer



finding those who commit suicide incomprehensible. In a three-square-meter, grave-like place without a hint of sunshine, I suffered physical and psychological torture for 108 days.”<sup>54</sup> These lines are from Zabit Kiři’s own pen, quoted from the complaint petition he submitted after he was put in the Kandıra prison. The gory account of what he had gone through may sound “unbearable to read,” and “it is impossible not to fall ill while reading,” as Gergerlioğlu describes it<sup>55</sup>, but it must still be included here to record how monstrous people can become in the

name of the state and how completely they can disregard dignity and disrespect even the most basic rights of human beings.

Zabit Kiři and Enver Kılıç were living in Kyrgyzstan. On September 16, 2017, the two men went to Kazakhstan’s Almaty International Airport to go to the Netherlands. As they were heading to their plane, they were detained because of “some problems” in their passports. On September 30, a court ruled to deport the two men back to Kyrgyzstan, and two seats were reserved for them on Airastana Airlines flight number KG 109. But Kiři and Kılıç were forced off this flight as well without an explanation.<sup>56</sup>

The two men didn’t know it at the time, but they were actually getting abducted illegally in Kazakhstan in what was declared as a joint operation by the Kazakh and Turkish intelligence. The operation was a flagrant violation of the international and national laws, but the intelligence bodies of both countries were too busy to heed the laws. Kiři and Kılıç were later deported to Turkey.<sup>57</sup> Unable to get any word from them for some time, their families inquired with the Kazakh authorities, only to learn that the two men were delivered to the Turkish intelligence. The families were told that the two men were taken to Turkey on September 30, 2017, at 23:32, on Turkish Airlines’ Almaty-Ankara flight number TT-4010. That wasn’t the case, though. The families of Kiři and Kılıç tried in vain to locate them for months.

When Zabit Kiři was delivered to the security forces after 108 days of heavy torture, his body was weak and feeble and, like his soul, laden with the deep wounds from aggravated torture. He had lost 30 kilos. The first time he faced the judge, he would beg the judge to put him in prison because he feared getting killed if he stayed outside.



He was sentenced to 13 years and 6 months for his connections with the Gülen movement on June 21. The judge who sent Kiři to prison, despite his extremely severe condition and despite the lack of any concrete evidence that he had been actively involved in any kind of violence, has not taken any step to investigate the perpetrators of the evident torture the suspect had undeniably suffered.

Only after he was partially healed with strong medication and was able to recuperate from the loss of sensation in his feet and hands, did he start writing about what had been done to him and others in the same place during that time. He said<sup>58</sup> he was put on a plane that was painted with camouflage patterns and that had no number or sign on it. People in plainclothes started beating him as soon as he was taken aboard. They were kicking especially at his head and groin, so hard that bleeding from his penis would last for days. His eyes were blindfolded tightly, covering also his nostrils, and his hands were cuffed from behind. The beating continued, and the torturers didn't even accept his plea to tear his pullover's neck so that he could breathe a little. He would soon black out. When he regained consciousness, he saw the men trying to hurriedly tear the collar of his pullover, while swearing at him and slapping him. "It is for your own good not to see us because if you see us, this is sufficient reason for you to die," they said, introducing themselves as MIT members.

Kiři was constantly questioning the situation, the reason that led to this situation. "I remember having said, 'Oh my Allah, so my life ends here. What is happening? What have I done? Who am I and why am I experiencing this torment?'" But he would soon realize that the real torture had yet to begin.

The plane landed and the abductors put Kişi in a van, which later drove for about six minutes and then stopped by a container that would be a cell of horror for him. The moment he was pushed into it, the torture began. He was stripped completely naked with humiliating verbal harassment and groping. The MIT members then started administering electric shocks on different parts of his body, with increasing magnitudes of voltage. They raised his feet while he was in a sitting position and crushed his toes with a pincer. At the same time, they were shouting at him, “We will extinguish you. We will make your wife a w.... You will never see her again.”

The pain in his toes would continue for about a month. They were stepping on the cuffs around his wrists, while his hands were tied from behind, and putting their weight on his hands and wrists. These particular acts of violence caused the nerves to suffer extensive damage and his hands to become numb, so much so that he was not even able to hold a spoon while eating what they gave him.

On another day, they would force a hard object into his anus while insulting him, and this rape was repeated several times. He was beaten with a bat on his back while two others were holding his arms. This caused his ribs to crack, and he would hardly be able to breathe because of the pain the ribs inflicted on his lungs. During all these tortures, he constantly prayed, whispering, begging Allah to take his life and put an end to all of it. “I have not understood their motive in torturing a human, and I think I will depart this world without ever understanding it,” he wrote in his complaint. “Because, whatever the reasons are, a human being must never be able to commit such vile treatment and torture on someone else.”

The torturers were forcing him to accept whatever they wanted him to do: “We are the judges and the prosecutors here. There are no lawyers nor cops. Your only way out is to accept whatever we say. We will torment you so long you are alive. If you die, we will bury you and you will be registered as an unresolved murder.”

What made the conditions additionally harder for Kişi was that he had bone corrosion and avascular necrosis of the femoral head, which was already forcing him to use a cane. After learning this, which Kişi had told only to beg for mercy, they started compelling him to stand on his feet for hours.

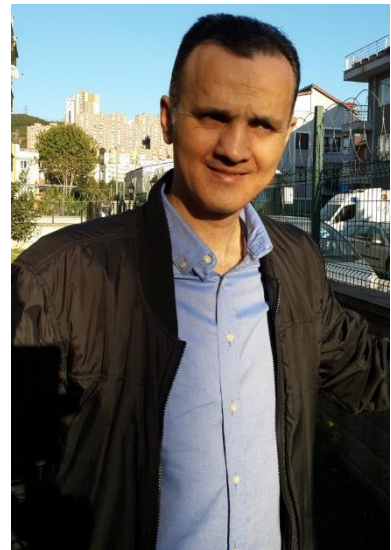
He wasn't allowed to perform any kind of personal care or hygiene. Only after two and a half months, when they could no longer bear the stinking smell exuding from Kiři, did they allow him to take a shower, during which they continually sexually harassed him.

Kiři's 8-page long complaint petition has more details and horrifying scenes of excruciating physical and psychological abuse but recounting them all here would be beyond the scope of this report. Kiři was delivered on January 18, 2019, at about 8 pm to another team with a sack over his head and his hands rear cuffed. This team brought him somewhere else and turned him over to a police team. "When they untied my blindfold, I saw the illuminated sign of the Ankara Courthouse. The police introduced themselves as a team from Ankara Counterterrorism Unit and visited the prosecutor on duty at night. They took down my statement as if I have turned myself in."

Parliamentarian Gergerlioęlu noted that Kiři was the first person among the abducted people to speak up in detail about the ordeal he was forced into. He brought his account to the Parliament in the form of a written question, but the Parliament administration refused to take his question into the agenda, since the torture details were too "rude" and "hurtful." Gergerlioęlu said the National Assembly's reaction was noteworthy, in the sense that a real person was suffering heavy, inhumane and anguished cruelty, but the Parliamentarians could not even stand to hear about it. A similar reaction was given by them about another question that was bringing forth the reluctance of banks to avail the same benefit that they offer to any applicant to their customers, who were expelled from their jobs with the decree laws by the government.

**Enver Kılıç:** Enver Kılıç's story is similar to Kiři's from the moment they were not allowed to get on board the Netherlands flight until they were illegally deported to Turkey by the Kazakh intelligence. Kiři's detailed complaint petition doesn't have any particular mention about his fellow traveler after they were forced to disembark from the flight back to Kyrgyzstan.

UN's Committee on Enforced Disappearances registered in two urgent actions<sup>59</sup> in 2017 on behalf of Zabit Kiři and Enver Kılıç to Kazakhstan. The country responded saying that they knew nothing about the disappeared persons. The last thing they knew



about them was that they had put them on a flight for expulsion to Turkey. The Committee wasn't convinced with the answer, so it sent a follow-up notice, saying that these two men were last seen "in the hands of the State party's authorities, which meant that, under the Convention, the State party was responsible for searching for and locating them." Kazahks continued dawdling, but the



Enver Kılıç  
with his  
family

committee would soon receive the information that Zabit Kişi had reappeared on 23 January 2018. Enver Kılıç would also reappear on 11 April 2018; however, the committee noted that Kılıç was also tortured during 73 days of detention in an unknown place. His health was in bad condition.

## PAKISTAN

***Mesut Kaçmaz and His Family:*** Mesut Kaçmaz and his wife and two daughters were



awakened from their sleep by loud thumps on the door on September 27, 2017, in Lahore. There still were many hours to the morning. His daughters Huda Nur (seventeen) and Fatma Huma (fourteen) burst into tears after seeing a squad of heavily armed men breaking down the door with a hammer. They assumed that the

Pakistani authorities had finally yielded to the pressure from the Turkish government to deport their father, the head of the PakTurk schools in the country, over his connections with the Gülen movement. But they were wrong. The Pakistani security forces, possibly from the country's spy agency, were not there just for their father, but for the whole family.

His friends witnessed the scene in dismay.<sup>60</sup> Mesut Kaçmaz was still naively asking the armed people to show their badges and warrant to enter his house. The security forces pushed into his residence like a mafia band, not the way a state unit is supposed to do. In a phone interview with the AST, Kaçmaz provided a detailed account of what happened to him and his family.

When she noticed that five of the armed gang were women, Mesut Kaçmaz's wife Meral understood that they would take her and her daughters as well. She blacked out and fell to the ground. All of them, including Mesut, his unconscious wife and his daughters, were blindfolded and rear cuffed. Apparently blindfolding them was not enough. They also put sacks over their heads and dragged them all into a van. An official statement from the Pakistani authorities would confirm the abduction, noting that the Kaçmaz family were relocated to another city. But there would be no further information as to what had happened and would happen to them and on what legal grounds, despite a habeas corpus decision by the Lahore High Court to relocate them. Pakistani police asserted that they, too, didn't know about the details of the operation or the current whereabouts of the family, providing evidence that the family was kidnapped by the intelligence.<sup>61</sup>

Turkish teacher Fatih Avcı video recorded the entire incident with his phone. After he was released following a brief detention, he posted the recording on social media, informing the world about the disgraceful act of abducting a family in total violation of international laws and even violating the orders of their own judiciary to protect the Kaçmaz family. But why? Erdoğan was personally asking Pakistan to no longer allow the members of the Hizmet movement to operate in their country and to confiscate all their properties, as he did in Turkey, and transfer them to the Maarif Foundation.

Mesut Kaçmaz had his bachelor's degree from the Selçuk University Urdu Language and Literature Department and came to Pakistan in 2007 and was recruited as a teacher at the PakTurk Education Institutions. His wife Meral was also a teacher there. He later became the principal of the Clifton Boys School, which has outshone its opponents in numerous international science and math contests. A *New York Times* story covered the constructive role of the PakTurk schools and their achievements in 2008<sup>62</sup>. Mesut Kaçmaz was also quoted in that story, which, twelve years after its publication, portrays an ironic picture. "Praying in Pakistan has not been easy for Mesut Kacmaz, a Muslim teacher from Turkey," the story begins, narrating what Kaçmaz meant for Pakistan and what Pakistan meant for him. The mosques in the country were ridden with political

symbols of enmity against other religions and cultures. He even faced expulsion for wearing a tie when he went to a mosque near his work. Besides, any Pakistani would assume him a non-believer for not having a beard. “Kill, fight, shoot,” Kaçmaz was quoted as saying. “This is a misinterpretation of Islam,” he added.

The article went on: “But that view is common in Pakistan, a frontier land for the future of Islam, where schools, nourished by Saudi and American money dating back to the 1980s, have spread Islamic radicalism through the poorest parts of society. With a literacy rate of just 50 percent and a public-school system near collapse, the country is particularly vulnerable.



Mr. Kacmaz is part of a group of Turkish educators who have come to this battleground with an entirely different vision of Islam. Theirs is moderate and flexible, comfortably coexisting with the West while remaining distinct from it. Like Muslim Peace Corps volunteers, they promote this approach in schools, which are now established in more than 80 countries, Muslim and Christian.”

Politicians who breed and exploit a radical interpretation of Islam for their political gains in both countries chose Kaçmaz and his family as their victim. He was waiting to stand before a court to challenge Erdoğan's pressure on the Pakistani government to deport him. The abduction took place only two days before this trial. In addition, the Lahore High Court decided on September 28--a day after their abduction-- that no action should be taken until a decision to be given by a court on October 6. It should also be noted that the abduction of the family had taken place in spite of an earlier Lahore High Court decision preventing harassment of Turkish asylum-seeking teachers and their families across Pakistan. But even their lawyers would be unable to contact them.

Blindfolded and with their hands tied, the family members were boarded on October 14, 2017, on a flight to Ankara from Islamabad on an aircraft that didn't have any sign or number on it.<sup>63</sup> Mesut and Meral Kaçmaz were detained. Meral Kaçmaz and her daughters were taken to Ankara, and Mesut was locked in a cell in İstanbul. Meral remembers the first night when she was trying to clean up the detention room for her daughters. She was rubbing the sink with an old brush she found there. She wanted the police to give her something clean that she could pray on, saying even a trash bag would be enough, but the police turned down this demand. Fortunately, the daughters were released the next day, and they started living with their uncle. Meral's detention lasted for 11 days. "They were yelling at me all the time. They were threatening me, saying 'we have to decapitate them'," said Meral.

Mesut was not better off. He said the person who was "taking care of him" was İlker Küçükheidir, who had lived in Pakistan in the past with an official duty and was a frequenter of the Turkish schools there. Küçükheidir was now the İstanbul Intelligence Bureau Head. The two men knew each other well. He showed Mesut files about three individuals, whom Mesut hadn't heard of before. Küçükheidir's offer was simple: confess that these men were working for the Kaynak Holding and that they were actively involved in the July 15th coup attempt. In return, Kaçmaz and his wife would be released immediately with a lot of money in their pockets along with other benefits they provide for the informants. But Mesut hadn't seen any of these men before. But the more interesting part for Mesut was that the interrogation had no substantiated charge directly implicating him.

In the meantime, a friend of his applied to the UN Arbitrary Detention Working Group. Kaçmaz believes this was the turning point. The group issued a report on May 25, 2018 along with a recommendation decision asking for the immediate release of Mesut and Meral, provide compensation for the physical and psychological damage they have sustained and a passport for each family member.

Kaçmaz said the first court hearing after the interrogation on July 3 was so swift that he was released immediately after the ordinary questions that judges routinely ask every suspect.



Mesut  
Kaçmaz  
awarded  
in Pakistan

In the meantime, UNCHR, which had earlier provided protection for the family until November 24, 2018, also stepped up and denounced the action as “a blatant violation of the family members’ UNHCR protection.” The agency had extended Kaçmaz, along with a number of other teachers from the Turkish schools in the country as well as their families, protection following the Pakistani government’s first skirmishes. In November of 2016, Pakistan had refused to renew the visas of the

teachers and gave them at the most three days to pack everything they had and leave the country. The teachers lost no time in applying to the courts to overrule this decision and also sought protection from the UNCHR, which they were granted. But even the protection of a UN agency would not deter the Pakistanis from abducting Kaçmaz and his wife and two daughters and give them to the Turks, knowing very well that they would be tortured there.

And they knew well, too, that a deportation would be completely illegal. The UNCHR warned that the family could not be extradited since they had a certificate valid until 24 November 2017, with the possibility to be extended for another year. A lawyer for the government had assured the UNCHR that the family would not be deported.<sup>64</sup>

Kaçmaz told AST that he and his wife were acquitted of all charges and were released, largely thanks to the pressure from the UN and because all assertions about them were nothing but groundless allegations.

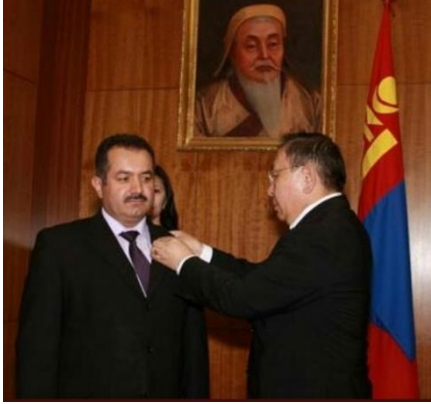
## MONGOLIA

***Veysel Akçay:*** Early in the morning on 27 July 2018, Erdoğan’s thugs were in a covert operation in the Mongolian capital of Ulaanbaatar, this time to abduct a 50-year-old school teacher. Veysel Akçay was forcefully captured in his home by a group of five masked men and was bundled into a Toyota minivan<sup>65</sup>. Already on the alert due to similar incidents around the world, his family and friends certainly knew that the perpetrators were most likely the spies commissioned by the Turkish Intel agency, and they lost no time in spreading the word through social media.



Veysel  
Akçay  
in a local  
costume

The news that the teacher was getting kidnapped immediately stirred a wide reaction. In the meantime, the unidentified men had already put him aboard a Bombardier jet, type Challenger, registration TT-4010, operated by the Turkish Air Force, according to an online flight-tracking service, Flightradar24. Authorities temporarily grounded the airplane. Akçay was released. The Turkish Embassy and Ambassador denied any involvement, and no arrests followed. Mongolian deputy Foreign Minister Battsetseg Batmunkh said that if the accusations were true, “It is an unacceptable act of violation of Mongolia’s sovereignty and independence and Mongolia will strongly object to it.”<sup>66</sup> MP Baasankhuu Oktaybri would also lash out at Turkey from his Twitter account with the words: “We are an independent nation. Do you think anyone can do abductions in our country?” Turkish Air Force’s jet departed empty by about 9 p.m., making a hash of their mission.



Akçay had been in Mongolia for nearly 25 years to establish education institutions in the country, during which time he was awarded the prestigious Mongolian Friendship Medal by the Mongolian government for his services to the Mongolian nation. In this case, Mongolia's emphasis on its sovereignty and its consistent and effective intervention to foil an abduction attempt by a reckless regime received acclamation.<sup>67</sup>

This country's commitment to human rights and the rule of law

was also hailed by US Secretary of State John Kerry with the metaphor of an "oasis of democracy," located in a complicated and harsh geopolitical position between the two autocratic regimes of Russia and China.

## MYANMAR

***Muhammet Furkan Sökmen:*** Muhammed Furkan Sökmen appeared in a 15-second



video clip on May 24, 2017. Standing in the corridor of the immigration lockup at the Yangon Airport in Myanmar, anxiously staring at the camera on his phone, which he was still able to retain, Sökmen spoke: "I am calling everyone, please help me. I am in the terminal area. They are pushing me. They are trying to give me to the Turkish Embassy. Please help me, all over the world, please help me."

Burmese officials had prevented him from boarding a plane due to "a problem with his passport," as his passport had been canceled by the Turkish government over his connections to the Gülen movement.<sup>68</sup> The Turkish ambassador to Myanmar was pressuring local officers to seize the family's passports.

Sökmen, with his wife and two-year old daughter, was sent to Suvarnabhumi Airport in Bangkok. He would post a second video after some time, repeating the same plea in a louder voice: "They take me to Bangkok. I am at the airport now. If they send me to Turkey, I will be imprisoned and most probably tortured like many others under the current regime. ...I am asking for international protection."

Human Rights Watch (HRW) responded quickly to Sökmen's call. Phil Robertson, deputy director of HRW's Asia division, rushed in: "The Embassy of Turkey unilaterally revoked or limited their passports in some way to make them vulnerable, and then sought to compel Myanmar to deport them to Turkey. This is a nasty, rights-abusing tactic that is illegal under international human rights law because it renders them stateless. But clearly, the increasingly dictatorial government of President Erdogan is prepared to run roughshod over rights and put pressure on countries like Myanmar to go along." He called on Myanmar and Thailand to "do the right thing" and grant Sökmen and his family access to the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR. "To do so would have been both humane and rights respecting, but both governments took the apparently cynical view that Turkey can do whatever it wants with its citizens, even those residing legally in other countries," he said.<sup>69</sup>

The minutes when Sökmen was forcefully snatched were recorded by a bystander. In the recording, Sökmen is heard to explain to the Turkish embassy officer that he would do all he could not to get on the plane. The officer responds calmly that they would capture him and take him away no matter what he did. After a brief silence, Sökmen's screams can be heard from an increasing distance, as he was asking for help from onlookers, saying the men were kidnapping him. With the silent consent of Thai officers, his futile resistance ended in the victory of the kidnappers.

Despite the warnings by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and other UN agencies to key Burmese and Thai government agencies that there were substantial grounds to believe that he would face an imminent risk of human rights abuse upon his return to Turkey, Sökmen's abduction went ahead unimpeded. Thailand acted in this way despite the fact that it is a signatory of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment that strictly prohibits non-refoulement. HRW's Brad Adams reacted harshly against the brazen delinquency of these two countries in showing due respect for the most basic and universally-acknowledged human rights and omission of the obligations to commit to certain procedures in asylum cases: "Burma and Thailand flagrantly violated Furkan Sökmen's human rights by caving in to pressure from Ankara and deporting him despite his claim for asylum and the real risk of ill-treatment and an unfair trial in Turkey."<sup>70</sup>



Accused by the Turkish state of being a member of an armed terrorist organization, Sökmen was an accountant and formerly the director of a company that managed an international school in Rangoon affiliated with the Gülen movement. Erdoğan's media started spinning stories about him, labelling him as the "so-called imam of Myanmar."<sup>71</sup>

## LEBANON

**Ayten Öztürk:** Ayten Öztürk was abducted in the Lebanon airport on March 8, 2018,



delivered to the Turkish intelligence units on March 13, 2018, and subjected to tortures that one can't even endure hearing about. The excruciating tribulation she had to put up with lasted for six long months. She read out a detailed account of these tortures at the İstanbul 3rd High Criminal Court.<sup>72</sup>

Originally from Turkey's Hatay province, Öztürk was living in Syria since she was wanted in Turkey for being a member of the outlawed Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP-C) and had moved to Lebanon to migrate from there to Europe after the conditions had aggravated in Syria. But things didn't go as planned. The Lebanese officials arrested and delivered her through internationally recognized procedures but with underhanded ways. Here is a small part of her 12-page long petition to the court:

"I was being carried to the torture room blindfolded. They were first stripping me naked and cuffing my hands to the iron rings on the walls in a position like hanging. They were pressing an electrifying device on almost every part of my naked body and keeping it a while. When they did this, my whole body was shaking in tremors and I was screaming at the top of my voice. They were doing this until I black out and then they were repeating it over and over again. Two slit-shaped spots would form on the places where they press this electric device. Spots with 2 centimeters in between... When I was taken to the prison after getting arrested, my friends in the ward counted the wounds and bruises on my body. There were 898 of them. When I was about to faint, they were taking me to the place where toilet and bath were located and were continuing the

torture with pressurized water. Sometimes they were doing waterboarding for hours. In the remaining time of the day, they were putting me in a cell or a grave-like section, forcing me to stand for hours. In the section called “coffin,” moving [like crouching, bending, etc.] was impossible. In the cell, they were opening the door every now and again and brutally beating and threatening me and swearing at me.”

She thought the place she was kept while being tortured was the basement of a kind of official building, which she inferred from the sounds of shoes coming from upstairs during the working hours. Öztürk was the only woman known to have been kidnapped and taken to the torture center in Ankara during the state of emergency. And she had to suffer more humiliating treatment from the torturers, who were getting more monstrous, especially during her menstrual periods. Her petition, submitted to the court and hence recorded forever, will be one of the lasting evidence of the reincarnation of a renewed version during Erdoğan’s dictatorial regime of the systematic torture practices of the 1990s.

Ayten Öztürk is also particularly reminiscent of the 1990s since another Ayten Öztürk was brutally killed during that time by the dark para-military agents of the deep state after being abducted. When her family found her in a half-dug grave, Öztürk’s ears, lips and nose were cut and half her head skin was scalped. All of her body was ridden with the wounds of heavy torture. Fortunately, today’s Ayten Öztürk was left alive.

## MOLDOVA



On the morning of September 6, 2018, the Information and Security Service of the Republic of Moldova (SIS) raided the houses of seven Turkish educators using disproportionate force, breaking down their doors with hammers, and then frog-marching them off to vans in front of their families. Working at different units and branches of the Orizont schools, the men who were subjected to this viciously ill treatment had been known in Moldova for years for their peaceful manners and kind demeanor.

The SIS explained this brutal operation by stating that it expelled seven foreign nationals because they posed a threat to national security. The operation was secretly carried out, they also added. It was so secret that even the country's president would need to announce later that he didn't know about it, even though evidence showed the opposite. But it was certainly not a secret for Turkey, since there was a group of Turkish spies at the airport by a plane, waiting for its forcefully nabbed passengers. The Turkish media would proudly confirm MİT's meddling in the abduction of the Turkish teachers. The aircraft was rented by the state-owned Air Moldova from the Armenian company Taron Avia.

Among these educators, Rıza Doğan was the director of the Durlesti branch of the Orizont school network and had been in the country for almost 20 years. The other educators kidnapped were Deputy General Manager Hasan Karacaoğlu, Public Relations Director Yasin Özdil, director of the Ciocana branch of the school chain Ahmet Bilgi and director of the Ceadir-Lunga branch of the network Feridun Tüfekçi. A fourteen-year-old was also taken, but he was shortly released. “They were taken this morning, but my son and his professor were released. But another professor was taken after they broke down his door,” the father of the teen said speaking to the *Balkan Insight*.<sup>73</sup>



Feridun  
Tüfekçi

They had been living in the country for a long time; some of them had even been there for over two decades. They had been lawful residents in Moldova, employed, paid taxes, married to Moldovans and had children in the country. The arbitrary detention and rendition of these people, about whom there were no legal lawsuits, not even for an insignificant offense, meant that their private and family lives were radically severed for no justifiable reason.

Feridun Tüfekçi’s wife, Galina, was not able to understand the SIS’s excuse of “threat to national security” to substantiate the unlawful expelling of the teachers. “We never had weapons in our possession. We are regarded as exemplary individuals in our community. My husband has been living here for 25 years. He had no criminal record, he applied for citizenship in the past months,” she told *Bold Medya*.



Feridun  
Tüfekçi’s  
wife Galina

*Balkan Insight* also reported<sup>74</sup> on the day of the incident that although Moldova’s secret service SIS stated that it had conducted the operation to prevent threats to national security, the narrative in the pro-government Turkish media was pointing to the MİT without any reservations.

The incident stirred repercussions in the country, which was actively seeking recognition as a European country. Yet, the degradation of caving into the demands of a dictator who presented nothing as concrete evidence to substantiate undeniably the terror links of Doğan and others, was not even close to what makes a real European country.

Moldovan President Igor Dodon, who has frequently boasted of having close relations with his Turkish counterpart, was accused of deliberately delivering the Turkish educators on Erdoğan’s

request, in return for financial aid of about \$10 million for the repair and renovation of the presidency building in Chisinau. The building was damaged in the street riots of April 7, 2009 that toppled the Communist-led government. Although Dodon confirmed having received funds from Turkey for this building, he rejected the accusation that this money was given as a bribe to illegally send asylum seekers to Turkey<sup>75</sup>. He rejected the accusations that the illegal abduction operation was carried out with his prior knowledge and consent.

The illegal operation also drew the ire of the opposition. Maia Saidu, who would become Prime Minister after the parliamentary elections on February 2019, posted a Facebook video message, harshly berating the authorities responsible for this blatant breach of the laws.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, the Moldovan authorities didn't even bother to pretend to abide by their own laws while acting as accomplices of Erdoğan's Intel operatives. For instance, the Bureau for Migration and Asylum sent a copy of the decision for his extradition to Rıza Doğan by mail four days after he was already forcefully sent from the country. In other words, he wasn't even given the chance to file an objection to this decision, which was a right acknowledged by the law. He was already behind the bars of a high-security prison cell in Turkey. The educators were declared "undesirable" after they were sent to Turkey, and they couldn't even learn under what grounds did they deserve to suddenly be designated as "undesirable" persons.

On October 15, 2018, the European Parliament condemned Moldova in its report on the implementation of the EU Association Agreement with Moldova (2017/2281(INI)) for "the recent extradition/abduction of Turkish citizens to Turkey due to their alleged links to the Gülen movement, in violation of the rule of law and basic human rights." The EP also strongly urged the Moldovan authorities to ensure that extradition requests are transparently processed within European principles and standards.

A similar concern was voiced by Amnesty International, which also made a statement in relation to the deportation of the seven Orizont teachers to Turkey. On 6 September 2018, Maria Struthers, the organization's director for Eastern Europe and Central Asia said: "The Moldovan authorities didn't just violate these individuals' rights once by deporting them - they put them on a fast-track to further human rights violations such as an unfair trial. ... The latest arrests in Moldova follow the pattern of political reprisals against Turkish nationals living abroad by the increasingly repressive government of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. ... Forcible return of those seeking protection in

Moldova is a flagrant violation of Moldova's international human rights obligations. The state authorities must immediately hold to account those responsible for the arbitrary detention and expulsion of the Turkish nationals.”<sup>77</sup>

The unlawful extradition was brought to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), which ruled against the Moldovan state and sentenced Moldova to pay 25,000 euros to the families of the applicants. In the “court's assessment” section of the verdict, ECHR asserted that the norms regulating expulsion and extradition contained within the Moldovan laws were not respected. “The applicants were removed from Moldova by way of an extra-legal transfer which circumvented the guarantees offered by domestic and international law,” the ECHR's ruling noted.<sup>78</sup>

Rıza Doğan had established a life in Moldova for over 20 years. He married there and both of his daughters were born in the country. He also was running a company of his own, paying taxes and was an integratral part of Moldova. He was sentenced to 7.5 years in prison by a Turkish court on July 19, 2019.

Hasan Karacaoğlu was also in Moldova for over 20 years. The country was like a second home for him. During all of his time at the Orizont schools in Moldova, he was helping Moldovan youth prepare for their future. He was the deputy director by the time he was expelled from the country for no reason.

Yasin Özdil was in charge of public relations for the high school network. He alone was able to inform of the abduction to his circles on social media with a Facebook message that read, “They came into my house to catch me. Please, the police, help me. Kaçırmaya geldiler beni.”<sup>79</sup> The last part in Turkish translates as “they came to kidnap me.” The time of the message was 8:42 in the morning. He waited in vain for rescue since the ones he called for help were indeed the ones who came to deliver him to a dictator, despite an imminent threat of torture.

Müjdat Çelebi had been residing in Moldova for five years. He was the financial director of the company that manages the Orizont high schools in Moldova. Feridun Tüfekci was the director of the branch in Ceadâr-Lunga. When he first set foot in Moldova to study, he was only a 17-year old boy. He eventually married his teacher, Galina, and established a family in the country, setting his roots there. He also worked as a journalist for some time, representing a Turkish TV channel in

Moldova. Hüseyin Bayraktar had only spent three years in Moldova, teaching Turkish language. Erdoğan's courts sentenced all of them to up to 12 years in prison.

After a new government came to power in Moldova in 2019, a criminal case was launched against the officials involved in the deportation of the teachers to Turkey. On September 6, exactly one year after the expulsion of the teachers, the former deputy head of the Information Security Service, Alexander Baltag, was detained. Also, a ban on leaving the country was imposed for the director of the Bureau for Migration and Refugees, Olga Poalelunzh.



## AZERBAIJAN

**Mustafa Ceyhan:** Mustafa Ceyhan's story is a special one in the sense that he was



kidnapped in Azerbaijan, just as he was abruptly released from a courthouse after what Ceyhan describes as a sham trial. His extraordinary adventure in Azerbaijan was later told by an inmate in the same prison as him.<sup>80</sup>

He used to be a businessman in Georgia, basically doing trade there. On April 20, 2017, while crossing the Azerbaijani border, he was detained with the allegation of 'forgery of documents' and was

arrested. Allegedly his passport was fake. Ceyhan couldn't make sense of it. His passport was authentic. He had been using that passport for eight years, visited many countries without any issue. But he didn't mind much since verifying the authenticity of his passport would be as easy as asking the Turkish embassy in Azerbaijan. This didn't happen.

The trial was postponed several times, and Ceyhan was kept behind bars during all of this time. He later learned that his name was on a list Turkey had sent to Azerbaijan, which means the accusation of a fake passport was only an excuse to seize him and deliver him to Turkey.

Mustafa Ceyhan remained in an Azerbaijani prison for a full year. On April 26, 2018, he was told he had a court hearing that day. Ceyhan was perplexed as there was still a month's time until his trial. He objected, but nobody would listen to him; he was taken to the court. Standing before the judge, he became aware of the presence of the Turkish ambassador to Baku, accompanied by three men, in the back of the court. He shouted at the judge, "What are they doing here?" but he got no answer. He asked the diplomat the reason for this unexpected and unfathomable visit to his trial but could not get any response from him either. He refused to say any word without his lawyers, and the judge ordered a recess until the lawyers could arrive.

The trial resumed after two hours, and the judge declared an acquittal on all charges, meaning that he had lost a year in prison for nothing. But Ceyhan was worried about something else. All these things were out of the ordinary, and his lawyers' objections against this unexpected and nonsensical exoneration were not heeded.

As Ceyhan stepped outside the courthouse flanked by his lawyer and the UN's lawyer, two Transporters approached, and eight people rushed out to surround Ceyhan. He was pulled away from his lawyers and pushed inside one of the vehicles which immediately sped away. Ceyhan would be brought to Turkey on a scheduled flight of the Turkish Airlines (THY). He was first put in the Metris prison and, after a short time, transferred to Silivri on April 30, 2019.

His wife, Meryem Ceyhan, would immediately start distributing news of her husband's doom through Twitter messages. "...he had a court appearance today after which he was released. He was under the UN protection. Exiting the court while accompanied by our lawyer and the UN's lawyer. 8 armed men abducted my husband with a black car. My husband is missing. We can't reach him."<sup>81</sup>

Before long, his family referred the case to the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, which acknowledged the application to be conformable and true and demanded Ceyhan's immediate release on July 10, 2019. It also decided that both Azerbaijan and Turkey must pay Ceyhan compensation. The decision was not heeded by either country, though, and to crown it all, Ceyhan was sentenced to 9 years in prison for "membership of an armed terror group." The proof the court based this decision to black his life out was a Bank Asya credit card.<sup>82</sup> Bank Asya was an Islamic bank opened by businesspeople close to the Hizmet movement and was one of the first targets Erdoğan chose to capture when he started his fight to annihilate the Gülen movement after the corruption probes.

## UKRAINE

The abduction of Turkish citizens by the MİT in cooperation with the Ukrainian authorities created a tremendous backlash in Ukraine.<sup>83</sup>

Presidential spokesperson İbrahim Kalın confirmed the abductions and the involvement of the MİT in these extrajudicial operations in Ukraine. He also praised the success of the Turkish spy agency, as well as the compromising national authorities in Ukraine and Azerbaijan, which had illegally deported other Turkish expats living on its soil.

***Salih Zeki Yigit:*** It was a shiny day in Odessa on July 13, 2017. Two ordinary looking



Turkish men approached businessman Salih Zeki Yiğit and pushed him into a car in broad daylight.<sup>84</sup> They put a sack over his head and sped away towards the east. Their destination was the oblast of Kherson, a district just above Crimea. Turkish media jumped on the story, saying the MİT had successfully picked up and brought in the imam of Turkey's Mersin province and a financier of the Hizmet movement. He was accused of collecting donations from the followers and transferring it to Ukraine to finance the expenses of the Turkish schools there.<sup>85</sup>

One week after Yigit's abduction, on July 19, a court ordered his arrest after his preliminary interrogation in the Mersin Department of Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crime (KOM). As he was being dragged to the court after undergoing a medical examination, journalists were asking him why he had not come back from Ukraine and turned himself in. "They said there was torture," he said. "We told them whatever we have done. We gave our state whatever information was useful for them," he added. The Turkish media reported that Yiğit became an informant in order to get immunity from serving jail time. But the court still ordered his arrest for being a member of an armed terror group. Yiğit's trial is in progress, and he is still in prison.

*Yusuf İnan:* "They pushed him into the car like a dog."

Yusuf İnan's Ukrainian wife Kateryna described the scene when her husband was apprehended by officers of the SBU. On July 12, 2017, Ukrainian law enforcers came to the farm the couple was running in the suburbs of Mykolaiv, a city about 120 kilometers northeast of Odessa. They started talking to İnan in Russian which he didn't understand. He asked his wife to help him communicate with the police. They said they were there to pick him up for an investigation in İzmir, his hometown in Turkey. İnan immediately called the local police. Before too long, the police actually arrived, but not in the way İnan was expecting. Along with the police arrived another car from which three masked SBU officers jumped out and arrested İnan.<sup>86</sup>



Yusuf İnan  
with his wife  
Kateryna

The Mykolaiv police reported that Yusuf İnan was detained by SBU officers.<sup>87</sup> A Mykolayiv court ruled the next day for the extradition of İnan. According to Ukrainian laws, any person who is slated for deportation by a court ruling has five days to appeal this decision, so his lawyer started immediately preparing an appeal and application for his asylum in Ukraine. He had July 16th in mind for the submission of the appeal. But neither the lawyer nor İnan's wife would ever consider the possibility that the Ukrainian authorities would resort to such an egregious act of overruling their own law and deport İnan without waiting the 5-day time period. "On Sunday [July 15] evening, I found out from the Turkish media that my husband was already in the Turkish territory," İnan's wife said. "Prosecution keeps silence, SBU keeps silence. Nobody told us that he's not here anymore, that he was taken away secretly."<sup>88</sup>

The Turkish Embassy was cheerful to claim the extraditions as a success and as “a part of ongoing security cooperation between Turkey and Ukraine.”



Yusuf İnan was a lawful resident in Ukraine with a permit he legally obtained after his marriage in 2015. The couple were sheep breeding on their farm for their livelihood. He was a journalist, working as a reporter for the Cihan News Agency, once the largest in Turkey with operations spanning all around the world until it was seized and then

closed by the government. He then served as the editor-in-chief of the *Yerel Gündem* newspaper and its website, which had been publishing anti-Erdoğan stories.<sup>89</sup>

OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Harlem Désir, expressed his great concern in a letter to Ukrainian authorities on July 19, asking them to immediately halt the deportation process and set İnan free. The call didn't reach the ears of the Ukrainian authorities.

Commenting on these two consecutive abductions of his friends, another journalist, Yunus Erdoğan, who also resided in Ukraine and whose name was on a list of the persons Turkey officially demanded Ukraine to deport, said nobody feels safe in Ukraine anymore. “MIT will kidnap all of Erdoğan critics in the list from Ukraine, where they had come to escape from the Erdoğan regime. Unfortunately, we can no longer request protection from Ukrainian state authorities for only one reason. Erdoğan's spokesperson İbrahim Kalın thanked the Ukrainian authorities for their ‘cooperation’. How can we trust those who cooperate with Erdoğan's special units?”<sup>90</sup>

The threat was imminent. Two men had already been sacrificed to Turkey, despite the certainty of harsh treatment, torture and unfair persecution in Turkey against the Erdoğan dissidents, especially against the followers of the Gülen movement. That caused urgent reactions from several international organizations.

Rebecca Harms, spokeswoman for foreign affairs and expert on Turkey in the European Parliaments Greens/EFA group, expressing solidarity with Erdoğan on July 23, called on the Ukrainian government to stop the abduction of Turkish citizens by Turkey's MİT in Ukraine in a Twitter message, mentioning the Twitter accounts of Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, Minister for Foreign Affairs Pavlo Klimkin and Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration Ivanna Klympush.

The International and European Federations of Journalists (IFJ-EFJ) called on the Ukrainian government to immediately provide protection for the journalist Erdoğan against any possible abduction by the Turkish spy agency.

## ALBANIA

**Harun Çelik:** 41-year-old Harun Çelik had fled to Albania from the persecution against the Gülen movement in Turkey and sought refuge in the country. He was arrested at Turkey's request. After spending five and a half months in an Albanian prison, Harun Çelik was finally released by a court,



which denied the extradition demands. He would heave a sigh of relief as he was finally freed, but then things turned awry for him. The police took him directly to an immigration office after the trial. And then to the Rinas International Airport. He was being deported. That wasn't in the plans. His friends chased the car that was taking him to a bleak future. They wanted to prevent this unlawful dispatch to the airport, and a stampede followed. But they failed. Çelik was sent to Turkey and put in a high-security prison.

Çelik was a teacher in Albania at a school that was affiliated with the Hizmet movement. He was sent to Turkey by Albanian authorities in an operation that the Turkish media declared to be perpetrated by the MİT. His deportation constituted a total breach of both the national and

international laws, as he was handed over to Turkish intelligence agents despite a court order releasing him from his five-month incarceration over an extradition request from Ankara.<sup>91</sup>

Andrej Hunko, Rapporteur on Albania for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, told *Exit* that the extradition of Çelik was “worrying” and that they had taken notice of the situation.<sup>92</sup> Recalling that extradition on political offenses are strictly prohibited by the European Convention on Extradition, he also said the European Convention on Human Rights also imposes on all member states to respect all human rights. “An extradition to a state where a fair trial is at least doubtful is not in line with these responsibilities,” he was quoted as saying. Çelik’s lawyer, Alban Bengasi, told *Exit* that an administrative act like an exclusion order was required for deportation. Besides, any person, for whatever reason he or she is deported, must be given enough time to challenge the court order that expels them. In Çelik’s case, none of these basic conditions were regarded properly.

## BULGARIA

**Abdullah Büyük:** Abdullah Büyük, a 43-year-old Turkish businessman, was accused of



being a follower of and a funder for the Hizmet movement in Turkey. He was briefly detained, questioned over his ties with the movement and over his role in providing finance for the movement’s activities in the country and abroad. After being released pending trial, he decided to leave the country and escaped to

Bulgaria on February 1, 2016. After exactly two weeks, he was the subject of an extradition request from the General Prosecutor's Office of Istanbul. By a final judgment on March 28, 2016, the Sofia Court of Appeal confirmed the judgment of the Sofia City Court rejecting the extradition request.

He applied for asylum in Bulgaria. In the hectic environment following the failed coup attempt on July 15, he was feeling himself in a tight squeeze because of the massive reaction inside Turkey against any person that is in sympathy with the Hizmet in any way. He simply didn’t want to go back there. But the Turkish government had already blacklisted his name as a “terrorist” and sent

official request to give back Büyük to its own jurisdiction. Despite the Bulgarian courts' clear decisions, Büyük was sent back to Turkey in a contentious manner.

On 10 August 2016, he was arrested by the police on the way to a scheduled meeting at the offices of the administration responsible for refugees. Then he was immediately taken to the Turkish border, without even being able to speak to the police. This would stir a serious outcry in Bulgaria, with critics accusing the government of having bowed to Turkish pressure and failing to follow the legal and ethical path.<sup>93</sup>

“It is disgusting that the Bulgarian leadership bends in such a humiliating way for the country and for every free citizen,” former justice minister Hristo Ivanov said on Facebook. Krasimir Kanev, chairman of the rights group the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, described the expulsion as an illegal act. Looking deeper into what lies behind Büyük's extradition may help understand the motive of the Bulgarian administration to dare take a negligent stance against the laws and court orders.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu visited and called the Bulgarian authorities for the purpose of sending Büyük, who he described as a “traitor,” back to Turkey. He was said to be directly involved in the coup, although he had moved to Bulgaria about five months prior to it. The extradition demands from Turkey were in two separate instances refused in March 2016 by Bulgarian courts on the grounds of the lack of a fair trial in Turkey and that the person of interest was “sought for political reasons.” Turkey, however, renewed its bid for his expulsion after the July 15 coup attempt. This request was also turned down since such a move would be “procedurally inadmissible.”<sup>94</sup>

Culling its hope from the independently functioning and impregnable Bulgarian justice system, the Turkish state possibly asked for the Bulgarian government involvement. This seems to be evident in the move by the Interior Ministry Deputy Chief of Staff Georgy Arabadzhiev. He said in a press conference that Interpol transmitted to them “new worrying facts and circumstances” about the person in question. He didn't give any details, though, about these facts or at least how serious they were. A couple of days after this statement, on August 9, 2016, Bulgarian Interior Ministry urgently expelled Büyük, escorted him to the border and handed him over to the Turkish

security forces. But interestingly, the Interior Ministry wouldn't mention the Turkish government's insistent demand for Büyük's extradition while expelling him. Instead, they presented the lack of necessary documents that would make it no longer possible for Büyük to stay in Bulgaria.<sup>95</sup>

Could these new facts about Büyük that were revealed out of the blue and his immediate extradition without even first referring to a court procedure, which is required by law, be seen as evidence of a premeditated and hastily carried out special operation by the Bulgarian and Turkish special services? Banking on this suspicion, the ECHR requested that Bulgaria provide documents and detailed information regarding this case.

Dilyana Giteva, a lawyer for the Sofia-based NGO Bulgarian Lawyers for Human Rights, thinks it could be. "This is a deal between two unconstitutional states in which Bulgaria's manner does not differ much from the one of Erdogan," she was quoted as saying. She said this was an arbitrary act by the government in total disregard of the laws.<sup>96</sup>

Boyko  
Borissov  
and  
Erdogan



Bulgarian PM Boyko Borissov's comment on the same topic on the NOVA TV channel brought to mind that the rendition of Büyük could actually be a quid pro quo. He said the extradition was an act "on the edge of the law." So why did they commit it, instead of staying within the safer realm

of the center of the laws? The answer was hidden in his words which legitimized the extradition because of the risk of massive waves of refugees, especially Syrian, from Turkey. Erdogan has time and again used the threat of opening the gates to allow, and push, his "Syrian brothers and sisters" to Europe. Their first stop would be Bulgaria, a burden that the country would hardly be able to cope with. "We must not allow the migrant wave to flood Bulgaria," he said in the same interview with NOVA, adding that "it is of great significance for Bulgaria to maintain good relations with Turkey."<sup>97</sup>

This stepping down against a threat, however, was not a solution; instead it was a manifestation of their own soft belly for an opponent, who would never shy away from abusing it.

Hristo Hristev, a professor of EU law at Sofia University warned against the same concern saying, “We have absolutely no guarantees against such acts in the future. The solution is not in surrendering to the pressure of Erdogan’s regime, but in working together with the other European countries,” he concluded.<sup>98</sup>

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) requested information concerning the extradition after Büyük and his lawyers lodged several petitions of complaints against the country, citing articles 3, 6 and 13 of the European Convention for Human Rights, which stipulate the prohibition of torture, the right to a fair trial and the right to an effective remedy respectively. The ECHR directed seven questions to Bulgaria along with two information requests.<sup>99</sup> Büyük is still in prison in Turkey awaiting the court decision.

## BAHRAIN

***Murat Acar:*** Murat Acar was a 46-year-old medical doctor, working as a professor and consultant at King Hamad University’s Radiology Department in Bahrain, when Bahrain’s security forces raided his house, seized him illegally and on October 8, 2016, sent him to Turkey, where he was subjected to torture. He was under the UN protection at that time, which he had applied for and received properly after noticing that the Turkish state was hammering out tricks to create problems for him, but overruling even this universally respected status didn’t stir a shred of hesitation in them.



The case was one of the incidents where Turkey exploited the Interpol system to seize dissidents of the Turkish autocratic regime abroad. Acar was detained by the Bahrain police and was delivered to Bahrain Interpol, which acted like a willing tool of Turkey without even needing to check the admissibility of the petition for the expulsion of Acar and without considering that what they were doing was indeed posing an obvious violation of the jurisdiction of a UN body.

The front page of the proceedings of a trial, which the judge rules for the continuation of Acar's detention.

In his testimony at the court, Acar narrated what he had gone through<sup>100</sup>: “Turkish Embassy in Manama notified me that my Turkish passport was declared null and void. I consulted an attorney. The attorney told me that we could face tough times if I went to Turkey. He said that we would be able to request humanitarian protection from the UN in order to elude extradition. I took the attorney’s advice. However, I was extradited, although I was granted protection.”

Having undergone a surgery for thyroid cancer and suffering from hypertension, Acar would have to wait in the notoriously terrible conditions of the prison and under strict restrictions that don't apply to even murderers for about a year to learn what exactly he was being accused of. The investigation file about him was so "confidential" that even he and his lawyer were not allowed access to its details. So there was no way for him to properly prepare for his defense. He filed several motions to be released, all of which have been rejected.

The abuse of Interpol to hunt down regime critics abroad by the Turkish government, as in Acar's case, was widely criticized. German Chancellor Angela Merkel has lambasted the Turkish authorities for the exploitation of the international police organization for the regime's own pragmatic intentions at the expense of chasing after real criminals. "(Dogan's) is one of many cases, unfortunately," Merkel said, in a sharpening of her tone toward Ankara. "That's why we have massively changed our Turkish policy recently ... because it's quite unacceptable that Erdogan does this."<sup>101</sup>

***Mehmet Tekeci:*** Metin Tekeci was the

Bahrain office manager of the Turkiye Finans Participation Bank. The Turkish courts had issued an arrest warrant for him for his alleged ties with the Hizmet movement. When Tekeci visited the Turkish embassy for some red-tape jobs in the capital city of Manama in January 2017, the officers in the embassy immediately



marked him. Tekeci possibly didn't know about the existence of an arrest warrant. The embassy confiscated his passport. Pro-government media has differing stories about how his capture happened. According to the Daily Sabah<sup>102</sup>, his passport was seized in the embassy and he was deported to Turkey where he is being held awaiting trial. The paper doesn't mention who captured him and how he was deported. The Turkish version of the same daily, Sabah, reported, however, that Tekeci was captured by the Bahrain police, without mentioning about the seizure of his passport.<sup>103</sup> The Bahrain state decided to deport Tekeci and turned him over to the Turkish Interpol on March, 25, 2017, the Sabah daily reported. According to this Turkish version of the story that appeared on the same day as the English one, Tekeci was the leader of the Bahrain branch of the Hizmet movement, administering financial relations of the organization there, without substantiating these claims with reference to any source. It also said he was in direct connection with the top management of the movement.

## **MALAYSIA**

***Turgay Karaman:*** Turgay Karaman got out of his car in

Basement No:5 of the Wisma E & C, a sixteen-story high-rise building in Kuala Lumpur. He was there to attend a meeting with some lawyers for his witnessing in a lawsuit that was slated for the next day. As he started walking away from his car, a gang of five men suddenly made a move toward him.





He didn't even understand what was happening when the men forcefully took him to their car, waiting just 10 meters away. Then they sped away. All of this scene was captured by cameras<sup>104</sup>. The date was May 2, 2017.

Karaman was the principal of Time International School. He was scheduled the next day to offer his testimony as a defense witness in a trial hearing of a case. When he didn't show up at the meeting despite that he had confirmed he was on his way and after realizing that his phone was no longer reachable, his friends filed a missing person's report with the police without a moment to spare. When they also found his car abandoned in the parking lot, it was no longer difficult for them to reach the conclusion that they didn't even want to consider. They alerted the United Nation's office in Kuala Lumpur about the possible abduction of a foreign national in Malaysia by clandestine groups operating on behalf of the Turkish government.<sup>105</sup>

The CCTV footage was also obtained during this time, clarifying what had happened. From other cameras installed along the route of the car of the abductors, the faces of the five Malaysian men were clearly visible.



**Turgay  
Karaman  
with his  
wife**

In a YouTube video to announce the details of the incident, Karaman's wife Ayşe's voice was trembling. Crushed, she burst into tears when asking for immediate action from the Malaysian authorities before it was too late. She said they have been legally living in Malaysia for 13 years. "I am calling on the Malaysian government to help as he is a gentleman and never hurt anyone," she said.

It didn't take long before the truth revealed itself. Turgay Karaman and an academician named İhsan Arslan were kidnapped by the Malaysian authorities as per orders from the Turkish state.

The two were deported to Turkey. Malaysia's anti-terrorism police unit had been investigating the two men, along with a number of others, for "spreading, influencing and funding" the activities of the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL), the government's English mouthpiece *Daily Sabah* quoted Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi as saying.<sup>106</sup> "There was no request from anyone. It [the arrest] is a result of their own doing," Hamidi claimed. Karaman was deported to Turkey on May 12, 2017. But that claim was a brazen misstatement, and an article in the *Guardian* newspaper would point a finger to this statement saying, "Karaman, who was the principal of a prestigious international school that promotes critical thinking as well as holding his post with the Malaysian–Turkish Dialogue Society, does not fit the stereotypical profile of an ISIS operative. ... His social media accounts promote books on topics from Turkish cuisine to Sufism, the mystical branch of Islam abhorred by hardline jihadists; on LinkedIn, he follows a global networking group for the LGBT community and their allies."<sup>107</sup>

Furthermore, the accusations against the two men weren't convincing enough for the UN Human Rights Committee. Turkey must release Karaman and İhsan Aslan immediately and pay them compensation for arbitrary detention, said the committee on May 29, 2019.<sup>108</sup> Turkey violated the two men's freedom and must comply with the ruling in 180 days, it said. "The State party is obligated ... to release the authors (of the complaint) and provide them with adequate compensation for the violations suffered," the committee said in its report about the case. The committee also found Turkey's request for an exemption due to its state of emergency and the "serious and complex" nature of the alleged crimes, unacceptable. It wanted Turkey to be more precise and show evidence in explaining how exactly the two men were posing a threat. Turkey failed to show it. However, since the committee's rulings are not binding and lack enforcement power, Turkey didn't comply.

***İhsan Arslan:*** A ten-year-old autistic boy was slapping his face and biting his arms to cope with the sadness, fury and disappointment of the sudden disappearance of his father. His mother, Ainnurul Aisyah Yunos, was in front of a group of journalists on May 8, exactly one week after her husband was kidnapped by unknown people who are believed to be operatives working on behalf of the Turkish government and was later detained by the Malaysian security forces.<sup>109</sup> Left alone with three kids, Yunos was in tears while asking



for an immediate action to halt the extradition process of her husband and give him a right to defend himself before a court.

Ainnurul  
Aisyah  
Yunos



Arslan went missing on May 1, 2017 in Kuala Lumpur around 8 p.m. He was a member of the Malaysian Turkish Chamber of Commerce and Industry, a business advocacy group that is affiliated with the Gulen movement. According to the information Yunos gave, when police checked her husband's phone signal, it was traced to the Malaysian Ministry of Defense.

And after a short while, on May 3 when the news of the abduction became a breaking story on international media, the truth behind the situation was revealed with a tweet from Malaysian National Police Chief Khalid Abu Bakar. İhsan Aslan was arrested along with Turgay Karaman “because they threatened the security of Malaysia.” He said they were arrested under Section 130 of the Penal Code. They were detained in the first place under the Security Offenses (Special Measures) Act (SOSMA), which allows for detention of suspects for 28 years without charges being filed and without even informing their families or lawyers. But why would they need to execute such exceptional measures to round up people, known to be moderate and kind. They didn't even have beards.

Home Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said anti-terror police had been investigating İhsan and Karaman for “spreading, influencing and funding” the Islamic State.<sup>110</sup> A *Guardian* article refuted such a smear, which was clearly in contradiction with the lifestyle and social connections of these men.<sup>111</sup>

It has been almost 3 years since Arslan was kidnapped and deported to Turkey without heeding the laws and international calls to stick to the path of justice. The man is still kept in a high-security prison, battling groundless terrorist charges.

***Alaettin Duman:*** Duman left his house, located in Tamarind Condoto on Jalal Sentul Indah Street, on or around 16.00 on October 13, 2016 to attend the afternoon prayer in a mosque operated by Pakistani expatriates some 500 meters from his house. After the prayer, he was going to meet his Malaysian friend, Mukhlis Amir Nordin, with whom he served on the Board of a school. His story is narrated in a report by Stockholm Center for Freedom (SCF):<sup>112</sup>



“As I passed through the traffic lights, a minibus stopped, and a Malaysian dressed in civilian clothes got out. He grabbed me by my arm and tried to put me in the minibus. I resisted, I pushed him. There were two more people inside. They were also in civilian clothes and Malaysian. I thought they were human traffickers. A fourth person pointed a gun at me. I tried to get away from them, but they anesthetized me. When I woke up, I found myself in an abandoned building in a forest.”

Before leaving home that afternoon, he had told his wife that he would return for dinner, but by 19.30 he had not shown up. His family tried to reach him, but his phone was off. They thought his phone battery was dead, but after one hour, they started to worry. At around 20.30, they called him three times, but they could not reach him again.

They thought Duman would surely have informed his family if he had had a change of plans. His 21-year-old son Kutluhan Duman called Nordin to ask him the whereabouts of his father. Nordin said, “I cannot find him because I cannot reach him.” Then the family began to worry more that he might have been involved in an accident or something similar. His wife Saliha (43) and his son Kutluhan checked the parking lot of the building to see if his car was still there. The car was there.

The family and friends decided to report the case to the police and search for signs of him at nearby hospitals. The possibility of his abduction had not crossed their minds. They thought he might have been injured in an accident or robbery attempt.

Kutluhan and his father’s friends waited in the police station until 3.00 in the morning to find out what they might do to locate him. But the Malaysian police said they could not do anything for 24 hours according to established procedures.

Those hours were long for the family, but they were even longer for Alaettin Duman. His hands and feet were tied, mouth gagged, eyes wrapped with tape and four men were torturing him heavily. He thought some mafia had kidnapped him for ransom. At some point, he even thought that these people were torturing him only to kill him.

At about 6.00, his wife Saliha and his son Kutluhan went to the mosque and asked other people whether they had witnessed anything related to Alettin Duman. One person among them said he knew Duman. He said that he saw Duman in the mosque the previous day, and he had left calmly after the prayer. The family at least knew that he had reached the mosque and left there safely.

The state-run news agency Anadolu quoted Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu the next day, saying that three persons were brought from Malaysia and that they were under detention with charges of "membership of a terrorist organization." When the Ankara police called Alaettin's sister-in-law the next morning and told her that Alaettin was in custody, his forceful abduction was now evident. But how? His passports and all his documents were at home.

Alaettin Duman was first seen after his abduction on November 4 by his mother and brother in court. He had a hard time even simply standing, and when asked what had happened, he told his brother that he had been tortured in Malaysia and in Turkey during the detention. The court hearing would later be deferred to November 7 due to missing documents.

He had been regularly tortured under police custody, especially at some points in the middle of the night. For instance, some officers were taking him from the detention room of the station at 3 AM in the morning to a distant empty place. They would put a gun against his head and shout that they would pull the trigger without even batting an eye if he didn't confess. He would say he didn't know anything to confess, only to receive fiercer beating in return. He recounted this to his brother while waiting for the court decision in the corridor in front of the courtroom. He couldn't tell more, but his brother Sebahattin narrated from his home what he had witnessed. A police officer threatened Alaettin saying, "Your wife and daughters are in danger if you do not confess."

Actively working in education in Malaysia since 2010, Duman was one of the founders of Time International School. He was married with three children. His name was featured in a derogatory article in the government mouthpiece, *Sabah* daily as the point man of the Gülen movement in

Malaysia.<sup>113</sup> Duman was sentenced to 18 years on April 17, 2018 for being a member of a terror organization.<sup>114</sup>

**Tamer Tıbık:** Kamuran Tıbık, wife of Tamer Tıbık, told SCF<sup>115</sup> her personal account of the day when her life was turned upside down. “I was constantly trying to reach him on the phone that day and I sent many messages. However, I received no replies. I did not know what happened to him, where he was, and who had kidnapped him. For two days, we and our friends sought him at all possible hospitals and police stations, in case he might have had an accident or fainted in some place or been attacked by robbers.



Tamer  
Tıbık with  
his family

My daughters and I were crying all day and night for two days and desperately trying to find him.”

Tamer was a frequenter of the Elite Language Center in Kuala Lumpur to build up his English. On October 13, 2016, he left his home as usual for the course, but he would never return. After realizing that Alaettin Duman was also reported missing on the same day, his family came to the realization of what was actually happening. Could they have all been abducted? They learned the gloomy news the next day when Çavuşoğlu told the Anatolia news agency about the kidnapping of three men from Malaysia as a splendid success for his government. Duman and Tıbık were the two, but the third man’s identity was unknown.

Tıbık served as the general secretary of the Malaysian–Turkish Chamber of Commerce and Industry for about one and a half years. He was married with two daughters and was a legal resident of Malaysia since 2015 with a valid employment visa.

Kamuran Tıbık stayed in Turkey until the end of 2015 to finish her doctorate studies and then moved to her husband’s side in Malaysia. She was a public employee at that time, too. Her daughters were studying in Canada. After successfully getting her doctorate, there was no obstacle left before their reunion, and she went to Malaysia without regrets in her heart, except for leaving her mother alone since she needed constant care for her celiac disease. She was already under pressure as her life and connections were being continuously scrutinized by the security and intelligence services. The police had even visited her house twice and asked for her husband.

When the trumped-up coup attempt was staged, the family was already in Kuala Lumpur. Their daughters had also come for a visit from Canada. “We were relieved that we were not in Turkey, but this time we started to feel pressure in Malaysia. We decided to have our daughters stay with us as the Turkish government was starting to cancel the passports of people who are affiliated with the Gülen movement. On August 7, 2016, a pro-Erdoğan newspaper published the name and photograph of my husband, claiming that he was part of ‘FETÖ’,” said Kamuran. On October 13, her husband was abducted. Since Malaysia was not a signatory of the refugee convention and neither was it a democratic country where human rights matter, the family decided to leave the country without further delay, fearing that the Malaysia authorities may kidnap and surrender them to the torturers as well. They moved to Canada on October 16.

Tıbık was put in Ankara Sincan Type T prison. His lawyer Hasan Basri Aksoy was also arrested, so his wife hired a new lawyer. But the officials rejected this lawyer, saying that they had already assigned a lawyer and hence they would not accept the family’s lawyer. The appointed lawyer, however, was not willing to cooperate with the family. He even refused to share Tıbık’s testimony with them and directed them to talk directly to the prosecutor. So Tamer Tıbık’s father and mother visited the prosecutor, who asked them to invite Tamer’s wife Kamuran back to Turkey. If Kamuran can convince her husband to testify the way the prosecutor needed and confess a role in the coup attempt and then reveal names, he would only get two years in prison. Otherwise, the best punishment would be at least 15 years, the prosecutor said. The family refused this indecent offer and had to leave the prosecutor’s office empty-handed.

Tıbık told his family members during their visit on December 1, 2016 that he was kept in police custody for a long time and subjected to torture to make him confess to crimes that he had never been involved with. He was forced to name people associated with the Gülen movement. Even Tıbık’s mother once heard directly from the police, who said, “Your son does not talk to us at all. He did not help us at all.”

Tamer Tıbık is still detained in a T-type prison in Keskin district of central province Kırıkkale, awaiting indictment.

## IRAQ

**Aslan Çelik:** Arslan Çelik, superintendent of the Roonaki Salahaddin Ayyubi Colleges, was abducted the morning of January 19, 2018 on his way to the school. He left his home at 8:11 a.m. According to his assistant Zana Cemil, who witnessed his abduction, a group of armed men forcefully seized him on Kurdsat Avenue near Grave of Mam Jalal Talabany, Sulaymaniyah, Iraqi-Kurdistan. The place was about 1.5 km from a police station. Some local witnesses also said a couple of cars blocked Çelik's car, a black Ford Explorer and abducted him.



Mahmut Övür, a columnist writing for the pro-government A Haber website and known to be a loyal messenger of MİT, confirmed that Turkey's intelligence had made long and delicate plans to abduct Ateş in Iraq, but they were foiled because of the involvement of the country's late president Jalal Talabany's wife, Hero.<sup>116</sup> He lashed out at Hero Talabany and accused her of being the front person of "terror-lovers all around the world from the CIA to Germany's Federal Intelligence Service BND" in their collaborative attempt to save Çelik. For him, Iraqis' intervention in MİT's operation in Iraq was not right.



Hero  
Talabany

Çelik was later sent to Dubai under the protection of Hero and from there, he went to the United States.

## Kosovo



Turkey kidnapped five teachers and a medical doctor from Kosovo in a covert operation with shady cooperation from the intelligence of this Balkan country. All the abducted men had something in common. They were known to have affiliations with the Gülen movement.

Yusuf Karabina, the Vice Director of the Gülistan Educational Institutions, his wife Yasemin Karabina and their 15-year-old son were stopped by Kosovo police in plainclothes at 8:30 a.m. on a Thursday. Fearing that the people who were trying to whisk them away might be MİT members, the family refused to cooperate and resisted them. The Kosovan officers used violence in return to force them into the cars and reportedly continued beating them during their detention in the station.<sup>117</sup>

Concurrently, Kahraman Demirez, the principal of Mehmet Akif College in Gjakova, and teachers Cihan Özkan and Hasan Hüseyin Günakan were also detained by the Kosovo police. After learning about the detention of his friends, the General Director of the Gülistan Educational Institutions, Mustafa Erdem, rushed to the police center to get information into what exactly was happening, but he was also taken into custody there.

The last person detained on this day was cardiology professor Osman Karakaya. He had moved to Kosovo to escape the persecution of the Erdoğan regime in Turkey, but, unfortunately, he was detained by Kosovo police.

Months earlier Kosovo police had arrested Uğur Toksoy, an educator with alleged links to the Hizmet movement. Toksoy eluded extradition, but still his detention in the first place had shaken the trust among the Turkish community about their safety in Kosovo.

The abduction was promoted like a polished success story in the pro-government media in Turkey, citing many top-brass government officials like Bekir Bozdağ, claiming this operation was a remarkable feat. But it would stir a completely opposite outcry in Kosovo.<sup>118</sup>

Then Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj was shocked with the incident, which had been carried out without his knowledge. It meant trampling on the country's sovereignty over its own jurisdiction, and it was irreconcilable with the very notion of independence. He fired Flamur Sefaj, the Minister of Internal Affairs and Driton Gashi, the head of the Kosovo Intelligence Agency, AKI.

Erdoğan lashed out at Kosovo's PM, who said the followers of the Gülen movement “were not deported but were stolen,” and publicly threatened the PM, saying he would “pay” for what he had done.

Kosovo's Foreign Affairs Ministry also reprimanded the abductions with strong language: “The arrest and deportation of Turkish citizens with regular residence permits ... is ... in direct contradiction to international norms,” it said in a statement.<sup>119</sup> Enver Robelli, a prominent Kosovar journalist, told Al-Monitor about Erdoğan's unbridled disparagement of the Kosovar PM: “People are irritated that Erdogan attacks the prime minister.



Thaci and Erdoğan

Most [local] media [report that] Erdogan behaves as if he were the king of Kosovo.”<sup>120</sup> The journalist also pointed to the role of the rivalry between President Hashim Thaci and Haradinaj in this incident, saying, “Thaci wants to play the tough guy. He has strong connections to Erdogan. Thaci apparently organized the arrest and the handover of the six Turks behind Haradinaj’s back.”

Thaci, indeed, seems to be vying to strike candid poses with Erdoğan before cameras when the two met. He had actually vowed to do anything in his capacity to help Erdoğan while he is trying his best to harm his critics, especially the Gülen movement followers. For example, when Erdoğan said in a joint press conference on December 29, 2016<sup>121</sup> that the crackdown on his critics, whom Erdoğan categorically calls terrorists, will continue both at home and abroad and that the Turkish officers will be hot on their heels, Thaci was nodding with a smiling face.

A parliamentary commission, established by the Kosovo Assembly to clarify the secrets behind the abductions, reported in February 2019 that the operation involved 31 instances of breaches of law and procedures. The commission also complained about Thaci’s obstruction of the investigation by failing to provide necessary information and documents.<sup>122</sup>

Kosovo is not the best Balkan country economically, and it pays extra attention to maintain cozy relations with Turkey, which had displayed support for it ever since its independence from Serbia in 2008. Turks also invest in Kosovo’s infrastructure. For instance, the country’s only airport and its electricity network are operated by the Turkish company Limak, one of Erdoğan’s most favorite companies, which is almost always on the winning side in major public tenders in Turkey. Another Turkish firm, ENKA, and its partner Bechtel are currently carrying out a \$2 billion road construction project in Kosovo.

The positive attitude toward refugees under Haradinaj rule had caused an increase in the interest of asylum seekers for this country; however, the pledge of one man may not be sufficient insurance against possible setbacks in the future. For instance, how the new government established in Kosovo by Albin Kurti on January 2020 will take on the asylum issues still remains unknown, and the internal political strife among the politicians, as well as the natural tendency among some politicians to curry favor with the Turkish autocrat, may always swing above the heads of the Turkish asylum seekers like Damocles’ Sword. Some people find Kosovo’s institutions faltering and have their trusts in them dented. Speaking to the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN), a Turkish woman, who wanted to be called with a pseudonym of Nermina for security

reasons, said, “When we see the police, we have mixed feelings. We feel protected, but also scared that something like March 29 could be repeated.”<sup>123</sup>



## GABON

Gabon’s detention of the Turkish educators reminds one of a sheep, which a wolf had set its mind to eat and had fabricated the fake reason of muddying its drinking water, although the sheep was standing on the lower part of the river. Gabon authorities rounded up the principal of the Ecole la Lumière school Osman Özpınar, the director of pedagogy İbrahim Akbaş and his spouse, and school accountant Fikriye Akbaş in Libreville on March 15, 2018, on the grounds that the said persons were involved in document forgery on behalf of the school. They claimed that the school’s ownership was transferred to the French company Mavna Cap on June 13, 2017, but it was fraudulent because not all shareholders were informed properly. Gabonese national Balla Ndiaye, who had a one percent share in the school ownership, said he didn’t know about the sale. But it turned out



Osman  
Özpınar



İbrahim  
Akbaş

his signature was on the agreement, penned among others. This time the man had to admit that he had actually signed the paper without knowing what it was about. He said he didn't read it.<sup>124</sup>

Instead of releasing them immediately after this new testimony by the complainant, the police spun a completely new and different reason for their detention. The Turkish teachers were declared “a threat to the national security,” without even substantiating this serious charge with any acceptable form of equally grave evidence.



A school employee, Adnan Demirönel, was also detained in the meantime, and the police asked the family members of Osman Özpınar and İbrahim Akbaş to turn over their passports. The families rejected this demand, fearing this would facilitate their deportation to Turkey. Police detained Osman Özpınar's wife Nesibe on March 23. When the local representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) stepped in to mediate and asked the families to cooperate, the families submitted

their passports to the police, who promised to only briefly examine them and give them back. They didn't. Nesibe was released on March 26, but then İbrahim Akbaş's wife Fikriye was detained the following day.

But what was all of this hustle about and why did the Gabon officials engage themselves in such onerous efforts to start trouble with a few Turkish teachers? The account by French human rights lawyer Richard Sedillot, who came to Gabon to investigate the detentions, gives a hint about the answer to this question. He said when he went to the police station to visit the individuals who were being kept in custody, he saw a vehicle belonging to the Turkish embassy in Gabon, parked in front of the station. He also saw two Turkish embassy employees waiting inside the station.<sup>125</sup>

The UN was also particularly interested in the case because Özpınar and Akbaş had formally requested UN protection in July 2017, stating their fear of arbitrary detention, deportation and abduction by the Turkish spies. Their fears had come true.

Their spouses and children were also collected and detained, bringing the total number of Turkish nationals forcefully kept inside the police detention facility to 13. The Gabon police delivered

them all to the Turkish authorities on April 10, 2018. When they arrived in Turkey, the children and spouses were released, while the three teachers were remanded in the police department for interrogation.<sup>126</sup>

*Hurriyet Daily*, which became a news outlet running in the same vein as the pro-government media after the botched coup attempt and which had recently become part of it, said the crime of these three people was to operate schools throughout Africa.<sup>127</sup> In another report on the same day, the same daily would cite a judicial source, who spoke on the condition of anonymity due to restrictions on speaking with the media, that the three men were accused of “international espionage” as well as “managing an armed terror organization.”<sup>128</sup>

The trial of the three kidnapped men was held on June 12, 2018 at the Istanbul 22nd High Criminal Court, where the three suspects rejected all allegations of ever having been involved in any kind of terror-related activities.<sup>129</sup> In their statements, the educators said they had spent years providing a more decent education opportunity for the children of the central African country, which many people cannot even locate on a map, setting aside the accusations of resorting to violence and terror. The prosecution also failed to provide any evidence relating the men to terror, according to an Anatolia news agency story, but this wasn’t enough for their release. The men had all deposited money in their Bank Asya accounts after Gülen had called on his followers to save the bank.

Erdoğan was using the state power back in 2014 to seize Bank Asya, which was by then owned by businessmen close to the Gülen movement, and towards this aim, he was publicly using defamation tactics to dissuade depositors from the bank and threatening big companies with inspections if they didn’t withdraw all their money immediately. These moves were even explicitly written down as serious crimes in the current laws his party had legislated. To save the bank from this blatant assault, many people, and not only the followers of the Hizmet movement, hurried to the offices of the bank to deposit money so that the bank could keep up with the soaring demand for cash. For the court, a deliberate attempt to cause a bank to collapse didn’t matter, while a counter-attempt to dodge a blatant crime was evidence of crime. With this distorted perception, the court ruled for the continuation of the educators’ detention.



## PART III: ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

Enforced disappearance was a widely used method by the Turkish state during the 1990s in its fight against the Kurdish insurgency. The state was quickly getting rid of its “trouble-maker citizens.” The formula was simple: Kidnap people, interrogate them under heavy torture, get the information you want and then kill them. The last stop for these people was usually acid wells or, as a former agent confessed, boiler rooms.<sup>130</sup> An estimated 5,000 people were victimized through this method and the symbol figure, or the keyword, for this devil cycle was “White Toros,” a very common car in Turkey that was usually used for the enforced disappearances.

One of the achievements the AKP had boasted about most in its first years was putting an end to unidentified murders and building a platform of dialogue to find a solution for the chronic Kurdish problem. All efforts to strengthen the democracy in the country and eradicate the remnants of the tyrannic implementation of the state’s monopoly of violence disappeared when MİT assumed the method again under Erdoğan’s order.

Instead of the White Toros, there was now the black VW Transporter van lurking in the streets, seeking its prey. The victims were now the followers of the Hizmet movement. The first person was whisked away with this method in January of 2016, six months before the coup attempt. His name was Sunay Elmas. He has been missing ever since, and the mystery behind his abduction

still remains unresolved. Intelligence agent Ayhan Oran would be the second name sharing the same fate as Elmas.

According to Erman Yalaz from Tr724<sup>131</sup>, the real abduction wave started with Mustafa Özgür Gültekin, who was kidnapped in Ankara on December 21, 2016. According to Yalaz, Gültekin's disappearance was related to the assassination of the Russian Ambassador to Turkey Andrey Karlov. Police officer Mevlüt Mert Altıntaş killed Karlov during his visit to a picture gallery in Ankara on December 19, only two days before Gültekin's abduction. Altıntaş had connections with a jihadist organization and was shouting slogans and a march that belonged to a radical Islamist group fighting in Syria. Erdoğan and the Interior Ministry declared hours after the incident that the assassin, who was shot dead by a special operations team with 33 bullets, was a member of FETÖ. The abduction of Gültekin was followed in the coming months by many other abductions, from public employees to teachers, mostly in Ankara.

Some of them were released, while some are still missing. All survivors have been ridden with signs of heavy torture, and some were even gravely traumatized, effects of which still linger even today. The report will provide the basic details of all the known cases of enforced disappearances.

***Sunay Elmas:*** Sunay Elmas dropped his kids at school in the Sincan district of Ankara on January 27, 2016. It was a freezing Tuesday morning in Turkey's capital city. Driving for about 20 minutes after he said goodbye to his loved ones, he stopped at the CEPA shopping mall. The last time he was seen was when a group of masked men pushed him into a Volkswagen Transporter in front of this mall.



January 27, 2016, 11:00 a.m. would be the marking point when the MİT's extrajudicial operations of enforced disappearance and torture against Hizmet members officially kicked off. Sunay Elmas will always be remembered as the first person Erdoğan's thugs kidnapped as part of their dirty war against the followers of the Gülen movement. As of March 2020, he is still missing, and the hope that he might still be alive has dimmed.

His family extracted a number of clips from the CCTV camera footage showing the car in route to the shopping mall, as well as the moment when Elmas was taken. The family collected every shred of evidence they had gathered with a lot of toil, put them in an organized file and submitted it to the Ankara Police Department. The camera records were very neat and clear. Even the faces of the people who illegally abducted Elmas could easily be identified. The department simply turned a deaf ear. CHP MP Sezgin Tanrikulu, who spared no effort in this case, as he did in all other cases to find out the whereabouts of all the victims of enforced disappearance, amplified their voices. However, even his efforts fell short of bearing any fruitful result.

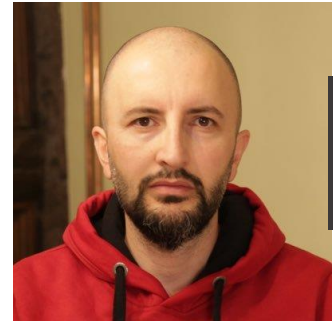
The police didn't even move a finger to find out where this person might be located. But they did something unexpected. Instead of finding the people whose faces and postures were easily identifiable in the camera records, the Ankara Police Department announced a nameless letter of denouncement as the primary evidence for the disappearance of Elmas. The letter, sent on 3/4/2016 from an email address '**michaelsantaza@yandex.com**' to the Ankara Provincial Security Administration Department of Telecommunication Electronic Office, took its place in the indictment number 2017/1121. It said that some top figures from the Gülen movement had a secret meeting and decided to kidnap Sunay Elmas. In other words, some shady men risked kidnapping their own man in broad daylight at a time when they were denounced by the Cabinet as a terror organization, instead of inviting their own man to an isolated place and getting rid of him without drawing too much attention. The court didn't heed the letter as reliable evidence, but it also didn't broaden the investigation to examine the camera records showing the moment of abduction.

Bold Medya news site would claim later, citing a source close to intelligence, that Elmas was actually abducted by the MİT's Special Operations Command. This source told the news site that the abduction was executed by a special team formed by Kemal Eskintan under the direct order of the MİT Undersecretary Hakan Fidan.<sup>132</sup>

A paragraph is needed to shed some light on Kemal Eskintan. He served many years in the Turkish army and was a colonel by the time he retired, after which he was interned by the MİT. When Fidan was appointed head of the country's intelligence agency, he commissioned Eskintan to build a team from select members of the Special Forces, an elite unit in the Turkish army, to be used primarily to provide protection for some VIP figures of the state. However, Eskintan was more

than a mere bodyguard: his main portfolio has been to act like a middleman and manage the Turkish government's underhanded relations with the jihadist groups in Syria and Iraq.<sup>133</sup> He was similar to a low-ranking version of Iran's top General Qasem Soleimani, who was killed recently in a drone attack by the US in Iraq. He managed relations with groups affiliated with both al-Qaeda and the ISIL, oversaw the delivery of arms and logistical supplies to these groups, controlled the extension of financial aid to them as well as supplying them with intelligence tips from the MİT. His involvement in several terror attacks in Turkey, which Erdoğan used quite deftly to consolidate his power, as well as his actions before and during the July 15 attempted coup were also contentious.<sup>134</sup> He is currently number two in the Turkish intelligence and is the point man in organizing and conducting top secret, and mostly illegal operations in Turkey and abroad. There are many signs that he is the man behind almost all abductions and enforced disappearances against the Hizmet members.

Investigative journalist Cevheri Güven found out that the building of the Special Activities Questioning Campus located at the intersection of Anadolu Boulevard and Marşandiz inside the Atatürk Forest Farm in Ankara, which is notoriously known as the Çiftlik (Farm), is the place where Sunay Elmas was taken for interrogation.<sup>135</sup> According to the testimonies by MİT directors Erhan Pekçetin and Aydın Günel, who were captured by Syrian Kurdish militants in 2017 while they were in a covert operation in



Cevheri  
Guven



Aydın  
Günel and  
Erhan  
Pekçetin

northern Syria, all abducted people that have affiliations with the Hizmet movement were being tortured and interrogated in this building, along with several other “private houses” of torture.<sup>136</sup> They also confessed that a special “FETÖ Department” was established within the MİT apparatus to deal specifically with the Gülen movement.

Known as  
"Çiftlik"  
(the Farm),  
the campus  
is MİT's  
torture  
base in  
Ankara.



Relying on a source who wanted to remain anonymous, Güven reiterated that this “Çiftlik” is the main torture center. The same source told Güven that Sunay Elmas most likely had already been killed. The reasons for this claim are that it’s been too much time since the abduction and that no information possibly taken from Elmas has ever appeared in any indictment against the Hizmet members, meaning that the intelligence agents possibly failed to extract information from him or failed to convince him to admit confessions.

His three kids are growing up without their father, and his wife Firdevs has been diagnosed with cancer. She is currently battling the disease.

**Ayhan Oran:** Ayhan Oran started his career at the MİT in 2005. Oran worked in Turkey’s Şırnak and Diyarbakır provinces as well as in Greece. He was on active duty in Greece but was called back to Turkey in June, 2016. On July 17, 2016, he was sidelined and was dismissed from the organization on August 2 due to his alleged connections with the Gülen movement.

He was last seen leaving the building complex he was living in at 12:38 on Nov. 1, 2016. The signal on his cell was active only until 16:00 the same day. While he had no money in his pocket, he did not even bid farewell to his wife before he went out.

MİT directors Erhan Pekçetin and Aydın Günel were also spilling the beans concerning Ayhan Oran in their interrogations by the Syrian Kurdish forces. One day, according to their narrative,

when they were at the Çiftlik, the FETÖ Department brought a man to the facility. Pekçetin said: “We were also using the place as the Security Intelligence Directorate [GİB]. It was already a small place with three or four cells, and there was also a guard post. The GİB head called to us and said, ‘Don’t make any sound, don’t raise your voice, and also switch off the cameras’. There were cameras showing the inside of the cells. I thought he was a member of the organization [MİT].” His reasoning was simple. The GİB president was asking them to remain silent because the person who was brought in would possibly recognize them from their voices, and the cameras were shut off because the people who brought this man in didn’t want anyone to see him. “But I saw him. He was Ayhan Oran, who organized the Paris massacre with Uğur Kaan Ayık and Oğuz Yüret.”<sup>137</sup>

The Paris massacre he was referring to was the murder of three Kurdish women activists, Sakine Cansız, Fidan Doğan and Leyla Şaylemez, who were sought by Turkey as members of terror organizations, in Paris on January 9, 2013. Although no one has claimed responsibility, the French investigation into the murders found some traces that the perpetrator was most probably the Turkish intelligence. Ayhan Oran, according to Pekçetin, was one of the organizers. He was kidnapped because of his connections with the Gülen movement, he would assert. How could he recognize the person brought to the Çiftlik for questioning? He said he knew Oran because of his bow shaped legs since he used to play football a lot.

***Mustafa Özgür Gültekin:*** Mustafa Özgür Gültekin was an employee at the Competition Authority. He was followed by four cars to a convenience store in Ankara’s Beştepe neighborhood at 18:15 on Dec. 21, 2016. Immediately after Gültekin left the store, he was surrounded by a group of men who later forced him into a Volkswagen Transporter van with tinted windows.

As in other cases, it was the family, rather than the police, who managed to get the CCTV records from the nearby cameras. The footage showed the faces of the kidnappers, meaning that it would not be really so hard to find these people if the police really wanted to. Even the Competition Authority got involved in this missing person case and attempted to conduct their own search to find their employee. But it was not long before they were visited by a team from the Anti-smuggling and Organized Crime Department (KOM), who warned the institution to keep their distance from the case as they were already on it. But they weren’t.

***Hüseyin Kötüce:*** Hüseyin Kötüce, an employee of the government-run Information and Communication Technologies Authority (BTK), was abducted in the parking lot of the Batıkent subway station in Ankara after he got off work on Feb 28, 2017. Family members found his winter coat and a cake he had bought in the back of Kötüce's car, parked in the parking lot.

Despite successive requests, family members have so far failed to get the police to carry out a fingerprint examination of the car, and no CCTV footage was collected from nearby locations overseeing the park.

After three months of heavy torture, one day he was left on a roadside in Ankara and was forced to turn himself in to the police. He was detained and was later arrested. His name would soon be included in the investigation into the assassination of Russia's ambassador to Turkey, Andrey Karlov. Karlov was killed by 22-year-old police officer Mevlüt Mert Altıntaş in December 2016, apparently in protest of Russia's positioning itself alongside the Syrian regime against the extreme, radical Islamist jihadists. He shouted, "Don't forget Aleppo," before pulling the trigger. Later, the Turkish government declared that the assassination was a devious scheme plotted by the Gülen Movement.<sup>138</sup> However, there were a lot of question marks concerning this young uniformed murderer's connections, especially his affiliations with some radical Islamist figures, who also had close ties with Erdoğan and his Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu.<sup>139</sup>

In his defense in a court on March 25, 2019 in Ankara, during which he also divulged some details about his kidnapping, Kötüce rejected all claims that he had figured in the assassination of the Ambassador.<sup>140</sup> He said he was injected into the assassination case in a completely unfathomable fashion, examples of which were seen only in the aftermath of the 1980 military coup in Turkey. "I was rear-cuffed and was kidnapped in a black van after my face was covered with a sack," said Kötüce, adding that the kidnappers were the MİT.

During the interrogation, he was told that he was kidnapped because he had connections with Mustafa Özgür Gültekin. The torturers were calling him the nickname of "Yusuf." Eventually, after long sessions of inhumane treatment, psychological and physical pressure and threats, he signed a testimony, said Kötüce, and added that he "disowned now everything in this testimony." The indictment, for instance, claimed that he was trying to muster intelligence about Karlov from a person named Vehbi Kürşat Akalın, such as whether the Ambassador had any professional

guards escorting him, and convey this information to his superiors. During the trial, however, Kötüce would say, “I don’t even know who this person is, much less that I would ask him for such sensitive information. I wanted to confront this person face to face during the interrogation, but this didn’t happen. I have been waiting for this day for one and a half years--that I would finally face this person.” He said he hadn’t even held a gun in his hand during his entire life, and he would not dare do anything to put his nation into peril and disgrace like killing the ambassador of another country. He demanded acquittal and release, but the court didn’t free him.<sup>141</sup>

**Mesut Geçer:** “I sensed that I was being followed while driving toward the Lale Square in Sincan on March 18, 2017. I recognized the vehicles on my trail and the men inside them. They stopped my car as if it was an ordinary police control. A grey [Fiat] Doblo with a plate number [that starts with] 58 approached, and I was made to enter it. We started the trip after they put a sack onto my head.” Mesut Geçer started telling about how he was nabbed and the hard days that followed during his defense in a trial in the Ankara 34th High Criminal Court on December 3, 2019, on charges of being a member of a terror organization.<sup>142</sup>

Geçer worked at the MİT until he was dismissed after the coup attempt. After being kidnapped, Geçer was put in a cell and his first interrogation started on March 20. It was not like an interrogation, though. They covered his head with a sack and smashed it against the wall. His hands were tied behind his back. He wasn’t even able to sooth the tremendous pain with his hands. This crushing impact on his defenseless head was only the beginning. “Then they continued with some more malice that I could hardly describe as a simple beating. I was still able to discern who they were from their voices,” he said. On March 22, Wednesday, his health condition got terribly worse. There was bleeding, he said, without giving any more details about where this bleeding exactly was. As his condition was getting even worse, he was transported to another place that he knew well. The torture continued until the night of June 20th, when he was taken to another place. “Later I realized that we were in Syria. I was travelling with my hands cuffed with plastic clamps, and my head covered with a sack. There were flaps on my ears and a band over my eyes. But I heard armed men get closer to me. Arabic speaking men carrying Kalashnikov rifles. I was detained by them until July 14, 2018.”

On this day, his head was again covered with a sack, and he was taken to the Kumlu district gendarmerie outpost on the Turkish side. Later he was handed over to the TEM Branch of the Ankara Security Department.

“On top of 16 months of missing, I have been under arrest for another 17 months. That means I have been separated from my wife and child and my life for about 33 months. Because of the maltreatment and the detainment conditions during this time, my left foot and knee are damaged. I can hardly use them. Also, I have a problem in my colon system.”

**Önder Asan:** Imagine a man confined in a cell no longer than a foot greater than his height,



on both sides. He is handcuffed from behind with a sack covering his head almost all the time, even when he is escorted to the toilet. He is naked, only his underwear is left on. A minute lasts like an eternity in the grave-like cell. His painful seclusion in this dark hermitage is only interrupted for random torture sessions every day. He is given food twice a day, just enough to keep him alive. He is beaten with batons to confess about names

he says he has not heard of before. He is molested, threatened with electroshock machines.

The formal complaint Önder Asan submitted to the Ankara prosecutor on June 23, 2017, details these horrific acts of cruelty and more that he was forced to suffer.<sup>143</sup>

Önder Asan was a 41-year-old teacher, who was dismissed with a decree law on the grounds of his connections with the Gülen movement. He was living like a fugitive due to the fear of getting kidnapped like some of his friends. His fears came true, unfortunately. On March 31, 2017, the taxi he was in was stopped by two vehicles, one of which was a black Transporter van as in other cases. It was just a 30-second commotion, but it marked the moment that dramatically changed the life of this man--who was known to be calm, helpful and gentle--forever.

His wife Fatma recounts these days to the BBC<sup>144</sup>: “He said he would surrender himself after the State of Emergency [the Turkish government had declared it following the failed coup] is over and give testimony. He had moved away from home so that we wouldn’t be anxious all the time of damage that may happen to us in case anything bad happens to him. Nevertheless, we were seeing

each other from time to time. We met in Etimesgut [district of Ankara] on March 31 and agreed to meet again on April 1. He didn't show up. He didn't come on Sunday either.”

On April 3, Fatma went to the police to report him missing, but her application was not processed as there already existed a warrant on Önder Asan. So, she headed to the prosecution to inform them that she used to meet her husband despite the warrant, and that he is missing now. A probe ensued. Fatma recalls her husband once mentioned that he was living in an apartment in the Şentepe neighborhood of Ankara but avoided divulging his exact address. She went there by herself to find this house and started showing Önder Asan's photo to safety officers in the housing sites. Finally, she found someone who claimed to have seen him around. They checked the security cams of the building that this officer was working for. The records luckily showed Asan leaving the building on 13:48 on a Saturday. With this new information, Fatma rushed to the prosecution to secure permission to tap into the camera records to trace her husband. This effort bore fruit as Asan was captured on a camera while taking a cab in front of the Ankara Water and Sewerage Administration (ASKİ). The plate number of this taxi was found with the help of the police, and Fatma went to see the taxi driver, who took her to where the abduction had taken place, in front of Sarıtaş Housing Complex on Vatan Street. The driver also told in detail how the incident had happened.

A black Transporter stopped the taxi by showing a gun, and another vehicle parked immediately behind the cab, blocking any possible escape route. The driver was stupefied, yet he protested. The armed men sallied forth from the Transporter, stopped the driver saying they were the police and forcefully pulled Asan out of the taxi into their vehicle.

Asan's statement recalls what happened afterwards. The men pushed Asan on the floor of the Transporter, made him lie face-down, took off his shirt and trousers and cuffed his hands from behind. They started punching and kicking him. After 42 days of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, he was dumped haggard and exhausted near Lake Eymir to be collected by the Ankara police.

Fatma told HRW<sup>145</sup> about the night when they received the information that Önder Asan had been found. On the night of May 12, her father-in-law received a call from the Ankara Provincial Security Directorate Organized Crime Branch. Önder was in police custody. “We went there taking

clothes and underwear for him with us. We were not allowed to see him. On May 16 in the afternoon, Önder was transferred to the prosecutor's office, and there my father-in-law, mother-in-law and I saw him. He had a beard and looked very thin. He was handcuffed. He said he had been ill-treated and kept in a small cell and told us about it. My husband is afraid for me and told me not to go out much because I might be arrested too. It was an illegal abduction. He didn't know where he had been held, but said he was held in a two-meter square room.

In Sincan F-Type prison [where he was held at the time of the interview] he is in a three-person cell, though there are six of them in the cell. I can see him once every two months in an open meeting, and once every two weeks in a closed meeting for 45 minutes. He is psychologically very badly affected and has lost a lot of weight and has asked for psychiatric help and was even sent to a psychologist at Bakırköy hospital. I just thank God he is alive.”

HRW also spoke to Asan's lawyer: “I saw my client Önder Asan on May 13 at the police station. He had trouble walking and held on to the wall. His hands were shaking. He was badly affected and said he needed psychological help.”

**Turgut Çapan:** Hours before he was abducted, on March 31, 2017, Önder Asan went to the



Ayvalı neighborhood in Ankara. He approached a woman who was heading to her children's school to pick them up and hailed “elder sister.” Ülkü Çapan had seen Önder only once, but she remembered her husband's friend. “Turgut was abducted around Şentepe,” said Önder and left without waiting.

Ülkü Çapan would talk to BBC about her struggle in the days to come<sup>146</sup>. Seeing his friends were being detained one after another, Turgut decided to leave home to be on the loose and to protect his family from any danger. But he would meet with his family on March 31 and take his kids on a brief picnic. At least that was the plan. After Önder Asan's visit to inform her

about Turgut's abduction, Ülkü waited a day to take action. She checked hospitals and then went to the police station and reported her husband missing. She went to the Prime Ministry Communication Center (BİMER), Presidency's Communication Center (CİMER) and the MİT.



Ülkü  
Çapan

She would soon learn that Önder Asan, who had just informed her about her husband's situation, was also abducted. Two fellow sufferers, Ülkü and Önder's wife Fatma, became sisters in solidarity in their quests to find out where their husbands were.

“We saw my husband passing from a front cam of a building, but he was nowhere to be seen in another camera that was watching the exit of this road. From another camera that was observing the area from a different angle, we saw a black Transporter running fast towards where my husband should be. That black van messes around there for about 15 seconds, and afterwards my husband doesn't seem to be in any direction that he can possibly go. A man vanishes into thin air in broad daylight in the middle of a street.”

Ülkü Çapan and her lawyers went to see the Ankara Governor Ercan Topaca on April 18, but this meeting bore no fruit as well. In the coming days, the separate files of Önder Asan and Turgut Çapan were merged and a confidentiality order was imposed. Ülkü told BBC: “If I will see him alive or if I can see him in the afterlife, I have to be able to look in his face. I will continue my struggle until the very end to be able to tell him one day that I didn't just sit idly by and wait. I did everything I could. I am not afraid for my life but for the kids I may leave behind. But this is my duty as a spouse and as a human.” Çapan's fate is still unknown as of the March 2020.

**Cengiz Usta:** Cengiz Usta left his home in İzmir's Torbalı district on April 4, 2017, telling his wife that he would be away briefly “to pay the installment of the elevator.” He wouldn't appear again for the next 87 days. It was the time when abduction and enforced disappearance stories were pouring in from all around the country, so his family, considering that Usta was dismissed from his teaching job at the Cumhuriyet Primary School in Torbalı by a government decree on Sept. 1, 2016, realized that he could have also been whisked away.



Starting to conduct a search by his own means, his brother Selim found out the truth. Some witnesses he talked to in the district told him that Cengiz was forced into a car by two men on Abdulkadir Street. The police report would also confirm this information.<sup>147</sup>

His family looked at every possible location where he might have been and pulled all the strings to at least find a trace of him, but to no avail. Nevertheless, a story in a local newspaper published in Torbalı, reported that Usta reappeared on July 10, 2017.<sup>148</sup> According to that story, Usta called his brother Selim on the 86<sup>th</sup> day of his missing and said, “I am in Afyon now and already bought a bus ticket. I am coming back tomorrow.” When he returned, he said he had got into serious psychological problems after his dismissal from the school, and he found the salvation from escaping everything. This story, however, is the only one about Usta online, and the family couldn’t be reached while preparing this report.

**Mustafa Özben :** On the morning of May 9, 2017, after a happy breakfast, Mustafa Özben



left home to take his daughters to their school. He never came back. That morning was the last time he saw his children and wife. He has never been seen again.

Mustafa Özben was a lawyer of the Ankara Bar Association and like Turgut Çapan, he, too, taught at Turgut Özal University until it was shut down by the government along with other Hizmet-affiliated educational institutions. His wife Emine would trace him like a detective and unearth that Mustafa was indeed snatched by a Transporter. Again, in Ankara and again, in Şentepe.

When her husband didn’t return that day, Emine got extremely worried, but she had to wait one day before reporting him missing. The next day she ran to the Ankara Police Department Şentepe Police Station. However, she would learn there that he was indeed sought by the police. The police told her that he might have quite likely escaped or absconded. She didn’t believe it and insisted that he be registered as missing. The next day she received a call from an unknown number. It was Mustafa. “He said in a hoarse voice that he was fine and was with friends and working, and that he would call again. I was very shocked and kept asking him if it was him. We searched for him everywhere despite that,” Emine told HRW<sup>149</sup>.



Emine  
Özben

She searched for a lawyer for the next two weeks but wasn't able to find one willing to represent her husband and help her in finding him. Lawyers were not so eager to step in since the case was extremely sensitive and too risky, and on top of that, many had prejudice against the Hizmet members. Finally, she found one, and they started their investigation on May 24, beginning with the route Mustafa was using while taking his daughters to school. She went from street to street looking for a clue and was finally able to locate their car parked at the entrance to a street several kilometers from her home.

She questioned local shopkeepers if they had witnessed anything strange or seen her husband. And that was when she faced the grim reality. A shopkeeper told her that a man was abducted in the street the same day as her husband went missing, and that they were unable to prevent it. He said it was like a horror movie. Someone even reported the incident to the police just after it happened. Emine verified this by checking the security cameras in the neighborhood. Indeed, a black Transporter, which was waiting in front of a pharmacy, started moving suddenly toward where her husband was. Three men, one of whom was in disguise with a mask, hurriedly whisked Mustafa Özben into the Transporter and sped away.

Emine and her lawyer reported this new information without delay. They were confident this time that it was not a simple case of "missing" but of "abduction." The police went there and questioned the shopkeepers. But there was a problem. They were no longer speaking as openly as they did previously. "We don't know what the police told them but the second time we went there, they were much more afraid and said they had heard my husband was wanted as a member of FETÖ.

I think about it every night. What are they doing to my husband? In the beginning I couldn't sleep or eat at all. I have a five-month-old baby, a six-year-old and a 10-year-old. I have told them we are trying to find out which prison their father is in as they keep asking where he is. Disappearing a person is nothing more than banditry. I don't want my children to know that their father has been disappeared."<sup>150</sup>

Three years later Mustafa is still missing.

**Fatih Kılıç:** “My husband Fatih Kılıç has been missing for 76 days. To run every time the



phone rings, everytime there is knocking at the door and to return destitute... Every day is a torment...” Nihal Kılıç wrote this Twitter message on July 29, 2017<sup>151</sup>. Even her child was running to the door to welcome his father whenever he heard a knock. “I am worried about my husband’s life, and every day is snatching a piece from my life, too,” she wrote for many days.

Fatih, who was a teacher before getting dismissed by a government decree after the failed coup, went missing after seeing his family off in the Ankara’s coach station AŞTİ at about 11:00 on May 14, 2017. Starting from the day her husband disappeared, his wife every day expressed in her notes how agonizing and excruciating the days had become. She stopped writing on her Twitter wall on the 77<sup>th</sup> day. As of February 2020, more than 1000 days have already passed without a single word from Fatih. It took 35 days for the prosecution to finally initiate an investigation, and the only evidence was the image of Fatih Kılıç while standing at a bus station in Ankara’s Dikmen district, which she found with her own struggle. But there was not even the slightest ruffle in the leaves of the investigation files. Even the camera records of the AŞTİ were not checked. The prosecutor closed the file 12 days after opening it, and Nihal was left hopelessly asking “Why?”

**Cemil Koçak:** Cemil Koçak’s wife remembers the moment when she answered the call from



Cemil’s phone on June 15, 2017. The shocked, distressed voice belonged to her 8-year-old son. The little boy told his mom that his father had been kidnapped. She heard voices of some men, calling her to come immediately to the place where the horrible incident happened. She rushed out.

Cemil and his son had just left home in his car. He didn’t realize a black and white Ford Focus, a VW Transporter van and a Fiat Doblo were stealthily on his trail. He didn’t even realize the danger when one of these cars hit his from behind and forced him to stop. It was 5:30 pm. Koçak got out of his vehicle to see what had happened, but in seconds, he was pushed into one of these cars in front of the eyes of his little son.

There were four CCTV cameras in the area, but the incident had happened at a blind spot. The identities of the abductors were not easy to find.

Koçak was an agricultural engineer at the Ministry of Agriculture until he was dismissed from his position by decree in September 2016.

“I found my son and people around him and the car in the road. I was in such shock and trying to comfort my son, and the police came as the crowd had called them. I assumed they would interview people and get their names,” Koçak’s wife said and went on: “My son is very traumatized by this and has bad dreams about being abducted. He fell out of bed last night – something he has never done before. I feel guilty I am not doing enough to find my husband. Where is he?”<sup>152</sup>



Koçak was not under any investigation. There was no arrest warrant for him. His wife lodged an official complaint for the abduction with the prosecutor’s office. In late September, Koçak was released.

**Murat Okumuş:** “It’s been 96 days, my son. I have lined up the days like aligning beads of a rosary. I am yearning for the day you will enter through this door again. I am waiting in hope. Please come,” wailed Murat Okumuş’s father Ahmet Okumuş on Twitter<sup>153</sup>. He was tirelessly searching day and night to find his son.



Life was harsh for Murat Okumuş, the operations director of the Şifa Hospital, after this ultra-modern health institution was closed by the government since it was owned by a foundation that had connections with the Hizmet movement. But losing his job was not the only tribulation he had to pass through. On June 16, 2017 in İzmir, Okumuş was abducted by some five or six men that got out of two vehicles. The men shouted at onlookers that they were the police to deter any intervention as they forced Okumuş into one of the cars. Okumuş’s father later managed to get

hold of the security camera records in the street to watch the moment when his son was kidnapped. He was able to capture the plate numbers of the vehicles used for the illegal seizure of Okumuş.

Ahmet Okumuş told HRW<sup>154</sup>: “We also went to the prosecutor, and there we were able to watch the security camera footage, which showed the actual abduction. Everything was clear. You could see the faces of those who abducted my son. From that footage those men could be identified if the authorities wanted them identified.”

The prosecutor told him that that he would give him a copy of the footage after two days. They revisited the prosecutor at the set time, but the same prosecutor sent them away without giving them anything; he even didn't offer them seats while talking. He said the file was assigned to another prosecutor. Later, they learned that a secrecy order had already been placed on the folder, making it impossible for the family or their lawyers to even peek into the details. Now they were no longer able to follow the case; neither could they get the same video clip that was substantiating the moment of abduction and the identities of the abductors.

“All my wife and I want to know is where our son is, to know that he is in the state's hands as we believe he is. We are in despair over this,” he said.

His family acted in no time to create a reaction in society about the illegal abduction of their son and public solidarity for their case. His father and mother clamored insistently about the illegal treatment, searched day and night for traces of their son, applied to all responsible offices and institutions and campaigned through social media. Facing only silence and indifference, Murat's family lodged a complaint to the ECHR, hoping that the state institutions might give up deliberately keeping silent about their inquiries and finally spill the beans if an International court, and the most effective one on human rights at that, requests it. The application was on August 21, 2017. The court asked the Turkish state whether the investigation was instigated promptly given the urgency of the situation. Another question concerned if the footage recorded by CCTVs and other security cameras along the route of the two cars involved in the incident and GPRS data of one of the cars were analyzed and secured properly. Questions about what the state had done to identify the perpetrators and to search for the owners of the cars with the plate numbers 48 E 8012 and 35 ZF 286 and their possible involvement in the abduction were also forwarded to the Turkish government.

It has been almost 1000 days since Murat Okumuş was forcefully disappeared, and he is nowhere to be found. The Twitter account his family had been actively using to create awareness has been inactive for the last two years.

**Hıdır Çelik:** On November 16, 2017, there was an armed conflict between Turkish soldiers and the militants of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in the rural side of Zoxbirîm (Kırmataş) village, located in Diyarbakır's Hazro district in eastern Anatolia. During this fight, Turkish military forces killed two PKK militants and captured a civilian, who was declared in a statement from the Diyarbakır governor as a collaborative of the terrorists. The declared accomplice was Hıdır Çelik from the Qubik (Bağyurdu) village of Hazro. Hıdır was a farmer engaged in stockbreeding on his modest ranch and selling cattle and sheep by visiting nearby villages. His family believed that Çelik was at the wrong place at the wrong time.

Çelik was in the village haggling with the villagers for cattle purchase when his Volkswagen Passat car was raked with bullets by some people reportedly in plainclothes, and Çelik was injured.<sup>155</sup> Hearing about the incident, his family rushed to this village and learned the details from the witnesses. Then they moved on without a moment's delay to learn where Çelik was taken and to find him.

They first headed to the gendarmerie station located in the village of Milkesî, where the officer told them that he had knowledge about the person in question. But after making several phone calls, he changed his rhetoric completely, saying he hadn't even heard about it. The officer told the family to go check with the District Gendarmerie Command in Hazro. The family did so. But there was no satisfactory answer there, too. The soldiers in Hazro advised the family to drive even further until they got to the bigger Silvan outpost. The officers there also said they could do nothing. Growing confused and hopeless, they went to the gendarmerie and police centers in the province of Diyarbakır. Çelik was nowhere to be found, and the state units were simply not willing to help them. Months passed, but they were not even told whether Çelik was alive or dead.

**Ümit Horzum :** Ümit Horzum was abducted on December 6, 2017 near the A City Mall in



Ankara. It was around 18:00. The next 133 days would be a trial with fire for him and his family. Many months after this incident, in February 2020, he testified before the 32nd High Criminal Court in Ankara against a suspect who was charged with being a member of a terror organization, dependent on his previous confessions. Horzum said he didn't even know who the suspect was and started narrating how he was implicated by this man, along with others, which he estimated at a number around 100. His statement was included in the

court record as follow: "A vehicle blocked my path when I was driving in Etlik [in Ankara]. Several people got out of that vehicle and forced me into their cars and took me away. They put a sack around my head. I was handed over to the staff in the Ankara Security Department on April 16, 2018 by these people. Before this date, I was tortured. Since I was also psychologically tortured in the Ankara Security Department, the things that I hadn't actually told were written down as if I told them. I was made to sign a statement of identification despite the fact that I hadn't identified anyone. Moreover, the people who had abducted me told me how to give a statement through coercion before bringing me to the police. Besides, I would also emphasize that the said statement was given to the police at the same time when I was delivered to the police."

This is a very brief summary of what Ümit Horzum had been through. It omits horrific details of torture. It doesn't mention his family's agonizing tribulation every moment as they lived without knowing where he was, who took him or what kind of ordeal he was suffering. And worst of all, without knowing whether he was dead or alive.

Horzum was working at the Turkish Accreditation Agency (TURKAK) until he was dismissed from his post by a government decree on August 2016 under the rule of emergency over his alleged links to the Gülen movement. Before he was kidnapped, Horzum knew that the police were looking for him for detention in an ongoing investigation. He was not staying in his home to dodge getting caught, due to fear of widespread and systematic torture under detention. But he was caught by people who were even worse than the police he was afraid of.

Horzum's wife, Aynur, learned from a person who introduced himself as a friend of Ümit's and whom she hadn't seen before, that her husband was missing. She wrote on her Twitter account that she had been frequenting every hospital, police station, courtroom and gendarmerie station to find her husband. The gendarmerie sergeant told her "to stop her futile search for him since he is a [terror] group leader who is going to be sentenced to jail in prison. He is up to no good for you." She wrote: "I am a mother of two, my children are constantly crying and asking for their father."



**Aynur  
Horzum**

Aynur Horzum knocked on the doors of every office possible to find her husband, but no one was willing to make any move. She continued her struggle undeterred. "My husband was an innocent man, who has not committed any illegal activities. In the laws, presumption of innocence is essential. If they have any claims, public prosecutors must investigate them, and authorized courts must judge them. Under a rule of law, it is not even a matter of question for anyone to execute their own law," she told in an interview with the Ahval news.<sup>156</sup>

The good news she had been longing for finally arrived after 133 days. Ümit Horzum was kept in the custody of the police department and was brought to the court on the 145<sup>th</sup> day, even without any notice being given to his lawyer. His lawyer also wasn't granted a meeting with Horzum. The court said a lawyer had already been assigned to the case, and the suspect's statement was taken with the presence of this lawyer. However, the court unexpectedly released him, most likely due to the confessions extracted from him after 133 days of torture. Aynur Horzum would share her joy after months of grueling waiting, saying, "I wish from my Lord that everyone feels the same feelings we had in the shortest possible time."

**Orçun Şenyücel :** Orçun Şenyücel went to a grocery to buy milk for his two children on



April 21, 2018. He has never returned. His family captured the moment of his abduction from the security cameras of the store. When Şenyücel's car stops at a roadside park in front of the grocery, a white Toyota approaches about 5 meters behind his. The place is Ankara's Türkkonut district, and the time is about 4 minutes past midnight. Şenyücel slowly moves toward the pedestrian way and bends to apparently tie his shoes. A man with a sack in his hand leaves the Toyota and starts advancing upon

Şenyücel, and a black Transporter at this exact moment stops in between the two cars in the middle of the road and several men rush out from it. The men haul him to the black van without him even realizing what was happening.

Orçun Şenyücel used to work as an expert at the Competition Authority until he was dismissed in 2016 after the coup attempt over his alleged ties with the Hizmet movement. After his kidnap, a Twitter account, ostensibly belonging to his father, wrote: "My son was only a dismissed public employee. He has never been tried or convicted of any charges. I am worried for his life, help me."

His relatives hurried to the police and asked for immediate action to rescue Şenyücel before anything bad happened to him. The license plate of the Toyota was legible from the footage, and the police made a quick check to find the owner. But unfortunately, the license plate was stolen from another car. The plate for the Transporter was not visible on the footage. There was no further inspection into the city surveillance cameras, through which the police could possibly track where the two vehicles sped to.<sup>157</sup> Orçun has been missing for more than 670 days by the time this report was prepared on February 2020.

**Hasan Kala:** Dr. Hasan Kala was an academician at Çankırı

Karatekin University until he was sacked with a decree law af ter the botched coup attempt for his connections with the Gülen movement.

He was trying to cling to his reduced life during the two years since losing his job, academic studies, and professional career. But unbeknownst to him, everything would turn even worse on July 28

of 2018. He was kidnapped around his house in Ankara’s Batıkent neighborhood in the dark of the night by unidentified people with a black Transporter. His family immediately started searching his whereabouts upon realizing he was missing.<sup>158</sup>



HDP MP Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu’s tweet on February 27, 2019, was just a humble attempt to interrupt the silence surrounding Kala’s misfortune. He said the academician has been missing for 222 days since his kidnap, and all legal attempts to locate the man have been futile. The last hope is now the European Court of Human Rights (AİHM). As of March 19, he has been missing for 608 days. A report by the Hak İnisiatifi (The Right Initiative Association) on June 2019 about the extrajudicial kidnapping of dissidents guesses that Kala was probably released after missing for about 250 days, and he managed to escape the country afterwards.<sup>159</sup> AST was not able to verify this information.

**Fahri Mert:** A group of men came to 44-year-old Fahri Mert’s house on August 12, 2018, and introduced themselves as police officers. They said they had to take him to the police station for an ongoing investigation. But they didn’t. They abducted Mert with a black Transporter.



His family and friends tried to get information about him afterwards, but it wasn’t possible since there was no record of his admission to any nearby police station in İzmir where the incident had happened.<sup>160</sup> He has been missing for about 585 days as of March 19, 2020, and nothing has been heard from him since then.

**Ahmet Ertürk:** An ordinary schoolteacher, Ahmet Ertürk was abducted on November 16,



2018, after he left his home at exactly the same time when a team of police raided the house of his parents and detained them. Two weeks after his abduction, his wife wrote on her social media accounts that all her attempts, her applications to the police and the prosecution to find the whereabouts of her husband had been fruitless. She had not received even a word of response from her petitions in 25 days. With Twitter messages, she was asking for help from the opposition parties and the human rights associations to

help her find Ahmet.<sup>161</sup> On December 24, she wrote: “This is the 40th day. I can no longer discern night from day. My daughter is kissing her father’s picture, constantly looking at it. She is rummaging around the house calling out daddy, daddy. I am sinking in deep sorrow. Please help me.” On December 25, she wrote: “For how many more days will my 15-month daughter remain an orphan like this. My home is shattered, and we are torn asunder. I beg, please help me.”

Fortunately, Ahmet Ertürk was surrendered to the police on January 4, 2019. His wife informed about the good news on Twitter, saying Ahmet was in custody.

**Gökhan Türkmen:** Gökhan Türkmen, who had been missing for nine months before he



reappeared in an Antalya police station on November 6, 2019, told the court about the tortures and threats he had to endure. Currently in the high-security Sincan prison, Türkmen gave his statement before Ankara 2nd High Criminal Court on February 7, 2020.

Türkmen was one of the seven people abducted in Antalya in 2019 a long with Salim Zeybek, Yusuf Bilge Tunç, Erkan Irmak, Yasin Ugan, Özgür Kaya and Mustafa Yılmaz. Among these seven, all but Yusuf Bilge was released later, and all were exhausted after months of heavy torture. These six men are in jail pending trial.<sup>162</sup>

Türkmen blew the lid off during his court hearing with the horrifying details of the inhumane treatment he had faced during the 271 days of his captivity.<sup>163</sup> Before he started detailing what had happened to him, according to the information provided by lawyer Murat Mehmet Atak, who

is also a member of the Human Rights Center of the Ankara Bar Association, Türkmen's lawyer Ayşegül Güney, who was appointed without Türkmen's consent, told the court that Türkmen will not plead. But the suspect stood up right at that moment and said he wanted to give a statement in his own defense and then he dismissed Güney. After Güney left the courtroom, Türkmen started telling the court how he was abducted in Antalya by three men wearing police vests and was taken to a desolate place in a forest. His clothes were replaced there, and then he was taken to a building in Ankara. There were several others kept confined in this building, but he said he knew none of them. "My eyes were blindfolded all the time. I was tortured during all those nine months. I was forced to stand for days in a place where lights were on all the time, after which I was slumping down out of extreme fatigue. I was given only a dribble of food and I became emaciated."

He was taken back to Antalya at the end of 271 days as if he had been there all the time, and the police took him back again to Ankara.

The court board decided to convey the statement to the prosecution conducting Türkmen's investigation, and it also decided to lodge a complaint against the torturers.

Speaking to TR7/24 news site<sup>164</sup>, lawyer Atak said Türkmen was being kept alone in a cell that was built to host three inmates, and that there are serious concerns for his life as long as he is kept there. What is more is that there are extremely strict surveillance measures imposed on Türkmen and the other five men abducted in Antalya, such as video taping all their interactions with anyone, including their families, always accompanying them with a guard wherever they go, and sometimes turning down the meeting applications from the lawyers saying, "He doesn't want to see you," etc. Atak said "this is not detainment but obvious captivity."

Türkmen ventured to divulge the torture he had to suffer, but this didn't come without any further cost. According to his wife Zehra, who didn't want to talk in detail about what kind of threats her husband was receiving, sufficed to quote Gökhan Türkmen as saying, "always some people checking up on me."

Gergerlioğlu brought Türkmen's case to the Parliament<sup>165</sup>. He said: "Gökhan Türkmen was kidnapped in the middle of the city. We have inquired about this case for nine months to the Internal Ministry and the Presidency. The President's Chief Advisor Fuat Oktay responded, saying,

‘There has never been and will never be a crime like abduction in the Turkish state tradition.’ But this man has spoken out in the court.” Gergerlioğlu wanted the Internal Ministry to carry out a deep examination of the claims and find out who were these three men wearing police vests.

***Yasin Ugan and Özgür Kaya*** : On February 12, 2019, around 3 p.m., a group of about



Yasin Ugan

40 policemen in plainclothes, but carrying automatic rifles, surrounded a condominium in Ankara’s Altındağ district. Their targets were two men living in different flats of this building with their families. With barrels filled with bullets pointing at them, Yasin Ugan and Özgür Kaya could do nothing but surrender themselves to these armed people. Black sacks were immediately wrapped around their heads, and they were pushed into minivans in a way that would hardly be described as gentle.



Özgür Kaya

Their families were perplexed, unable to make sense of what had just happened. The gang introduced themselves as policemen, so the police must know their whereabouts, they thought. The relatives of the two men rushed to the precincts to ask for the details of this extraordinary operation. Nobody in the police department knew about it. They started looking for a clue everywhere, to no avail.

Evidently, the two men were kidnapped. But who would snatch two civilian and not-so-athletic men, as if mounting a sweeping assault into a very dangerous mafia nest?

Although they introduced themselves as police, the extravagant way they performed the operation with so many agents, their dauntless move to kidnap people in broad daylight, and their use of black sacks to cover the heads of the men, reminded of the typical course of action MİT would take. Days passed excruciatingly slow for the families, whose attempts to elucidate the fate of Kaya and Ugan ended nowhere. There was a massive reaction in the social media, MPs Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu and Sezgin Tanrikulu brought the cases of these two men to the Parliament’s agenda, and even the ECHR formally requested info about them; but all these screams for humaneness died down into a stone-cold silence.

On the evening of July 28, the families of Kaya and Ugan received phone calls from the police, who said the men were being held by the counter-terrorism units. The wives who had been tweeting their pains by using accounts with their husbands' names were finally able to heave a deep sigh of relief after six months of nerve-racking wait. Nobody would divulge anything about where the two men had been held during this time; still, it was better than them having been lost in utter obscurity and not knowing if they were dead or alive. Yet that didn't mean the days ahead promised any relaxation. The two men were denied their requests to see their families and even their lawyers. The families were told that the two suspects had already shook hands with a lawyer, and that their statements had already been taken under the watch of the lawyer.

News website Bold managed to interview this lawyer.<sup>166</sup> Neslihan Koçer was registered to the Ankara bar. She was known to be affiliated with the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), a staunch ally of Erdoğan and his main supporter in his crackdown on the Hizmet members. According to the Bold, MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli had decorated Koçer with a party pin 8 years ago in an initiation ceremony that was also attended by Engin Alan, who had been sentenced to 18 years in prison for surreptitiously plotting to topple the government with a putsch in the famous Ergenekon cases. Judges loyal to Erdoğan hurried to release Alan along with others convicted in the Ergenekon case, as Erdoğan was looking for partners in his fight against the Gülen movement. The trust with the MHP was set during this time.

Özgür Kaya's wife would tweet: "I couldn't reach this lawyer, who was said to be representing my husband, nor her name, her fame, no matter what I did, whom I asked. I don't have even a tiny bit of information concerning what he was accused of nor what statement he gave. My husband who was missing for the last 165 days found a lawyer for himself, but he doesn't even know her name. It was written, staged and my husband was arrested."



Özgür  
Kaya's wife

Answering Bold's questions in a phone interview, Koçer rejected the claims that the suspects were kidnapped. She said the two men surrendered themselves to justice on their own accord. She also denied the assertions that Kaya and Ugan were not allowed to see anybody--lawyers or families. She said they met coincidentally at the police station, where they asked her to become their lawyer, and she gladly accepted. She portrayed such a blissful scene in which everyone was so joyful and

festive that they even celebrated her birthday there with a cake, according to the lawyer quoted by the Bold.

Deputy Program Director at Human Rights Watch Tom Porteous criticized this common unjust treatment saying: “Lawyers have been prevented from meeting the men, in violation of Turkey’s laws, which fuels our suspicion that the authorities want to hide the truth about what these four have lived through for the past five-and-a-half months.”<sup>167</sup>

Evidently, things were not so delightful as Koçer struggled to show. For instance, when Kaya’s trial began, it began secretly without informing anyone, in a courtroom that was not announced to the family or the lawyer of the family. Even the parliamentarian Sezgin Tanrikulu, who went to the Ankara Courthouse at 9:30 a.m. on October 24, 2019 to witness the trial, learned that the case would be seen in the 34th High Criminal Court, newly established to solely taken on the MİT-related cases.<sup>168</sup> He started searching for the location of the newly established court. He was told that it was located on the fifth floor. He went there, but there was no one inside. The family tried to reach the lawyer appointed by the Ankara Bar Association as per the request by the court, instead of the family’s own lawyer. This lawyer texted the family that he wouldn’t be able to pick the phone up since the trial was already in progress.

**Erkan Irmak** :“My husband was hardly able to stay at home,” said Nilüfer Irmak when



describing the last days before Erkan Irmak disappeared. “He was afraid of meeting the same fate as those who were kidnapped, and in order to protect his family he was only rarely stopping at the house,” said Nilüfer as she was speaking to Gergerlioğlu in an interview that was published on the Parliamentarian’s YouTube and Twitter channels.<sup>169</sup>

“That night he was home. He played with the kids, we talked, and I sent him away at 11:03. He passed the part of the road that was under construction, and as he was about to the school at the corner of our house, two men approached him quickly. I saw it through the window. They ran. I couldn’t utter even a faintest sound,” told Nilüfer.



**Nilüfer  
Irmak**

The family was not able to sleep until the morning, and the first thing they did next day was to rush to a lawyer, who suggested they wait for 24 hours. If the police took him, they would surely notify you about it, said the lawyer.

Days passed without any word from her husband. Nilüfer didn't just mark the time but submitted petitions to the police stations, the Police Department, prosecution and finally the Constitutional Court. "They were taking good care of us in the beginning, you trust the state, I mean. But the next week, they became tough on us," she recalled. The lawyer informed her that the case was moved to Ankara, and a confidentiality order was placed on the file. Interestingly, the file number was the same as those of the other four names, who were all abducted in the same month. Despite this maddening silence from the state institutions, however, the ECHR was swift to show their care, she said. The court sent a response in just ten days and ordered the Turkish Justice Ministry to provide an explanation as soon as possible. But they too came away empty-handed.

Like Yasin Ugan, Özgür Kaya and Gökhan Türkmen, who all disappeared in Ankara on different days in February, Irmak was also kidnapped in February and like the others, he also appeared on the same day and found himself captured by the police.

Their appearance soothed concerns only to a limited extent, though. Erkan Irmak's lawyer Emir Seydi Kaya complains about the prosecution's deliberate action of not taking any notice of the gravity of the situation. "When I asked if there is any investigation in progress into the subject [the abduction of his client], he said 'These people were detained yesterday. Whatever happened before doesn't interest me.' He also rejected outright our demand for an independent physician," said Kaya, speaking during a joint press conference on July 2019 in Ankara with representatives from the İHD, Turkey Human Rights Association (TİHV), Ankara Chamber of Physicians (ATO) and the Rights Initiative concerning the abductions of Irmak, Ufan, Kaya, Zeybek, Yılmaz and Türkmen and their immediate arrest after they reappeared at the same time out of the blue

**Mustafa Yılmaz:** Mustafa Yılmaz was a physiotherapist in Ankara Elvankent. On October



2018, he was detained for the crime of having worked at a university prep course in the past and that course, which was officially permitted, audited and 100% legal at that time, had connections with the Gülen movement. He was released on January 8, 2019, pending trial. He would soon be sentenced to 6 years and 3 months for this “crime.” His case was referred to the appeals court and Yılmaz was waiting for the decision while trying

to keep his family afloat amidst this turbulent part of their lives. A research fellow at the Hacettepe University, his wife Sümeyye also lost her job.

MP Gergerlioğlu has a detailed account on his website of what Sümeyye Yılmaz had gone through, along with many other similar cases. The following details were taken from this site. Sümeyye wanted to believe for about a month a fictional story she was told by the police: On February 19, Mustafa first rode a bus after leaving home for his job and then changed to a subway train. After a while he switched off his phone and dissolved into thin air. Her application to the prosecution to find her missing husband was turned down for not enough evidence. But her suspicions lingered. With the instructions of the Human Rights Association (İHD), she started searching for the tracks of her husband. She collected the records of the cameras at certain spots along the route her husband took that day. The video recording of a kiosk near her house revealed the actual story of what had happened to Mustafa Yılmaz: Two men are seen putting a sack over Yılmaz’s head, beating and frog-marching him. The time is 07:26 in the morning. An extended video captured between 7:00 and 8:00 a.m. showed two black Transporter model minivans, usually preferred by the MİT in its abduction operations, patrolling around the house.



Sümeyye  
Yılmaz

Sümeyye rushed to the police once more, this time with proof of her husband’s abduction. The police, however, calmly responded, saying, “Yes, he indeed was kidnapped. But this doesn’t negate the story that he later vanished by himself by bus.” Yet she submitted the recorded video clip to the prosecution and had it inserted into her husband’s file. Prosecution, however, sent this

video to a legal expert for a professional opinion and requested him to answer back in three months, completely disregarding the urgency of the case in which the life of Mustafa Yılmaz was seriously at stake.

Without a lawyer but with a 2-year-old daughter hanging on to her, Sümeyye strolled along the corridors of the police stations and courts, to and fro. She submitted applications to exactly 12 separate places, but to no avail. The police still insist on their own scenario, saying Mustafa Yılmaz's electronic ticket was used on a bus and a train. Indeed, a man -- wearing the same coat as Mustafa but whose face cannot be seen -- is captured by the cameras while passing through the turnpikes at the bus station. But the camera records for this bus don't exist for the time period he must have been using it.

Sümeyye Yılmaz applied also to the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, which soon sent a letter to Turkey's Justice Ministry asking for information about Mustafa. The Ministry dispatched only the files pertaining to the lawsuit that ended in Mustafa's imprisonment. This pointless action was taken ostensibly only to stall the process, as the Ministry simultaneously asked the BM group to grant a delay until September to prepare.<sup>170</sup>

On September 24, weary of no progress and upset at not receiving any concrete response, Yılmaz's family members convened to make their case public with a press statement in Ankara. MP Gergerlioğlu was with them to lend support with his presence as a parliamentarian, which may be helpful if the police decide to use brute force to disperse the family. A video clip shows the argument between the police and Gergerlioğlu, during which Sümeyye was trying to express her grief and complaint.<sup>171</sup> A police officer says, "They are traitors. They bolted from the country." Gergerlioğlu responds: "You say he escaped whereas we are looking for a trace of him for the last 7 months. That means you know where he is. Previously, others, who were reported to have fled abroad, were found in police stations. ... I have asked the Internal Ministry time and again about the kidnapped people and they couldn't answer. The ECHR also asked the same question to the internal ministry and got no answer. ... So that if you know his whereabouts, rush and inform your minister, too." He also chastised the officer for calling a person a "traitor" without any proof and verdict from a court.

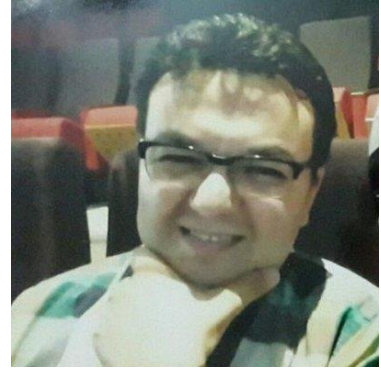
With pangs of apprehension and hope, Mustafa Yılmaz's family waited for 245 days for even a faintest voice or word about his actual whereabouts. On October 2019, at 02:07 am, the police called Sümeyye to inform her that her husband had surrendered himself in Karapürçek police precinct, in the middle of nowhere at the easternmost frontier of Ankara. He was brought to the Counterterrorism unit due to an arrest warrant for him. The police said Mustafa Yılmaz didn't want to hire a lawyer, and that Sümeyye and her daughter may see him briefly after getting permission from the prosecution first.<sup>172</sup>

"He was a lot weaker, had lost about 20-25 kilos. His hands and skin had become pale and white. I guess due to staying in darkness. His hands were very cold, evidently because of anemia. He was suffering malnutrition. He seemed anxious a bit, but he was also comfortable," Sümeyye Yılmaz was quoted as saying by the DW.<sup>173</sup>

Today it is still not clear what exactly happened during those 8.5 months. Gergerlioğlu told *Deutsche Welle*: "For what reason did they capture and for what reason did they find him. A man is found in a police station in Turkey. The truth must be told. We will never give up asking questions and raising inquiries."<sup>174</sup>

Mustafa Yılmaz's mother Nevim Yılmaz, too, insists that the state owes them an explanation for the time her son was missing. She narrates how she failed even to reach AKP MPL Naci Bostancı about this case. "I don't believe my son was guilty. I only want justice from the Turkish Republic, ask them to perform the trial properly."

**Salim Zeybek :** A six-year-old girl trembling in fear was asking her mother: “Mommy, are they going to kill us?” Moments ago, her father Salim Zeybek was abducted by a team of armed men, who introduced themselves as the “state”.<sup>175</sup> It was February 21, 2019. Salim, his wife Betül and their two kids were in a car on their way to Edirne from Ankara without knowing that they were running towards the worst experience of their lives. She recounted the day in an interview with Bold Media.<sup>176</sup>



When Salim realized a car was on their tail, he tried to evade and escape from its pestering chase. He failed after bumping into several cars. Betül took one kid and Salim seized the other to rush to the side of the road, hoping to escape. Betül recalls how frightened they were after hearing gunshots fired just as they were trying to jump over a water raceway along the road. “Don’t shoot,” she cried out. “There are children.” The men approached, pointing their guns at the family.



**Betül  
Zeybek**

They forced Salim to lie down on the ground, then grabbed him by the collar and neck and dragged him to their car and sped away. Three others took Betül and her kids in a car and delivered them back to Ankara after a long drive, constantly changing the license plates and once changing the car, mostly under the frightening shadow of the guns. They were not allowed to stop even for a toilet break.

Struck with terror, the woman and the kids were traumatized. The armed gang who identified themselves as the state told her not to go to the prosecutor or police if she cared about her husband’s wellbeing. Betül asked if this was a threat, only to hear: “You haven’t seen what a threat is.” During the journey back to Ankara, one of the men gives his phone to Betül and orders her to talk with the person on the line. It was her husband, Salim. He sounded calm and said, “I am fine. I asked them to leave you at the coach station. Return to Ankara and live your life normally from now on.” Betül answered: “You say so to console me. How can we move on after now? They want me not to go to the police.” After a moment of silence, Salim said: “Then don’t go.” Yet she couldn’t wait long doing nothing. Fearing to be too late to save her husband, she applied to the prosecution, the police, human rights associations, etc.

Salim was one of the tens of thousands of victims of the cultural genocide against the members of the Gülen movement. He was fired from the Information and Communication Technologies Authority (BTK) after the failed coup in 2016. His wife was also laid off from the school where she was working as a literature teacher. Their life had become already very tough as both of them had lost their jobs; nonetheless, with this latest calamity, a lot more stormy and difficult days were ahead. Betül would say: “They can sit in judgement on my husband, but whatever they do, they must do it within the laws.”

On July 29, she received the news that she had been dying to hear for months. She tweeted: “Just now, someone called from the Ankara Police Department Counterterrorism Unit. He said my husband is there now, and that his health is in decent condition. We as the family are extremely excited now, so much so that I can’t even write. I will inform about the developments. We were told we wouldn’t be able to meet even if we went there. We will hardly be able to wait until the morning. But I am still very much concerned about Gökhan Türkmen and Mustafa Yılmaz, who have been missing for the longest period of time, and their families.”

Salim Zeybek is held in Silivri prison today. He is alive, but psychologically devastated. He can hardly communicate with others and according to the people who have seen him recently, he is no longer a normal person. He keeps mumbling, repeating constantly the things spoken to him.

**Yusuf Bilge Tunç:** Former Ministry of Industry employee Yusuf Bilge Tunç, who was



discharged with a decree law, was abducted in Ankara on August 6, 2019. Unable to get any news from him, his family started looking for him everywhere, but he was nowhere to be found. The family began worrying about a possible kidnapping similar to what they had been hearing. They applied to the Ankara Police Department, but there was a deafening silence. The police finally deigned to give an answer to the calls about Tunç months after his abduction. On December 25, a written statement said in summary that the person in question was already sought as part of an ongoing investigation,

and the police went to his house to search

for him but couldn't locate him. There was no other operation concerning Tunç. Therefore, "it has been understood that he is a fugitive suspect in the investigation that is currently being carried out by the public prosecution."

"Always the same story," Gergerlioğlu lashed out at the statement. "His family is forlorn. It's been already five months. ... No city surveillance camera has been checked. His car waited at the place of kidnapping for months. His family applied over and over again for a crime scene investigation, but no examination was performed. His family finally had to remove the car from where it was left." Tunç's car was found near the food wholesale market GIMAT in Ankara, and the family called the police to inspect it for handprints or any other kind of evidence that may lead to the abductors. The police, however, refused to do any examination on site, and instead advised the family to wait for his return, offhandedly saying, "He has most likely left his car there and escaped."<sup>177</sup>

Saadet Party MP Cihangir İslam aired tough questions on October 21, 2019, concerning the whereabouts of Yusuf Bilge to the Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu from the rostrum of the Parliament. "We are expecting a clear explanation from you about what has happened to Yusuf Bilge Tunç," he said, along with a series of other questions concerning the other kidnapped and tortured people. AKP deputies started hurling insults and verbal assaults at him, while Soylu accused İslam of being a "traitor," much less giving any answers to the questions he raised.<sup>178</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The veil of secrecy over the enforced disappearances has still not been lifted, and it will probably take many years for a full-fledged illumination of them. The first and foremost reality: All these people were kidnapped, robbed of their most basic rights; their dignity was trampled with torture. Their families were also heavily impacted. Their parents, wives and children felt like dying anew every day, as repeated in many cases included in this report. Some of these victims were found. The others have yet not been so fortunate.

Those who were found were mostly traumatized after long sessions of tortures. Their physical and psychological conditions were devastated beyond description. The families were all saying that the police didn't allow any questions about where they were.<sup>179</sup> A police officer would stand present while wives met with their husbands. Most of the people who reappeared after months of disappearance said they didn't want lawyers. Even if they wanted to be represented by their own lawyers, they weren't allowed. Some asked their relatives to stop the campaigns they had initiated while they were missing, to withdraw all complaints and petitions they had filed in Turkey or at international human rights associations or courts. Also, they demanded their wives completely withdraw existing complaints. In some cases, they adopted an introverted manner of speaking, avoiding the gazes from even their parents, wives and kids, and deliberately evading talking about what had happened to them during the time they went missing. All these signs bring to mind the possibility that these people are being pressured to withhold information.

## LIST OF ABDUCTIONS

	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
1.	Sunay Elmas	Educator	27-Jan-2016	Turkey-Ankara	Enforced Disappearance	Missing	Sunay Elmas is the first person ever recorded to have been abducted for alleged ties with the Gülen movement. He was a victim of the enforced disappearance even before the failed coup on July 15, 2016, at the Ankara CEPA shopping mall while he was returning from dropping his kids at home in Sincan district. Elmas had also been forced into a Volkswagon Transporter with tinted windows. His family has not heard from Elmas since then.
2.	Abdullah Büyük	Software Engineer	10-Aug-2016	Bulgaria	Rendition	Arrested, pending trial	Abdullah Büyük escaped persecution in Turkey and sought asylum in Bulgaria. The Turkish state demanded his extradition. Despite a decision by a Bulgarian court providing him protection, Büyük was deported and handed over to the Turkish authorities in a move which the Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borissov had described as an act on "the edge of the law."
3.	Alaettin Duman	Educator	13-Oct-16	Malaysia	Arbitrary arrest and detention	Sentenced to 18 years	Kidnapped on his way to a mosque by Malaysian police, Duman was deported to Turkey illegally. He was tortured severely both in Malaysia and Turkey. Duman had been teaching in Malaysia for 10 years before he was abducted and was one of the founders of Time International School. Erdoğan's media had accused him of being the point man of the Gülen movement in Malaysia. Duman was sentenced to 18 years on April 17, 2018.

	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
4.	<b>Tamer Tıbık</b>	Businessman	13-Oct-2016	Malaysia	Abduction	Sentenced to 12.5 years	Tamer Tıbık was seized in Kuala Lumpur on his way to a language course. His name was asserted by a pro-Erdoğan newspaper on August 7, 2016 as one of the key members of the movement in this country. Tıbık served as the general secretary of the Malaysian–Turkish Chamber of Commerce and Industry for about one and a half years. He was married with two daughters and was a legal resident of Malaysia since 2015 with a valid employment visa.
5.	<b>Ayhan Oran</b>	Intelligence Agent	1-Nov-2016	Turkey- Ankara	Enforced Disappearance	Missing	Ayhan Oran was a MİT agent and reportedly had sensitive knowledge on the assassination of three Kurdish activist women, Sakine Cansız, Fidan Doğan and Leyla Şaylemez in Paris on 9 January, 2013. He was last seen leaving the MİT compound on Nov. 1, 2016.
6.	<b>Mustafa Özgür Gültekin</b>	Public Employee	21-Dec-2016	Turkey-Ankara	Enforced Disappearance	Missing	Gültekin was abducted by unidentified people who followed him with four cars to a convenience store in Ankara's Beştepe neighborhood. His case is also known to be the first "black Transporter" incident. Some rumors attach his abduction to the assassination of the Russian Ambassador Andrey Karlov. His abduction was not examined by the police despite frequent applications by his family, and Parliamentary questions by some deputies into his disappearance were left unanswered.
7.	<b>Mesut Geçer</b>	Intelligence Agent	26-Mar-2017	Turkey- Ankara	Enforced Disappearance	Missing	Mesut Geçer worked at MİT until he was dismissed as part of the government's post-coup crackdown. He was abducted in the Çakırlar quarter in Ankara's Yenimahalle district, on March 26, 2017. His family's fight to find a trace of him has proven useless so far.

	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
8.	<b>Uğur Toksoy</b>	Educator	31-Mar-2017	Kosovo	Abduction	Asylee in Kosovo	Toksoy, a Turkish teacher at the Gülen-affiliated Hasan Nahi school in Prizren and head of the Atmosfera Association in Kosovo, was among the people sought by the police for deportation. But he was fortunate to evade extradition since the police were unable to find him that day. Toksoy applied for asylum on November 3, 2017, which was approved on April 6, 2018.
9.	<b>Cihan Özkan</b>	Educator	31-Mar-2017	Kosovo	Rendition	Sentenced to 7.5 years	Cihan Ozkan was a teacher at the Orizont school in Kosovo. He was among the 6 people who were illegally abducted by the Kosovar intelligence forces and deported to Turkey illegally. Özkan was arrested in Turkey and a court sentenced him to seven years and six months in November 2019.
10.	<b>Hasan Hüseyin Günakan</b>	Educator	31-Mar-2017	Kosovo	Rendition	Sentenced to 8 years and one month	Hasan Hüseyin Günakan was one of the six Turkish nationals who were deported from Kosovo to Turkey on March 29, 2018. He was a teacher. A Turkish court sentenced him to eight years and one month.
11.	<b>Kahraman Demirez</b>	Educator	31-Mar-2017	Kosovo	Rendition	Sentenced to 8 years and nine months.	Kahraman Demirez, the principal of Mehmet Akif College in Gjakova, was abducted illegally in a joint operation by the Kosovar and Turkish intel agencies. He was one of the six educators deported to Turkey despite the concerns of unfair trial and inhumane treatment. He was sentenced to eight years, nine months imprisonment on December 26, 2019.
12.	<b>Mustafa Erdem</b>	Educator	31-Mar-2017	Kosovo	Rendition	Jailed pending trial	Mustafa Erdem was not among the first wave of detainments by the Kosovo intelligence, but he was also included in the list while he was trying to get information into what exactly was happening and to help his friends. He was sent to Turkey with the rest and has been waiting for a court decision behind bars since then.

	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
13.	<b>Osman Karakaya</b>	Physician	31-Mar-2017	Kosovo	Rendition	Sentenced to 7.5 years	Osman Karakaya was a cardiology professor who had moved to Kosovo to escape the persecution of the Erdoğan regime in Turkey. But unfortunately he was detained by Kosovo police and was deported to Turkey unlawfully in a covert operation. He was sentenced to seven years and six months imprisonment in November 2019.
14.	<b>Yusuf Karabina</b>	Educator	31-Mar-2017	Kosovo	Rendition	Jailed pending trial	Yusuf Karabina, the Vice Director of the Gülistan Educational Institutions, his wife Yasemin Karabina and their 15-year-old son were stopped by Kosovo police in plainclothes on the morning of March 31, 2017. The Kosovan officers used violence to force them into the cars and reportedly continued beating them during their detention in the station. Karabina was sent to Turkey unlawfully, and there he was put in jail. He is still pending trial.
15.	<b>Turgut Çapan</b>	University Director	31-Mar-2017	Turkey-Ankara	Enforced Disappearance	Missing	Turgut Çapan was abducted on March 31, 2017, in Ankara. His wife Ülkü Çapan released a video clip in which she said Önder Asan, a friend of her husband's, dropped by her home to inform her of Turgut's abduction. Asan was also abducted on the same day.
16.	<b>Önder Asan</b>	Educator	31-Mar-2017	Turkey-Ankara	Enforced Disappearance	Turned over to police after torture. Jailed pending trial.	Önder Asan was found 42 days after his sudden disappearance in Ankara, with severe torture signs on his body. He was psychologically devastated. His wife Fatma filed petitions with police and the prosecutor to investigate possible kidnapping but had no progress. His lawyer Burak Çolak was detained after refusing to sign a false statement saying Asan hadn't seen any violence and that he was absent on his own will.

	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
17.	<b>Cengiz Usta</b>	Educator	4-Apr-2017	Turkey-İzmir	Enforced Disappearance	Returned home safe and sound.	Cengiz Usta was a teacher at the Cumhuriyet Primary School in Torbalı district of Turkey's İzmir province. He was dismissed from his job by the government on September 1, 2016. He was abducted by two men after leaving home to pay for the elevator maintenance fee. He reappeared in Afyon on July 10, 2017, saying he left home on his own accord because he was depressed.
18.	<b>Mustafa Ceyhan</b>	Businessman	20-Apr-2017	Azerbaijan	Rendition	Sentenced to 9 years	While crossing the Azerbaijani border, Ceyhan was detained with the allegation of "forgery of documents" and was arrested. The same day he was released after a year in prison, he was kidnapped while he was standing between his own lawyer and a UN lawyer appointed for his case, ostensibly by Turkish intelligence agents. He was immediately sent to Turkey and was put in prison.
19.	<b>Turgay Karaman</b>	Educator	2-May-2017	Malaysia	Abduction	Jailed pending trial	Turgay Karaman was the principal of the Gülen movement-affiliated Time International School. On 2 May 2017, he was kidnapped in Malaysia. CCTV footage revealed that he was forced into a car by five unidentified persons in an underground parking garage. His family quickly discovered that he could not be reached, and they alerted the local police and the UN office in Kuala Lumpur. Karaman was deported to Turkey, where he was arrested.
20.	<b>İhsan Arslan</b>	Businessman	1-May-2017	Malaysia	Arbitrary arrest and detention	Released on Judicial Control	Arslan went missing on May 1, 2017, in Kuala Lumpur around 8 p.m. He was a member of the Malaysian Turkish Chamber Of Commerce and Industry, a business advocacy group that is affiliated with the Gülen movement. A court ordered his released on judicial control on May 25.

	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
21.	<b>İsmet Özçelik</b>	Academician	4-May-2017	Malaysia	Rendition	Jailed pending trial	Awaiting resettlement by UNHCR after having previously been the victim of an attempted abduction from his son's home in Kuala Lumpur, İsmet Özçelik was kidnapped by Malaysian security officers. The local police intervened and stopped the rendition. He was detained for a period of 50 days before Malaysian authorities decided to release him pending trial. On 4 May 2017, he was once again deprived of his liberty. On 12 May 2017, he was sent to Turkey although he had a pending extradition hearing and no judicial decision to that effect had been taken. Upon return to Turkey, he was held in incommunicado detention at an unknown location and was later arrested.
22. - 38.	<b>Anonymous 17 people</b>	Various	6-May-2017	Saudi Arabia	Rendition	4 arrested others released	Saudi Arabia detained 17 people as per the official request by the Turkish authorities on June 5, 2017. The detainees were Hajj pilgrimage organizers in Saudi Arabia, and they were accused of spending the income from their business for Hizmet activities. Turkey's National Intelligence Organization played an active role in the arrests of the suspects. Later, the suspects were detained in Turkey by Ankara police department's counterterrorism units and put in jail. A court ruled for the arrest of 4 while releasing the other 13 people. Their names were not disclosed.
39.	<b>Mustafa Özben</b>	Lawyer	9-May-2017	Turkey- Ankara	Enforced Disappearanc	Missing	Mustafa Özben, a lawyer, was abducted on May 9, 2017, after leaving his daughter at school. His car was found parked on a street in Ankara, and the CCTV records showed the moment when he was forcefully snatched by a Transporter.

	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
40.	<b>Fatih Kılıç</b>	Educator	14-May-2017	Turkey-Ankara	Enforced Disappearance	Missing	Dismissed from his teaching job under the post-coup emergency rule, Kılıç was abducted on May 14, 2017. There has been no sign of him since the last CCTV footage he appeared in shows him getting into a vehicle found in the Ankara's Kızılay district. Both the police and the prosecution ignored the family's insistent requests for a detailed investigation to find Kılıç. He is still missing.
41.	<b>Durmus Ali Çetin</b>	Police officer	17-May-2017	Turkey-Hatay	Disappearance	Found dead	Durmuş Ali Çetin, a former police officer who had been dismissed from his job by government decree 10 months ago, was found dead at his home in İstanbul on May 17, 2017, apparently having committed suicide. It was reported that Çetin fell into a depression after he had difficulty repaying a loan he secured to buy the house in İstanbul.
42.	<b>Muhammet Furkan Sökmen</b>	Accountant	24-May-2017	Myanmar	Rendition	Jailed pending trial	On May 24, 2017, Burmese officials detained Sökmen at Yangon International Airport at the request of Turkish authorities who had canceled his passport. After he and his family were held for approximately 24 hours, he was forcibly sent to Turkey via Thailand. Despite international warnings that there were substantial grounds to believe that he would face an imminent risk of human rights abuse upon his return to Turkey, Sökmen's abduction went ahead unimpeded.

	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
43.	<b>Mustafa Emre Çabuk</b>	Educator	25-May-2017	Georgia	Rendition	Released on bail	Mustafa Emre Çabuk had a valid Georgian residence permit and was working as a teacher when he was detained by the Georgian security forces and later arrested by a Georgian court upon a request from the Turkish government. The incident created a big outcry in the country as well as a reaction from international human rights organizations. He was released after 9 months.
44.	<b>Cemil Koçak</b>	Engineer	15-Jun-2017	Turkey-Ankara	Enforced Disappearance	Missing	Dismissed from his job, Cemil Koçak was abducted on June 15, 2017. His car was forced to stop by four cars at around 5:30 p.m. near his home in Ankara's Altındağ district. He was kidnapped by brute force in front of his 8-year-old son. The abduction took place in a blind spot not covered by any of the four CCTV cameras in the area, according to the account.
45.	<b>Murat Okumuş</b>	Accountant	16-Jun-2017	Turkey-İzmir	Enforced Disappearance	Missing	Murat Okumuş was an accountant director at the Şifa University Hospital in İzmir province until it was shut down by the government. He was abducted in June 2017.
46.	<b>Yusuf İnan</b>	Journalist	15-Jul-2017	Ukraine	Rendition	Arrested, pending trial	Yusuf İnan was a lawful resident in Ukraine with a permit he legally obtained after his marriage in 2015. The couple were sheep breeding on their farm for their livelihood. He was also a journalist. Turkish and Ukrainian agents kidnapped him while he was working on his farm with his wife. He was sent to Turkey and was arrested on the charge of being a member of the Gülen movement, which Turkey considers a terrorist organization. İzmir Public Prosecutor demanded 15 years for İnan, citing as evidence his articles praising the Gülen movement and criticizing Erdoğan.

	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
47.	<b>Zabit Kiři</b>	Educator	16-Sep-2017	Kazakhstan	Abduction	Jailed pending trial	Zabit Kiři was abducted from a plane by a group of unknown people in the Kazakh city of Almaty. Kiři was accused of having links with the Gülen movement. He was tortured for 108 days by MİT agents in a secluded place and was later turned over to the police. Kılıç was sent behind the bars by a court, which refused to do anything about the torturers.
48.	<b>Enver Kılıç</b>	Educator	16-Sep-2017	Kazakhstan-Almaty	Abduction	Jailed pending trial	Enver Kılıç was the other person, alongside Zabit Kiři, who was abducted from a plane by a group of unknown people in the Kazakh city of Almaty. Enver Kılıç reappeared on 11 April 2018; however, UN's Committee on Enforced Disappearances noted that Kılıç was also tortured during 73 days of detention in an unknown place. His health was in a bad condition.
49.	<b>Mesut Kaçmaz and Meral Kaçmaz</b>	Educators	27-Sep-2017	Pakistan	Abduction	Released pending trial	Mesut Kaçmaz, his wife Meral and daughters Huda Nur and Fatma Huma, were abducted forcefully in the middle of the night from their home and were later deported to Turkey. Mesut and Meral were arrested, while the teenage daughters were turned over to a relative. The two persons were released in the first hearing.
50.	<b>Hakan İslamoğlu</b>	Businessman	19-Oct-2017	Indonesia	Rendition	Released	He was captured in Indonesia in an operation by the MİT and was deported to Turkey. He wanted to become an informant and provided the names of some of the members of the Gülen movement in Indonesia and in several other countries and was released.

	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
51.	Hıdır Çelik	Farmer	16-Nov-2017	Turkey-Diyarbakır	Enforced Disappearance	Missing	Hıdır Çelik was in a village in Diyarbakır for animal trade when the security forces had an armed fight with members of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) militants. A statement from the governorate accused Hıdır of being a collaborative and said he was captured injured. Ever since then, his family's attempts to learn his whereabouts have failed.
52.	Memduh Çıkmaz	Businessman	27-Nov-2017	Sudan-Khartoom	Abduction	Jailed pending trial	Memduh Çıkmaz was a successful businessman who had been dealing with manufacturing and trade in Turkey and in Sudan for many years. He was brought to Turkey from Sudan in a joint operation between the two countries' intelligence agencies. Sudanese security forces were also involved in his arrest and repatriation.
53.	Ümit Horzum	Public Employee	6-Dec-2017	Turkey-Ankara	Enforced Disappearance	Missing	Horzum was abducted in Ankara on June, 12, 2017. His family's applications to different security departments to find a trace of him have not borne any fruit. He was registered as "missing" rather than "abducted," and no prosecutor has initiated any legal proceeding as to what has happened to him.
54.	Aslan Çelik	Superintendent	19-Jan-2018	Iraq	Abduction	Rescued	Arslan Çelik was the superintendent of the Roonaki Salahaddin Ayyubi Colleges. He was abducted on January 19, 2018, on his way to the school by a group of armed men who forcefully seized him on Kurdsat Avenue in Sulaymaniyah, Iraqi-Kurdistan. The country's late president Jalal Talabany's wife, Hero, stepped in and saved Çelik, who was later sent to Dubai under the protection of Hero and from there to the United States.

	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
55.	<b>Ayhan Seferoğlu</b>	Educator	19-Feb-2018	Azerbaijan	Rendition	Jailed pending trial	Ayhan Seferoğlu was detained by Azeri police and was kept in jail for 40 days before a court released him. His relatives were waiting outside to meet him, but he was abducted by unidentified persons from the backdoor of the courthouse. Seferoğlu's wife called on the Azeri authorities to help find her husband. He was brought to Ankara and was arrested for being a member of a terror organization.
56.	<b>Erdoğan Taylan</b>	Manager	19-Feb-2018	Azerbaijan	Rendition	Jailed pending trial	Erdoğan Taylan, along with his friend Ayhan Seferoğlu, was detained by the Azeri police on charges of being a member of the Gülen movement. An Azeri court decided to release them. Their relatives were waiting for Seferoğlu and Taylan to be freed outside the courthouse, but they didn't show up. It was later revealed that the two men were abducted while exiting from the back door. He was brought to Turkey illegally and was arrested.
57.	<b>Faik Semih Başoğlu</b>	Businessman	19-Feb-2018	Azerbaijan	Rendition	Jailed pending trial	Faik Semih Başoğlu was delivered to the Turkish National Intelligence Organization (MİT) by the Azeri authorities unlawfully. The European Court of Human Rights demanded Azerbaijan authorities to explain the reason for the rendition of Başoğlu despite concerns that he may be subjected to torture in Turkey. Başoğlu was questioned by the MİT before being submitted to the prosecution. He was arrested and is currently awaiting trial.

	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
58.	<b>Ayten Öztürk</b>	Student	8-Mar-2018	Lebanon	Rendition	Jailed pending trial	Ayten Öztürk was abducted in the Lebanon airport on March 8, 2018, delivered to the Turkish intelligence units on March 13, 2018, and subjected to severe torture for six months. Öztürk had been living in Syria since she was wanted in Turkey for being a member of the outlawed Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP-C) and had moved to Lebanon to migrate from there to Europe after the conditions had aggravated in Syria.
59.	<b>Osman Özpınar</b>	Educator	15-Mar-2018	Gabon	Rendition	Jailed pending trial	Gabon authorities rounded up the principal of the Ecole la Lumière School, Osman Özpınar, on March 15, 2018, for forgery of official documents. This was proven wrong by the defendant, but instead of releasing him, the Gabon authorities detained him again, this time on the grounds that he was a threat to national security. He was deported to Turkey, where he was arrested on terror charges.
60.	<b>İbrahim Akbaş and Fikriye Akbaş</b>	Educator	15-Mar-2018	Gabon	Rendition	Jailed pending trial	Gabon authorities detained İbrahim Akbaş, the director of pedagogy of the Lumiere School, along with his spouse Fikriye, who was the accountant at the same school, on March 15, 2018. They were first charged with forgery of official documents. But when they were acquitted from this charge, the Gabon authorities detained them again, this time on the grounds that they constituted a threat to national security. They were deported to Turkey. İsa was arrested, while Fikriye was released.

	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
61.	<b>Adnan Demirönel</b>	Educator	22-Mar-2018	Gabon	Rendition	As of September 7, 2020; he was released	Adnan Demirönel was detained in Gabon for his alleged links with the Gülen movement and was deported to Turkey. He was charged with being the "imam," or the point man for the African country. He refused the assertions, saying he wasn't involved in any activity other than teaching.
62.	<b>Orçun Şenyücel</b>	Public Employee	21-Apr-2018	Turkey- Ankara	Enforced Disappearanc	Missing	Orçun Şenyücel, a former public employee who was dismissed from his job at the Competition Authority in 2016, was abducted after being forced into a black Transporter in Ankara's Türkkonut neighborhood at midnight on April 21, 2018.
63.	<b>İsa Özdemir</b>	Businessman	12-Jul-2018	Azerbaijan	Abduction	Jailed pending trial	İsa Özdemir was delivered to the Turkish National Intelligence Organization (MİT) by the Azeri authorities unlawfully. The European Court of Human Rights demanded Azerbaijan authorities to explain the reason for the rendition of Özdemir despite concerns that he may be subjected to torture in Turkey. Başoğlu was questioned by the MİT before submitting him to the prosecution. He was arrested and jailed pending trial.
64.	<b>Salih Zeki Yiğit</b>	Businessman	12-Jul-2018	Ukraine	Rendition	Jailed pending trial	Salih Zeki Yigit was an alleged imam of the Gülen movement in the southern Mersin province. He was accused of carrying out money transfers to financially support the activities of the movement. He fled to Ukraine after the defeated July 15, 2016 coup attempt but was detained and sent to Turkey by this country.
65.	<b>Hasan Kala</b>	Academician	21-Jul-2018	Turkey- Ankara	Enforced Disappearanc	Missing	Associated Professor Kala was abducted after being forced into a black Transporter in Ankara's Batıkent district at 11:30 p.m. on July 21, 2018.

	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
66.	<b>Veysel Akçay</b>	Educator	27-Jul-2018	Mongolia	Abduction	Rescued	Veysel Akçay was forcefully captured in his home by a group of five masked men, possibly Turkish spies, and he was bundled into a van to be illegally abducted to Turkey. A Turkish army aircraft was waiting to transport him. But after his family and friends mobilized a reaction online and informed Mongolian authorities about the incident, the aircraft was forced to land and Akçay was saved.
67. - 111.	<b>Anonymous 45 people</b>	Various	28-Jul-2018	KKTC	Rendition	Some were released, others are remanded.	The Republic of Northern Cyprus (KKTC) captured 45 individuals, allegedly having links with the Gülen movement, off Kyrenia before they set sail on board a yacht to take refuge in Greece. Among the captured people, there were 9 women and 17 children. All of them were deported to Turkey.
112.	<b>Fahri Mert</b>	Businessman	12-Aug-2018	Turkey-İzmir	Enforced Disappearance	Missing	Fahri Mert was abducted in İzmir province by a black Transporter van by a group of people who introduced themselves as police officers, saying they were taking him to the police station. He has been missing since then.
113.	<b>Ahmet Bilgi</b>	Educator	6-Sep-2018	Moldova	Rendition	Jailed pending trial	Ahmet Bilgi was one of the six Turkish nationals seized by the Moldovan authorities in 2018. He was deported to Turkey like the rest and was arrested after the first hearing.
114.	<b>Feridun Tüfekçi</b>	Educator	6-Sep-2018	Moldova	Rendition	Jailed pending trial	Feridun Tüfekçi was the director of the branch of the Orizont school in the city of Ceadr-Lunga. Having come to the country at the age of 17 to study, he later became a permanent resident after marrying his teacher, Galina. Tüfekçi also worked as a journalist for some time, representing a Turkish TV channel in Moldova. He was deported to Turkey.

	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
115.	<b>Hasan Karacaoğlu</b>	Educator	6-Sep-2018	Moldova	Rendition	Sentenced to 8 years and 3 months.	Hasan Karacaoğlu was in Moldova for over 20 years by the time he was abducted in 2018. During all his time at the Orizont schools in Moldova, he was helping Moldovan youth prepare for their lives. He was the deputy director by the time he was expelled from the country for no reason.
116.	<b>Rıza Doğan</b>	Educator	6-Sep-2018	Moldova	Rendition	Jailed pending trial	Rıza Doğan had established a life in Moldova for over 20 years. He married there and both of his daughters were born in the country. He also was running a company of his own, paying taxes and was an integrated part of Moldova. He was sentenced to 7.5 years in prison by a Turkish court on July 19, 2019.
117.	<b>Yasin Özdil</b>	Public Relations	6-Sep-2018	Moldova	Rendition	Sentenced to 12 years	Yasin Özdil was in charge of public relations for the Orizont high school network. He tried to make his voice heard by informing of the abduction to his circles on social media with a message at 8:42 in the morning. He was deported to Turkey.
118.	<b>Hüseyin Bayraktar</b>	Educator	6-Sep-2018	Moldova	Abduction	Jailed pending trial	He was snatched by the MİT from the front of the school he was working at. Hüseyin Bayraktar had only spent three years in Moldova, teaching Turkish language.
119.	<b>Mujdat Celebi</b>	Educator	6-Sep-2018	Moldova	Abduction	Jailed pending trial	Mujdat Çelebi had been residing in Moldova for five years. He was the financial director of the company that manages the Orizont high schools in Moldova.
120.	<b>Ahmet Ertürk</b>	Educator	16-Nov-2018	Turkey-Ankara	Enforced Disappearance	Found	Ahmet Ertürk, a teacher at a school run by the Gülen movement, was abducted on Nov. 16, 2018. After his abduction, his parents' home was raided by the police. He reappeared in Ankara Police Department on January 8, 2019.

	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
121.	Mehmet Gelen	Educator	30-Dec-2018	Azerbaijan	Arrested and deported	Jailed pending trial	Mehmet Gelen, a Turkish schoolteacher in Azerbaijan, was abducted by Turkish intelligence agents after he was interrogated by an Azerbaijani prosecutor over allegations of his links with the Hizmet movement. Gelen was taken to Turkey within hours.
122.	İbrahim E	Businessman	30-Jan-2019	Azerbaijan	Rendition	Jailed pending trial	İbrahim E. was the owner of the printing house that was publishing the <i>Zaman</i> newspaper in Azerbaijan. MİT notified the Azeri intelligence that the person is a key figure of the Gülen movement in the country. He was captured in a joint operation and was deported to Turkey.
123.	Gökhan Türkmen	Civil Servant	7-Feb-2019	Turkey-Antalya	Enforced Disappearance	Jailed pending trial	Gökhan Türkmen was abducted on Feb. 7, 2019. According to his family, Türkmen was hiding from persecution and torture after his house was raided by heavily armed counterterrorism police in his absence in August 2016. Türkmen reappeared in a police station and told the court in February 2020 that he was subjected to torture for 271 days.
124.	Yasin Ugan	Accountant	12-Feb-2019	Turkey-Ankara	Enforced Disappearance	Jailed pending trial	Yasin Ugan was abducted by armed men from his apartment building. The Ankara Police Department denied any knowledge of the incident or his whereabouts. He was delivered to the Ankara police on July 26 by the people who abducted him. He was arrested and sent to jail on August 10, 2019.
125.	Özgür Kaya	Educator	12-Feb-2019	Turkey- Ankara	Enforced Disappearance	Jailed pending trial	Özgür Kaya was abducted in the same incident as Yasin Ugan. Like Ugan, he was also returned to the Ankara police on July 26, 2019. He was charged with terror organization membership and was put in jail on August 10, 2019.

	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
126.	<b>Erkan Irmak</b>	Educator	16-Feb-2019	Turkey-Istanbul	Enforced Disappearance	Jailed pending trial	Erkan Irmak was kidnapped in front of his house in İstanbul on the night of Feb. 16, 2019, and his family has been unable to reach him since. On July 26, 2019, he appeared in police custody and was arrested as part of an investigation into the Gülen movement. He was later arrested and sent to the prison on August 10, 2019.
127.	<b>Mustafa Yılmaz</b>	Physiotherapist	19-Feb-2019	Turkey-Ankara	Enforced Disappearance	Missing	Mustafa Yılmaz was kidnapped in Ankara when he left his home on February 19, 2019. Yılmaz was sentenced to 6.5 years in prison. He was released pending appeal in January 2019, after serving 100 days in prison.
128.	<b>Salim Zeybek</b>	Technician	21-Feb-2019	Turkey-Edirne	Enforced Disappearance	Jailed pending trial	Zeybek was abducted by armed men in the Turkish province of Edirne on the evening of Feb. 21, 2019, while travelling with his wife and children. He appeared at the Ankara police after 5 months, worn out from severe torture. Zeybek was later arrested and sent to prison on August 10, 2019. He is kept in solitary confinement.
129.	<b>Fatih Keskin</b>	Businessman	12-Mar-2019	Bosnia	Arbitrary arrest and detention	Released	Fatih Keskin, director of Richmond Park Schools in Bihac in northwest Bosnia, was arrested on March 12, 2019, after his permanent residence permit was revoked for unknown reasons. Bosnian authorities were poised to deport him to Turkey, where he is wanted over his connections with the Gülen movement. However, a Bosnian court ruled against his rendition. Keskin was released.

	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
130.	<b>Yusuf Bilge Tunç</b>	Public Employee	6-Aug-2019	Turkey-Ankara	Enforced Disappearance	Missing	Yusuf Bilge Tunç was a former civil servant at the Defense Ministry and was dismissed as part of the broad witch hunt following the coup attempt on July 15, 2016. He has been missing since August 6, 2019, and the car he used was found in the Çamlica neighbourhood of Ankara.
131.	<b>Arif Komis</b>	Educator	30-Aug-2019	Malaysia	Rendition	Jailed pending trial	The police from the Malaysian Immigration Bureau detained Arif Komis, his wife and four children. Komis, the director and a teacher at Hibiscus International School, had applied for asylum and was under UN protection. Malaysia surrendered the teacher to Turkey, ignoring reactions against this decision in the international and domestic circles.
132.	<b>Osman Karaca</b>	Educator	19-Oct-2019	Mexico	Rendition	Jailed pending trial	Karaca was arrested by the Mexican police and was turned into the Turkish intelligence agents, according to the state-run news agency Anatolia. Karaca worked at the Zaman International School for nearly 9 years. His extradition drew fire from human rights associations in Mexico.
133.	<b>Harun Ayvaz</b>	Electrical Technician	16-Aug-2019	Montenegro	Arrested	Waiting court decision	Ayvaz has been detained in a Montenegrin prison in Bijelo Polje since August 16, 2019, waiting the extradition decision. The court has already ruled in favor of his extradition, and the Higher Court ruled for a second time in October to extradite him to Turkey. The Podgorica Appeal Court also rejected his appeal against this decision. The last word for now belongs to the Justice Minister of Montenegro.

	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
134.	<b>Harun Çelik</b>	Businessman	2-Jan-2020	Albania	Arbitrary arrest, detention and rendition	Jailed pending trial	Kept behind bars for five months, Çelik was deported to Turkey by Albania. A video taken while he was being taken to the airport shows MİT officers were actively involved in his capture. Turkish media claimed Çelik was an active user of the communication program ByLock.
135.	<b>Hüseyin Kötüce</b>	IT technician	28-Feb-2107	Turkey-Ankara	Enforced Disappearance	Missing	Hüseyin Kötüce, an employee for the government-run Information and Communication Technologies Authority (BTK), was abducted at a parking lot of the Batıkent subway station in Ankara after he got off work on Feb 28, 2017. Despite successive requests, the police conducted no concrete examination of the incident.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Jordans, Frank. “Interpol Reviewing 40,000 Wanted Notices for Political Abuse.” *AP NEWS*, Associated Press, 1 Dec. 2017, [apnews.com/70703fffc58648c196efac699bd461c2](http://apnews.com/70703fffc58648c196efac699bd461c2).

<sup>4</sup> *OHCHR Declaration on the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance*, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, (2019). [www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/EnforcedDisappearance.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/EnforcedDisappearance.aspx)

<sup>5</sup> Hizmet is also known as the Gülen Movement and the word translates as service in English. Hizmet members act under the guidance of the US-based Muslim cleric Fethullah Gülen, who has been living in a self-imposed exile in Saylorsburg, PA, since 1999. They adopt the principles inspired and preached by him as the core of their lives. Gülen has convinced countless numbers of followers for decades around such principles as the emphasis on science education rather than an exclusive interest in religious teachings; being a world citizen rather than confining one's self within his or her own national boundaries; volunteering with a pure heart rather than seeking profits out of benevolence; and explaining the beauties of religion on an equal basis of interfaith dialogue rather than imposing one's faith over all the others on the basis of radical interpretation of Islam.

<sup>6</sup> Winter, Chase. “Turkish Islamic organization DITIB admits preachers spied in Germany”, *Deutsche Welle*, 12 Jan. 2017, [p.dw.com/p/2Vgzu?tw](http://p.dw.com/p/2Vgzu?tw).

<sup>7</sup> Winter, Chase. “Turkish imam spy affair in Germany extends across Europe.” *Deutsche Welle*, 16 Feb. 2017, [p.dw.com/p/2Xj3A?tw](http://p.dw.com/p/2Xj3A?tw).

<sup>8</sup> *They've Come For You: Misuse of Extradition Procedures and Interstate Legal Assistance*, The Open Dialogue Foundation, (2019, November 5), [en.odfoundation.eu/a/9579,theyve-come-for-you-misuse-of-extradition-procedures-and-interstate-legal-assistance/](http://en.odfoundation.eu/a/9579,theyve-come-for-you-misuse-of-extradition-procedures-and-interstate-legal-assistance/)

<sup>9</sup> HDI Scores, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/HDI>

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<sup>10</sup> Corruption Perception Rankings, <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2019/results/table>

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<sup>12</sup> Davaasharav, Munkhchimeg. “Turkish Teacher Kidnapped in Mongolia Freed after Authorities Ground Flight.” Reuters, Thomson Reuters, 28 July 2018, [www.reuters.com/article/us-mongolia-kidnapping-turkey/turkish-teacher-kidnapped-in-mongolia-freed-after-authorities-ground-flight-idUSKBN1KI03N](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mongolia-kidnapping-turkey/turkish-teacher-kidnapped-in-mongolia-freed-after-authorities-ground-flight-idUSKBN1KI03N).

<sup>13</sup> Zaman, Amberin. “Erdogan Ramps up Dispute with Kosovo over Deportation of Gulen-Linked Turks.” Al, 10 Aug. 2018, [www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/04/erdogan-gulenists-kosovo.html](http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/04/erdogan-gulenists-kosovo.html).

<sup>14</sup> Schenkkan, Nate. “Turkey Just Snatched Six of Its Citizens from Another Country.” The Washington Post, WP Company, 1 Apr. 2018, [www.washingtonpost.com/news/democracy-post/wp/2018/04/01/turkey-just-snatched-six-of-its-citizens-from-another-country/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/democracy-post/wp/2018/04/01/turkey-just-snatched-six-of-its-citizens-from-another-country/).

<sup>15</sup> This term was first dubbed by the political scientist Dana M. Moss and it explains Erdoğan regime’s actions to a certain extent as it demonstrated that authoritarian regimes target dissent among the Diaspora through violence, exile, threats, surveillance, and by harming dissidents’ relatives at home. For the full article please see: Dana M. Moss, Transnational Repression, Diaspora Mobilization, and the Case of The Arab Spring, Social Problems, Volume 63, Issue 4, November 2016, Pages 480–498, [doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spw019](https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spw019)

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<sup>20</sup> “Erdogan Threatens to Kill Syrian Kurdish Leader - Reports.” IPA NEWS, 31 Oct. 2019, [ipa.news/2019/10/31/erdogan-threatens-to-kill-syrian-kurdish-leader-reports/](http://ipa.news/2019/10/31/erdogan-threatens-to-kill-syrian-kurdish-leader-reports/).

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