



BEYOND TURKEY'S BORDERS: UNVEILING GLOBAL PURGE, TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION, ABDUCTIONS

REPORT BY ADVOCATES OF SILENCED TURKEY
2023



**BEYOND TURKEY'S
BORDERS:
UNVEILING GLOBAL PURGE,
TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION,
ABDUCTIONS**

REPORT BY ADVOCATES OF SILENCED TURKEY

2023



ADVOCATES OF SILENCED TURKEY

AST is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt, not for profit charitable and educational organization based in New Jersey, USA exclusively for defending human and civil rights.

ISBN: 9798396034891

MAILING ADDRESS

271 US-46 Fairfield, NJ 07004
Suite F-203

CONTACT

✉ help@silencedturkey.org

WEB & SOCIAL MEDIA

www.silencedturkey.org

🐦 [@silencedturkey](https://twitter.com/silencedturkey)

📘 facebook.com/silencedturkey

📺 youtube.com/advocatesofsilencedturkey



REPORT BY

ADVOCATES OF SILENCED TURKEY

EDITORS

YOUSSEF HARVEY
HAFZA GIRDAP

DESIGN AND ILLUSTRATIONS

MUHSIN NAZIF

TRANSLATOR

YOUSSEF HARVEY

CONTRIBUTIONS BY

BÜLENT CEYHAN
MURAT KAVAL

COPYRIGHT © AST PUBLISHING, 2023

All publication rights of this work belong to the Advocates of Silenced Turkey Inc. and AST Publishing. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system without permission in writing from the Advocates of Silenced Turkey Inc.

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY THE PROBLEM	8
THE ORIGINS OF THE PROBLEM	12
WHEN PRESIDENT GOES TO WAR	13
A CULTURAL GENOCIDE	13
GLOBALIZING THE THEATER OF WAR	15
VICIOUS METHODS INSIDE AND ABROAD	15
THE SCOPE OF THE REPORT	17
PART 1: INTRODUCTION	18
BACKGROUND	20
ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES IN INTERNATIONAL LAW	24
CONFESSING ABDUCTIONS	29
PART 2: ABDUCTIONS AND RENDITIONS	36
SUDAN / MEMDUH ÇIKMAZ	38
GEORGIA / MUSTAFA EMRE ÇABUK	39
KAZAKHSTAN / ZABİT KİŞİ	40
ENVER KILIÇ	44
KYRGYZSTAN / ORHAN İNANDI	45
PAKISTAN / KAÇMAZ FAMILY	50
MONGOLIA / VEYSEL AKÇAY	55
MYANMAR / MUHAMMED FURKAN SÖKMEN	56
LEBANON / AYTEN ÖZTÜRK	58
MOLDOVA	61
AZERBAIJAN / MUSTAFA CEYHAN	65
MEHMET CINTOSUN	68
SALIH ZEKI YİĞİT	69
YUSUF İNAN	70
ALBANIA / HARUN ÇELİK	72
BULGARIA / ABDULLAH BÜYÜK	73
BAHRAIN / MURAT ACAR	77
METİN TEKECİ	78
MALAYSIA / TURGAY KARAMAN	79
İHSAN ARSLAN	81
ALAETTİN DUMAN	82
TAMER TIBİK	85
ARIF KOMIŞ	87
IRAQ / ASLAN ÇELİK	89
KOSOVO	90
GABON	93

CONTENTS

MONTENEGRO / HARUN AYVAZ	96
KENYA / SELAHADDIN GÜLEN	98
PART 3: ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES	99
SUNAY ELMAS	100
AYHAN ORAN	103
MUSTAFA ÖZGÜR GÜLTEKİN	104
HÜSEYİN KÖTÜCE	105
MESUT GEÇER	106
ÖNDER ASAN	107
TURGUT ÇAPAN	110
CENGİZ USTA	111
MUSTAFA ÖZBEN	112
FATİH KILIÇ	115
CEMİL KOÇAK	116
MURAT OKUMUŞ	117
HİDİR ÇELİK	118
ÜMIT HORZUM	119
ORÇUN ŞENYÜCEL	121
HASAN KALA	122
FAHİRİ MERT	123
AHMET ERTÜRK	123
GÖKHAN TÜRKMEN	124
YASİN UĞAN AND ÖZGÜR KAYA	126
ERKAN IRMAK	128
MUSTAFA YILMAZ	130
SALİM ZEYBEK	133
YUSUF BİLGE TUNÇ	135
MEHMET BAL	136
LİDER POLAT	137
HÜSEYİN GALİP KÜÇÜKÖZYİĞİT	138
GÖKHAN GÜNEŞ	140
UĞURCAN BAYNAL, SENA BADEMLİ AND ALİ BERKE AYDUĞAN	141
ÖDP MEMBERS	143
ZEKİ OĞUZ	143
CONCLUSION	145
[TABLE] - VICTIMS OF ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE AND ABDUCTIONS AFTER 2016 IN TURKEY AND ABROAD	148

Advocates of Silenced Turkey: Our Story

In August 2017, during a notorious speech, the Turkish President declared, "The old Turkey is no more; This is the new Turkey," signifying a pivotal moment in Turkey's descent into authoritarianism. Exploiting the failed July 2016 coup attempt as justification, the Turkish government has unjustly detained hundreds of thousands of individuals, including housewives, mothers, children, babies, teachers, NGO workers, academics, judges, prosecutors, journalists, and countless others. Prisons are now filled to unprecedented levels, and opposition voices in the country have been stifled.

Once celebrated as a model of democratization and a source of inspiration for Muslim nations, the Republic of Turkey has regrettably transformed under its new regime. The brutality of those in power, the silence of the opposition, the imposition of prison sentences for lawful social associations, and the blatant disregard for universal human rights have become the unsettling norm.

The current Turkish government ranks among the worst offenders of the rule of law in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, arbitrarily imprisoning more journalists than any other country worldwide. It stands as a glaring example of democratic regression due to unmitigated authoritarianism.

In the New Turkey, liberal democracy and democratic safeguards have been marginalized and eroded within a mere decade. Dissent has become feeble and fragmented, human rights are ignored and neglected, and respect for human dignity is absent.

Given Turkey's alarming decline in human rights, we have taken a firm stand against the oppressive regime's most egregious tendencies. We are a collective of lawyers, judges, academics, journalists, and countless activists who hold dear the principles of democracy and universal human rights.

We include prisoners of conscience pursued by the Erdoğan regime, relatives of political prisoners, and victims who have suffered the loss of jobs, property, and family members due to the current administration, which has been rightfully described as a Mafia State.

We are the Advocates of Silenced Turkey.

Our mission is to advocate for the rights of Silenced Turkey until universal human rights and democratic governance become the primary objectives of the Republic of Turkey. We work tirelessly to shed light on the injustices faced by the silenced voices and seek to ensure their freedom, dignity, and well-being. Through our legal expertise, relentless activism, and unwavering commitment, we strive to raise awareness, mobilize international support, and pressure the Turkish government to adhere to its obligations under international human rights law.

We envision a future where Turkey rediscovers its democratic heritage, upholds the rule of law, safeguards human rights, and fosters an inclusive society that respects the inherent dignity and freedoms of all its citizens. Together, we will continue to champion these ideals until justice prevails and the silenced are heard.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Problem

1 The current government in Turkey employs a highly oppressive approach, both domestically and internationally, to intimidate and suppress opposition voices critical of the regime. This policy includes grave human rights violations that amount to crimes against humanity, such as abductions, enforced disappearances, torture, extrajudicial executions, and providing de facto and de jure immunity for perpetrators. The government's efforts to investigate, prosecute, and punish security forces and officials accused of human rights abuses have been woefully inadequate. Impunity for those responsible for disregarding human rights on behalf of the state has become a defining feature of the current Turkish regime, characterized by a blend of political Islamism and ultra-nationalism, under the leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

2 The regime refuses to acknowledge any responsibility for the occurrence of enforced disappearances within the country. However, considering the evidentiary standard of proof "beyond reasonable doubt" applied by international courts in cases of abduction and enforced disappearance, this report examines all known cases and confirms that Turkey deliberately engages in these cruel practices and is thus accountable.¹ These incidents involve individuals who identify themselves as police forcefully abducting people, often in busy locations such as shopping malls or public streets, in broad daylight using unmarked vehicles. The whereabouts of these individuals remain unknown for extended periods, ranging from months to years. Ultimately, the abductees, physically and emotionally exhausted from torture, are turned over to the police and subsequently arrested on terrorism charges. Claims of torture made by the suspects are disregarded or concealed. Through torture and threats against their families, these individuals are coerced into confessing and signing pre-prepared statements. Despite overwhelming evidence, state institutions and government officials persistently deny any involvement in these activities.

3 There exists compelling evidence, beyond reasonable doubt, that Turkey bears responsibility for enforced disappearances and abductions. This report provides comprehensive details, including testimonies from abductees, eyewitness ac-

¹ For an example of the utilization of this standard in an actual trial, please see UN News. (2019). 'Beyond reasonable doubt', international court convicts notorious DR Congo rebel leader of war crimes. [online] Available at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/07/1042011> [Accessed 12 Apr. 2022].

counts, statements from their families, video footage, and an examination of events following the abductees' transfer to the police. Consequently, it has been determined that these kidnappings, which have been occurring for decades, experienced a temporary slowdown during the European Union negotiation process but increased significantly after 2016. This systematic and premeditated practice by the regime is intended to silence dissenting voices.

4 Concerning kidnappings from abroad, a distinct policy is pursued by the Turkish government. If the abductions are successful, both the government and relevant state organs embrace and promote these operations as significant achievements. However, if the abduction is thwarted by the host country, immediate denial ensues, claiming no involvement in the incident. Those who are abducted and brought back to Turkey endure similar experiences to those abducted and disappeared within the country. They are promptly arrested, subjected to torture and threats to force confessions, and simultaneously labeled as terrorists through the government-controlled media, even while investigations are ongoing and trials are yet to take place.

5 The suffering of these individuals persists even after their arrest. In many cases, they are denied access to their lawyers and families for prolonged periods. When permitted to meet, they are accompanied by attendants, and all conversations are recorded. Numerous detainees are subjected to solitary confinement and denied contact with other prisoners. They face relentless pressure to cease their pursuit of justice for the injustices inflicted upon them, and are coerced into withdrawing complaints of torture and ill-treatment. Unlawful extensions of detention periods are imposed upon them, while their access to independent medical professionals to verify cases of torture is prohibited.

6 Despite persistent denial, the evidence pointing to Turkey's responsibility for enforced disappearances and abductions is stronger than reasonable doubt. This report provides extensive details, including eyewitness accounts, testimonies from the abducted individuals, their families and witnesses, camera footage, and a comprehensive analysis of the post-abduction events. Consequently, it is concluded that these kidnappings, which have been occurring for decades, experienced a temporary slowdown during the European Union negotiations process but have significantly increased since 2016. The regime deliberately and systematically employs these practices to silence dissident voices.

7 Kidnapping, enforced disappearance, and torture are explicitly prohibited both in domestic law and international conventions and agreements. These practices flagrantly violate fundamental human rights, such as the right to liberty free from arbitrary deprivation, the right to a fair trial, the prohibition of torture

and persecution, the right to be free from inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and even the right to life itself.

8 Turkish officials have acknowledged that over 100 dissidents have been forcibly abducted from foreign countries by Turkey. However, due to limited sources such as victim and witness testimonies, media reports, and social media, the report only covers certain cases in detail, which will be presented in the relevant sections.

9 Some instances of forced abductions from other countries originate from the detention of Turkish citizens at foreign border crossings due to the cancellation of their passports by Turkey. In certain cases, misleading information about dissidents was entered into the Interpol database using the “Red Notice” method, leading many countries to disregard the majority of information provided by Turkey, thus jeopardizing global security. Similarly, the active involvement of Turkish intelligence officers in the abduction of regime opponents, whether with or without the consent of the foreign state, constitutes a violation of international law and the sovereignty of the affected countries. These practices have been widely condemned by the European Commission and the European Court of Human Rights.

10 There is little compelling evidence to suggest that Turkey is actively investigating complaints and allegations of enforced disappearances and unlawful abductions. Furthermore, it is challenging to assert that the right to life of current political opponents opposing the regime in Turkey is secure. Effective investigations into cases of abduction and enforced disappearance are virtually non-existent. The examples provided demonstrate Turkey’s failure to fulfill its positive obligations under international law to investigate such allegations and complaints. In most cases, authorities have outright refused to take the necessary investigative measures, even when significant evidence has been presented by relatives of the abductees, which the authorities have chosen to ignore.

11 Despite encouragement from relevant UN agencies, Turkey has not become a party to international conventions against enforced disappearance. This limitation hampers the existence of effective mechanisms to exert pressure on the Turkish government’s violations regarding extradition, abduction, and enforced disappearance. It is imperative that Turkey recognizes the gravity of this human rights issue and takes immediate action to rectify its stance, aligning itself with international standards and obligations.

12 The enforced disappearances and abductions carried out by the Turkish regime constitute a gross violation of human rights, undermining the principles of justice, freedom, and dignity. These practices inflict immense suffering upon individuals and their families, depriving them of their fundamental rights and subjecting them to cruel and inhumane treatment. The international community must stand united in condemning these actions and pressuring the Turkish government to put an end to these grave human rights abuses.

13 The Advocates of Silenced Turkey call upon the international community, human rights organizations, governments, and individuals to take decisive action in addressing the enforced disappearances and abductions in Turkey. Urgent measures must be taken to hold those responsible accountable for their actions, ensuring justice for the victims and deterring future violations. It is crucial to provide support to the affected individuals and their families, both within Turkey and in the diaspora, offering them protection, legal assistance, and avenues for seeking redress.

14 The Advocates of Silenced Turkey reiterates its commitment to raising awareness about the plight of those subjected to enforced disappearances and abductions in Turkey. We will continue our efforts to document and expose these human rights violations, amplifying the voices of the victims and advocating for their rights on the national and international stages. Together, we can strive towards a future where respect for human rights, the rule of law, and democratic principles are upheld in Turkey, ensuring the protection and well-being of all its citizens.

The Origins of the Problem

Turkey's pursuit of alignment with the principles of the European Union has been marred by the government's increasingly authoritarian tendencies, particularly since 2011. Regrettably, the country has witnessed a rapid decline, distancing itself further from the realm of modern democracy. Since 2014, Turkey's Freedom Index score has plummeted due to a series of escalating assaults on press freedom, social media users, protesters, political parties, the judiciary, and the electoral system. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has sought to establish personalized control over the state and society within a deteriorating domestic and regional security environment.

Various factors have contributed to this grave situation. The Erdoğan regime's change in rhetoric following the 2011 referendum, coupled with its increasing encroachment upon private life, has sparked concerns. The rapid marginalization of opposition voices and the rise of an authoritarian discourse have exacerbated societal fault lines. In 2013, when the nationwide Gezi Park protests emerged as a social movement reflecting these tensions, Erdoğan responded harshly. Rather than taking a step back, he intensified pressure on the opposition. Furthermore, when corruption investigations emerged in December 2013, implicating him and his close associates on an unprecedented scale in the history of the Republic, Erdoğan declared the Gülen movement as a domestic tool of international powers aiming to overthrow him. The subsequent purge of Gülen movement members, also known as Hizmet, irreversibly solidified the country's descent into an authoritarian one-man regime. The coup attempt on July 15 served as the final blow to the already fragile democracy in Turkey.

Hizmet, known for its extensive focus on education, humanitarian aid, and interfaith dialogue, had long been viewed as a positive influence, showcasing Turkey as a mystical yet adaptable and open-minded nation. Gülen schools became places where close connections were formed with elites and their children in numerous countries. However, Erdoğan exploited the movement's international reach as evidence of its alleged manipulation by foreign powers.

WHEN PRESIDENT GOES TO WAR

President Erdoğan has repeatedly pledged to eradicate the Gülen Movement from life. Employing the might of the state and forming unlikely alliances with former adversaries, Erdoğan, referring to the movement as the Parallel Structure, spared no effort in his campaign against Hizmet. He initiated what he termed a “witch hunt,” targeting the movement’s followers by purging them from public positions, undermining media influence, implementing bureaucratic obstacles, and subjecting institutions and companies to incessant inspections. The culmination of these actions came with the attempted coup on July 15, 2016, during which Erdoğan attributed blame to Hizmet, providing a justification for his draconian measures. He boldly proclaimed, “Not a single member of this organization will feel at ease, neither in the East nor in the West. Today or tomorrow, every member of the treacherous FETÖ front will be held accountable for betraying their country and their people.”¹ To vilify the movement, Erdoğan adopted the acronym FETÖ, representing Fetullah Terrorist Organization.

A CULTURAL GENOCIDE

Erdoğan’s actions were not mere rhetoric; he implemented measures to make the lives of Gülen followers inside the country unbearable. Exploiting the coup attempt, which the Hizmet movement consistently denied involvement in and disavowed from the outset, Erdoğan capitalized on a state of emergency to completely disregard existing laws, including international standards such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. What followed was an unprecedented and frenzied witch hunt.

Since the onset of the witch hunt against the Hizmet movement in Turkey from early 2022, approximately 1.6 million people have faced prosecution, accused of being members of armed terrorist organizations. Over 300,000 individuals have been subjected to detention, and more than 100,000 have been arrested. The cancellation of 234,419 passports further restricted freedom of movement. During the state of emergency following the failed coup attempt in 2016, over 152,000 civil servants were dismissed without the opportunity to present their defense. Moreover, 4,500 judges and prosecutors were summarily removed from their positions, with 4,000 of them subsequently arrested. Shockingly, more than 17,000 women were arrested for political reasons, and over 3,000 children under the age of 6 were imprisoned alongside their mothers, the majority of whom were detained for political motives. At one point, nearly 900 babies were confined in the grim wards of Turkish prisons.

Tragically, 36 individuals who attempted to flee the country to escape inhumane practic-

¹ Ibid.

es such as intense pressure, social isolation, imprisonment, torture, and persecution lost their lives, drowning in the Maritsa River and the Aegean Sea. Among the victims were numerous young children. Disturbingly, around 800 people reportedly succumbed to psychological problems, while over 100 individuals ended their lives due to the trauma and stress they experienced. The consequences of the crackdown extend to academia, where a total of 23,427 scholars either lost opportunities for promotion or were expelled. Among them, 406 were expelled for signing a declaration advocating peace, and 3,041 were dismissed for working in shuttered universities. Furthermore, 7,508 academics and scientists were excluded from academic life due to their affiliation with specific political and social groups.

The cultural genocide carried out by the political power in Turkey also targeted various institutions. The doors of 1,598 associations were forcefully closed, and 560 foundations, engaged in education, social cooperation, and solidarity, were shut down despite their legal immunity. Additionally, 5,728 institutions were closed, resulting in the dismissal of over 40,000 employees without any rights or compensation. 29 unions were closed. Even being a member of these unions was considered a crime.

Freedom of the press has been severely undermined. With decree laws exempted from judicial review, 33 television channels and 34 radio channels were forcibly closed. Furthermore, 90 publications, including Turkey's leading newspapers and magazines, were unlawfully seized and shut down, despite constitutional guarantees.

Educational institutions also fell victim to the social genocide perpetrated by the Turkish government. Through decree laws, the doors of 1,604 high schools, primary schools, and kindergartens were abruptly closed. Additionally, 360 private prep courses and study centers were terminated, and their assets were confiscated. The closure of 847 student dormitories, which had provided accommodation and support to students throughout their educational journey, resulted in their displacement. Erdoğan even seized 15 foundation universities, esteemed for their contributions to education.

Using accusations against owners and managers as a pretext, the political Islamist government seized 985 companies, along with their assets, and wrongfully confiscated the movable and immovable properties of those unjustly accused and imprisoned. In this manner, personal and corporate accounts worth more than 30 billion TL were seized. The arbitrary detentions and politically motivated retaliatory actions have led to severe overcrowding in prisons. Despite a total capacity of 233,194 individuals, as of February 28, 2022, Turkish prisons accommodate 309,558 detainees and convicts. In terms of the prison density ratio per population, Turkey ranks first among member states of the Council of Europe, with 3,642 prisoners per 1 million people.

These egregious violations amount to a cultural genocide, with devastating consequences for individuals, families, and society as a whole. The Advocates of Silenced Turkey denounce these grave human rights abuses and emphasize the urgent need for international attention and action. The international community must hold Turkey accountable for its disregard of fundamental rights, ensure justice for the victims, and work towards the restoration of democracy, rule of law, and respect for human rights in Turkey.

GLOBALIZING THE THEATER 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 inherently entails. Various governments did not hesitate to jump on the bandwagon and bowed to Erdoğan's diplomatic pressure to arrest and deport members of the movement living in their own 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 such as Myanmar, Kosovo, Kazakhstan and Sudan, countries did not even obey their own laws while carrying out 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 AND ABROAD

Although it is not easy to determine the exact number, around 130 people were abducted in and outside of Turkey through heinous methods, and even their most basic fair trial and defense rights were brushed away. Some of these people who were abducted abroad by covert operations were under the protection of the United Nations. They were subjected to severe torture, forced to sign false testimonies, turned into the living dead, and even killed. Ankara was even accused of abusing the Interpol system by requesting the extradition of more than 40,000 people on arbitrary terrorism charges, revoking the passports of dissidents struggling to survive as expatriates, and issuing arrest warrants on false charges.² The coun-

² Jordans, F. (2017). Interpol reviewing 40,000 wanted notices for political abuse. [online] AP NEWS. Available at: <https://apnews.com/article/70703fffc58648c196efac699bd461c2> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

try's intelligence agents abducted and brought people, most of whom were alleged to be affiliated with the Gülen movement, to Turkey, sometimes in cooperation with the relevant authorities of the country, sometimes without even bothering to inform them.

Inside the country, some people were abducted in broad daylight. 29 people were registered as victims of enforced disappearance. While most of these people appeared in police stations with marks of heavy torture on them, it is feared that some of them have been killed because they have not been heard from for years. Some of the survivors found the courage to tell the bloody details of their torture. Almost all of the people who were handed over to the police and arrested showed signs of severe physical and psychological damage.

The summary of Turkey's poor human rights record in the US Department of State's regularly published Country Reports on Human Rights Practices is growing in size every year, marking a precipitated aggravation of the situation. In the 2021 report, for instance, the size of the summary was twice as much as it was in the 2018 report. The latest report stipulated Turkey's substandard human rights record as follows: "Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: arbitrary killings; suspicious deaths of persons in custody; forced disappearances; torture; arbitrary arrest and continued detention of tens of thousands of persons, including opposition politicians and former members of parliament, lawyers, journalists, human rights activists, and employees of the U.S. Mission, for purported ties to "terrorist" groups or peaceful legitimate speech; political prisoners, including elected officials; politically motivated reprisal against individuals located outside the country, including kidnappings and transfers without due process of alleged members of the Gulen movement; significant problems with judicial independence; support for Syrian opposition groups that perpetrated serious abuses in conflict, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers; severe restrictions on freedom of expression, the press, and the internet, including violence and threats of violence against journalists, closure of media outlets, and arrests or criminal prosecution of journalists and others for criticizing government policies or officials, censorship, site blocking, and criminal libel laws; severe restriction of freedoms of assembly, association, and movement, including overly restrictive laws regarding government oversight of nongovernmental organizations and civil society organizations; some cases of refoulement of refugees; serious government harassment of domestic human rights organizations; gender-based violence; crimes involving violence targeting members of national/racial/ethnic minority groups; crimes involving violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex persons."³

³ United States Department of State. (2022). 2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Turkey. [online] Available at: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/turkey/> [Accessed 13 Apr. 2022].

The Scope **of the Report**

The report consists of three parts. The introduction will first provide a consolidated approach to the nature of the war waged by the Turkish State against the Gülen movement, emphasizing Erdoğan's passion for revenge, which has further worsened the conditions of Gülen supporters. The first part will also provide a comprehensive discussion of abductions and enforced disappearances within the framework of international law.

The second part will shed light on how the Erdoğan administration has expanded its operations against supporters of the Gülen movement around the world, stipulating and examining all known cases around the world. The third chapter will deal with forced abductions in Turkey, also called the Black Transporter cases.

PART 1:

INTRODUCTION

It's no secret that Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and its authoritarian political Islamist regime led by its leader, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, have long suppressed opposition in the country. Hand in glove with the dark elements of the country's former power centers, its struggle against any form of political opposition has been waged with drastic measures, often reminiscent of dark memories of the witch hunts of the Middle Ages.

As demonstrated on numerous occasions, the Turkish state's actions to squelch and silence critics contain a list of the most baleful forms of crimes against humanity basically including hate crimes, such as demonization, slander and libel that are gushing out in torrents from a giant 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 civil society institutions, media and even individuals. 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. And that's not all: those who use force for this purpose are respected and rewarded.

This report will attempt to throw light upon one of the most contemptible misdeed among all these practices of malfeasance, 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 become part of the club of countries that do not respect foreign jurisdiction very much when plotting against people or communities they deem enemies. 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 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.”⁴ How can one justify such a vicious act?

What is even worse is that the Turkish authorities have only rarely repudiated the claims of extreme and illegal measures to silence the opposition. On the contrary, high-ranking government officials bragged about them for domestic political gains and to gain popular acclaim. Even bureaucrats from security and intelligence units have embraced such practices. The Turkish media, which has almost become a submissive instrument and staunch promoter of power to propagate Erdoğan’s messages to the masses, has been brimming with success stories of how people have been 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

4 OHCHR. (2022). Declaration on the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance. [online] Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-protection-all-persons-enforced-disappearance> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

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

Turkey's recent and distant history is full of examples of the state using shady methods to attack people or groups that it positions as enemies or a threat to the core establishment. For example, the Kurdish political opposition has long been a usual target for covert attacks and assassinations. It is known that during the struggle to exterminate the Kurdish separatist insurgency, thousands of civilians were sacrificed in the conflicts between the two sides, especially in Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia. Even today, twenty years after their disappearance, the mothers of abducted and possibly murdered children meet every Saturday in İstanbul demanding to at least have a grave for their children. Likewise, leftist groups, communists and Alevis have been subjected to similar clandestine actions. However, in recent years, the main victims of extrajudicial practices have become members of the Gülen movement.⁵

The Gülen movement supported the AKP government for its policies that strengthened the country's democratic institutions and forced the anti-democratic elements of the established state to withdraw. However, Erdoğan chose to fill the vacuum left by the old anti-democratic ruling elite of the country, which was largely defeated and lost its former power, with his own dictatorial desires. This situation led to the deterioration of relations between Erdoğan and the Gülen movement. Erdoğan accused Hizmet of planning to topple his government in December 2013, with two corruption and bribery operations implicating some businessmen close to him and several members of his government and his relatives, and launched a major war against the movement.

It should be noted that the dramatic upheaval of relations between AKP and Hizmet

⁵ Hizmet is also known as Gülen Movement and the word is translated into English as service. Members of the movement act under the guidance of Fethullah Gülen, a US-based Muslim cleric who has voluntarily lived in exile in Saylorsburg, PA since 1999. They adopt the principles he inspired and preached as the essence of their lives. For decades, Gülen inspired countless followers to act voluntarily in order to raise the society with an education approach that respects the basic principles of religion while emphasizing science. The movement defines itself around these key principles: to be a citizen of the world rather than confined to one's own national borders; volunteering with a pure heart instead of profiting from philanthropy; and to explain the beauties of religion on the basis of an equal interfaith dialogue, rather than imposing one's own faith on others on the basis of a radical interpretation of Islam.

took place simultaneously with the country starting to sever its already flimsy ties with the rule of law. When Erdoğan's shady network of relations was exposed thanks to the corruption operations, the politician promptly declared that his government had been attacked by global powers that did not want Turkey to re-emerge as a regional actor, and that these secret organizations had assigned Hizmet to finish off his party, the only hope for the revival of the old magnificence of the country.

In a few days, he changed his discourse that Hizmet is a sublime organization acting on the axis of sincerity and devotion, and began to argue that the Hizmet movement is a demonic entity and is the main source of all evil in the country. Erdoğan was claiming that Hizmet volunteered to be a puppet of the nation's external enemies, and therefore it must also be deemed enemy of the people, and precisely for this reason, its total annihilation would be good for the whole nation. Erdoğan's reasoning, which was suddenly inspired after the corruption cases erupted, surprisingly convinced many of his supporters. This was probably helped by Erdoğan's extremely loyal media power and the general inclination of ordinary Turkish people to accept conspiracy theories.

The further away the conspiracy theories were from the truth, the more convincing they became, especially because they were repeated by a powerful and important figure like Erdoğan. Without wasting any time, the politician hit the road and started rallies all over Turkey to tell the same lies to the masses. Sometimes he held rallies in three different cities on the same day. Every message that came out of his mouth was reproduced by the media and delivered to a much wider audience over and over again. At the same time, prosecutors and law enforcement officers involved in corruption operations were either demoted or reassigned to insignificant positions, in violation of the current law. Erdoğan's next step would be to seek cooperation against the common enemy with former deep state actors, who were forced to withdraw after their coup d'état plans came to light.

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

The Gülen movement was designated as a terrorist organization by Erdoğan's cabinet as per the recommendations of the National Security Council (MGK), which was still a powerful remnant of the old regime, but a significant part of the domestic public still favored Hizmet. The movement had always praised peace over violence, dialogue over conflict, and education above all else. Gülen has often denounced those who resort to terrorism 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.

However, this situation changed after the failed coup attempt on 15 July. The details of the coup were only allowed to be told from the government's point of view, and the members of the Gülen movement were never allowed to make their statements be heard by the public opinion. Although the movement condemned the coup attempt from the very first moments, their voices were muzzled and their statements were not allowed to be published. Asking questions about the coup and expressing opinions other than officially allowed ones were strictly prevented. It didn't take long for the public to turn completely against the Hizmet and its leader, with the help of a torrential flood of a one-sided narration of the coup details that the media made unilaterally while demonizing the entire movement.

As a result of enormous public anger against everything and everyone related to the Gülen movement, Erdoğan found the strength and the excuse to completely ignore any obligation to respect the law, abide by justice, and heed the principle of proportionality or compassion in his war against the members of the Gülen movement. He was applauded when he shouted at rallies that all Hizmet followers must be destroyed. He was applauded when he ordered the looting of the properties of service members. He got a standing ovation when he asked people to snitch on their relatives and friends in Hizmet.

Many practices such as identifying the members of the Gülen movement, isolating them from society and exerting social pressure, implementing an economic embargo on them and insulting them were no longer just a highly recommended civic duty to ordinary people, but was also a duty given to elected and appointed local administrators from governors to village headmen, to state institutions and to AKP local offices.

Embassies were also tasked with coordinating profiling and espionage activities against expatriate members of the Hizmet movement. These missions included a variety of operations, from simply gathering intelligence and tracking, to threatening, harassing and even physically attacking Hizmet members. It is quite possible that embassies were also actively involved in the preparation and logistics of abductions and extraditions. The mastermind and executive of the operations was Turkey's main spy agency, the National Intelligence Organization (MIT). The Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB) and Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA) also actively participated in secret intelligence operations around the world.

Ironically, the country's Directorate of Religious Affairs (DİB) voluntarily participated in the work of the MIT to identify Erdoğan's dissidents, even though the constant effort to pre-

serve brotherhood and friendship among believers is one of the main duties mandated by religion itself. Moreover, the imams of the DİB did this not only in Turkey, but also through mosques abroad, although espionage is a serious crime. Likewise, Turkish preachers from the Turkish-Islamic Union of Religious Affairs (DİTİB) were actively employed in these intelligence gathering activities at the request of the state. Its Secretary General Bekir Alboğa initially refuted these claims to be “false media allegations” but later had to admit that several imams provided information about certain people to the DİB.⁶ Moreover, according to a later report, German police investigations revealed that these accusations may be just the tip of the iceberg, and that such efforts exist in European countries such as the Netherlands, Switzerland and Belgium.⁷

State-owned news companies Anadolu News Agency (AA) and Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) spared no effort to follow the opposition figures and make sensational news about them in the countries where they operate. Yunus Emre Institute and Maarif Foundation, which cooperated with the Turkish government to forcibly confiscate the educational institutions built and operated by the Hizmet movement in various countries, were also active participants in the secret war waged against the Gülen movement worldwide.

Last but not least, government-funded private think tanks and organizations such as the European Turkish Democrats Union (UETD), the Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA) and the Turkish Heritage Organization should be counted among the main actors. They have held panels, conferences and events and published various publications to disseminate ideas designed to justify extrajudicial, arbitrary and inhumane acts of government as inevitable measures taken at extraordinary times. These institutions, which strive to provide support for Erdoğan and his party among the Turkish and Muslim communities abroad, also collect information about individuals and groups working against Erdoğan among those living abroad.

Based on such underhanded investigations and espionage, the Erdoğan regime primarily sought the extradition of its critics from their countries of legal residence. Depending on the status of its relations with these countries, Turkey wants the dissidents to be deported first through legitimate channels. If this step fails, Turkey either begins to offer

6 Deutsche Welle (www.dw.com (2017). Turkish Islamic organization DİTİB admits preachers spied in Germany | DW | 12.01.2017. [online] DW.COM. Available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/turkish-islamic-organization-ditib-admits-preachers-spied-in-germany/a-37106126> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

7 Deutsche Welle (www.dw.com (2017). Turkish imam spy affair in Germany extends across Europe | DW | 16.02.2017. [online] DW.COM. Available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/turkish-imam-spy-affair-in-germany-extends-across-europe/a-37590672> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

bribes or tries to use its influence to pressure these countries into handing over wanted persons. The different milestones of this path have been formulated in a report by the EU Open Dialogue Foundation: “When non-democratic states do not succeed in attaining extradition by legitimate methods, extra-procedural 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).⁸

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES IN INTERNATIONAL LAW

Enforced disappearances are universally classified as some of the most heinous crimes that can be committed by malicious state actors. All relevant documents of international law expressly prohibit enforced disappearances, given that the law completely circumvents legal processes while causing extreme trauma to both the abducted and the relatives of the abducted.

The Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1992, asserts in Article 1 Paragraph 2 that enforced disappearance is said to have taken place if “persons are arrested, detained or abducted against their will or otherwise deprived of their liberty by officials of different branches or levels of 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”⁹ Turkey has not participated in this agreement at all.

Article II of the Inter-American Convention on Forced Disappearance of Persons adopted in 1994 defines enforced disappearance of persons as “the act of depriving a person or persons of his or their freedom, in whatever way, perpetrated by agents of the state or by

8 Open Dialogue Foundation. (2019). They've Come For You: Misuse of Extradition Procedures and Interstate Legal Assistance - Open Dialogue Foundation. [online] Available at: <https://en.odfoundation.eu/a/9579,theyve-come-for-you-misuse-of-extradition-procedures-and-interstate-legal-assistance/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

9 OHCHR. (2022). Declaration on the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance. [online] Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-protection-all-persons-enforced-disappearance> [Accessed 13 Apr. 2022].

persons or groups of persons acting with the authorization, support, or acquiescence of the state, followed by an absence of information or a refusal to acknowledge that deprivation of freedom or to give information on the whereabouts of that person, thereby impeding his or her recourse to the applicable legal remedies and procedural guarantees.”¹⁰ Turkey has no part in this regional convention.

Finally, one of the most recent instruments of international law, the 2006 Convention on Enforced Disappearance, first entrenches an indisputably phrased right to all persons by saying “No one shall be subjected to enforced disappearance” in the first paragraph of Article 1 and in the next paragraph goes on: “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.”¹¹ Turkey is not a signatory of this agreement.

The Turkish government has violated the most fundamental rights of abducted or deported victims in all countries covered in detail in this report, however, since it has not signed any of the relevant international documents, it is acting more unbridledly in enforced disappearances and abductions. Still, the conventions and agreements, to which Turkey is a signatory and which are dealing with crimes against humanity, may be a deterrence. In addition, the Turkish administration has used baseless national security arguments to justify its appalling behavior around the world. The Turkish government’s brazen attempts to terrorize Turkish citizens around the world violated the sovereignty of states in the 16 known cases detailed here.

All in all, Erdoğan’s government and all the relevant actors involved in the process of terrorizing, abducting and transporting people around the world to achieve its goals are in constant violation of widely accepted international laws, the national sovereignty of the countries subject to such operations, and local rules and regulations of the respective countries. In summary, the Erdoğan regime and its essential elements, especially members of the intelligence agency involved in operations around the world, have committed crimes against humanity. Crimes against humanity have no statute of limitations.

Turkey’s extraterritorial operations to kidnap dissidents and similar egregious acts in its jurisdiction have been proven by many cases, and this report will try to shed light on as

10 Oas.org. (2022). Inter-American Convention On Forced Disappearance Of Persons. [online] Available at: <https://www.oas.org/juridico/english/treaties/a-60.html> [Accessed 13 Apr. 2022].

11 United Nations (2022). 16. International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. [online] Available at: https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-16&chapter=4 [Accessed 13 Apr. 2022].

many cases as possible. First of all, however, it is necessary to examine the grounds on which the Turkish authorities base their actions.

On April 17, 2014, with a critical amendment made in Law No. 2937, the Turkish Grand National Assembly gave MİT legal authority to perform secret missions outside the borders of Turkey.

Another important change was implemented in 2017 with the decree law numbered 694, which subordinated the MİT directly to the presidency as well as appointing the President as the head of the National Intelligence Coordination Board (MİKK) that was designed as the main strategy-making body for MİT's moves outside Turkey.¹² 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 following sections, although the domestic reaction to the covert operations carried out by the MİT inside and outside the country was limited, it was strongly criticized by some states and international organizations because its actions were perceived as a kind 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 unequivocally stipulate that any person must be well informed, immediately or at the time of arrest, of the reasons for his arrest and of the charges against him if he is arrested. In addition, any person should be brought before a judge or similar judicial authority without delay.

However, in Turkish practice, people are abducted without even knowing what their crimes are or who exactly captured them. If they are lucky enough to live long enough, they end up on trial only after months of severe torture. Indeed, they cannot even see the faces of the kidnappers or torturers, let alone their lawyers or their families.

While Turkey's abduction operations abroad were in some cases in cooperation with the host countries, in others, Turkish operational units simply utilized underhanded methods, drawing strong reactions from those countries. For example, Mongolian Deputy For-

¹² Kennedy School Review. (2018). Turkey's Kidnappings Abroad Defy International Law - KENNEDY SCHOOL REVIEW. [online] Available at: <https://ksr.hkspublications.org/2018/11/25/turkeys-kidnappings-defy-international-law/> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

Foreign Minister Battsetseg Batmunkh condemned the attempted kidnapping of Turkish teacher Veysel Akçay, saying, “This is an unacceptable violation of Mongolia’s sovereignty and independence, and Mongolia will strongly oppose it.” Without taking a moment’s notice, Turkey’s Ambassador to Ulaanbaatar rejected any information or interference with the operation.¹³

Another strong backlash came from Kosovo after Turkey kidnapped five teachers and a medical doctor linked to the Gülen movement. Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj dismissed the interior minister and spy chief for alleged complicity. The Kosovo Ministry of Foreign Affairs made a harsh statement that “the arrest and deportation of Turkish citizens with regular residence permits ... is ... in direct contradiction to international norms.”¹⁴ Erdoğan lambasted Kosovo’s PM saying that he would pay for what he said and did, as if he were talking to one of his subordinates or any Turk who dared to question him. Enver Robelli, a prominent Kosovar journalist, told *Al Monitor* about Erdoğan’s unbridled humiliation of the Kosovo Prime Minister: “People are irritated that Erdoğan attacks the prime minister. Most [local] media [report that] Erdoğan behaves as if he were the king of Kosovo.”

Nate Schenkkan from the Freedom House 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.”¹⁵ Schenkkan elaborated on Turkey’s flagrant “transnational repression.”¹⁶ 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,

13 Munkhchimeg Davaasharav (2018). Turkish teacher kidnapped in Mongolia freed after authorities ground flight. [online] U.S. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mongolia-kidnapping-turkey/turkish-teacher-kidnapped-in-%20mongolia-freed-after-authorities-ground-flight-idUSKBN1KI03N> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

14 Zaman, Amberin (2018). Erdoğan ramps up dispute with Kosovo over deportation of Gulen-linked Turks. [online] Available at: <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2018/04/Erdoğan-gulenists-kosovo.html> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

15 Nate Schenkkan (2018). Turkey just snatched six of its citizens from another country. [online] *Washington Post*. Available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/democracy-post/wp/2018/04/01/turkey-just-snatched-six-of-its-citizens-from-another-country/> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

16 The term was first coined by political scientist Dana M. Moss, and it explains to some extent the actions of the Erdoğan regime, as it shows that authoritarian regimes target opposition within the diaspora through violence, exile, threats, surveillance, and harm to the relatives of dissidents. house. For the full article, please see: Dana M. Moss, *Transnational Repression, Diaspora Mobilization, and the Case of the Arab Spring*, *Social Problems*, Vol 63, Issue 4, November 2016, Pages 480–498, doi.org/10.1093/socpro / spw019

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.¹⁷

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."¹⁸ The report mentioned the abductions by "unidentified perpetrators believed to be state agents" in at least six cases. The 2018 report cited the continued absence of any meaningful investigation into torture, ill-treatment and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment in police custody and prison as a cause for deep concern. Furthermore, it also lambasted the lack of any effective investigations into these serious assertions by the judiciary.¹⁹

The same report for the next year recorded only exacerbation in these sources of concern without any sign of progress.²⁰ 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 also criticized 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.

17 Nate Schenkkan (2019). The Remarkable Scale of Turkey's 'Global Purge'. [online] Foreign Affairs. Available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/turkey/2018-01-29/remarkable-scale-turkeys-global-purge> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

18 Human Rights Watch. (2018). World Report 2018: Rights Trends in Turkey. [online] Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2018/country-chapters/turkey> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

19 Human Rights Watch. (2018). World Report 2019: Rights Trends in Turkey. [online] Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/turkey> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

20 Human Rights Watch. (2020). World Report 2020: Rights Trends in Turkey. [online] Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/turkey> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

CONFESSING ABDUCTIONS

Despite the undeniable evidence that enforced disappearances were carried out overtly or covertly by various state institutions, primarily intelligence and security units, different government representatives and bodies vehemently denied the accusations in their official statements. Despite that, their deliberate or on-impulse confessions are available even in the sources that are publicly accessible. Although universally regarded as a heinous violation of fundamental human rights and widely repudiated, Turkish authorities have interestingly defended the abduction of dissidents in Turkey or abroad, not through blurted-out blunders but with deliberate confirmations. In the following paragraphs, some examples of such disclosures will be highlighted.

Before proceeding with the kidnappings, Turkey first tried to apprehend the dissidents within the framework of internationally accepted norms and through official mechanisms, such as demanding the extradition of members of the Gülen movement. However, after their demands were turned down in some countries, especially in the democratic world where the rule of law is respected, the Turkish government began to resort to extra-judicial means such as kidnapping to bring these people back.

Erdoğan repeatedly encouraged his loyalists to make life unbearable for Hizmet members, and ordered law enforcement and intelligence officials to kidnap and punish his critics, even vaguely hinting at their murders. For example, in one of his speeches, he said: “Some countries eliminate terrorists, whom they see as a threat to their national security, wherever they are. This means that they accept that Turkey has the same right.” He then hinted at his target: “This includes the terrorists they shake hands with and praise. I hope that we will receive good news for our nation on this matter as soon as possible.”²¹

In one of his statements in September 2016, he said, “No country or region in the world will ever be a safe haven for FETÖ and its militants.”²² The Turkish autocrat described the members of the Gülen movement as cancer cells that must be destroyed without leaving any residue. “Those who fled abroad in the murky atmosphere of the coup d'état should never feel safe. ... The children of this country should go back and tell the relevant authorities what they know. If they don't, they will pay for it. In any case, we will not sup-

21 IPANews (2019). Erdoğan threatens to kill Syrian Kurdish leader - reports. [online] IPA NEWS. Available at: <https://ipa.news/2019/10/31/Erdoğan-threatens-to-kill-syrian-kurdish-leader-reports/> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

22 TRT Haber, (2016). 'Hiçbir ülke FETÖ için güvenli sığınak değildir' ('No country is a safe haven for FETO'). [online] Trthaber.com. Available at: <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/hicbir-ulke-feto-icin-guvenli-siginak-degildir-272161.html> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

port them as our citizens. ... We will take due action wherever they are captured.”²³

“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.

Similar words were to come out of Erdoğan's mouth at the joint press conference he held in Ankara with President of Kosovo Hashim Thaçi on December 29, 2016: “Our crack-down 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.”²⁴

The former Deputy Prime Minister, Bekir Bozdağ, who currently serves as the Justice Minister, admitted indifferently that Ankara's spy agency had “bundled up and brought back” 80 suspects against their will, as part of their global response to alleged threats to Turkey's security from the Hizmet movement. He also described the capture of Turkish dissidents from Kosovo, which caused a serious turmoil in that country, as a “great success.”²⁵

Erdoğan's lawyer, Hüseyin Aydın, told the state-owned TRT radio that abductions by Turkish intelligence would continue, similar to the kidnappings in Kosovo. Aydın said the Kosovo operation did not mark any “paradigm change” for the MIT and was not the first of its kind. “Fugitive Gülenists will always walk looking behind them. The National Intelligence Organization will continue its operations everywhere. After the government's success at home, there was a need for operations targeting the movement's overseas network,” he said.²⁶

Following suit, some members of the Turkish government, as well as loyal followers of the president, have expressed similar thoughts. There have been repeated calls for kid-

23 Milliyet.com.tr (2016). Erdoğan: Türkiye istediğin zaman gelen istediğin zaman çıkan bir ülke değil. (Erdoğan: Turkey is not a country that comes when you want and leaves when you want.) [online] Milliyet. Available at: <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/siyaset/Erdoğan-turkiye-istedigin-zaman-gelen-istedigin-zaman-cikan-bir-ulke-degil-2327388> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

24 Milliyet.com.tr (2016). Erdoğan-Taçi Ortak Basın Toplantısı (Erdoğan-Taçi Joint Press Conference). [online] Milliyet. Available at: <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/yerel-haberler/ankara/Erdoğan-taci-ortak-basin-toplantisi-11745175> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

25 Vice.com. (2018). Turkey's spy agency has secretly abducted 80 Turkish citizens living abroad. [online] Available at: <https://www.vice.com/en/article/evqm5e/turkeys-spy-agency-has-secretly-abducted-80-turkish-citizens-living-abroad> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

26 SCF (2018). Turkey tries to snatch Gülen supporters in Gabon - Stockholm Center for Freedom. [online] Stockholm Center for Freedom. Available at: <https://stockholmcf.org/turkey-tries-to-snatch-gulen-supporters-in-gabon/> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

napping, 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.

Erdoğan's son-in-law even publicly encouraged AKP fanatics to kill supporters of the Gülen movement, saying that he would kill them wherever he saw them without blinking.²⁷ 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.

While answering the questions of the press on September 21, 2018, Erdoğan's Spokesperson İbrahim Kalın said, "Look, now it may be the US, maybe other places, other countries or regions where FETÖ is nesting. The operations of our relevant units and institutions in these places will continue uninterrupted. Therefore, they will continue to feel the breath of the Republic of Turkey on their necks. No one must ever doubt this. Of course, I can't give any details about which countries here or there, but anything can happen anywhere. That our President has a clear order in this regard, and that our units are the best possible. "Let me tell you that our president has a clear order on this matter and that our units have been conducting professional efforts to the fullest possible extent. There may be operations in other regions, too, similar to the one in Kosovo. The Republic of Turkey will not allow FETÖ to breathe in peace, everyone should know this."²⁸

The Kosovo operation, which he referred to, sparked a major backlash in the Balkan

27 DHA (2017). Berat Albayrak: Gördüğüm yerde boğazlarım yani (Berat Albayrak: So I slit their throats where I see them). [online] Hürriyet. Available at: <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yerel-haberler/istanbul/berat-albayrak-gordugum-yerde-bogazlarim-yani-40554294> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

28 İbrahim Kalın, Turkish Presidency Spokesperson (2018). Cumhurbaşkanlığı Sözcüsü Sayın İbrahim Kalın'ın Basın Toplantısında Yaptığı Konuşma (Speech by Presidential Spokesperson İbrahim Kalın at the Press Conference). [online] Tccb.gov.tr. Available at: <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/cumhurbaskanligi-sozculugunden/1695/98667/cumhurbaskanligi-sozcusu-sayin-ibrahim-kalin-in-basin-toplantısında-yaptigi-konusma> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

country, as the Prime Minister took steps to dismiss the interior minister and the head of the security forces for their negligence, which tarnished the country's sovereignty and made Kosovo look like an uncontrolled and an unprotected area where agents of other countries can freely do whatever they want.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu said in a statement on April 4, 2017, "We do not stop chasing them [the members of the Gülen movement] at home and abroad. We are breathing down their necks. We won't give these traitors and dishonorable people room to breathe."²⁹ He would repeat the same threats over and over again as he did during his speech in Antalya in February 2019: "We are breathing down their necks. We will grab them by their necks and bring them back to Turkey. We will make the whole world a dungeon for them. We are after them all over the world. We are closing their associations and schools. We are closing or closing them all. Lastly, Pakistan Constitutional Court declared them a terror organization."³⁰

In several other cases, Turkish authorities announced plans to resort to covert operations against members of the Gülen movement. For example, Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu claimed in March 2017 that Turkish state units were planning to kidnap opposition figures who fled the AKP persecution and sought refuge in Germany as political refugees. "One day, these FETÖ terrorists may be shocked when they see where they are, you know. I'm telling you here, it's not that easy."³¹

In one of the most famous events of this kind, which also created controversy in the United States, it was alleged that Mike Flynn, the national security adviser to former US President Donald Trump, allegedly discussed with representatives from the Turkish government a \$15-million offer in exchange for delivering Fethullah Gülen to Turkey.³² This case alone illustrates the exorbitant intrigues that the Turkish government has planned and embarked on, even in the United States, let alone countries with less well-established democratic institutions. The Turkish government will continue to recruit and bring in dissidents to fill the 228 new prisons still under construction, both within its borders and

29 Yeni Çağ Gazetesi. (2017). AKP'li Çavuşoğlu'ndan bozkurt işareti (Gray wolf sign from AKP's Çavuşoğlu). [online] Available at: <https://www.yenicaggazetesi.com.tr/akpli-cavusoglundan-bozkurt-isareti-161056h.htm> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

30 Anatolia News Agency (2019). 'Tüm dünyada FETÖ'cü hainlerin ensesindeyiz' ('We are on the neck of FETÖ traitors all over the world'). [online] Aa.com.tr. Available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/disisleri-bakani-mevlut-cavusoglu-tum-dunyada-fetocu-hainlerin-ensesindeyiz/1395566> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

31 Hurriyet (2017). 'Bir de başımıza Almanya çıktı' ('New we came across Germany'). [online] Hurriyet.com.tr. Available at: <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/bir-de-basimiza-almanya-cikti-40388917> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

32 Grimaldi, J.V. (2017). Mueller Probes Flynn's Role in Alleged Plan to Deliver Cleric to Turkey. [online] WSJ. Available at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/mueller-probes-flynn-s-role-in-alleged-plan-to-deliver-cleric-to-turkey-1510309982> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

abroad.³³

Supporters of the government, not only from politics but also from the media, encouraged the kidnapping, torture and murder of government opponents in Turkey and abroad. For example, Aydın Ünal, who used to pen Erdoğan's speeches, wrote open threats against Hizmet members in his column in a media outlet close to the government. The following quote is taken from his column in the *Yeni Şafak* newspaper: "Some Fetullahists who continue to live do not serve the interests of neither Gülen nor the US intelligence. They should prepare for the upcoming extrajudicial executions within the organization, rather than operating through a judicial act staged in a courtroom."³⁴ While writing these lines, was also a member of the parliament from Erdoğan's party. He claimed that Hizmet would do such a thing because the lives of journalists in exile would no longer serve the interests of the movement. However, these lines were preparing a kind of pretext for the MIT's covert assassination operations against these dissidents.

Another pro-government journalist, Cem Küçük, made an even more serious statement. In a live television program, he insisted that the Turkish intelligence agency should kill family members of people arrested for their (alleged) links to the Gülen movement. In the same program, Küçük criticized the prosecutors who carried out investigations into the Gülen movement and acted very harshly and ruthlessly and tried to impose the highest sentences, accusing them of being overly permissive in investigations. For example, he suggested that detainees be subjected to various tortures during their stay in prisons instead of asking questions and getting answers using traditional methods. One of the suggestions he made in persuading Gülen followers to confess to the alleged crimes was to "hang them by their legs out of the window."³⁵ Unfortunately, the Turkish state is already committing far worse atrocities against the members of the movement. There are countless grueling accounts of how service members are treated in prisons.³⁶

33 Sinan Saygılı (2017). Hükümetin 2023 planı: 5 yılda 228 yeni cezaevi (Government plan for 2023: 228 new prisons in 5 years). [online] *Gazete Duvar*. Available at: <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/gundem/2017/12/10/hukümetin-2023-planı-5-yılda-228-yeni-cezaevi> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

34 Aydın Ünal (2017). 'Smart' Fetullahists. [online] *Yeni Şafak*. Available at: <https://www.yenisafak.com/en/columns/aydin-unal/smart-fetullahists-2040235> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

35 Cumhuriyet (2017). Cem Küçük'ten canlı yayında işkence tavsiyesi: Havlu tekniği var, boğuyor (Torture advice on live broadcast from Cem Küçük: There is a towel technique to suffocate). [online] Available at: <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/cem-kucukten-canli-yayinda-iskence-tavsiyesi-havlu-tekniği-var-boguyor-884749> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

36 SCF (2017). SCF reveals mass torture and abuse in an unofficial detention facility in Turkey's capital - Stockholm Center for Freedom. [online] Stockholm Center for Freedom. Available at: <https://stockholmcf.org/scf-reveals-mass-torture-and-abuse-in-an-unofficial-detention-facility-in-turkeys-capital/> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

Threats from Erdoğan's bigoted followers should also be noted. There have been numerous physical attacks against members of the Hizmet movement within Turkey, but there are tangible signs of deliberate intimidation and attacks in other countries as well. For example, some German media outlets covered the serious allegations of AKP Deputy Metin Külünk that he provided money to the Turkish "Ottoman Germania" gangs. There was surveillance footage of this politician allegedly filmed giving money to gang members and being in contact with them. A ZDF report contained evidence that Ottoman Germania was tasked with organizing attacks against Turkish dissidents living in the country.³⁷ Ozan Ceyhun, a former member of the European Parliament, wrote on social media: "Gülenists in Germany will have many sleepless nights. We owe this to our martyrs."³⁸

Likewise, Dursun Baş, Head of the German Branch of the European Turkish Democrats Union (UETD), addressed the two members of Stiftung Dialog und Bildung on Twitter: "How do you dare to go out on the streets? For you there will be no easy death."³⁹

German security circles are following the developments with increasing concern and are trying to be more vigilant against acts of violence against the opposition residing in Germany. In particular, they have concerns that MIT may take action against opposition figures. A security guard, who asked not to be named, told DTJ-Online, "All allegations of state terrorism by the Turkish intelligence services will be seriously investigated. [These allegations] are not only focused on MIT [but also] on the Turkish right, the extremist group acting on behalf of the Turkish state."⁴⁰ Green Party politician Cem Özdemir also emphasizes the concept of "State Terrorism" in a Twitter message he sent: "more and more people from Erdoğan's henchmen abducted worldwide. The German government has addressed the case of #OrhanInandi, who was kidnapped in Kyrgyzstan, but the real danger remains. to kidnap people is state terrorism, wherever."⁴¹

Mafia leader Sedat Peker, who was released from prison by Erdoğan in 2014, openly threatened Erdoğan's critics with death. Although this was a serious crime, as a result of

37 Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (2017). Vertrauter Erdoğans zündelt in Deutschland (Erdoğan's confidant sets fire to Germany). [online] [www.zdf.de](https://www.zdf.de/politik/frontal/osmanen-germania-104.html). Available at: <https://www.zdf.de/politik/frontal/osmanen-germania-104.html> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

38 de, M. and Giulia Paravicini (2016). 'Sleepless nights' for Gülen's supporters in Europe. [online] POLITICO. Available at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/sleepless-nights-for-fetullah-gulen-supporters-in-europe-Erdoğan-turkey-coup/> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

39 Ibid.

40 Deutsch Türkisches Journal (2021). Deutsche Sicherheitskreise: Türkischer Geheimdienst könnte auch in Deutschland zuschlagen. [online] DTJ Online. Available at: <https://dtj-online.de/tuerkei-entfuehrungen-opposition-journalisten-exil-deutschland-europa/> [Accessed 13 Apr. 2022].

41 Özdemir, Cem (2022), Twitter [online] Available at: <https://t.co/fqx9giFvDZ>

the lawsuit against him, the court evaluated Peker's death threats within the scope of freedom of expression and acquitted him. Peker, who Erdoğan embraced many times and had a very close relationship with the youth of Erdoğan's party, said, "We will break into the jails after hanging all of whomever we catch on the trees, flag poles. We will hang them in prisons as well. We will hang them from their necks on poles." The court accepted these words as nothing more than a normal expression of one's opinions.⁴² The same Peker had to leave the country after falling out with the Minister of Interior Süleyman Soylu in 2021, and this time he started to reveal serious practices of corruption and lawlessness against the AKP government, in which he himself was involved, through his social media posts. Heavy criminal investigations were soon launched against him.

Out of fear of being attacked by partisans, people stopped going to mosques to pray.⁴³ Even in major European countries, the buildings of Erdoğan opponents were stoned or set on fire.⁴⁴ Turkish businessman Ali Ekrem Kaynak was verbally and physically attacked in Amsterdam by Erdoğan supporters for his closeness to the Hizmet movement and was killed after a while.⁴⁵ Similar incidents took place in the USA as well.⁴⁶

42 CNN TÜRK (2018). 'Onları cezaevlerinde de asacağız' diyen Sedat Peker'e beraat kararı (Acquittal of Sedat Peker, who said, 'We will hang them in prisons, too'). [online] CNN TÜRK. Available at: <https://www.cnntrk.com/turkiye/onlari-cezaevlerinde-de-asacagiz-diyen-sedat-pekere-beraat-karari> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

43 Marthe van der Wolf (2016). Turks Seen as Sympathetic to US-Based Muslim Cleric Say They Face Threats. [online] VOA. Available at: <https://www.voanews.com/a/turks-seen-sympathetic-us-based-muslim-cleric-face-threats/3485265.html> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

44 Ibid.

45 SCF (2017). A Turkish businessman killed in Amsterdam over his alleged links to Gülen movement - Stockholm Center for Freedom. [online] Stockholm Center for Freedom. Available at: <https://stockholmcf.org/a-turkish-businessman-killed-in-amsterdam-over-his-alleged-links-to-gulen-movement/> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

46 Gabriel San Román (2017). Turkish Trash Talk: Erdoğan Backer Accosts Gulenist Vendor at OC Halal Food Festival – OC Weekly. [online] Ocweekly.com. Available at: <https://www.ocweekly.com/video-Erdoğan-supporter-accosts-gulenist-vendor-at-muslim-food-festival-8605011/> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

PART 2:

ABDUCTIONS AND RENDITIONS

This part will particularly shed light on the abduction, deportation and extradition of opponents of the Erdoğan regime outside of Turkey. Erdoğan has sought to persuade countries to join his personal fight against Hizmet members through diplomatic or economic pressure, or in some cases more diplomatic means. As an example of such pressure, a businessman who has lived and worked in Azerbaijan for more than a decade and is actively engaged in educational activities as part of the Hizmet movement shared an anecdote with AST: “When Erdoğan declared war against the movement after the corruption operations in 2013, despite his repeated and persistent demands that all institutions affiliated with the Hizmet be closed, the Azerbaijani administration was tolerant of us. 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 rarely interfered with the running of the schools. It didn’t take long for the Turkish authorities to realize this, 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 the schools of the movement before the July 15 coup attempt, but didn’t touch its university there, Kafkas. The university was also closed in the days after the failed coup, followed by a series of arrests.

Erdoğan has repeatedly asked governments around the world to join his fight against the movement; however, he was able to garner only limited support in a few countries. For example, Gambia closed schools known to be linked to the movement in April 2014, and Azerbaijan and Tajikistan in 2015. But the coup gave him leverage to be more persistent. Governments, especially in democratically and economically backward regions, bowed to pressure, and some even imitated Erdoğan’s aggressive stance. The arrest and deportation of members of the Gülen Movement followed. According to the information given by Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu in April 2019, 22 countries closed the Hizmet schools and 18 countries seized these schools and transferred them to the Maarif Foundation established under the auspices of the Turkish government as a tool for this purpose. The 22 countries are Russian Federation, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Gambia, Libya, Jordan, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Rwanda, Kuwait, Morocco, Tunisia, Montenegro, Mal-

dives, Madagascar, Ivory Coast, Serbia, Senegal, Venezuela and Amman. Countries that seized some or all of the movement's schools and transferred them to Erdoğan-backed foundations include Guinea, Somalia, Niger, Sudan, Republic of Congo, Mauritania, Mali, Chad, Senegal, Gabon, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tunisia, Ivory Coast and Venezuela.⁴⁷

Apart from these, 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 with the persecution and exiles of Gülen followers in their jurisdictions. In some, such as Myanmar, Kosovo, Kazakhstan, and Sudan, the governments did not even abide by their own laws when carrying out deportations. In some countries, local intelligence agencies cooperated to capture the Gülenists, while in others, the MIT did not even need permission to conduct an operation. In countries where democratic institutions are established and the rule of law prevails, Erdoğan's persistent demands to ignore the law in order to get rid of dissidents have been ignored. EU member Bulgaria was unfortunately an exception. Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borisov would have to admit in August 2016 that the deportation of a software engineer was "on the edge of the law". This person had applied for asylum before the coup attempt. The Balkan country received a huge internal and external backlash for its extra-judicial action.

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 abduction and illegal deportation in some countries will be reported below.

⁴⁷ Evrin Güvendik (2019). Türkiye bastırdı 22 ülke FETÖ okullarını kapattı (Turkey suppressed, 22 countries closed FETO schools). [online] Sabah. Available at: <https://www.sabah.com.tr/dunya/turkiye-bastirdi-22-ulke-feto-okullarini-kapatti-4644403> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

SUDAN / MEMDUH ÇIKMAZ

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

Çıkmaç, after pressures on his membership in the Hizmet movement, decided to put more emphasis on the African side of his business and moved there in 2016. However, he got his share of Erdoğan's antagonism against the movement even there. Seeing the businessman as one of the important figures of the movement in this country, the Turkish government began to put pressure on Sudan through official channels of foreign affairs. Sudanese

authorities turned down Turkey's demands to hand over the man they knew very well. However, after the July 15 coup attempt, in which the Turkish state cited the Hizmet movement as the main culprit, they could no longer resist these demands. State news agency Anatolia reported that Çıkmaç was brought to Turkey from Sudan with the joint operation of the intelligence agencies of the two countries.⁴⁸ The Sudanese National Intelligence and Security Service was believed to have assisted in his arrest and repatriation.



Memduh Çıkmaç

He was accused of being a “money safe”, one of the key financiers of the Gülen movement, which he flatly refused. Çıkmaç claimed that he was innocent because he lived in Sudan before and during the coup and had no connection with the putschists. Worse

48 Anatolia News Agency (2017). FETÖ'nün 'para kasası'na MİT operasyonu (MIT operation against FETO's 'money safe'). [online] Aa.com.tr. Available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/15-temmuz-darbe-girisimi/fetonun-para-kasasi-mit-operasyonuyla-turkiyeye-getirildi/980736> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

still, he was not allowed to meet with his lawyer, and his family's petition that he had a rare protein-related disease that could easily become life-threatening in prison conditions if not treated appropriately was not considered at all. Warnings of torture and unfair treatment in Turkey were also ignored, and Sudan eventually handed Çıkmaz to Turkey. As expected, the businessman was arrested and sent to prison. He was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment.⁴⁹

GEORGIA / MUSTAFA EMRE ÇABUK

Mustafa Emre Çabuk, who has been living in Georgia since 2002, was a teacher at Demirel College when he was detained on May 25, 2017, one day after then Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım's visit to this country. At the request of the Turkish side, Çabuk was placed in pre-extradition detention for three months.⁵⁰ His family members also began to receive

threats from pro-Erdoğan bigots in the country, and the Georgian Prosecutor General's Office decided to shelter him and his family with a special protection program.



Deeply concerned by Turkey's infamous practices that violate even the most basic human rights and the torture cases in Turkey, Transparency International Georgia, a leading NGO, supported the Çabuk family in their defense against their extradition to Turkey, stating: "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."⁵¹

49 Anatolia News Agency (2018). FETÖ'nün 'para kasası'na 10 yıl hapis (10 years in prison for FETÖ's 'money safe'). [online] Aa.com.tr. Available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/fetonun-para-kasasina-10-yil-hapis/1157072> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

50 OC Media. (2017). Gülen school manager arrested after Turkish PM's Tbilisi visit. [online] Available at: <https://oc-media.org/gulen-school-manager-arrested-after-turkish-pms-tbilisi-visit/> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

51 Transparency International - Georgia(2018). We call upon the President of Georgia to grant Mustafa Emre Çabuk

Amnesty International (AI) voiced similar concerns. by Amnesty International (AI), which has called for urgent action to prevent Çabuk's deportation before it became critical.. "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," the AI asserted.⁵² It also warned 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.⁵³

However, his application for asylum in Georgia was not only rejected in July 2017, a court extended his prison sentence for another three months in August 2017.⁵⁴ Rebecca Harms, member of the European Parliament and co-chairman of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly, was closely involved in the case and urged Georgian authorities to step back from their mistakes while there was still time, while making several visits to Georgia to show solidarity with Çabuk and his family. There was still time. On February 19, 2018, she took to his Twitter account to announce that Çabuk had been released on bail by the Georgian court..⁵⁵

KAZAKHSTAN / ZABIT KİŞİ

"Life had no meaning anymore. I had put dying in my heart and could no longer find those who committed suicide incomprehensible. I was tortured physically and psychologically for 108 days in a place of three square meters, like a grave, in a place where the sun beam can never make its way through."⁵⁶ These lines are from Zabit Kişi's own narra-

Georgian citizenship. [online] Available at: <https://transparency.ge/en/post/we-call-upon-president-georgia-grant-mustafa-emre-cabuk-georgian-citizenship> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

52 Amnesty International USA. (2017). Urgent Action: Teacher At Risk If Extradited To Turkey (Georgia: 121.17) [online] Available at: <https://www.amnestyusa.org/urgent-actions/urgent-action-teacher-risk-extradited-turkey-georgia-121-17/> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

53 Leavingstone (2021). NGO's appeal to the Government of Georgia regarding possible extradition of Mustafa Chabuk to Turkey. [online] Available at: <https://emc.leavingstone.club/en/products/arasamtavrobo-organizatsiebi-mustafa-chabukis-turketshi-savaraudo-ekstraditsiis-sakmeze-sakartvelos-mtavrobas-mimartaven> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

54 OC Media. (2017). Georgia refuses refugee status to detained 'Gülen school manager'. [online] Available at: <https://oc-media.org/georgia-refuses-refugee-status-to-detained-gulen-school-manager/> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

55 SCF (2018). Jailed Turkish teacher Çabuk freed on bail by Georgian court - Stockholm Center for Freedom. [online] Stockholm Center for Freedom. Available at: <https://stockholmcf.org/jailed-turkish-teacher-cabuk-freed-on-bail-by-georgian-court/> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

56 AST (2019), 'Türkiye'de Sistemik İşkence ve Kötü Muamele' ('Systematic Torture and Ill-Treatment in Turkey'), [online]

tion, which was quoted from his complaint petition after he was put in the Kandıra prison. The gory account of his experiences may sound “unbearable to read” and “it is impossible not to get sick while reading,” as Gergerliođlu puts it,⁵⁷ but it should 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 lived in Kyrgyzstan. On September 16, 2017, the two men traveled to Kazakhstan’s Almaty International Airport for the Netherlands. While boarding the plane, they were detained due to “some problems” with their passports. On September 30, the court ordered the deportation of the two people to Kyrgyzstan, and they were allocated two seats on Airastana Airlines flight KG 109. However, Kiři and Kılıç were also forced off this flight as well without an explanation.⁵⁸



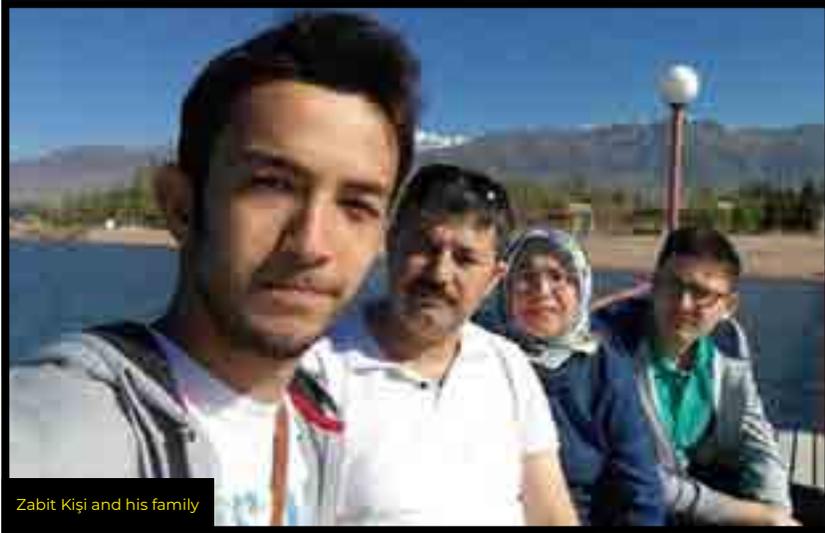
The two men didn’t know this at the time, but they were actually illegally abducted in Kazakhstan, which was declared as a joint operation by Kazakh and Turkish intelligence. The operation was a blatant violation of international and national laws, but the intelligence agencies of both countries had no worries regarding what the laws were saying. Kiři and Kılıç were later deported to Turkey.⁵⁹ Unable to hear from them for a while, their families applied to the Kazakh authorities. Eventually, they learned that the two men had been handed over

pg 71. Available at: <https://silencedturkey.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/15-Temmuz-2016-Darbe-Giris%CC%A7imi-Sonras%C4%B1-Tu%CC%88rkiye%E2%80%99de-Sistematik-1%CC%87s%CC%A7kence-Ve-Ko%CC%88tu%CC%88-Muamele-1.pdf> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

57 Ahval. (2018). Kaçırılan 26 kişiden birinin hikâyesi: Fenalık geçirmemeniz mümkün değil... (The story of one of the 26 abducted people: It is impossible not to feel sick...) | Ahval. [online] Available at: <https://ahvalnews.com/tr/iskence-iddialari/kacirilan-26-kisiden-birinin-hikayesi-fenalik-gecirmemeniz-mumkun-degil> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

58 Samanyolu Haber (2017). Kazakistan’da kaçırılan Enver Kılıç’ın eři dünyaya seslendi (The wife of Enver Kılıç, who was kidnapped in Kazakhstan, called out to the world). [online] samanyoluhaber.com. Available at: <http://www.samanyoluhaber.com/kazakistanda-kacirilan-enver-kilicin-esi-dunyaya-seslendi-haberi/1291717/> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

59 TurkeyPurge (2017). Two Turkish nationals, abducted from plane in Kazakhstan, returned to Turkey: report | Turkey Purge. [online] Turkeypurge.com. Available at: <https://turkeypurge.com/two-turkish-nationals-abducted-plane-kazakhstan-returned-turkey-report> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].



Zabit Kişi and his family

to Turkish intelligence. The families were told that the two people were taken to Turkey by Turkish Airlines flight number Almaty-Ankara TT-4010 on September 30, 2017 at 23:32. However, that was not the case. Kişi and Kılıç's families spent months trying in vain to find them.

When Zabit Kişi was handed over to the security forces after 108 days of severe

torture, his body was weak and frail, and his soul was laden with the deep wounds of torture. He had lost 30 kilos. When he first met the judge, he would beg the judge to put him in jail for fear of being killed if he stayed outside. On June 21, he received a 13-year and 6-month prison sentence for his alleged affiliation with the Gülen movement.. The judge who sent Kişi to prison, despite his extremely serious condition due to torture and the absence of any concrete evidence that he was actively involved in any kind of violence, had not taken any steps to investigate the perpetrators of the blatant torture to which the suspect was undeniably subjected.

It was only after he had partially recovered with the aid of powerful medications. and recovered from the loss of feeling in his feet and hands that he began to write about what had been done to him and others in the same place during that time. He said he was boarded an unnumbered or unmarked plane that was painted with camouflage patterns.⁶⁰ As soon as he got on board, individuals dressed in plain clothes began assaulting him. They especially kicked him in the head and groin, so severe that bleeding from his penis would last for days. His eyes were tightly closed, his nostrils covered as well, and his hands were cuffed behind his back. The beating continued, and the torturers did not even accept his request to tear the neck of his sweater off so that he could breathe a little. He would soon pass out. When he regained consciousness, he saw the men hastily tearing the collar of his sweater off, cursing and slapping him. Introducing themselves as MIT members, they said, "It is for your own good that you do not see us because if you see us, that is reason enough for you to die."

60 AST (2019), 'Türkiye'de Sistemik İşkence ve Kötü Muamele' ('Systematic Torture and Ill-Treatment in Turkey'), [online] pg 71. Available at: <https://silencedturkey.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/15-Temmuz-2016-Darbe-Giris%CC%A7imi-Sonras%C4%B1-Tu%CC%88rkiye%E2%80%99de-Sistemik-1%CC%87s%CC%A7kence-Ve-Ko%CC%88tu%CC%88-Muamele-1.pdf> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

Kişi was constantly questioning the situation, the reason that caused this situation. I remember saying, “Oh my god, my life ends here”. What is happening? What have I done? Who am I and why am I suffering this torment?” But he would soon realize that the real torture had not yet begun.

The plane landed and the kidnappers put Kişi in a van that drove for approximately 6 minutes and then stopped in front of a container that would become a cell of horror for him. The moment he was thrust into it, the torture began. He was stripped completely naked through humiliating verbal harassment and groping. Thereupon, MIT members began to give electric shocks to different parts of his body with increasing magnitudes of voltage. They lifted his feet while he remained seated and used a pincer to crush his toes. At the same time, they were shouting at him, “We will extinguish you. We will make your wife a whore. You will never see her again.”

The pain in his toes would continue for about a month. With his hands tied behind their back, they stepped on the cuffs around his wrists, putting their weight on their hands and wrists. These particular acts of violence caused his nerves to be severely damaged and his hands numb, so much so that he could not even hold a spoon while eating what was given to him.

Another day, they forced a hard object into his anus while insulting him, and this rape was repeated many times. He was beaten on the back with a stick, while two men were holding his arms. This caused his ribs to crack and he could hardly breathe due to the pain his ribs inflicted on his lungs. During all these tortures, he was constantly praying, whispering, begging Allah to take his life and put an end to it. In his complaint he wrote, “I did not understand the reason why they tortured a person and I think I will leave this world without understanding. Because, whatever the reason, a person should never inflict such despicable treatment and torture on another.”



The torturers were forcing him to accept whatever they wanted: “We are the judge and the prosecutor here. There are no lawyers or police. Your only way out is to accept whatever we say. We will torment you as long as you live. If you die, we’ll bury you and you’ll be recorded as an unsolved murder.”

What made the conditions even more difficult for Kişi was that he had bone erosion and avascular necrosis of the femoral head, which forced him to use a cane anyway. After learning this, which Kişi only said to beg for mercy, they began forcing him to stand on his feet for hours.

He was not allowed to do any personal care or hygiene. But two and a half months later, when they couldn’t stand the putrid odor emanating from Kishi any longer, they allowed him to take a shower, during which they continually sexually harassed him.

Kişi’s 8-page complaint contains more detail and gruesome scenes of excruciating physical and psychological abuse, but it would be beyond the scope of this report to describe them all here. He was handed over to another team on January 18, 2019, around 20:00, with his hands cuffed behind his back and a sack over his head. This team took him to another place and handed him over to the police team. He wrote in his complaint: “When they untied my blindfold, I saw the illuminated sign of the Ankara Courthouse. The police introduced themselves as a team from the Ankara Anti-Terror Branch and visited the prosecutor on duty at night. They took my statement as if I had surrendered.”

Deputy Gergerlioğlu noted that Kişi was the first person among the abducted to speak up to describe in detail his ordeal. He brought Kişi’s account to the Parliament in the form of a written question, but the Parliament administration refused to raise the question because the details of torture were too “vulgar” and “hurtful”. Gergerlioğlu said that the reaction of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey was remarkable in the sense that a real person was subjected to severe, inhuman and painful cruelty, but that the deputies could not even bear to hear it.

ENVER KILIÇ

Enver Kılıç’s story is similar to Kişi’s story from the time they were not allowed to board a Dutch plane until he was illegally deported to Turkey by Kazakh intelligence. In Kişi’s detailed complaint petition, there is no specific mention of his friend, who had to get off the plane back to Kyrgyzstan.

The UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances registered two urgent actions concerning Zabit Kişi and Enver Kılıç to Kazakhstan after they went missing in 2017.⁶¹ The country responded by saying that they knew nothing about the missing persons. The last thing they knew about them was that they put them on a plane to be deported to Turkey. The Committee was not convinced by the answer, so it sent a follow-up notice stating 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.” The Kazakhs continued to linger, but the delegation would soon receive information that Zabit Kişi had reappeared on January 23, 2018. Enver Kılıç would also reappear on April 11, 2018; however, the committee noted that Kılıç was also tortured while he was detained in an unknown location for 73 days. His health was in poor condition.



KYRGYZSTAN / ORHAN İNANDI

In 2019, Turkey requested the extradition of the head of the Turkish-Kyrgyz Sapat Schools, Orhan İnandı, from the Kyrgyzstan judicial authorities, citing an investigation against him. İnandı has been a Kyrgyz citizen since 2010. Kyrgyzstan rejected Turkey’s request, however, İnandı was kidnapped on 1 June 2021 by MIT agents from Bishkek, where he used to live.

İnandı was pushed into a car and three MIT agents inside neutralized him using excessive force. During this assault, his right arm was broken in three different places. He was then given a sedative injection and put on a plane. While on the plane, he was not allowed to sit but was forced to stand on his knees. All the while, he was always blindfolded and subjected to constant beatings.

61 Ohchr.org. (2019), International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance [online] Available at: <http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2FPPRiCAqhKb7yhsq0W1tPtMXP04ugMtnOr3yp8elAk2x1s5RXVEYStpqXLXOlau9BmBBI ZLjxZNY0XIBAFQzF1c7dRgsNLAtkJ3KqTekjjWRI8ZX5TBQVY2RlZ> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].



Upon landing, the agents brought him to a building 15 minutes away from Esenboğa Airport in Ankara and locked him in a 20 square meter room, which he called a 'grave'. There he was subjected to psychological and physical torture; He was not allowed to sleep properly under continuously playing loud music and always-on lights for 35 days. MIT agents conducted informal interrogations to force him to confess that he was a terrorist, and on 6 July 2021 handed him over to the Ankara Police Department Anti-Terror Branch. He was arrested on 12 July 2021 and sent to Ankara Sincan F Type No 1 Penal Institution. During the examination performed at the Dışkapı Hospital, where he was transferred before he was put in prison, it was determined that his right arm was broken in many parts, but due to faulty lining up of his arm during its healing process, a malunion had occurred. At the Gazi Hospital, where he was transferred later, the doctors sufficed to put his arm in a cast instead of placing a platinum. He is currently unable to use his right arm properly. Despite serious health problems, İnandı was kept in a solitary cell in prison. He is currently unable to use his right arm properly. Despite his severe health condition, he was kept in a solitary cell in prison.

In the hearing on December 8, 2021 at the Ankara 23rd High Criminal Court where he was charged with "directing an armed terrorist organization," for which the prosecutor demanded a prison sentence of up to 22 years, İnandı, crying from time to time, explained

the inhuman treatment he experienced as follows:⁶²

"... The car moved and the journey lasted for about 15-20 minutes. I felt that it had turned into a byroad from the highway. Then we went down a sloping road and stopped at what I thought was a basement and got out of the vehicle. We walked about 15-20 meters. They put me in a place like a coffin room, approximately 2.5x3 square meters in area and 2.5 meters in height, covered with leather-clad sponge material on all sides, with a light, camera and speaker at the top. They gave me new underwear and pajamas. I wore them for 37 days. After bringing me to the room, they said everything will be done with commands. They said 'when we knock on the door, you will put the velvet sack we gave you on your head and you will turn your back to the door and kneel and wait. You will call us senior brother or sir.'" From the moment I was put on the plane to the moment I was submitted to the police, all these treatments were accompanied by insults like "traitor, despicable, pimp," and by f-worded heavy swears.

"At the beginning, they kept standing in the coffin room. They were playing loud sizzling music. They were yelling out instructions like sit, kneel, stand. My eyes were allowed to stay open in two places, one in my room and the other in the toilet. Along with the sizzling sound coming from the loudspeaker, they were also playing songs like The Janissary March, I Die Turkey, etc. all the time. Every movement was controlled by the camera. It was strictly forbidden to pray. It was forbidden to cry. There were times when I cried, they kicked and slapped me.

"They provided two meals a day. In the morning they gave me cheese, Chokella [a private brand for cocoa cream with hazelnut, ed.], in the evenings tomato or yogurt soup, porridge and pasta. They insulted me even while giving food and forced me to eat it when I was too bad to eat. I think they put drugs in them, probably because the soups had a different bitter taste.

"... They were trying to wear me out psychologically. I have come to the point where I will sign whatever is put before me, I think that drug also had an effect. One day, a person who I thought was in the position of supervisor came. He said 'whether you stay here or leave depends on your testimony. We know everything, if you testify like a man, they will act accordingly. I will go now and you will be alone with friends. I hope you will tell us everything without having to make us do bad things.'

62 Haber, T. (2021). Orhan İnandı'ya yapılan işkence mahkeme kayıtlarına geçti: 'İfademi işkence altında verdim' (Torture against Orhan İnandı enters the court records: 'I gave my statement under torture') - Tr724. [online] Tr724. Available at: <https://www.tr724.com/orhan-inandiya-yapilan-iskence-mahkeme-kayıtlarina-gecti-ifademi-iskence-altında-verdim/> [Accessed 14 Apr. 2022].



Orhan İnandı in prison

“There have always been threats and curses during all conversations. They also used derogatory expressions such as ‘you are a bug, you are a leech, you cannot be a man.’ They said that they would do different kinds of torture to take a statement: ‘We electrify, put a towel and suffocate, castrate, soap the baton and stick it all the way in, etc.’ Twice they said ‘take out your underpants, we

have the same one, don’t be afraid.’ and they stripped me. They tied three wires to a stick and constantly hit my legs with it. When they took me to my cell, I had extreme pain in my legs. Later, I saw batons and clubs at the place where the photo was taken.

“They said ‘you are not telling anything, so strip and sit on the stake.’ They tried to make me sit down on it, scaring me. They said ‘we will show what torture is.’ They said ‘we will give chemicals. This is a place that doesn’t exist, if we throw you in a pit, no one will find you. But your death will not help us. We just heard that they are looking for you in the garbage in Kyrgyzstan, your life is of no value. But if we kill you, the enemies will use it.’

“... When I came out 37 days later, I estimated that I had lost at least 10 kilograms. ... On the last day in the intelligence [compound], when the statements were over, they shaved my beard while I was blindfolded. In front of the camera, they conveyed the instructions they received to me and asked me to repeat them. They recorded for about 30-40 minutes.

“They gave me the trousers and shirt I was wearing in Kyrgyzstan when I was going to take the photo, and they gave me a jacket. They made me wear a jacket so that my arm would not be visible. The photo was taken in front of the Turkish flag. People wearing ski masks took the picture. Then they put me in the car and made me sit in the back seat. They put a sack over my head again. ‘Bow your head as much as you can,’ they said, again pressing my head with their hands. We traveled for half an hour.

“We crossed a barrier and parked. We waited 10-15 minutes. They said ‘you are getting off.’ They got me out of the car, they took the sack from my head. Two people held me by my arms, and I climbed two or three stairs. We took the elevator to the 2nd floor.

They said 'kneel down.' I stayed like that for half an hour. I realized that I was brought to TEM [Anti-terror unit of the police]. When I got tired, I asked for permission to sit. They said 'sit cross-legged.' They said, 'if you testify properly, we will give you water, bread and a place to sit.' I said ok I will testify. They sat me down and the first question I asked was, what month are we in?

"The lawyer did not come for 3 days. They took the same statement at the Anti-Terrorism Branch in Ankara they took in the intelligence service. I gave the same answer to the questions asked for fear of going through the same process again and I didn't say a word about it to my lawyer at this time. After the statements at the TEM Branch Directorate were over, I was brought to the prosecutor's office and was arrested and put in a solitary cell in the Sincan F-Type Prison No. 1."



Although İnanđı provided details about how he was tortured during the hearing, the judges who presided over the hearing tried to prevent the disclosure of details by giving warnings frequently. In addition, despite the statements of İnanđı, the judges did not file any criminal complaint concerning the allegations of torture.

The entire process of İnanđı's abduction and unofficial interrogation for 37 days under torture took place in line with the instructions of the authorities of the Republic of Turkey. Finally, on July 5, 2021, President Erdoğan announced in his press statement broadcasted on TRT, the official channel of the state, that İnanđı was brought to Turkey with an MIT operation.⁶³ He praised the illegal and inhuman act by showing the footage of İnanđı standing with his broken arm. About İnanđı, who has not even been put on trial yet, Erdoğan said, "We will continue to work on solving and eliminating FETÖ. As a result of the unconventional and assiduous work it has carried out, our National Intelligence Organization brought FETÖ's Central Asia General Officer Orhan İnanđı to our country and brought him to justice," he said.

63 Deutsche Welle. (2021). Erdoğan: Orhan İnanđı Türkiye'ye getirildi. [online] dw.com. Available at: <https://www.dw.com/tr/erdo%C4%9Fan-orhan-i%C4%B1-t%C3%BCrkiyeye-getirildi/a-58168782> [Accessed 14 Apr. 2022].

Following the criminal complaint made by his lawyer regarding the tortures, the Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor's Office initiated an investigation into crimes including forced abduction from another country, torture, deprivation of liberty, deliberate injury, threats, insults, forced to make false statements, violation of the right to life and health. In addition, a lawsuit filed regarding the kidnapping action in Kyrgyzstan continues.



PAKISTAN / KAÇMAZ FAMILY

Mesut Kaçmaz and his wife and two daughters were awakened by loud bangs on the door of their home in Lahore on September 27, 2017. It was still hours in the morning. His daughters Hüda Nur (17) and Fatma Hüma (14) burst into tears after seeing a heavily armed group smash the door with a hammer. They assumed that the Pakistani authorities had finally yielded to pressure from the Turkish government to expel their father, the head of PakTurk schools in the country, for his links to the Gülen movement. But they were wrong. The Pakistani security forces, probably from the country's spy agency, were there for the whole family, not just their father.

His friends witnessed the scene in horror.⁶⁴ Mesut Kaçmaz was still naively asking armed people to show their badges and search warrant for them to be able to enter his house. Security forces pushed into his home like a mafia gang, not as a state unit is supposed to do. In a phone interview with AST, Kaçmaz explained in detail what happened to him and his family.

When Mesut Kaçmaz's wife, Meral, realized that five of the armed gang were women, she realized that they would take her and her daughters as well. She fainted and fell to the ground. Mesut, including his unconscious wife and daughters, were all blindfolded and handcuffed. It seems that blindfolding was not enough. They also put sacks on their heads and dragged them all into a van. An official statement from the Pakistani authorities would confirm the kidnapping, stating that the Kaçmaz family were brought to another city. However, despite a habeas corpus decision by the Lahore High Court to relocate them, there would be no further information on what had happened and what would happen to them, and on what legal grounds. Pakistani police claimed that they did not know the details of the operation or the whereabouts of the family now, indicating the family was abducted by intelligence.⁶⁵

Turkish teacher Fatih Avcı recorded the whole incident on video with his phone. After being released from detention for a short time, he posted the recording on social media, announcing the shameful act of kidnapping a family in total violation of international law, even violating the orders of his own judiciary, which ruled for taking measures to protect the Kaçmaz family. But why? Erdoğan was asking Pakistan itself not to allow the members of the Hizmet movement to operate in their country anymore, and to seize all their assets and transfer them to the Maarif Foundation, as they did in Turkey.

After graduating from Selcuk University, Department of Urdu Language and Literature, Mesut Kaçmaz came to Pakistan in 2007 and was appointed as a teacher at PakTurk Educational Institutions. His wife Meral was also a teacher there. He later became principal of the Clifton Boys School, which has outstripped its competitors in numerous international science and math competitions. A New York Times report discussed the constructive

64 SCF (2017). Pakistan government deports abducted Kaçmaz Family to Turkey - Stockholm Center for Freedom. [online] Stockholm Center for Freedom. Available at: <https://stockholmcf.org/pakistan-government-deports-abducted-kacmaz-family-to-turkey/> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

65 Haq Nawaz Khan and Constable, P. (2017). A Turkish family has disappeared in Pakistan, and suspicion turns to intelligence agencies. [online] Washington Post. Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/a-turkish-family-has-disappeared-in-pakistan-and-suspicion-turns-to-intelligence-agencies/2017/10/11/aa8c0d80-a480-11e7-b573-8ec86cdfefed_story.html [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].



role of PakTurk schools and their success in 2008.⁶⁶ Mesut Kaçmaz also took part in this story, which drew an ironic picture twelve years after its publication. The story about what Kaçmaz means to Pakistan and what Pakistan means to him begins by saying, “Praying in Pakistan has not been easy for Mesut Kacmaz, a Muslim teacher from Turkey.” Mosques in the country were filled with symbols of political hostility towards other religions and cultures. He even faced deportation for wearing a tie when he went to a mosque near his job. Also, any Pakistani would consider him an infidel as he did not have 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.”

66 Turkish Schools Offer Pakistan a Gentler Vision of Islam (Published 2008). (2022). The New York Times. [online] Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/04/world/asia/04islam.html> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

Politicians in both countries, who nurtured and exploited a radical interpretation of Islam for their own political interests, chose Kaçmaz and his family as victims. He was waiting to appear in 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 happened despite Lahore High Court's decision to prevent harassment against Turkish asylum-seeking teachers and their families across Pakistan. But even their lawyers would not be able to contact them.

Blindfolded and handcuffed, family members were put on the plane from Islamabad to Ankara on 14 October 2017, which had no markings or numbers on it.⁶⁷ Mesut and Meral Kaçmaz were detained. While Meral Kaçmaz and her daughters were taken to Ankara, Mesut was put in a cell in Istanbul. Meral remembers the first night she tried to clean the detention room for her daughters. She was scrubbing the sink with an old brush she found there. She asked the police to give her something clean to pray on, saying that even a garbage bag would suffice, but the police turned down this request. Fortunately, the girls were released the next day and started living with their uncle. Meral's detention lasted 11 days. "They were constantly shouting at me. They were threatening me by saying, "We must cut off their heads," said Meral.

Mesut's condition was no better. He said that the person who "took care of him" was İlker Küçükheidir, who used to live in Pakistan on an official mission and was a regular at Turkish schools there. Küçükheidir was now the Head of the İstanbul Intelligence Bureau. The two men knew each other well. He showed the files about three people Mesut had not heard of before. Kucukheidir's offer was simple. He asked Kaçmaz to admit that these men worked for Kaynak Holding and took an active role in the July 15 coup attempt. In return, Kaçmaz and his wife would be released immediately, with a large amount of money in their pockets and other benefits they provided to the informants. But Mesut had never seen any of these men before. But the more interesting part for Mesut was that the interrogation had no substantiated accusations directly incriminating him.

Meanwhile, a friend of his applied to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. Kaçmaz believes that this was the turning point. On May 25, 2018, the group issued a report and a recommendation requesting the immediate release of Mesut and Meral,

⁶⁷ SCF (2017). Pakistan government deports abducted Kaçmaz Family to Turkey - Stockholm Center for Freedom. [online] Stockholm Center for Freedom. Available at: <https://stockholmcf.org/pakistan-government-deports-abducted-kacmaz-family-to-turkey/> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].



compensation for the physical and psychological harm they have suffered, and the issuance of a passport to each family member. Kaçmaz said that after his interrogation on 3 July, the first hearing took place so quickly that the judges asked each suspect ordinary questions and he was immediately released.

Meanwhile, the UNHCR, which had previously provided the family with protection until 24 November 2018, also took action, denouncing the action as “a blatant violation of the UNHCR protection of family members.” After seeing the Pakistani government’s audacious move, the agency took Kaçmaz under protection, along with several teachers from Turkish schools in the country, as well as their families. In November 2016, Pakistan refused to renew teachers’ visas, giving them a maximum of three days to pack up and leave the country. The teachers did not waste time to apply to the courts to overturn this decision and sought protection from the UNHCR, which was granted to them. But even the protection of a UN agency could not prevent Pakistanis from abducting Kaçmaz, his wife and two daughters and handing them over to the Turks, who knew very well that they would be tortured there.

They also knew very well that deportation would be completely illegal. UNHCR warned that the family cannot be extradited as they have a valid certificate until 24 November 2017 that may be extended for another year. A lawyer for the government had assured UNHCR that the family would not be deported.⁶⁸ Speaking to AST, Kaçmaz said that he and his wife were acquitted of all charges and released, largely because of UN pressure and all allegations against them were baseless.

68 Human Rights Watch. (2017). Pakistan’s Deportation of Turkish Family Shows Many at Risk. [online] Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/10/18/pakistans-deportation-turkish-family-shows-many-risk> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

MONGOLIA / VEYSEL AKÇAY



In the early morning hours of July 27, 2018, Erdoğan's thugs embarked on a covert operation in the Mongolian capital of Ulaanbaatar, this time to kidnap a 50-year-old school teacher. VeySEL Akçay was forcibly caught in his home by a group of five masked people and bundled into a Toyota minivan.⁶⁹

Already alerted by similar events around the world, his family and friends knew that the perpetrators were most likely spies commissioned by the Turkish agency Intel, and they wasted no time spreading this via social media.

The news of the teacher's kidnapping immediately garnered a great reaction. Meanwhile, unidentified individuals had already placed him in a TT-4010 registered Challenger-type Bombardier jet operated by the Turkish Air Force, according to Flightradar24, an online flight tracking service. Authorities temporarily grounded the plane. Akçay was released. The Turkish Embassy and Ambassador refused any intervention, and no arrests followed. Mongolian Deputy Foreign Minister Battsetseg Batmunkh said that if the accusations are true, "violating Mongolia's sovereignty and independence is an unacceptable act and Mongolia will strongly oppose it."⁶⁶ Deputy Baasankhuu Oktaybri would also attack Turkey on his Twitter account. In his words: "We are an independent nation. Do you think anyone can commit kidnappings in our country?" The jet belonging to the Turkish Air Force made a summary of its duties by moving empty at around 21.00.

Batmunkh said that if the accusations are true, "violating Mongolia's sovereignty and independence is an unacceptable act and Mongolia will strongly object to it."⁷⁰ Deputy

69 Turkish School Leader Abducted, and Released, in Mongolia (Published 2018). (2022). The New York Times. [online] Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/28/world/europe/turkish-school-leader-abducted-and-released-in-mongolia.html> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

70 Munkhchimeg Davaasharav (2018). Turkish teacher kidnapped in Mongolia freed after authorities ground flight. [online]

Baasankhuu Oktaybri would also lash out Turkey on his Twitter account. In his words: “We are an independent nation. Do you think anyone can commit abductions in our country?” The jet belonging to the Turkish Air Force took off at around 21.00 empty.

Akçay was in Mongolia for nearly 25 years to establish educational institutions in the country, and during this time he was awarded the prestigious Mongolian Friendship Medal by the Mongolian government for his services to the Mongolian nation. In this situation, Mongolia’s emphasis on its sovereignty and consistent and effective intervention to foil an abduction attempt by a reckless regime received acclamation.⁷¹ 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,” referring to its location in a complex and harsh geopolitical position between the two autocratic regimes of Russia and China.

MYANMAR / MUHAMMED FURKAN SÖKMEN

Muhammed Furkan Sökmen appeared in a 15-second video clip on May 24, 2017. Standing in the corridor of the immigration lock-out at Yangon Airport in Myanmar and looking anxiously at the camera of his phone that he is still holding, Sökmen said: “I’m calling everyone, please help me. I’m in the terminal area. They are pushing me. They are trying to hand me over to the Turkish Embassy. Please help me, all over the world, please help me.”

Burmese authorities had prevented him from boarding the plane because of “a problem with his passport,” as his passport had been revoked by the Turkish government due to his alleged links to the Gülen movement.⁷² Turkey’s ambassador to Myanmar was pressuring local authorities to seize his and his family’s passports.

Sökmen was sent to Suvarnabhumi Airport in Bangkok with his wife and two-year-old daughter. After a while, he would release a second video and repeat the same plea louder: “They’re taking me to Bangkok. Now I’m at the airport. If they send me to Turkey,

U.S. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mongolia-kidnapping-turkey/turkish-teacher-%20kidnapped-in-mongolia-freed-after-authorities-ground-flight-idUSKBN1KI03N> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

71 Ahval. (2016). MİT bu kez kaçıramadı: Moğolistan eğitimci Akçay’ı kurtardı (MIT could not abduct this time: Mongolia saved educator Akçay) | Ahval. [online] Available at: <https://ahvalnews.com/tr/mit/mit-bu-kez-kaciramadi-mogolistan-egitimci-akcayi-kurtardi> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

72 Goldberg, Jacob (2022). Myanmar-based family abducted by Turkish embassy from Yangon airport | Coconuts. [online] Coconuts. Available at: <https://coconuts.co/yangon/news/turkish-teacher-abducted-embassy-officials-yangon-airport/> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

I'll go to jail and probably be tortured like many in the current regime. ...I'm asking for international protection.”

HRW quickly responded to Sökmen's call. Phil Robertson, deputy director of HRW's Asia division hastily 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 Erdoğan is prepared to run roughshod over rights and put pressure on countries like Myanmar to go along.” He urged Myanmar and Thailand to “do the right thing” and to grant Sökmen and his family access to 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.⁷³



The minutes when Sökmen was forcibly abducted were recorded by a bystander. In the recording, Sökmen can be heard telling the Turkish embassy officer that he will do his best not to get on the plane. The officer calmly says that whatever he does, they will catch him and take him away. After a short silence, Sökmen's screams were heard from an increasing distance, as he was asking for help from the people around him, saying that the men were kidnapping him. With the silent consent of the Thai officers, the futile resistance resulted in the kidnappers' victory.

Despite warnings from the UNHCR and other UN agencies to key government agencies in Burma and Thailand that there are compelling reasons to believe that he would

⁷³ TurkeyPurge (2017). Teacher detained in Turkey after forced return from Myanmar | Turkey Purge. [online] Turkeypurge.com. Available at: <https://turkeypurge.com/teacher-detained-in-turkey-after-forcibly-returned-from-myanmar-thailand> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

face an imminent risk of human rights violations when he returned to Turkey, Sökmen's abduction went ahead unimpeded. Thailand did so despite being a signatory to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which strictly prohibits non-refoulement. HRW's Brad Adams sharply reacted to the brazen crimes of these two countries in showing due respect for the most basic and universally accepted human rights and neglecting their obligations to follow 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."⁷⁴

Accused by the Turkish state of being a member of an armed terrorist organization, Sökmen was an accountant and director of a company that ran an international school in Rangoon, affiliated with the Gülen movement. Erdoğan's media started spinning stories on him, labeling him "the so-called imam of Myanmar."⁷⁵

LEBANON / AYTEN ÖZTÜRK

Ayten Öztürk was kidnapped at the Lebanese airport on March 8, 2018, handed over to the Turkish intelligence units on March 13, 2018, and was subjected to torture that one cannot even bear to hear. The unbearable ordeal he had to endure lasted for six long months. She narrated a detailed account of these tortures at the İstanbul 3rd High Criminal Court.⁷⁶

Originally from Turkey's Hatay province, Öztürk was living in Syria because she was wanted in Turkey for being a member of the illegal Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP-C) and moved to Lebanon to immigrate from there to Europe after the conditions were intensified in Syria. However, things didn't go as planned. Lebanese authorities arrested and handed her over, using not internationally accepted ordinary procedures but with underhanded methods. Here is a small excerpt from her 12-page petition to the court:

74 Human Rights Watch. (2017). Burma/Thailand: Deported Turkish Man at Risk. [online] Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/06/01/burma/thailand-deported-turkish-man-risk> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

75 Milliyet (2017). Son dakika: FETÖ'nün 'Myanmar imamı' Türkiye'ye getirildi (Last minute: FETÖ's 'Myanmar imam' was brought to Turkey). [online] Milliyet. Available at: <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/gundem/son-dakika-fetonun-myanmar-imami-turkiyeye-getirildi-2458074> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

76 BoldMedya (2019). Ayten Öztürk who survived The Secret Torture Center in Ankara: 'I was tortured for 6 months'. [online] BoldMedya. Available at: <https://boldmedya.com/2019/06/21/ayten-ozturk-who-survived-the-secret-torture-center-in-ankara-i-was-tortured-for-6-months/> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].



"I was taken to the torture chamber blindfolded. First they undressed me, then they cuffed my hands to the iron rings on the wall in a suspended position. They pressed almost every part of my naked body with an electrical device and held it for a while. When they did this, my whole body was shaking and I was screaming with my last voice. They did this over and over until I passed out. The part of my body where they pressed with the electrical device against, two slit-like spots appeared, leaving traces 2 cm between them. ... When I was about to pass out, they would take me to the bathroom and continue to torture me with pressurized water. They were torturing me with waterboarding for hours. ... They also used that electrical device during the drowning torture. ... Suddenly, the door opened mistakenly. I saw a civilian without a mask on his head. He was tall, slim, about 45 years old, with a thin and long face, a goatee beard, glasses, slightly gray hair and small eyes. Noticing that I saw him, he quickly closed the door and left. They intensified the torture as they noticed that I had just happened to see one of them. I was tortured with water for about five hours. For the rest of the day, they kept me up for hours in a cell, a coffin-shaped compartment.

It was impossible to move in the so-called coffin. They were opening the door randomly and every time there were beatings, threats and curses. At least twice they hit me very intensely, especially on my face and head. They did this until my mouth and nose were covered in blood and my face was swollen and bruised. They gave me electricity from my pinky fingers and toes. They taped a metal ring to my fingers and electrified



Ayten Öztürk

me with a remote control. I passed out several times and was unable to stand up. When they interrupted the electricity, they kept me suspended and harassed every part of my body with fingers, sticks and batons. They were doing all kinds of wickedness, trying to get the baton into my genitals.

They were also threatening to rape me with a thick stick they called “Harbi”. They were hitting my feet, which swelled up to the size of a stovepipe from standing too long, with sticks and batons. They threatened to break my toes with pliers. They stuck something sharp under my three fingernails and burned my pinky finger. The wound on my finger and the inflammation on my nail did not heal for months. From time to time they would turn me over, hold me upside down, and tie me to my feet. Meanwhile, they were hitting my feet.”

Se thought that the place where she was held during the torture was in the basement of some kind of official building, and she understood this from the sound of shoes coming from the upper floor during 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 be subjected to more degrading treatment from her tormentors, who especially became more monstrous during her menstrual periods. Her petition, which was presented to the court and therefore forever recorded, will be one of the enduring proofs of the reincarnation of systematic torture practices of the 1990s during Erdoğan’s reign.

Ayten Öztürk is especially reminiscent of the 1990s because at that time another Ayten Öztürk was brutally murdered by the the dark paramilitary agents of the deep state after she was kidnapped. When her family found her in a half-dug grave, Öztürk’s ears, lips and nose were cut off, and half of her scalp was flayed. Her entire body was covered with severe torture wounds. Fortunately, today’s Ayten Öztürk survived.

MOLDOVA

On the morning of September 6, 2018, the Information and Security Service of the Republic of Moldova (SIS) raided the homes of seven Turkish educators using disproportionate force, smashed their doors with hammers and then frog-marched them to vans in front of their families. The men who were subjected to this viciously ill treatment worked in different units and branches of Orizont schools and were known in Moldova for their peaceful demeanor and gentle demeanor for years.

The SIS explained this brutal operation by stating that it had deported seven foreign nationals because they posed a threat to national security. They added that the operation was conducted in secret. It was so secret that even the country's president

would have to declare later that he didn't know, despite the evidence to the contrary. But it was certainly not a secret for Turkey, because at the airport there was a group of Turkish spies on a plane waiting for their passengers who were forcibly abducted. Turkish media proudly confirmed that MIT was involved in the kidnapping of Turkish teachers. The plane was leased by the state-owned Air Moldova from the Armenian company Taron Avia.

Rıza Doğan, one of these educators, was the director of the Durlesti branch of the Orizont school network and had been in the country for nearly 20 years. Other abducted educators were Deputy General Manager Hasan Karacaoğlu, Public Relations Man-





ager Yasin Özdil, school chain Ciocana branch manager Ahmet Bilgi and the network's Ceadir-Lunga branch manager Feridun Tüfekçi. A fourteen-year-old boy was also taken, but was soon released. "They were taken this morning, but my son and his professor were released. But another professor was kidnapped after they smashed his door," the teenager's father told Balkan Insight.⁷⁷

They had lived in the country for a long time; some have even been there for over twenty years. They legally resided in Moldova, worked, paid taxes, were married to Moldovans, and had children in the country. Arbitrary detention and extradition of these people, who were not prosecuted for even the slightest crime, meant that their private and family lives were severed completely without any justification.

Feridun Tüfekçi's wife, Galina, could not understand the "threat to national security" excuse of the SIS to substantiate the unlawful expelling of the teachers. "We have never had a gun in our possession. We are considered exemplary individuals in our society. 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.

Balkan Insight also reported that, on the day of the incident, although the Moldovan secret service SIS stated that it carried out the operation to prevent threats to national security, the narrative in the pro-government Turkish media was pointing to the MİT without any reservations.⁷⁸

77 Balkan Insight. (2018). Turkish Secret Services Nab Six 'Gülenists' in Moldova. [online] Available at: <https://balkaninsight.com/2018/09/06/six-turkish-professors-detained-by-moldovan-secret-services-09-06-2018/> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

78 Ibid.

The incident had repercussions in the country, which actively seeks to be recognized as a European country. Yet the humiliation of yielding to the demands of a dictator who offered no tangible evidence to undeniably substantiate Doğan and others' terrorist affiliations is nowhere near what makes a truly European country.

Moldovan President Igor Dodon, who often boasts of having close ties with his Turkish counterpart, has been accused of deliberately handing over Turkish educators at Erdoğan's request in exchange for nearly \$10 million in financial assistance for the repair and refurbishment of the Presidential building in Chisinau. The building was damaged in street riots that overthrew the Communist-led government on April 7, 2009. Although Dodon confirmed that he received money from Turkey for this building, he denied the accusation that the money was given as a bribe to send asylum seekers to Turkey illegally.⁷⁹ He denied accusations that the illegal abduction operation was carried out with his prior knowledge and approval.

The illegal operation drew the reaction of the opposition. Maia Saidu, who will become Prime Minister after the parliamentary elections in February 2019, posted a video message on Facebook, harshly rebuking the officials responsible for this blatant violation of the law.⁸⁰ Indeed, Moldovan officials did not even bother to pretend to comply with their own laws while acting as accomplices of Erdoğan's Intel operatives. For example, the Immigration and Asylum Bureau sent a copy of the extradition decision to Rıza Doğan by mail, four days after he was forcibly deported from the country. In other words, even the right to appeal against this decision, which is a right recognized by law, has not been given. He was already behind the bars of a maximum security prison cell in Turkey. Educators who were declared "undesirable" after being sent to Turkey could not even learn why they deserved to be called "undesirable".

On 15 October 2018, the European Parliament, in its report on the implementation of the EU Association Agreement with Moldova (2017/2281(INI)), condemned Moldova 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 handled in a transparent manner within the framework of European principles and standards.

79 Balkan Insight. (2018). Erdoğan to Visit Moldova after Turkish Professors Expelled. [online] Available at: <https://balkaninsight.com/2018/09/25/Erdoğan-will-visit-moldova-after-turkish-professors-recent-expulsion-09-25-2018/> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

80 Facebook.com. (2020). Facebook Live. [online] Available at: https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=1992196870802080 [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

A similar concern was expressed by Amnesty International, which also made a statement regarding the deportation of seven Orizont teachers to Turkey.⁸¹ On September 6, 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. In March this year, six Turkish nationals, also school employees, were abducted and unlawfully returned to Turkey without the knowledge of the country's highest authorities and without the ability to challenge what happened to them." She went on: "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."

The unlawful extradition was brought under the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), which ruled against the Moldovan state and ordered Moldova to pay 25,000 euros to the applicants' families. In the "court's assessment" part of the judgment, the ECtHR argued that the norms in Moldovan law governing deportation and extradition were not complied with. The ECtHR judgment stated that "The applicants were expelled from Moldova through an unlawful transfer which removed the guarantees offered by domestic and international law".⁸²

Rıza Doğan had built a life in Moldova for over 20 years. He got married there and his two daughters were born in this country. He also ran her own company, paid taxes and was an integral part of Moldova. He was later sentenced to 7.5 years in prison by a Turkish court on 19 July 2019.

Hasan Karacaoğlu was also in Moldova for more than 20 years. The country was like a second home to him. During his time at Orizont schools in Moldova, he helped Moldovan youth prepare for their future. He was deputy director when he was expelled from the country for no reason.

Yasin Özdil was the public relations officer of the high school network. Only he was able to inform about the abduction incident through his social media circles with a Face-

81 Amnesty International (2018). Moldova: Seven people deported to Turkey despite major human rights concerns. [online] Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/09/moldova-seven-people-deported-to-turkey-despite-major-human-rights-concerns/> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

82 ECHR (2022). HUDOC - Case of Ozdil and Others v. The Republic of Moldova (Application no. 42305/18). [online] Coe.int. Available at: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/fre#%7B%22itemid%22:%5B%22001-193614%22%5D%7D> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

book message. The message was “They came to my house to catch me. Please, police, help me. They came to kidnap me.”⁸³ The time of the message was 8:42 am. He waited in vain to be rescued, because the people he sought help from were those who had come to hand him over to a dictator, despite the imminent threat of torture.

Müjdat Çelebi had been residing in Moldova for five years. He was the financial director of the company that manages Orizont high schools in Moldova. Feridun Tüfekci was the manager of the branch in Ceadir-Lunga. He was only 17 when he first set foot in Moldova for education. He eventually married his teacher, Galina, and established a family in the country, setting his roots there. He also worked as a journalist representing a Turkish television channel in Moldova for a while. Hüseyin Bayraktar had only spent three years in Moldova, teaching the Turkish language. Erdoğan’s courts sentenced all of them to up to 12 years in prison.

Criminal proceedings were brought against officials involved in the deportation of teachers to Turkey after a new government came to power in Moldova in 2019. On September 6, exactly one year after the teachers were expelled, Alexander Baltag, former deputy head of the Information Security Service, was detained. In addition, Olga Poalelunzh, director of the Immigration and Refugees Bureau, was banned from leaving the country.

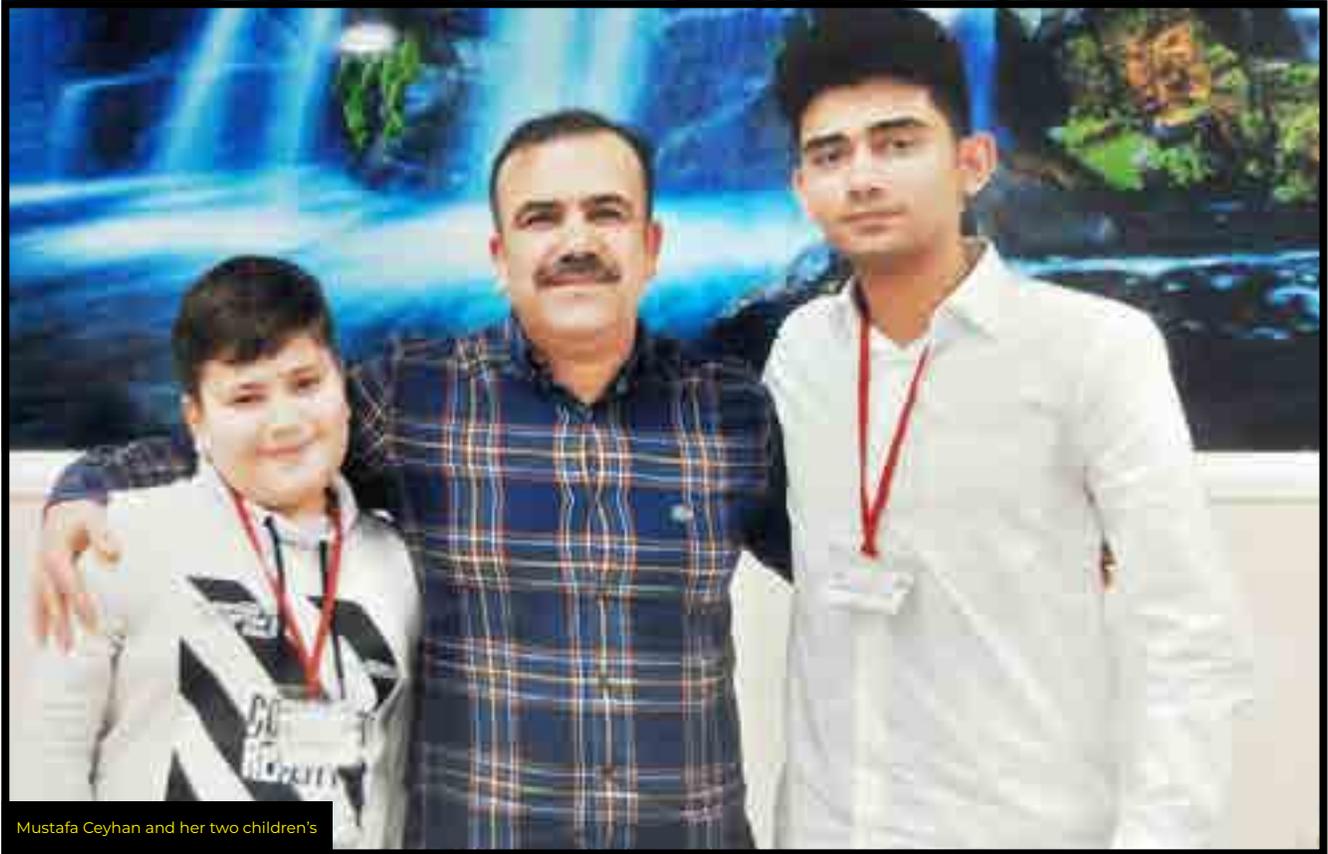
AZERBAIJAN / MUSTAFA CEYHAN

The story of Mustafa Ceyhan is a special one in the sense that he was kidnapped in Azerbaijan soon after he was suddenly released from the courthouse after what he described as a sham trial. His extraordinary adventure in Azerbaijan was later told by an inmate in the same prison as him.⁸⁴

He used to be a businessman in Georgia, doing business mostly in this country. On April 20, 2017, he was detained and arrested on charges of ‘forgery of documents’ while crossing the Azerbaijani border. His passport was allegedly fake. Ceyhan couldn’t make sense of it. His passport was genuine. He has been using that passport for eight years, visiting many countries without any problems. However, he didn’t mind as verifying the

83 İlker Doğan (2019). ‘Beni hakimlerin savcıların önünde kaçırdılar’ (‘They kidnapped me in front of judges and prosecutors’) - Tr724. [online] Tr724. Available at: <http://www.tr724.com/beni-hakimlerin-savcilarin-onunde-kacirdilar/> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

84 Ibid



authenticity of his passport would be as easy as asking the Turkish embassy in Azerbaijan. This did not happen.

The trial was postponed several times and Ceyhan was kept behind bars all this time. He later learned that his name was on a list Turkey sent to Azerbaijan, meaning that the false passport charge was an excuse to catch him and hand him over to Turkey.

Mustafa Ceyhan spent a full year in Azerbaijan prison. On April 26, 2018, he was told that he had a hearing that day. He was confused because his trial was still a month away. He objected, but no one listened to him; he was taken to court. While standing in front of the judge, he noticed that behind the court was the Turkish ambassador to Baku with three men. He shouted to the judge, "What are they doing here?" but did not get an answer. He asked the diplomat the reason for this unexpected and unfathomable visit to his trial, but received no response from him either. He refused to say a word without his lawyers, and the judge paused until the lawyers arrived.

The trial resumed two hours later, and the judge acquitted him of all charges, meaning that he had lost a year in prison for nothing. But Ceyhan was worried about something

else. All this was out of the ordinary, and his lawyers' objections to this unexpected and absurd acquittal were ignored.

As Ceyhan, flanked by his lawyer and the UN's lawyer, was leaving the courthouse, 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 was brought to Turkey by a Turkish Airlines (THY) scheduled flight. He was first put in Metris prison and transferred to Silivri a short time later on 30 April 2019.

His wife, Meryem, 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 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."⁸⁵

Before long, his family referred the matter to the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, which accepted the application as appropriate and correct and demanded the immediate release of Ceyhan on 10 July 2019. It also decided that both Azerbaijan and Turkey must pay compensation to Ceyhan. However, both countries did not comply with the decision and to crown all this, Ceyhan was sentenced to 9 years in prison for "being a member of an armed terrorist organization". The proof that the court had based this decision to make his life worse was the Bank Asya credit card.⁸⁶ Bank Asya was an Islamic bank opened by businessmen close to the Hizmet movement and was one of the first targets Erdoğan chose to seize when he started the struggle. destroying the Gülen movement after corruption investigations.

85 Aktif Haber (2018). İşadamı Mustafa Ceyhan Azerbaycan'da kaçırıldı. (Businessman Mustafa Ceyhan was kidnapped in Azerbaijan.) [online] Available at: <http://aktifhaber.com/gundem/isadami-mustafa-ceyhan-azerbaycanda-kacirildi-h116107.html> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

86 Doğan, İlker (2019). 'Beni hakimlerin savcılarının önünde kaçırdılar' ('They kidnapped me in front of judges and prosecutors') - Tr724. [online] Tr724. Available at: <http://www.tr724.com/beni-hakimlerin-savcilarin-onunde-kacirdilar/> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].



MEHMET CINTOSUN

Mehmet Cintosun is a Turkish citizen who was kidnapped in Azerbaijan on January 20, 2023. He was reportedly taken from his home in Baku by a group of men who spoke Turkish. The men forced Cintosun into a vehicle and drove him to the border with Turkey. Once they crossed the border, the men took Cintosun to an unknown location in Turkey.⁸⁷

Cintosun, who was in Azerbaijan between 1995 and 2014, returned to Turkey in 2014. The accusation against Cintosun, who later went abroad again, is to provide financial support for victims in Turkey. Unable to contact him since his kidnapping, Cintosun's family has filed a complaint with the Azerbaijani authorities, but no progress has been made in the investigation. Cintosun's family believes that he was kidnapped by Turkish authorities because of his political views.

⁸⁷ Tr724 [Haber Merkezi (2023). MiT yine yurt dışından adam kaçırdı; Mehmet Cintosun Türkiye'ye götürüldü - Tr724. [online] Tr724. Available at: <https://www.tr724.com/mit-yine-yurt-disindan-adam-kacirdi-mehmet-cintosun-turkiyeye-goturuldu/> [Accessed 19 May 2023].

UKRAINE

MİT's abduction of Turkish citizens in cooperation with the Ukrainian authorities caused a great backlash in Ukraine.⁸⁸ Presidential Spokesperson İbrahim Kalın confirmed the abductions and the MİT's involvement in these extrajudicial operations in Ukraine. He also lauded the success of the Turkish spy agency, as well as the accommodating national authorities in Ukraine and Azerbaijan, who illegally deported other Turkish expatriates living on their territory.

SALİH ZEKİ YİĞİT

On a sunny day in Odessa, on July 13, 2017, two seemingly average individuals approached businessman Salih Zeki Yiğit in a public setting and forcefully ushered him into a waiting car.⁸⁹ They put a sack over his head and quickly drove away to the east. Their target was the Kherson region, a region just above the Crimea. Turkish media jumped into the story, saying that MİT had successfully captured and brought in the imam of Turkey's Mersin province and the financier of the Hizmet movement. He was accused of collecting donations from his followers and transferring them to Ukraine to cover the expenses of the Turkish schools there.⁹⁰

One week after Yiğit's abduction, on 19 July, after a preliminary questioning at the



88 İpa News (2018). MİT operasyonları Ukrayna'yı karıştırdı, 10 kişilik kaçırılacaklar listesi yayımlandı. (MIT operations mixes Ukraine, 10-people abduction list published.) [online] İPA - International Press Agency. Available at: <https://ipa.news/tr/2018/07/19/mit-operasyonlari-ukraynayı-karıştırdı-10-kisilik-kacirilacaklar-listesi-yayimlandi/> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

89 Open Dialogue Foundation. (2019). They've Come For You: Misuse of Extradition Procedures and Interstate Legal Assistance - Open Dialogue Foundation. [online] Available at: <https://en.odfoundation.eu/a/9579,theyve-come-for-you-misuse-of-extradition-procedures-and-interstate-legal-assistance/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

90 TR724 Haber Merkezi (2018). Ukrayna'dan kaçırılan işadamı Yiğit tutuklandı (Yiğit, a businessman kidnapped from Ukraine, was arrested) - Tr724. [online] Tr724. Available at: <http://www.tr724.com/ukraynadan-kacirilan-isadami-yigit-tutuklandi-ne-yaptiysak-soyledik/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

Mersin Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crime Branch (KOM), the court ordered his arrest. While he was being taken to the court after his medical examination, journalists asked him why he had not returned from Ukraine and surrendered. “They said it was torture,” he said. “We told them everything we did. We have given all kinds of information that will be useful to our state,” he said. Turkish media reported that Yiğit became an informant in order to gain immunity from imprisonment. However, the court still decided to arrest him for being a member of an armed terrorist organization. Yigit’s case is in progress and he is still in prison.



YUSUF İNAN

Kateryna, Yusuf İnan’s Ukrainian wife, described the moment her husband was apprehended by the SBU officers, saying, “They pushed him into the car like a dog.” On July 12, 2017, Ukrainian law enforcement officers arrived at the farm the couple was running in the suburbs of Mykolaiv, about 120 kilometers northeast of Odessa. They started talking to İnan in Russian, which he did not understand. He asked his wife to help him contact the police. They said they had come to pick him up for an ongoing investigation in his hometown of İzmir in Turkey. İnan immediately called the local police. Before long, the police arrived, but

not in the way İnan expected. Along with the police arrived another car from which three masked SBU officers jumped out and arrested İnan.⁹¹

Mykolaiv police reported that Yusuf İnan was detained by SBU officers.⁹² A Mykolaiv court ordered İnan’s extradition the next day. Under Ukrainian law, any person who is scheduled to be deported by court order has five days to appeal this decision, so his lawyer

91 Oksana Grytsenko | (2022). Ukrainian wife of extradited Erdoğan’s critic says he was sent to Turkey illegally – Global News Network. [online] Available at: <https://gnnliberia.com/2018/07/17/ukrainian-wife-of-extradited-Erdogans-critic-says-he-was-sent-to-turkey-illegally/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

92 Open Dialogue Foundation. (2019). They’ve Come For You: Misuse of Extradition Procedures and Interstate Legal Assistance - Open Dialogue Foundation. [online] Available at: <https://en.odfoundation.eu/a/9579,theyve-come-for-you-misuse-of-extradition-procedures-and-interstate-legal-assistance/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

immediately began preparing an appeal and an application for asylum in Ukraine. He had 16 July in mind for his appeal. But neither the lawyer nor Kateryna could have imagined the possibility that the Ukrainian authorities would deport İnan without waiting for the 5-day deadline, in such a flagrant act as violating their own law. Kateryna said, "I learned from the Turkish media that my husband was on Turkish soil on Sunday evening [July 15]." She went on: "The prosecutor's office remains silent, the SBU remains silent. No one told us that he was no longer here, that he had been secretly taken away."⁹³

The Turkish Embassy expressed their happiness for the successful deportation of İnan and emphasized that this is "part of the ongoing security cooperation between Turkey and Ukraine". Yusuf İnan was legally residing in Ukraine with the permission he obtained after getting married in 2015. The couple made their living by herding sheep on their farm. He was once a journalist working as a reporter for Cihan News Agency, which was Turkey's largest news agency with offices all around the world until it was seized and closed by the Turkish government. Afterwards, he was the editor-in-chief of the *Yerel Gündem* newspaper and its website, which published anti-Erdoğan news.⁹⁴

OSCE Representative for Freedom of the Press, Harlem Désir, expressed his deep concern in a letter he wrote to the Ukrainian authorities on 19 July, demanding that they immediately stop the deportation process and release İnan. The call did not reach the ears of the Ukrainian authorities.

Yunus Erdoğan, another journalist residing in Ukraine who is on the list of people whom Turkey has officially requested to be deported from Ukraine, commented on the abduction of his friends twice in a row and said that no one feels safe in Ukraine anymore. "MIT will kidnap all Erdoğan opponents on the list from Ukraine, where they came to escape the Erdoğan regime. Unfortunately, we can no longer seek protection from the Ukrainian state authorities for only one reason. Erdoğan's spokesman, İbrahim Kalın, thanked the Ukrainian authorities for their "cooperation". How can we trust those who cooperate with Erdoğan's special units?"⁹⁵

93 Oksana Grytsenko (2022). Ukrainian wife of extradited Erdoğan's critic says he was sent to Turkey illegally – Global News Network. [online] Available at: <https://gnnliberia.com/2018/07/17/ukrainian-wife-of-extradited-Erdogans-critic-says-he-was-sent-to-turkey-illegally/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

94 SCF (2018). Turkey's intelligence service abducts journalist İnan from Ukraine over Gülen links - Stockholm Center for Freedom. [online] Stockholm Center for Freedom. Available at: <https://stockholmcf.org/turkeys-intelligence-service-abducts-one-more-person-from-ukraine-over-gulen-links/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

95 İpa News (2018). MIT operasyonları Ukrayna'yı karıştırdı, 10 kişilik kaçırılacaklar listesi yayımlandı. (MIT operations confused Ukraine, 10-people harunabduction list published.) [online] İPA - International Press Agency. Available at: <https://ipa.news/tr/2018/07/19/mit-operasyonlari-ukraynayı-karistirdi-10-kisilik-kacirilacaklar-listesi-yayimlandi/> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

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

Expressing her solidarity with Erdoğan on July 23, Rebecca Harms, Turkey expert and foreign affairs spokesperson in the European Parliament Greens/EFA group, called on the Ukrainian government to stop the abduction of Turkish citizens in Ukraine by Turkey's MIT 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 Klymush. Elsewhere, the International and European Federations of Journalists (IFJ-EFJ) urged the Ukrainian government to provide immediate protection for journalist Erdoğan against possible kidnapping by the Turkish spy agency.

ALBANIA / HARUN ÇELİK

Harun Celik, 41, fled to and sought refuge in Albania from the government's persecution of the Gülen movement in Turkey. He was arrested there at the request of Turkey. After five and a half months in an Albanian prison, Çelik was finally released by a court that refused his extradition requests. 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 Rinas International Airport. He was being deported. This was not in the plans.

His friends chased the car that took him to a bleak future. They wanted to prevent this unlawful dispatch to the airport, and then there was a stampede. But they failed. Çelik was sent to Turkey



and put in a high security prison.

Çelik was a teacher at a school affiliated with the Hizmet movement in Albania. He was sent to Turkey by the Albanian authorities in an operation that the Turkish media announced was perpetrated by the MİT. His deportation constituted a complete violation of both national and international law, 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.⁹⁶

Andrej Hunko, Albanian Rapporteur of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, told Exit that Çelik's extradition is "worrying" and that they took notice of the situation.⁹⁷ Recalling that extradition on political offenses is strictly prohibited by the European Convention on Extradition, he also said that the European Convention on Human Rights obliges 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 Bingasi, told Exit that an administrative act like an exclusion order was required for deportation. In addition, any person deported for any reason should be given sufficient time to challenge the court decision. In Çelik's case, none of these key conditions were properly regarded.

BULGARIA / ABDULLAH BÜYÜK

Turkish businessman Abdullah Büyük, 43, was accused of being a follower and funder of the Hizmet movement in Turkey. He was briefly detained, questioned about his ties to the movement and his role in funding the movement's activities at home and abroad. After being released pending trial, he decided to leave the country and fled to Bulgaria on 1 February 2016. Exactly two weeks later, an extradition request was made from the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office. With its final decision on 28 March 2016, the Sofia Court of Appeal upheld the decision of the Sofia City Court rejecting the extradition request.

He applied for asylum in Bulgaria. In the hectic environment that followed the failed

96 SCF (2020). Albania deports Gülen follower at Turkey's request despite court rejection of extradition - Stockholm Center for Freedom. [online] Stockholm Center for Freedom. Available at: <https://stockholmcf.org/albania-deports-gulen-follower-at-turkeys-request-despite-court-rejection-of-extradition/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

97 Exit (2020). CoE Rapporteur on Albania Speaks of 'Worrying' Extradition of Harun Çelik and Human Rights Violations - Exit - Explaining Albania. [online] Available at: <https://exit.al/en/2020/01/08/coe-rapporteur-on-albania-speaks-of-worrying-extradition-of-harun-celik-and-human-rights-violations/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].



coup attempt on 15 July, he felt trapped by the intense backlash against anyone in Turkey who had any sympathy for Gülen movement members. He just didn't want to go back there. However, the Turkish government had blacklisted his name as a “terrorist” and made an official request to return Büyük to its jurisdiction. Despite the clear decisions of the Bulgarian courts, Büyük was controversially repatriated to Turkey.

On August 10, 2016, he was arrested by the police on his way to a scheduled meeting at the offices of the administration responsible for refugees. Afterwards, he was taken to the Turkish border immediately without even being able to speak to the police. This provoked a serious backlash in Bulgaria, with critics accusing the government of yielding to Turkish pressure and failing to follow the legal and ethical path.⁹⁸

“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. Digging deeper into the reasons behind Büyük's extradition can help to understand the motivation of the Bulgarian administration to dare

98 The Guardian Nigeria News - Nigeria and World News. (2016). Outcry as Bulgaria deports Gulen supporter to Turkey | The Guardian Nigeria News - Nigeria and World News. [online] Available at: <https://guardian.ng/news/outcry-as-bulgaria-deports-gulen-supporter-to-turkey/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

to take a negligent stand against the law and court orders.

During his visit to Bulgaria, Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu requested the Bulgarian authorities to send Büyük, whom he described as a “traitor”, to Turkey. It is said that he was directly involved in the coup, although he had moved to Bulgaria about five months before the coup. Turkey’s extradition requests were rejected on two separate instances by Bulgarian courts in March 2016 on the grounds that there was no fair trial in Turkey and that the person concerned was “wanted for political reasons”. However, Turkey renewed its deportation request after the July 15 coup attempt. This request was also turned down as such a move would be “procedurally unacceptable”.⁹⁹

The Turkish state, despairing of the independent and impregnable Bulgarian justice system, seemingly wanted the Bulgarian government to intervene. This is clearly seen in the act of the Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Georgy Arabadzhiev. He said at a press conference that Interpol had transmitted “worrying new facts and circumstances” to them about the person in question. Still, he didn’t give any details about these facts, or at least how serious they were. A few days after this statement, on August 9, 2016, the Bulgarian Ministry of Internal Affairs urgently deported Büyük, escorted him to the border and handed him over to the Turkish security forces. Interestingly, however, the Ministry of Interior did not mention the insistent extradition request of the Turkish government when deporting Büyük. Instead, they presented the lack of necessary documents that would no longer make it possible for the Büyük to stay in Bulgaria.¹⁰⁰

Can these new facts about Büyük and his immediate extradition, without even resorting to a court procedure required by law, be seen as evidence of a premeditated and hastily carried out special operation by the Bulgarian and Turkish secret service? Based on this suspicion, the ECtHR demanded Bulgaria to provide documents and detailed information regarding this case.

Dilyana Giteva, a lawyer for the Sofia-based Bulgarian NGO Human Rights Lawyers, thinks this could be the case. “This is a deal between two unconstitutional states in which Bulgaria’s manner does not differ much from the one of Erdoğan,” she was quoted as saying. She said this was an arbitrary act by the government in total disregard of the laws.¹⁰¹

99 Ibid.

100 Cheresheva, Mariya (2016). Bulgarians Outraged at Deportation of Gulen Supporter to Turkey. [online] Available at: <https://balkaninsight.com/2016/08/16/bulgarians-outraged-at-deportation-of-a-gulen-supporter-to-turkey-08-15-2016/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

101 Ibid.

Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borisov's comment on the same issue on NOVA TV channel brought to mind that the rendition of Büyük could actually be a quid pro quo. He said his extradition was an action "on the edge of the law". So why did they commit to this instead of staying in the safer area at the center of the law? The answer was in his words, which justified extradition due to the risk of large waves of refugees from Turkey, mainly Syrians. Erdoğan has repeatedly used the threat of opening the border gates to allow the flow of his "Syrian brothers" out and push them into Europe. Bulgaria will be one of the first destinations for the refugees, a burden the country can hardly handle. In the same interview with NOVA, he said, "We must not allow the migrant wave to flood Bulgaria," adding that "it is of great significance for Bulgaria to maintain good relations with Turkey."¹⁰²

However, this retreat against a threat was not a solution; instead, it was a manifestation of his own soft underbelly 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 Erdoğan's regime, but in working together with the other European countries," he concluded.¹⁰³

The ECtHR requested information about extradition after Büyük and his lawyers filed numerous complaints against the country, referring to Articles 3, 6 and 13 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which stipulate the prohibition of torture, the right to a fair trial and the right to an effective remedy, respectively. The ECHR asked Bulgaria seven questions, including two requests for information.¹⁰⁴ Büyük is still in prison in Turkey, awaiting a court decision.

102 Bnr (2022). Premier Boyko Borisov: I am worried that Bulgaria may be flooded with migrants. [online] Available at: <https://bnr.bg/en/post/100725697/premier-boyko-borisov-i-am-worried-%20that-bulgaria-may-be-flooded-with-migrants> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

103 Cheresheva, Mariya (2016). Bulgarians Outraged at Deportation of Gulen Supporter to Turkey. [online] Available at: <https://balkaninsight.com/2016/08/16/bulgarians-outraged-at-deportation-of-a-gulen-supporter-to-turkey-08-15-2016/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

104 ECHR (2022). HUDOC - European Court of Human Rights. [online] Coe.int. Available at: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#%7B%22itemid%22:%5B%22001-182514%22%5D%7D> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].



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. It is worth noting that Acar had sought and obtained protection from the United Nations (UN) due to concerns about the Turkish government's actions against him. However, this did not deter the Turkish authorities from disregarding his protected status.

This case exemplifies how Turkey has exploited the Interpol system to target opponents of the autocratic regime abroad. Acar was apprehended by Bahraini police and subsequently handed over to Bahrain Interpol, which willingly acted as an intermediary for Turkey without assessing the legitimacy of the deportation request. This action by Bahrain Interpol blatantly violated the jurisdiction of a UN body.

Upon his arrival in Turkey, Acar endured severe torture for 18 days until October 26, when he was brought before the Ankara 7th Penal Court of Peace for his arraignment hearing. The court ordered his arrest.

During his court testimony, Acar recounted his ordeal, stating, "The Turkish Embassy in Manama informed me that my Turkish passport was deemed invalid. I sought legal advice, and my lawyer cautioned that returning to Turkey could pose difficulties. He suggested we seek humanitarian protection from the UN to prevent extradition. I followed his advice, yet I was still extradited despite having been granted protection."¹⁰⁵

Despite having undergone thyroid cancer surgery and suffering from hypertension, Acar was subjected to nearly a year of harsh prison conditions and stringent restrictions that surpassed those imposed on even convicted murderers. He was denied access to the

105 SCF (2017). Interpol helped Harvard educated professor get tortured in Turkish prison - Stockholm Center for Freedom. [online] Stockholm Center for Freedom. Available at: <https://stockholmcf.org/interpol-helped-harvard-educated-professor-get-tortured-in-turkish-prison/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

investigation file against him, which was deemed “confidential,” preventing him and his lawyer from adequately preparing his defense. Numerous petitions for his release were submitted, but all were rejected.

The abuse of Interpol by the Turkish government to target critics abroad, as exemplified in Acar’s case, has drawn widespread condemnation. German Chancellor Angela Merkel criticized Turkish authorities for exploiting the international police force to further their own agenda, at the expense of pursuing actual criminals. Merkel emphasized that Acar’s case is just one of many, leading to a significant shift in German policy towards Turkey due to the unacceptable actions of President Erdoğan’s regime.¹⁰⁶



METİN TEKECİ

Metin Tekeci was the Bahrain office manager of Türkiye Finans Katılım Bankası. Turkish courts had issued a warrant for his arrest for alleged links to the Hizmet movement. When Tekeci visited the Turkish embassy in the capital Manama for some bureaucratic work in January 2017, embassy officials immediately flagged him down. Tekeci was probably unaware of the existence of the arrest warrant. The embassy confiscated his passport. The pro-government media have different stories of how his capture

came about. According to Daily Sabah, his passport was confiscated at the embassy and he was deported to Turkey, where a trial awaits him.¹⁰⁷ The newspaper does not mention who captured him or how he was deported. Sabah, the Turkish version of the same newspaper, reported that Tekeci was caught by the Bahraini police without mentioning that his passport was confiscated.¹⁰⁸ The Bahraini state decided to deport Tekeci and handed him

106 Reuters (2017). Merkel attacks Turkey’s ‘misuse’ of Interpol warrants. [online] U.S. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-eu-turkey-election/merkel-attacks-turkeys-misuse-of-interpol-%20warrants-idUSKCN1B001P> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

107 Erkam Çoban (2017). Turkey looks abroad to clamp down on FETÖ suspects. [online] Daily Sabah. Available at: <https://www.dailysabah.com/investigations/2017/04/20/turkey-looks-abroad-to-clamp-down-on-feto-suspects> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

108 Erkam Çoban (2017). Interpol FETÖ’cü hainlerin ensesinde (Interpol is on the neck of FETO traitors). [online] Sabah. Available at: <https://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2017/04/20/interpol-fetocu-hainlerin-ensesinde> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

over to the Turkish Interpol on March 25, 2017, Sabah reported. According to this Turkish version of the news, which appeared on the same day as the English version, Tekeci was the leader of the Bahrain branch of the Hizmet movement and managed the financial relations of the organization there, without substantiating these claims with reference to any source. It also claimed Tekeci was in direct connection with the top management of the movement.

MALAYSIA / TURGAY KARAMAN

Turgay Karaman got out of his car on the 5th basement floor of Wisma E&C, a sixteen-storey high building in Kuala Lumpur. He was there to attend a meeting with some lawyers to testify in a trial scheduled for the next day. As he began to walk away from his car, a gang of five suddenly moved towards him. He didn't even realize what had happened when the men forced him to their car, which had parked 10 meters away. Then they quickly drove away. This entire scene was recorded by cameras.¹⁰⁹ The date was May 2, 2017.

Karaman was the principal of Time International School. He was scheduled to present his testimony as a defense witness at a trial hearing the next day. When he did not show up to the meeting despite confirming that he was on his way and when his friends realized that his phone could no longer be reached, they reported his missing to the police without a moment to spare. When they found his car abandoned in the parking lot, it was no longer difficult for them to come to a conclusion they didn't even want to think about. They alerted the United Nations office in Kuala Lumpur about the possible abduction of a foreign national in Malaysia by clandestine groups operating on behalf of the Turkish government.¹¹⁰



109 The Star (2017). Turkish man abducted before testifying in court. YouTube. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1hq5HbQ9Ry8> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

110 SCF (2017). VIDEO - A Turkish national abducted in Malaysia by operatives linked to Turkey's Erdoğan - Stockholm Center for Freedom. [online] Stockholm Center for Freedom. Available at: <https://stockholmcf.org/a-turkish-national-abducted-in-malaysia-by-operatives-linked-to-turkeys-erdogan/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

CCTV footage was also obtained during this time, clarifying what had happened. The faces of the five Malaysian men were clearly visible from other cameras installed along the route of the kidnappers' car. In a YouTube video to announce the details of the incident, Karaman's wife Ayşe was trembling. Crushed, she burst into tears as she demanded immediate action from the Malaysian authorities before it was too late. She said they've been legally living in Malaysia for 13 years. "I urge the Malaysian government to help us. He is a very gentle person and never hurt anyone," she said.

It didn't take long for the truth to emerge. Academicians Turgay Karaman and İhsan Arslan were kidnapped by the Malaysian authorities on the orders of the Turkish state. Two of them were deported to Turkey. Malaysia's counter-terrorism police unit was investigating the two men, along with several others, on charges of "spreading, influencing and financing" the activities of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS), the government's English mouthpiece Daily Sabah quoted Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi as saying.¹¹¹ "There was no request from anyone. It [the arrest] is a result of our own doing," Hamidi claimed.

Karaman was deported to Turkey on 12 May 2017. However, this claim was a brazen misstatement, and an article in the Guardian newspaper would point this: "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."¹¹²

Moreover, the charges against the two men were not convincing enough for the UN Human Rights Committee. The committee said on 29 May 2019 that Turkey should immediately release Karaman and İhsan Aslan and pay compensation for their arbitrary detention.¹¹³ Turkey violated the freedoms of the two men and said it had to comply with the decision within 180 days. In its report on the case, the Committee said, "the State party is obligated to release the authors (of the complaint) and provide them with adequate compensation

111 Daily Sabah (2017). FETÖ members arrested in Malaysia accused of funding Daesh. [online] Daily Sabah. Available at: <https://www.dailysabah.com/investigations/2017/05/04/feto-members-arrested-in-malaysia-accused-of-funding-daesh> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

112 Holmes, O. (2017). Turkish headmaster accused of Isis links met Malaysian PM, pictures reveal. [online] the Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/05/turkish-headmaster-accused-of-isis-links-met-malaysian-pm-pictures-reveal> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

113 Miles, T. (2019). Turkey told by U.N. to free and compensate Gulen-linked detainees. [online] U.S. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-un-idUSKCNISZIRD> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

for the violations suffered,” 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 asked Turkey to be more precise and show evidence to explain exactly how the two men posed a threat. Turkey could not show this. However, since the commission’s decisions were not binding and had no sanction power, Turkey did not 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.¹¹⁴ 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.

Arslan disappeared around 8 pm in Kuala Lumpur on May 1, 2017. He was a member of the Malaysian Turkish Chamber of Commerce and Industry, a business advocacy group affiliated with the Gülen movement. According to Yunos, when the police checked her husband’s phone signal, he was traced to the Malaysian Ministry of Defense.

And shortly after, while the news of the kidnapping on May 3 was breaking news in the international media, the truth behind his disappearance was revealed with a tweet by Malaysian National Police Chief Khalid Abu Bakar. İhsan Arslan, along with Turgay Karaman, was arrested for “threatening the security of Malaysia”. He said they were arrested under Section 130 of the Penal Code. In the first place, they were detained under the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act (SOSMA), which allows the suspects to be detained for

114 SCF (2017). Autistic child injures self to express grief over detention of Turkish father in Malaysia - Stockholm Center for Freedom. [online] Stockholm Center for Freedom. Available at: <https://stockholmcf.org/autistic-child-injures-self-to-express-grief-over-detention-of-turkish-father-in-malaysia/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

28 days without filing a criminal complaint or even informing their families and lawyers. But why would they feel the need to take such exceptional measures to round up people, known to be moderate and kind. They didn't even have beards.

Home Minister Ahmed Zahid Hamidi said counter-terrorism police are investigating Ihsan and Karaman on charges of “spreading, influencing and funding” the Islamic State.¹¹⁵ A Guardian article denied such defamation, which contradicted clearly with the lifestyle and social connections of these men.¹¹⁶

Almost 5 years have passed since Arslan was abducted and deported to Turkey in violation of Malaysian and international law. He is currently still held in a maximum security prison and is fighting unsubstantiated terrorism charges.



ALAETTİN DUMAN

Alaettin Duman left his home in Tamarindi Condoto on Jalal Sentul Indah Street at around 4 pm on 13 October 2016 to attend the afternoon prayer at a mosque run by Pakistani expats, about 500 meters from his home. After the prayer, he would meet with his Malaysian friend Mukhlis Amir Nordin, with whom he served on the board of a school. His story is told in a report by the Stockholm Freedom Center (SCF):¹¹⁷

“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

115 Daily Sabah (2017). FETÖ members arrested in Malaysia accused of funding Daesh. [online] Daily Sabah. Available at: <https://www.dailysabah.com/investigations/2017/05/04/feto-members-arrested-in-malaysia-accused-of-funding-daesh> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

116 Holmes, O. (2017). Turkish headmaster accused of Isis links met Malaysian PM, pictures reveal. [online] the Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/05/turkish-headmaster-accused-of-isis-links-met-malaysian-pm-pictures-reveal> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

117 SCF (2017). Erdoğan's Long Arm: The Case Of Malaysia - Stockholm Center for Freedom. [online] Stockholm Center for Freedom. Available at: <https://stockholmcf.org/Erdoğans-long-arms-the-case-of-malaysia/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

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 told his wife that he would be back for dinner, but he did not arrive until 7:30 pm.

His family tried to reach him, but his phone was off. They thought his phone battery was dead, but after an hour, they started to worry. They called 3 times around 7.30 pm but they could not reach me again.



They thought that if there was a change in the plans, Duman would definitely let his family know about it. His 21-year-old son, Kutluhan Duman, called Nordin and asked where his father was. “I can’t find him too and I can’t reach him,” Nordin said. Then the family started to worry more that he might have been involved in an accident or something. His wife Saliha (43) and son Kutluhan checked the parking lot of the building to see if his car was in place. The car was there.

His family and friends decided to report the situation to the police and search for signs of him at nearby hospitals. The possibility of abduction had not crossed their minds. They thought he might have been injured in an accident or attempted robbery. Kutluhan and his father’s friends waited at the police station until 3:00 in the morning to find out what they could do to find him. However, Malaysian police said they could not do anything for 24 hours according to established procedures.

Waiting one day was too long for the family, but even longer for Alaettin Duman. He was tied in the hands and feet, gagged and blindfolded and four men were torturing him heavily. He thought a mob kidnapped him for ransom. At one point, he even thought that these people were torturing him just to kill him.

At around 6:00 p.m., Saliha and Kutluhan went to the mosque and asked the people there if they had witnessed anything about Alettin Duman. One of them said he knew Du-

man. He said that he saw Duman in the mosque the previous day and that he left calmly after the prayer. At least the family knew that he had reached the mosque and got out of it safe and sound.

State news agency Anatolia reported the next day a speech by Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu in which he said three men were brought from Malaysia and detained on charges of “membership in a terrorist organization”. When the Ankara police called Alaettin’s sister-in-law the next morning and said that Alaettin was in custody, it was now clear that Alaettin had been forcibly abducted. But how? His passports and all documents were at home in Malaysia.

After his abduction, Alaettin Duman was first seen by his mother and brother on 4 November. He had trouble even just standing up, and when asked what happened, he told his brother that he was tortured during detention in Malaysia and Turkey.

He was regularly tortured in police custody, especially at some hours of the night. For example, some officers were taking him from the police station’s custody at 3 am and taking him to an empty place in the distance. They held a gun to his head and shouted that they would pull the trigger without hesitation if he didn’t confess. A police officer threatened Alaettin, saying, “If you don’t confess, your wife and daughters are in danger.” He would say he didn’t know anything to confess, only to receive a more severe beating in return. He told this to his brother while waiting for the court decision in the hallway in front of the courtroom. He could not tell more, but his brother Sebahattin told what he witnessed from his home. The court postponed the hearing to 7 November due to missing documents.

Working actively in the field of education in Malaysia since 2010, Duman was one of the founders of Time International School. He was married and had three children. His name was featured in a disparaging article in the Turkish government’s mouthpiece *Sabah* daily as the point man of the Gülen movement in Malaysia.¹¹⁸ Duman was sentenced to 18 years in prison on 17 April 2018 for being a member of a terrorist organization.¹¹⁹

118 SCF (2017) ‘Erdogan’s Long Arms: The Case Of Malaysia’. Stockholm Center for Freedom. [online] Available at: <https://stockholmcf.org/erdogans-long-arms-the-case-of-malaysia/> [Accessed 11th April 2022].

119 Anatolia News Agency (2018). FETÖ’nün “Malezya imamı”na 18 yıl hapis (18 years in prison for FETÖ’s ‘Malaysia imam’). [online] Anatolia News Agency Available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/15-temmuz-darbe-girisimi/fetonun-malezya-imamina-18-yil-hapis/1120719> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].



TAMER TIBIK

Kamuran Tibik, wife of Tamer Tibik, told SCF her personal account of the day when her life was turned upside down.¹²⁰ "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. 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 Tibik were the two, but the third man's identity was unknown.

Tibik worked as the general secretary of the Malaysia-Turkey Chamber of Commerce and Industry for about a year and a half. He was married and had two daughters and had been a legal resident of Malaysia since 2015 with a valid work visa.

After staying in Turkey until the end of 2015 to complete her doctoral studies, Kamuran moved to Malaysia to stay with her husband. She was also a public servant at the time. Their daughter was studying in Canada. After successfully completing her doctorate, there was no obstacle for them to reunite and she went to Malaysia without regret in her heart, except leaving her mother alone as she needed constant care due to her celiac disease. She was already under pressure as his life and connections were constantly scrutinized by the security and intelligence services. In fact, the police had visited her house twice and asked for her husband.

120 SCF (2017). Erdoğan's Long Arm: The Case Of Malaysia - Stockholm Center for Freedom. [online] Stockholm Center for Freedom. Available at: <https://stockholmcf.org/Erdoğans-long-arms-the-case-of-malaysia/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].



The family was already in Kuala Lumpur when the fabricated coup attempt was staged. Their daughters had also come to visit from Canada. “We were relieved that we were not in Turkey, but this time we started to feel pressure in Malaysia. When the Turkish government started to cancel the passports of people affiliated with the

Gülen movement, we decided to keep our girls with us. On August 7, 2016, a pro-Erdoğan newspaper published my husband’s name and photo, claiming that he was a member of FETÖ,” said Kamuran. On October 13, her husband was kidnapped. Since Malaysia is not a signatory to the refugee convention and nor is it a democratic country where human rights matter, the family decided to leave the country without further delay, fearing that the Malaysian authorities might also kidnap them and hand them over to the torturers. They moved to Canada on October 16.

Tibik was put in Ankara Sincan T Type Prison. His lawyer, Hasan Basri Aksoy, was also arrested, so his wife hired a new lawyer. However, the authorities refused, saying that they had already appointed a lawyer and therefore would not accept the family’s lawyer. However, the appointed lawyer was not willing to cooperate with the family. He even refused to share Tibik’s testimony with them and directed them to meet directly with the prosecutor if they needed further information. Thereupon, Tamer Tibik’s father and mother visited the prosecutor. He asked them to invite Tamer’s wife, Kamuran, to Turkey. The prosecutor said if Kamuran could convince Tamer to confess his role in the coup and to testify as the prosecutor wishes to implicate certain names, he would only be sentenced to two years in prison. If he refuses, the best sentence would be at least 15 years. The family refused this inappropriate offer and had to leave the prosecutor’s office empty-handed.

Tibik told that during their visit to their families on 1 December 2016, he was held by the police for a long time and was tortured to make him confess to crimes he had never been involved in before. He had to give the names of people linked to the Gülen movement. Even Tibik’s mother once heard directly from the police, “Your son never talks to us. He hasn’t helped us at all.”

According to what Tibik told his family, who came to visit him on December 1, 2016,

he was held at the police station for a long time. Here he was tortured into committing crimes that he had never been involved in and of which he was unaware. He came under great pressure to give the names of people linked to the Gülen movement. The police told Tıbık's mother: "Your son never talks to us. He hasn't helped us at all." Tamer Tıbık is still detained in a T-type prison in Keskin district of central province Kırıkkale, awaiting indictment.



ARIF KOMIŞ

On August 28, 2019, at around 23:30, approximately 30 police officers raided the residence of Arif Komiş and his family in Kuala Lumpur. The plainclothes police detained Komiş, his wife and four young children.¹²¹ Four police officers told the Komiş family that their passports had been revoked by the Turkish government and that they had to be prepared for deportation to Turkey within five minutes. Komiş and his family were put in a police car in handcuffs and taken to the Putrajaya Immigration Office, where they were detained. The next day, the family was brought to the airport and forcibly taken to Turkey on a plane that was stated to belong to the MIT.

121 SCF (2017) 'Erdogan's Long Arms: The Case Of Malaysia'. Stockholm Center for Freedom. [online] Available at: <https://stockholmcf.org/erdogans-long-arms-the-case-of-malaysia/> [Accessed 11th April 2022].

Komiş, who sought asylum from the UN in Malaysia, was under the protection of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). His abduction was a violation of international conventions that grant UN protection and immunity to asylum seekers until a decision is made on their claims.¹²²

A medical report before he was sent to prison in Turkey demonstrated that he was tortured in the Police Department. The United Nations Arbitrary Arrest Working Group decided that the arrest, detention and forced transfer to Turkey of the Komiş family in Malaysia was arbitrary and contrary to international human rights norms and standards. Following this decision, Komiş was released on parole.¹²³

Pointing to the responsibility of the Malaysian government in the arrest, detention and deportation of the Komiş family, the decision emphasized that the Malaysian government was responsible for its own actions and later for the violations of rights in Turkey. In the UN resolution, it was determined that the arrest and deportation of Ülkü Komis and her four young children violated Article 37 (b) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

It emphasized that Komiş's affiliation with the Gülen group, opening an account at Bank Asya and using the ByLock communication application alone would not constitute evidence for "membership in a terrorist organization". The opinion said: "In the present case, it is clear to the Working Group that even if Mr. Komiş had used the ByLock application, it would have been mere exercise of his freedom of expression, a right protected under article 19 of the Covenant."

The Working Group pointed to the increase in the number of cases brought to it concerning arbitrary detention in Turkey especially after 2017. It expressed its concern over the pattern that all these cases follow and recalls that under certain circumstances, widespread or systematic imprisonment or other severe deprivation of liberty in violation of the rules of international law may constitute crimes against humanity.

122 BoldMedya (2019). Malaysia has disregarded UN protection: Arif Komis has been sent to Turkey. [online] BoldMedya. Available at: <https://boldmedya.com/2019/09/12/malaysia-has-disregarded-un-protection-arif-komis-has-been-sent-to-turkey/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

123 Human Rights Council Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (2020). Opinions adopted by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention at its eighty-eighth session, 24–28 August 2020 [online] OHCHR. Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Detention/Opinions/Session88/A_HRC_WGAD_2020_51_Advance_Edited_Version.pdf [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022]



IRAQ / ASLAN ÇELİK

Arslan Çelik, Inspector of Roonaki Salahaddin Ayyubi Colleges, was kidnapped on the morning of January 19, 2018 on his way to school. According to his assistant, Zana Cemil, who witnessed her abduction, a group of armed men forcibly seized her in Kurdsat Avenue, near Mam Jalal Talabany's Grave, in Sulaymaniyah, Iraq-Kurdistan.

The place was about 1.5 km from a police station. Some local eyewitnesses also said that several cars blocked Çelik's car, a black Ford Explorer, and kidnapped him.

Mahmut Övür, a columnist on the website of the pro-government A Haber TV channel and known as a loyal MİT messenger, confirmed that Turkish intelligence made long and delicate plans to kidnap Ateş in Iraq, but these plans were foiled because of the involvement of the country's late president Jalal Talabany's wife, Hero.¹²⁴ He lashed out at Hero Talabany and accused her of being the frontline 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, Iraq's intervention in MİT's operation in Iraq was not right. Çelik was later sent to Dubai under the protection of Hero and from there, he went to the United States.

124 Mahmut Övür (2018). FETÖ'cüyü Hero Talabani nasıl kurtardı? (How did Hero Talabani save FETO?) [online] Sabah. Available at: <https://www.sabah.com.tr/yazarlar/ovur/2018/03/17/fetocuyu-hero-talabani-nasil-kurtardi> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].



KOSOVO

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

Gülistan Educational Institutions Deputy Director Yusuf Karabina, his wife Yasemin and their 15-year-old son were stopped by the Kosovo police at around 08:30 am on Thursday. Fearing that the people trying to kidnap them might be MIT members, the family refused to cooperate and resisted them. Kosovar officers used violence to force them into cars and reportedly continued to beat them throughout their detention at the police station.¹²⁵

Concurrently, Kahraman Demirez, Principal of Mehmet Akif College in Gjakova, and

125 SCF (2018). Kosovo under Turkish gov't pressure detains 5 Turkish educators over alleged links to Gülen movement - Stockholm Center for Freedom. [online] Stockholm Center for Freedom. Available at: <https://stockholmcf.org/kosovo-under-turkish-govt-pressure-detains-5-turkish-educators-over-alleged-links-to-gulen-movement/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

teachers Cihan Özkan and Hasan Hüseyin Günakan were detained by the Kosovo police. Mustafa Erdem, General Director of Gülistan Educational Institutions, who learned that his friends were detained, went to the police station to get information about the incident, but was detained there as well.

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

Months ago, Kosovo police arrested Uğur Toksoy, an educator allegedly linked to the Hizmet movement. Toksoy escaped extradition, but still his detention in the first place had shaken the trust among the Turkish community about their safety in Kosovo.

In Turkey, pro-government media featured statements from many high-ranking state officials, such as Bekir Bozdağ, claiming that the operation was a remarkable success, and presented the kidnapping as a polished success story. But it would cause the opposite reaction in Kosovo.¹²⁶

Then Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj was shocked by the incident that took place without his knowledge. This meant trampling the country's sovereignty over its jurisdiction and was irreconcilable with the very notion of independence. He dismissed Interior Minister Flamur Sefaj and Kosovo Intelligence Agency (AKI) head Driton Gashi.

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," the minister said in a statement.¹²⁷ Enver Robelli, a prominent Kosovar journalist, told Al-Monitor about Erdoğan's unbridled disparagement of the Kosovar PM: "People are irritated that Erdoğan attacks the prime minister. Most [local] media [report that] Erdoğan behaves as if he were the king of Kosovo."¹²⁸ The journalist also pointed to the role of the rivalry between President Hashim Thaçi and Haradinaj in this incident, saying, "Thaçi wants to play the tough

126 Liataud, Alexa (2018). Turkey's spy agency has secretly abducted 80 Turkish citizens living abroad. [online] Available at: <https://www.vice.com/en/article/evqm5e/turkeys-spy-agency-has-secretly-abducted-80-turkish-citizens-living-abroad> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

127 Zaman, Amberin (2018). Erdoğan ramps up dispute with Kosovo over deportation of Gulen-linked Turks. [online] Available at: <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2018/04/Erdoğan-gulenists-kosovo.html> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

128 Ibid.



guy. He has strong connections to Erdoğan. Thaçi apparently organized the arrest and the handover of the six Turks behind Haradinaj's back."

Indeed, Thaçi seems to be vying to give candid poses with Erdoğan in front of the cameras when the two get together. He had promised to do everything in his power to help Erdoğan, while trying his best to harm his critics, especially his supporters of the Gülen movement. For example, when Thaçi said at a joint press conference on December 29, 2016 that the crackdown on his opponents, whom Erdoğan categorically calls terrorists, would continue both at home and abroad and that Turkish officers would be hot on their heels follow up, Thaçi nodded with a smile.¹²⁹

A parliamentary commission set up by the Assembly of Kosovo to uncover the secrets behind the abductions reported in February 2019 that the operation involved 31 violations of law and procedure. The commission also complained that Thaçi had hindered the investigation by not providing the necessary information and documents.¹³⁰

129 Milliyet.com.tr (2016). Erdoğan-Taçi Ortak Basın Toplantısı (Erdoğan-Taçi Joint Press Conference). [online] Milliyet. Available at: <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/yerel-haberler/ankara/Erdoğan-taci-ortak-basin-toplantisi-11745175> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2022].

130 Eraldin Fazliu (2019). Insecurity over Turkish deportations from Kosovo remains - Prishtina Insight. [online] Prishtina Insight. Available at: <https://prishtinainsight.com/insecurity-over-turkish-deportations-from-kosovo-remains-mag/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

Kosovo is not the best Balkan country economically and takes extra care to maintain cordial relations with Turkey, which has supported it since gaining independence from Serbia in 2008. Turks are also investing in Kosovo's infrastructure. For example, the country's only airport and power grid is operated by Turkish company Limak, one of Erdoğan's favorite companies that almost always wins major public tenders in Turkey. Another Turkish firm, ENKA and its partner Bechtel, are currently running a \$2 billion road construction project in Kosovo.

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."¹³¹

GABON

Gabon's detention of Turkish educators was reminiscent of the story of a lamb and a hungry wolf hunting for some delicious morsels. Lamb looked so very helpless and innocent that the wolf felt he should have some kind of an excuse for taking its life. So he came up with a false justification that the lamb muddied the water even though it stood downstream. The strong unjust do not listen to the reasoning of the innocent. Similarly, Gabon authorities detained Ecole la Lumière School Principal Osman Özpınar, Pedagogy Director İbrahim Akbaş and his wife and school accountant Fikriye Akbaş in Libreville on 15 March 2018 for alleged involvement in forging documents on behalf of the school. They said the ownership of the school was transferred to the French company Mavna Cap on 13 June 2017, but not all shareholders were properly informed, and they filed charges of fraud. Balla Ndiaye, a Gabon national who owns a one percent stake in the school's property, said he was not informed of the sale. But his signature turned out to be in the sales agreement penned among others. This time, the man had to admit that he had signed the paper without read-

131 Ibid.

ing it, not knowing what it was about. But the result did not change for the teachers.¹³²

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

Meanwhile, school employee Adnan Demironal was also detained. The police asked the families of Osman Özpınar and İbrahim Akbaş to hand over their passports. The families refused this request, fearing that this would facilitate their deportation to Turkey. The police detained Osman Özpınar’s wife, Nesibe, on 23 March. UNHCR’s local representative mediated and asked families to cooperate. The families were convinced and handed over their passports to the police. The police promised that they would examine the passports briefly and return them, but they did not keep this promise. Nesibe was released on March 26, but the next day, İbrahim Akbaş’s wife Fikriye was detained.



132 SCF (2018). Turkey tries to snatch Gülen supporters in Gabon - Stockholm Center for Freedom. [online] Stockholm Center for Freedom. Available at: <https://stockholmcf.org/turkey-tries-to-snatch-gulen-supporters-in-gabon/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

But what was all the hustle and bustle for, and why did the Gabonese authorities go to such painstaking efforts to cause trouble with a few Turkish teachers? The account of the French human rights lawyer Richard Sedillot, who came to Gabon to investigate the detentions, gives a clue to the answer to this question. He said that when he went to the police station to visit the detainees, he saw a vehicle belonging to the Turkish embassy in Gabon parked in front of the police station. He also saw two Turkish embassy officials waiting at the station.¹³³

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

The total number of Turkish nationals who were forcibly detained in the police detention center, with their spouses and children gathered and detained, reached 13. Gabonese police handed them all over to Turkish authorities on April 10, 2018. In Turkey, the children and spouses were released whereas the three teachers were taken to the police station for interrogation.¹³⁴

Turkish daily *Hürriyet*, 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 Erdoğan's media, said that the crime of these three people was to run schools in Africa.¹³⁵ 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."¹³⁶

133 Ibid.

134 SCF (2018). 3 detained Turkish educators and their families handed over to Turkey by Gabon - Stockholm Center for Freedom. [online] Stockholm Center for Freedom. Available at: <https://stockholmcf.org/3-detained-turkish-educators-and-their-families-handed-over-to-turkey-by-gabon/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

135 *Hürriyet* (2018). Turkish intelligence agency brings three FETÖ members from Gabon to Turkey. [online] *Hürriyet Daily News*. Available at: <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-intelligence-agency-brings-three-feto-members-from-gabon-to-turkey-130050> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

136 *Hürriyet Daily* (2018). Turkey probes 4,167 FETÖ suspects living in 110 countries. [online] *Hürriyet Daily News*. Available at: <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-probes-4-167-feto-suspects-from-110-countries-130608> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

The trial of the three abducted persons was heard at the İstanbul 22nd High Criminal Court on 12 June 2018, and the three suspects denied their involvement in any terrorist-related activity.¹³⁷ In their statements, educators firmly denied the allegations of resorting to violence and terrorism, and contrary to such horrific crimes, they said that they have spent years to provide a better education and a brighter future for children in the Central African country, which many cannot even find on the map. According to a news of Anadolu News Agency, which broadcasts under the guidance of Erdoğan, the prosecutor's office was also unable to provide any evidence of any terrorist connection of the persons in question, but this was not sufficient for their release. After Gülen urged his followers to save Bank Asya from Erdoğan's attack, these men had deposited money into their bank accounts.

In 2014, Erdoğan wanted to seize Bank Asya, owned by businessmen close to the Gülen movement, by using state power. Towards this aim, he tried to deter depositors from the bank by using smear tactics in front of the public. He also demanded large companies to withdraw their savings from Bank Asya, threatening them with intensive financial inspections, and so fines. Bank Asya was among the financial institutions with the best capital adequacy ratio. Erdoğan's aim was to create a reason to be able to confiscate the bank after it could no longer stand the excessive cash outflow. To save the bank from this blatant attack, many, not just followers of the Hizmet movement, rushed to the bank's offices to deposit money so that the bank could meet this abrupt and extraordinarily huge, growing demand for cash. It was a very serious crime to speculate that would ruin the financial situation of a bank, and Erdoğan's party had enacted the law establishing this crime in its first years, when it was orienting to the EU. Unfortunately, while the courts did not take any action against the crime of deliberate attempt to crash a bank, they would deem the act of saving this victim bank a crime. In fact, the court ruled for the continuation of the educators' detention with this distorted perception.

¹³⁷ Anatolia News Agency (2019). Gabon'dan getirilen FETÖ sanıkları hakim karşısına çıktı (FETÖ suspects brought from Gabon appeared before the judge). [online] Available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/gabondan-getirilen-feto-saniklari-hakim-karsisina-cikti/1502226> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].



MONTENEGRO / HARUN AYVAZ

Harun Ayvaz was the director of a student dormitory in Turkey, which was closed by the Turkish government over its alleged links to the Gülen movement. After learning that Turkish authorities were accusing him of affiliation with a terrorist organization, Ayvaz applied for asylum in Montenegro. However, the Bijelo Polje High Court ruled his extradition and this decision was later upheld by the Montenegrin Court of Appeal. However, the Montenegrin Constitutional Court annulled the decision to extradite Ayvaz to the Turkish authorities due to the risk of torture.¹³⁸

The Constitutional Court applied the principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits a state from extraditing a person to a country where they would be at risk of torture. With this decision, the Constitutional Court showed that it understood the international prohibition of torture and accepted the criticism of Turkey's persecution of members of the Gülen movement, a victimization practice previously condemned by the international government and non-governmental organizations. The Constitutional Court's decision stated: "Due to the above stated reasons, including the fact that the Turkish security forces are known to torture any person for whose involvement with the [Gülen] movement there exists a reasonable doubt; the serious, massive, and systematic violations of human rights which continue to be ascribed to the Turkish security forces; as well as the aforementioned prescriptions of the Articles of the Law on International Legal Aid in Criminal Matters and the Law on International and Temporary Protection for Foreigners, the Constitutional Court finds the concern that the appellant's extradition to Turkey would violate Article 3 of the European Convention grounded."

138 Landmark, A. (2019). A Landmark Ruling by the Montenegrin Constitutional Court - a Ban on Extradition to Turkey due to Risk of Torture. [online] HRA. Available at: <https://www.hraction.org/2019/12/31/a-landmark-ruling-by-the-montenegrin-constitutional-court-a-ban-on-extradition-to-turkey-due-to-risk-of-torture/?lang=en> [Accessed 16 Apr. 2022].



KENYA / SELAHADDİN GÜLEN

Selahaddin Gülen was Fethullah Gülen's nephew and a teacher in Kenya. He was brought back to Turkey by agents of the Turkish intelligence agency on May 3 2021, after he was arrested by Kenya's Interpol due to Turkey's red notice. Then, on 5 June, he was arrested by the Ankara court on the charge of "managing an armed terrorist organization." The Ankara 27th High Criminal Court sentenced Gülen to 12 years in prison for "being a member of an armed terrorist organization" on March 22, 2022, but the sentence was reduced to 3 years and 4 months by applying "effective repentance provisions." The court decided to continue Gülen detention.¹³⁹

In August 2021, the UN Working Group sent a statement to Kenya regarding the case of Selahaddin Gülen, who was arrested in Nairobi and disappeared from Kenya's criminal investigations directorate.¹⁴⁰

139 Cumhuriyet.com.tr. (2022). Fetullah Gülen'in yeğeni Selahaddin Gülen için karar: 'Etkin pişmanlık' indirimi yapıldı. (Verdict for Fetullah Gülen's nephew Selahaddin Gülen: "Effective repent" reduction in sentence) [online] Available at: <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/turkiye/fetullah-gulenin-yegeni-selahaddin-gulen-icin-karar-1918325> [Accessed 16 Apr. 2022].

140 SCF (2021). UN Working Group to address 'disappearance' of Selahaddin Gülen - Stockholm Center for Freedom. [online] Stockholm Center for Freedom. Available at: <https://stockholmcf.org/un-working-group-to-address-disappearance-of-selahaddin-gulen/> [Accessed 16 Apr. 2022].

PART 3:

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

Enforced disappearance was a common method used by the Turkish state in its fight against the Kurdish insurgency in the 1990s. The state was quickly getting rid of its “trouble-making citizens”. The formula was simple: kidnap people, interrogate them under severe torture, get the information you want and kill them. These people’s final destinations were usually acid wells or, as a former agent confessed, boiler rooms.¹⁴¹ An estimated 5,000 people were victimized by this method, and the symbolic figure or keyword for this demon cycle was “White Toros”, a very common car in Turkey, often used for enforced disappearances.

One of the achievements that the AKP was most proud of in its early years was to put an end to the unsolved murders and to create a platform for dialogue to find a solution to the chronic Kurdish problem. All efforts to strengthen democracy in the country and eradicate the remnants of the tyrannic implementation of the state’s monopoly of violence were erased with the restructuring of the MIT on Erdoğan’s orders.

The white Taurus was replaced by a black VW Transporter van now lurking in the streets looking for its prey. The victims were now followers of the Hizmet movement. The first person was kidnapped by this method in January 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 of Tr724, the real wave of abductions started with Mustafa Özgür Gültekin, who was kidnapped in Ankara on 21 December 2016.¹⁴² According to Yalaz, Gültekin’s disappearance was related to the assassination of the Russian Ambassador to Turkey, Andrey Karlov. On December 19, just two days before Gültekin’s abduction, police

141 Timeturk (2009). JİTEM ifşaatları ve asit kuyuları gerçeği (JİTEM disclosures and acid wells reality) - Timeturk Haber. [online] Timeturk.com. Available at: <https://www.timeturk.com/tr/2009/04/16/jitem-ifsaatlari-ve-asit-kuyulari-gercegi.html> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

142 Erman Yalaz (2019). MIT’in siyah transporterları Karlov suikastından sonra devreye girdi [KARLOV SUIKASTI GERÇEKLERİ-6] (MIT’s black transporters stepped in after Karlov’s assassination [Karlov Assassination Facts-6]) - Tr724. [online] Tr724. Available at: <https://www.tr724.com/mitin-siyah-transporterlari-karlov-suikastindan-sonra-devreye-girdi-karlov-suikasti-gercekleri-6/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

officer Mevlüt Mert Altıntaş killed Karlov during his visit to a painting gallery in Ankara. Altıntaş, who had ties to a jihadist organization, was shouting slogans and marching belonging to a radical Islamist group fighting in Syria. Erdoğan and the Ministry of Interior announced hours after the incident that the assassin, who was shot dead by 33 bullets by the special operations team, was a member of FETÖ. Gültekin's abduction was followed by many other abductions in the coming months, mostly in Ankara, from public employees to teachers.

Some have been released, others 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 children to school on January 27, 2016 in the Sincan district of Ankara. It was a freezing Tuesday morning in the Turkish capital. After saying goodbye to his loved ones, he drove for about 20 minutes and stopped at the CEPA 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 am, would be the turning point when the MİT's extrajudicial enforced disappearance and torture operations against the members of the Gülen movement started. Sunay Elmas will always be remembered as the first person Erdoğan's thugs kidnapped as part of their dirty war against the Gülen movement. As of May 2022, he is still missing and hopes that he may still be alive have faded.

His family extracted a number of clips from CCTV footage showing the car driving to the mall and the moment Elmas was kidnapped. The family collected all kinds of evidence they had gathered with their long efforts, put them in an organized file and handed them over to the Ankara Police Department. Camera footage was very clean and clear. Even the faces of those who abducted Elmas were easily identified. The department just went deaf. CHP Deputy Sezgin Tanrikulu, who did his best to find out the whereabouts of all victims of enforced disappearance, helped the family amplify their voices in this case, as he did in

many other cases of human rights violations. However, even their efforts fell short of producing any fruitful results.

The police didn't even lift a finger to find out where this person might be. But they did something unexpected. Ankara Police Department, instead of finding people whose faces and postures could be easily identified in the camera recordings, announced that they have received an anonymous letter, which they said was the primary evidence of Elmas' disappearance. The letter sent to Ankara Provincial Police Department Telecommunication Department Electronic Branch from the e-mail address michaelsantaza@yandex.com on 3/4/2016 was included in the indictment numbered 2017/1121. The letter claimed that some senior figures from the Gülen movement held a secret meeting and decided to kidnap Sunay Elmas. In other words, some men in shadows took the risk of kidnapping their own men in broad daylight at a time when they were declared a terrorist organization by the Council of Ministers, instead of inviting their own men to a deserted place and getting rid of him without attracting much attention. The court did not look at the letter as credible evidence, but did not expand the investigation to examine the footage showing the abduction.

The Bold Medya news site would later claim that Elmas, based on a source close to the intelligence, was actually abducted by the MIT Special Operations Command. This source told the news site that the kidnapping was carried out by a special team formed by Kemal Eskintan, at the direct instruction of MIT Undersecretary Hakan Fidan.¹⁴³

A section is needed to shed some light on Kemal Eskintan. He served in the Turkish army for many years; he had become a colonel by the time he retired, after which he was interned by the MIT. When Fidan was appointed head of the country's intelligence agency, he tasked Eskintan with building a team of select members of the Special Forces, an elite unit of the Turkish army, that would be used primarily to protect some of the state's VIP figures. But Eskintan was more than just a bodyguard: its main portfolio was to act as an intermediary and manage the Turkish government's covert relations with jihadist groups in Syria and Iraq.¹⁴⁴

He was in a sense a lower-ranking version of Iran's top general, Qassem Soleimani, who

143 BoldMedya (2019). İlk siyah Transporter kurbanı Sunay Elmas'ın kaçırılışının 3'üncü yılı (3rd anniversary of the kidnapping of Sunay Elmas, the first black Transporter victim). [online] BoldMedya. Available at: <https://boldmedya.com/2019/01/27/ilk-siyah-transporter-kurbani-sunay-elmasin-kacirilisinin-ucuncu-yili/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

144 SCF (2018). COMMENTARY - Turkey's spy colonel Kemal Eskintan, master of conspiracy plots - Stockholm Center for Freedom. [online] Stockholm Center for Freedom. Available at: <https://stockholmcf.org/commentary-turkeys-spy-colonel-kemal-eskintan-master-of-conspiracy-plots/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

was killed in a US drone strike in Iraq. He oversaw relations with both al-Qaeda and ISIS affiliates, overseeing the supply of weapons and logistics to these groups, expanding financial aid to them, and providing intelligence tips from MIT. His involvement in various terrorist attacks in Turkey, which he used so skillfully to consolidate his power, and his actions before and during the July 15 coup attempt were also controversial.¹⁴⁵ He rose to the position of number two in Turkish intelligence and this was the point man in organizing and conducting top secret, and mostly illegal operations in Turkey and abroad. There are many indications that he is behind nearly all abductions and enforced disappearances of Hizmet members.

Eskintan's name stands out among the connections of Abuliezi Abuduhamiti, who was arrested as part of a terrorist attack on a bar in Turkey and whose ISIS connections were known before. Abuduhamit admitted that he took to the streets to support Erdoğan on July 15, 2016. There are images of him attacking and lynching Turkish soldiers who were commissioned by their superiors to stand guard, although they were unaware of the events. In one of the images, Abuduhamit happily poses with a group of long-bearded men in Islamist attires after killing a soldier covered in blood. The statements and confessions of many terrorist-related individuals, such as Abuduhamit, confirm the claims that the MIT mobilized jihadist and radical groups to create a chaotic scene on the night of the coup. Armed, financed, and supported by the MIT, jihadist groups have been reporting to Kemal Eskintan.¹⁴⁶

Investigative journalist Cevheri Güven learned that the Special Activities Interrogation Campus building, located at the intersection of Anadolu Boulevard and Marşandiz within the Atatürk Forest Farm, which is known as Çiftlik (Farm), was the place where Sunay Elmas was taken to for questioning.¹⁴⁷ According to the statements of MIT administrators Erhan Pekçetin and Aydın Günel, who were captured by Syrian Kurdish militants in 2017 during a covert operation in 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.¹⁴⁸ They also admitted that a special "FETO Department" had been established within the MIT to deal specifically with the Gülen movement.

145 Ibid.

146 MakhaterItakfir.com. (2021). Chinese ISIS terrorist, linked to deadly nightclub attack in Turkey, mobilized to support Erdoğan. [online] Available at: <https://makhaterItakfir.com/en/articleview/4185/chinese-isis-terrorist,-linked-to-deadly-nightclub-attack-in-turkey,-mobilized-to-support-erdo%C4%9Fan> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

147 Güven, Cevheri (2019). İlk siyah Transporter kurbanı Sunay Elmas'ın kaçırılışının 3'üncü yılı (3rd anniversary of the kidnapping of Sunay Elmas, the first black Transporter victim). [online] BoldMedya. Available at: <https://boldmedya.com/2019/01/27/ilk-siyah-transporter-kurbani-sunay-elmasin-kacirilisinin-ucuncu-yili/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

148 ANF News. (2022). MIT officials confess Turkey's relations with ISIS and Al Nusra. [online] Available at: <https://anfenglish.com/news/mit-officials-confess-turkey-s-relations-with-isis-and-al-nusra-%2024382> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

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.”¹⁴⁹

149 Ibid.

The Paris massacre he mentioned was the murder of three Kurdish women activists, namely Sakine Cansız, Fidan Doğan and Leyla Şaylemez, wanted by Turkey for alleged membership of a terrorist organization, in Paris on January 9, 2013. Although no one has claimed responsibility, the French investigation into the murders found some indication that the perpetrator was most likely Turkish intelligence. According to Pekçetin, Ayhan Oran was one of the organizers. He claimed he was kidnapped because of his links to the Gülen movement. As for how he could recognize the person who was brought to the Farm for questioning, he said he knew Oran because of his bow-shaped legs, as he played a lot of football.

Despite the passage of time, Ayhan Oran remains missing. However, there has been a recent development regarding his case, as his brother's application to the Constitutional Court was concluded in 2019.¹⁵⁰ In the decision's final section, it was stated that there had been a violation of the obligation to protect the right to life guaranteed by Article 17 of the Constitution, as well as a violation of the obligation to conduct an effective investigation. A copy of the decision was sent to the Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor's Office for necessary action to eliminate the consequences of the violation of the right to life. The court also ordered the payment of 90,000 TL in non-pecuniary damages to the applicant, while other compensation requests were rejected. The decision, passed unanimously, was also forwarded to the Ministry of Justice on September 14, 2022.

MUSTAFA ÖZGÜR GÜLTEKİN

Mustafa Özgür Gültekin was an officer at the Competition Authority. On December 21, 2016, at 18:15, he was followed by four cars to a market in Ankara's Beştepe district. Just 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, not the police, who managed to get the CCTV footage from nearby cameras. The images showed the kidnappers' faces, so if the police really wanted them, it wouldn't have been so difficult to find them. Even the Competition Authority got involved in this disappearance case and tried to do its own search to find the employee. Before long, however, they were visited by a team from the Anti-Smuggling

¹⁵⁰ Tan, F. (2022). 15 Temmuz sonrası kaçırılan MİT personeli: Anayasa Mahkemesi'nden yaşam hakkı ihlal edildi kararı. [online] BoldMedya. Available at: <https://boldmedya.com/2022/10/08/15-temmuz-sonrasi-kacirilan-mit-personeli-anayasa-mahkemesinden-yasam-hakki-ihlal-edildi-karari/> [Accessed 19 May 2023].

and Organized Crime Department (KOM), who warned the agency to stay away from the case as they were already on the case. But they weren't.



HÜSEYİN 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 severe torture, he was left by the roadside in Ankara one day and was forced to turn himself to the police. He was detained and later arrested. His name would soon be included in the investigation into the murder of the Russian ambassador to Turkey, Andrey Karlov. Karlov was murdered in December 2016 by 22-year-old police officer Mevlüt Mert Altıntaş, apparently in protest against Russia's positioning of him on the side of the Syrian regime against extremist, radical Islamist jihadists. "Don't forget Aleppo," he shouted before pulling the trigger. Later, the Turkish government declared that the assassination was an insidious plot planned by the Gülen Movement.¹⁵¹ However, there were many questions about the connections of this young uniformed murderer, especially his close relations with some radical Islamist figures and with Erdoğan and his Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu.¹⁵²

In his defense, in which he disclosed some details about his abduction in a court in Ankara on March 25, 2019, Kötüce denied all the allegations that he was involved in the

¹⁵¹ Walker, S., Chulov, M., Shaheen, K. and Wintour, P. (2016). Russian ambassador to Turkey shot dead by police officer in Ankara gallery. [online] the Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/19/russian-ambassador-to-turkey-wounded-in-ankara-shooting-attack> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

¹⁵² For further details concerning the assassination please see a commentary and analysis by journalist Abdullah Bozkurt, who attempted to shed light on the shady sides of the murderer and the incident in "The Murder of the Russian Ambassador Exposes Erdoğan's Jihadist Friends." Stockholm Center for Freedom, 1 Dec. 2018, stockholmcf.org/commentary-the-murder-of-the-russian-ambassador-exposes-erdogans-jihadist-friends.

assassination of the Ambassador.¹⁵³ He said he was inserted 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 had been kidnapped because he had connections with Mustafa Özgür Gültekin. The torturers nicknamed him “Yusuf”. Kötüce, who signed the statement after long sessions of inhuman treatment, psychological and physical pressure and threats, said during the trial that he “disowned everything in this testimony.” In the indictment, for example, it was alleged that he tried to gather 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.

However, during the trial Kötüce said, “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, so that I could finally face this person.” He said that he did not even hold a gun in his hand throughout his life, and that he would not dare to do anything that would endanger or disgrace his nation, such as killing the ambassador of another country. He demanded that he be acquitted and released, but the court did not free him.¹⁵⁴

MESUT GEÇER

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:¹⁵⁵ “I sensed that I was being followed while driving toward the Lale Square in Sincan on March 18, 2017. I recognized the

153 Özkan Arslan, DHA (2019). Karlov suikastının kritik ismi savunma yaptı (The critical figure of the Karlov assassination defended.). [online] Hurriyet.com.tr. Available at: <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/karlov-suikastinin-kritik-ismi-savunma-yapti-41161403> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

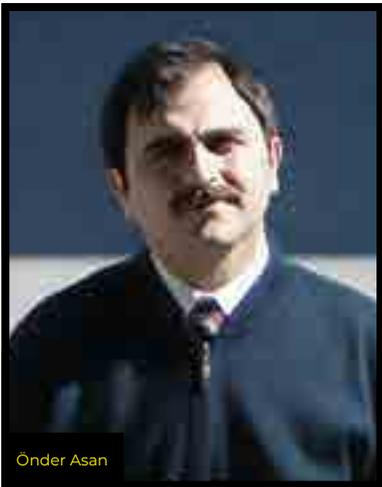
154 Zaman Avustralya. (2019). Hüseyin Kötüce: 3 ay işkenceye maruz kaldım, kaçırılanlar MİT görevlileriydi (Hüseyin Kötüce: I was tortured for 3 months. The kidnappers were MİT agents). [online] Available at: <https://zamanaustralia.com/2019/03/huseyin-kotuce-3-ay-iskenceye-maruz-kaldim-kaciranlar-mit-gorevlileriydi/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

155 Uludağ, Alican (2020). FETÖ tutuklusundan çarpıcı ifadeler (Striking statements from a FETO detainee.). [online] Available at: <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/feto-tutuklusundan-carpici-ifadeler-1712065> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

vehicles on my trail and the men inside them. They stopped my car as if it was an ordinary police control. A gray [Fiat] Doblo with license plates [starting with] 58 approached and I had to go inside. We started the trip after they put a sack onto my head.”

Geçer worked at MIT until he was dismissed after the coup attempt. Geçer was put in a cell after his kidnapping and his first interrogation on 20 March. But it didn't look like an interrogation. They covered his head with a sack and hit his head against the wall. His hands were tied behind his back. He couldn't even relieve the immense pain with his hands. This crushing blow to his defenseless head was only the beginning. “Then they continued with a malice that I couldn't describe their treatment as a simple beating. I could still tell from their voices who they were,” he said. On Wednesday, March 22, his health condition got terribly worse. He said there was bleeding without further details on exactly where the bleeding 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 20 June, when he was taken to another place. “I realized later that we were in Syria. I was traveling with my hands cuffed in plastic handcuffs and my head covered in a sack. I had plugs on my ears and a band over my eyes. But I heard gunmen approaching me. Arabic speaking men carrying Kalashnikov rifles. I was detained by them until 14 July 2018.”

On this day, he was taken to the gendarmerie station in Kumlu district on the Turkish side, with a sack on his head again. He was then handed over to the Ankara Police Department TEM Branch. “Following 16 months of disappearance, I was kept for another 17 months under detention. So, I have been separated from my wife, child and life for about 33 months. Due to the ill-treatment and detention conditions during this period, my left foot and knee were damaged. I can't use them much. I also have a problem with my colon system.”



Onder Asan

ÖNDER ASAN

Imagine a man locked in a cell no more than a foot taller than he is on either side. Even when taken to the bathroom, he is almost always handcuffed from behind with a sack covering his head. Naked, only underwear remained. A minute in a cell like a tomb lasts like an eternity. His painful imprisonment in this dark hermitage was interrupted only for random torture sessions each day. He was given enough food to keep him alive twice a day. He was beaten with batons to confess names he had

never heard of before. He is molested, threatened with electroshock machines. Önder Asan's official complaint to the Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor's Office on June 23, 2017 contained the details of these terrible atrocities and the more he had to endure.¹⁵⁶

Önder Asan was a 41-year-old teacher who was dismissed by a decree law for being linked to the Gülen movement. Like some of his friends, he lived like a fugitive for fear of being kidnapped. His fears unfortunately came true. 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 only 30 seconds of commotion, but it marked the moment that dramatically changed the life of this man, who was known for being calm, helpful and kind, forever.

His wife Fatma tells the BBC these days:¹⁵⁷ "He said that he would surrender and give a testimony after the State of Emergency [which the Turkish government had declared after the failed coup] was over. 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 still kept seeing each other from time to time. We met in Etimesgut [Ankara district] on 31 March and decided to meet again on 1 April. He did not show up and he didn't come on Sunday either."

On April 3, Fatma went to the police to report her missing, but her application was not processed as there was already an arrest warrant for Önder Asan. Therefore, she went to the prosecutor's office to report that she had met her husband despite the search warrant and that she is now missing. An investigation began. Fatma remembered that her husband once said that he lived in an apartment in Ankara's Şentepe district, but avoided giving his full address. He went there by himself to find this house and started showing Önder Asan's photo to the security guards in the housing estates. He finally found someone who claimed to have seen him around. They checked the security cameras of the building where this officer works. Luckily, records show Asan left the building at 1:48 p.m. on a Saturday. With this new information, Fatma rushed to the prosecutor's office for permission to access the camera footage to track down her husband. This effort bore fruit when Asan was seen getting into a taxi in front of the Ankara Water and Sewerage Administration (ASKİ). When the license plate of this taxi was found with the help of the police, Fatma went to see the taxi driver, who took her to the place where the abduction took place, in front of the Sarıtaş Residence Complex on Vatan Caddesi. The driver also

156 Human Rights Watch. (2017). In Custody. [online] Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/10/12/custody/police-torture-and-abductions-turkey> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

157 Human Rights Watch (2017) 'Custody: Police Torture and Abductions in Turkey'. [online] Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/10/12/custody/police-torture-and-abductions-turkey> [Accessed 25th May 2023].

explained in detail how the incident happened.

Accordingly, a black Transporter stopped the taxi by showing a gun, and another vehicle parked immediately behind the cab, blocking a possible escape route. The driver was stunned, yet he protested. The gunmen jumped out of the Transporter, saying they were cops, stopping the driver and forcibly pulling Asan out of the taxi into their vehicle.

Asan's statement recalls what happened after this. The men pushed Asan onto the Transporter's floor, laid him face down, took off his shirt and pants, and cuffed his hands behind his back. 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 about the night they received the information that Önder Asan was found.¹⁵⁸ On the night of 12 May, her father-in-law received a call from the Ankara Provincial Police Department Organized Crime Branch. Önder was detained by the police. "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 concerned about 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 a contact visit, 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."

158 Human Rights Watch. (2017). *In Custody*. [online] Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/10/12/custody/police-torture-and-abductions-turkey> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].



TURGUT ÇAPAN

Önder Asan went to Ankara's Ayvalı neighborhood on March 31, 2017, hours before his abduction. He approached a woman who was heading to her children's school to pick them up, and she called out "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 talked to the BBC about her struggle in the coming days.¹⁵⁹ Seeing that his friends were taken into custody one after another, Turgut decided to leave the house and remain at large to protect his family from all kinds of dangers due to him. Still he was seeing his family occasionally. On March 31, he was going to meet his family and take his children on a short picnic.

After Önder Asan's visit to inform him that Turgut was kidnapped, Ülkü waited one day to take action. After checking the hospitals, she went to the police station and reported that her husband was missing. He applied to the Prime Ministry Communication Center (BİMER), Presidential Communication Center (CİMER) and MİT.

She would learn that Önder Asan, who had informed her of her husband's abduction, had also been kidnapped shortly after their encounter. The two victims, Ülkü and Önder's wife, Fatma, became sisters in solidarity in their quest to find their husbands' whereabouts. Both of their spouses were employees of Turgut Özal University. When Fatma Asan and Ülkü Çapan saw that the police were not really willing to cooperate fully and do what was necessary to investigate their husbands, they started their own search. They followed their husbands' tracks through the cameras by walking around. In one of the cameras of an apartment building, they finally found Turgut while walking in the street. "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

159 Human Rights Watch (2017) 'Custody: Police Torture and Abductions in Turkey'. [online] Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/10/12/custody/police-torture-and-abductions-turkey> [Accessed 25th May 2023].

daylight in the middle of a street.”

Ülkü Capan and his lawyers went to see Ankara Governor Ercan Topaca on April 18, but this meeting did not yield any results either. In the coming days, the separate files of Önder Asan and Turgut Çapan were combined and a confidentiality decision was imposed on it. Ülkü told the 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.” As of April 2022, the fate of Çapan is still unknown.



CENGİZ USTA

Cengiz Usta left his house in Torbalı district of Izmir on April 4, 2017 and told his wife that he would be away for a short time “to pay the elevator installment”. He would not appear again for the next 87 days. It was a time of news of abductions and enforced disappearances from all over the country, so his family thought that he could have been kidnapped too, considering that Usta was dismissed from his teaching position at Torbalı Cumhuriyet Primary School by a decree on September 1, 2016.

His brother Selim, who started to investigate with his own means, learned the truth. Some eyewitnesses he interviewed in the neighborhood said that Cengiz was forced into a car by two men on Abdulkadir Street. The police report also confirms this information.¹⁶⁰

His family looked everywhere he could be and pulled all strings to at least track him down, but to no avail. On July 10, 2017, a local newspaper published in Torbalı reported that Usta had reappeared.¹⁶¹ According to that story, Usta called his brother Selim on the 86th day of his disappearance 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 salvation in escaping

¹⁶⁰ Zengin, Deniz. 15 Temmuzla Kararan Hayatlar, Crab Publishing, 2018.

¹⁶¹ Daniş, İbrahim (2017). Kayıp öğretmen 87 gün sonra bulundu (Missing teacher found 87 days later.). [online] Torbalı Haber. Available at: <https://torbaliguncel.com/gundem/kayip-ogretmen-80-gun-sonra-bulundu-h14801.html> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

from everything. This story, however, is the only one about Usta online, and the family couldn't be reached while preparing this report.



MUSTAFA ÖZBEN

After a happy breakfast on the morning of May 9, 2017, Mustafa Özben left home to take his daughter to school. He never came back. That morning was the last time he saw his children and wife. It was never seen again.

Mustafa Özben was a lawyer for the Ankara Bar Association, and like Turgut Çapan, he taught at Turgut Özal University, together with other Hizmet affiliated educational institutions, until it was closed by the government. His wife, Emine, would track him down like a detective and reveal that Mustafa had indeed been abducted by a Transporter in Ankara Şentepe.

When her husband did not return that day, Emine was very worried but had to wait a day to report her disappearance. The next day she ran to Ankara Police Department Şentepe Police Station. However, there she would find out that he was indeed wanted by the police. The police said he probably escaped, she said.

She did not believe it and insisted that it be recorded 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, that he was with his friends and was working and would call back. I was very surprised and kept asking if it was him. Despite that, we searched everywhere for him," Emine told HRW.¹⁶²

She found a lawyer, and they began investigating, starting with the route Mustafa used to take his daughters to school on May 24. They wandered from street to street looking for a clue, and were finally able to find their car parked at the entrance of a street a few kilometers from his home.

She questioned local shopkeepers if they had witnessed anything strange or if they had seen her husband. That's when she came face to face with the bitter truth. A shop owner said

162 Human Rights Watch. (2017). In Custody. [online] Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/10/12/custody/police-torture-and-abductions-turkey> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

that on the same day her husband disappeared, a man was kidnapped in the street and they couldn't stop it. He said it was like a horror movie. In fact, right after the incident, someone reported the incident to the police. Emine confirmed this by checking the security cameras in the neighborhood. As a matter of fact, a black Transporter waiting in front of a pharmacy suddenly started moving towards her husband's location. Three disguised persons, one of whom was masked, hurried Mustafa Özben onto the Transporter and sped away.

Emine and her lawyer reported this new information without delay. This time they were sure that it was a case of 'abduction' and not a simple 'disappearance'. The police went there and questioned the shopkeepers. But there was a problem. They no longer spoke as openly as they used to. "We don't know what the police said, but the second time we went, they got more scared and said they heard that my wife was wanted for a FETÖ member. I think every night. What are they doing to my husband? At first I could neither sleep nor eat. ... The disappearance of a person is nothing but banditry. I don't want my children to know that their father is missing."¹⁶³

Özben was released on August 9, 2017, 92 days after he was abducted, having lost 20 kilograms. He talked about the kidnapping and torture that he experienced in the "People's Tribunal" established in Geneva in September 2021. Below are some excerpts from his statement:¹⁶⁴

"I struggled with the thought that I could escape in the vehicle. After three or five minutes, my resistance broke. A bag was put on my head. They were discussing where to take me, 'to 34 or 06'. That means there were different places where they were taking the people they abducted. They said, 'We will take him to 34'.

The car stopped after about half an hour and they took me out. I thought there was a group of men waiting for us outside. I had a sack on my head. ... They stripped me of all my clothes and dressed me in pajamas they had given me. While I was dressing, they took off the plastic handcuffs on my hands and feet and put on iron handcuffs. I was thrown into a small cell. The cell was 3 square meters when I counted it barefoot. There was something like a hard stretcher on the soft floor that was covered with some material for sound insulation. Inside, there was a camera in the corner, a sound system, and a projector so that the camera could

163 Human Rights Watch (2017) 'Custody: Police Torture and Abductions in Turkey'. [online] Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/10/12/custody/police-torture-and-abductions-turkey> [Accessed 25th May 2023].

164 Kronos (2021). 92 gün işkence gören Özben: Cinsel saldırı ile tehdit edip çocuklarıma izleteceklerini söylediler (Özben, who was tortured for 92 days: They threatened me with sexual assault and said they would make my children watch it). [online] Kronos Haber. Available at: <https://kronos35.news/tr/kacirilan-ve-92-gun-boyunca-iskence-goren-mustafa-ozben-cinsel-saldiri-ile-tehdit-edip-bunu-cocuklarima-izleteceklerini-soylediler/> [Accessed 12 Apr. 2022].

record clearly. I think they were watching the camera closely. There was also a ventilation system the sound of which I heard for 93 days. I think this is a different method of torture. A sound that whirs incessantly day and night is constantly disturbing you. Maybe it was made for ventilation, but it was a separate torture for me.

During the interrogation, I stood facing the wall. They were in a constant panic and fear of the possibility that I might see them. Even though I was blindfolded, they were trying very hard not to show their faces. The first thing they asked was 'where are you now?' I said, 'I guess I'm in the MIT.' At that time I was shaking, my hands and feet were trembling. 'How do you know it is MIT? Maybe it's the security, maybe it's the gendarmerie.'

They said, 'Look, Mustafa, this is a place that exists and doesn't exist. ... We are the state here, now the state is managed differently. If you help us, we will drop all charges against you, we will delete them, we will send a note to the prosecutor from here, we will solve any problem about you. We'll give you a new identity, we'll give you as much money as you want. But if you don't help us, we know human anatomy very well, you will beg us here to kill you.'

I was stating that I was innocent. 'I am nothing but a normal lawyer and academic,' I said. They asked me, 'Which general did you call on the day of the coup?' I didn't call anyone. If you search, you can already find the records of all my calls.'

They brought me various files, classified by different colors. My eyes were opened so that I could look at the files, and in the meantime they were hiding behind me. There were pictures in the file and they were asking if I knew these people. These were pictures taken in natural settings, some like security footage taken at passport control, sometimes in a cafe. When I saw these pictures, I was convinced that these people that kidnapped me were certainly government agents.

I feel obligated to tell about the tortures. Constant electroshock, brutal beating... They brought a sex toy. They bent me over and said they were going to do bad things with it. They tried everything I could be sensitive to. They said that they will bring my wife and children there [to interrogate them]. ... On the day they were going to release me, on August 8, they gave my belongings back to me at 5 am and dropped me off at 9 am in Ankara Yenimahalle."

Much later, Turkey's Constitutional Court reviewed Özben's application and decided that the stay must pay TL 54.000 (\$3.700 in April 2022 exchange rates) in compensation for non-pecuniary damage.¹⁶⁵

165 Kronos (2021). AYM'den kaçırılan ve 92 gün işkence gören avukat Mustafa Özben kararı: Yaşam hakkı ihlal edildi (AYM's



FATİH KILIÇ

“To run every time the phone rings, everytime there is knocking on the door and to return ruined... Every day is a torment...”¹⁶⁶ Nihal Kiliç wrote this Twitter message on July 29, 2017. The door for him to greet his father when there is a knock on the door. “I worry for my husband’s life, and every day he takes a piece of my life too,” she wrote for days.

“My husband Fatih Kiliç 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 Kiliç wrote this Twitter message on July 29, 2017.¹⁶⁷ 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 he was dismissed by statutory decree after the coup attempt, went missing after seeing his family off at Ankara AŞTi bus station around 11:00 on 14 May 2017. Ever since the day her husband disappeared, his wife has been writing about how painful and unbearable the days have become in her notes. On the 77th day of her husband’s disappearance, she stopped writing on her Twitter wall. As of May 2022, 5 years have passed without a word from Fatih. It took 35 days for the prosecutor’s office to finally launch an investigation, and the only evidence was the image of Fatih, which Nihal found with her own efforts, while he was standing at a bus station in Ankara’s Dikmen district. However, there was not even the slightest movement in the investigation. Even AŞTi’s camera records were not checked. The prosecutor closed the file 2 weeks after opening it, leaving Nihal desperately asking “Why?”

Fatih Kiliç was a teacher who was expelled by a statutory decree. He had been unemployed for 7 months and was living with the financial aid from his parents as he had no income. After spending a day with his wife and 4 children on Sunday, 14 May, at around

decision about lawyer Mustafa Özben, who was abducted and tortured for 92 days: The right to life has been violated). [online] Kronos Haber. Available at: <https://kronos35.news/tr/aymden-kacirilan-ve-92-gun-iskence-goren-avukat-mustafa-ozben-karari-yasam-hakki-ihlal-edildi/> [Accessed 12 Apr. 2022].

166 Nihal Kiliç seems to have suspended her Twitter handle as of April 11, 2022. The Tweet content can be accessed through Zaman Avustralya. (2017). Ankara’nin Göbeğinde Kaçırılan Kiliç Ve Özben’den Hala Haber Yok. [online] Available at: <https://zamanaustralia.com/2017/06/ankaranin-gobeginde-kacirilan-kilic-ve-ozbenden-hala-haber-yok/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

167 Ibid.

22.30-23.00 at night, he sent his wife and children to his hometown from AŞTİ. He was planning to join them later. He said goodbye to his children and hugged them for the last time. Then he got on the Ankaray train heading to Kızılay at 22.55. He got off at the Diki-mevi stop from Ankaray. This was where Fatih Kılıç was last seen. He has not been heard from since that day.¹⁶⁸



CEMİL KOÇAK

Cemil Koçak's wife remembers the moment on June 15, 2017, when she answered the call from Cemil's phone. The shocked, distressed voice belonged to his 8-year-old son. The little boy told his mother 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 hurried out.

Cemil and his son had just left the house in their car. He was unaware that a black and white Ford Focus, a VW Transporter van and a Fiat Doblo were stealthily following him. He didn't even realize the danger when one of these cars hit him from behind and forced him to stop. It was 17:30. Koçak, who got out of his vehicle to understand what had happened, was put in one of these cars in front of his young son within seconds. There were four CCTV cameras in the area, but the incident occurred in a blind spot. Finding the identities of the kidnapers was not easy. Koçak was an agricultural engineer at the Ministry of Agriculture until he was dismissed with a statutory decree in September 2016. "I found my son and the people around him and the car on the road. I was in such shock that I was trying to console my son and the police came as the crowd called. I assumed they would interview people and get their names," said Koçak's wife. "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?"¹⁶⁹

No investigation was opened against Koçak. No arrest warrant was issued for him. His wife filed a criminal complaint with the prosecutor's office about the incident.

168 Türkiye'de Zorla Kaçırılmalar. (2018). Fatih Kılıç. [online] Available at: <https://trdekacirilma.wordpress.com/fatih-kilic> [Accessed 12 Apr. 2022].

169 Human Rights Watch. (2017). In Custody. [online] Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/10/12/custody/police-torture-and-abductions-turkey> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].



MURAT OKUMUŞ

“It’s been 96 days, son. I lined up the days like stringing rosary beads. I am yearning for the day you will walk through this door again. I am waiting with hope. Please come,” cried Murat Okumuş’s father, Ahmet on Twitter.¹⁷⁰ He searched tirelessly day and night to find his son.

The life of Murat Okumuş, director of operations at Şifa Hospital, was difficult after this ultra-modern healthcare institution was shut down by the government as it belonged to a foundation linked to the Hizmet movement. But losing his job was not the only tribulation he had to pass through.

On June 16, 2017, Okumuş was kidnapped in İzmir by 5-6 people who 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. His father later managed to find the security camera footage from the street to watch the moment his son was abducted and was also able to get the plate numbers of the vehicles used for the illegal seizure of Okumuş.

Ahmet Okumuş told HRW:¹⁷¹ “We also went to the prosecutor and there we were able to watch the security camera footage showing the actual kidnapping. Everything was clear. You could see the faces of those who kidnapped my son. If the authorities want their identities to be found, these images would be enough.”

The prosecutor said he would give him a copy of the image two days later. They visited the prosecutor again at the appointed hour, but the same prosecutor sent them without giving them anything; he even didn’t offer them seats while talking. He said the file was transferred to another prosecutor. They later learned that a confidentiality order had already been placed on the case, making it impossible for the family or their lawyers to even look at the details. They could no longer pursue the case; they also did not receive the same video clip confirming the moment of the abduction and the identities of the abductors. “All my wife and I want to know is to know where our son is, that he is in the hands of the state as we believe. We are in despair in this matter,” he said.

170 Human Rights Watch (2017) ‘Custody: Police Torture and Abductions in Turkey’. [online] Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/10/12/custody/police-torture-and-abductions-turkey> [Accessed 25th May 2023].

171 155 Human Rights Watch. (2017). In Custody. [online] Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/10/12/custody/police-torture-and-abductions-turkey> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

His family immediately took action to provoke public outcry over their son's illegal abduction and popular solidarity for their cause. His father and mother insistently raised their voices about the illegal treatment, searched for their son day and night, applied to all responsible institutions and organizations and ran a campaign on social media. Faced with 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 filed on August 21, 2017. The court asked the Turkish state whether the investigation was opened promptly given the urgency of the situation. Another question was whether the footage recorded by CCTVs and other security cameras on the route of the two cars involved and the GPRS data of one of the cars had been properly analyzed and secured. Questions about what the state did to identify the perpetrators and search for the owners of vehicles with license plates 48 E 8012 and 35 ZF 286, and the possibility of their involvement in the kidnapping, were also conveyed to the Turkish government.

The government defense sent by the Ministry of Justice claimed that the Republic of Turkey was a state of law. In the defense, it was stated that Murat Okumuş was a wanted FETO suspect at the time of the incident and still according to official records. Okumuş's father did not respond to the opinion Turkey sent to the ECtHR. Thereupon, the ECtHR decided to dismiss the application, stating that it did not follow the application of the applicant and that the application did not have any special reason to continue its examination in terms of respect for human rights. The Twitter account his family had been actively using to create awareness has also been inactive since September 20, 2017. It has been almost 5 years since Murat Okumuş was forcefully disappeared as of May 2022, and he is nowhere to be found.



HIDIR ÇELİK

On November 16, 2017, an armed conflict broke out between Turkish soldiers and illegal Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) militants in the rural area of Zoxbirîm (Kırmataş) village in Diyarbakır's Hazro district. During this fight, Turkish military forces killed two PKK militants and captured a civilian who was described as a terrorist collaborator in a statement by the Diyarbakır governor. It was announced that the accomplice was Hıdır Çelik from Hazro's Qubik (Bağyurdu) village. Hıdır was a farmer who

was engaged in animal husbandry on his modest farm, and traveled to the surrounding villages selling cattle and sheep. His family believed that Celik was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Çelik was in the village haggling with the villagers trading cattle when his Volkswagen Passat car was raked with bullets by some people reportedly in plainclothes, and Çelik was injured.¹⁷² 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.

First they headed to a nearby gendarmerie station, and the officer there told them that he had information about the person in question. But after making several phone calls, he changed his rhetoric completely, saying he hadn't even heard of him. The officer told the family to go to the District Gendarmerie Headquarters in Hazro. The family did. But there was no satisfactory answer there either. The soldiers at Hazro advised the family to go further until they arrived at the larger Silvan outpost. The officers there said they couldn't do anything. Confused and despairing, the duo went to the gendarmerie and police stations in Diyarbakır. Çelik was nowhere to be found, and government agencies were not willing to help them. Months passed, but it was not even said whether Celik was alive or dead.



ÜMIT HORZUM

Ümit Horzum was kidnapped near A City Shopping Center in Ankara on December 6, 2017. It was around 18:00. The next 133 days until he was found would be a trial by fire for him and his family. In February 2020, he testified at the 32nd High Criminal Court in Ankara against a suspect accused of being a member of a terrorist organization based on the confessions during his interrogation. Horzum said he didn't even know who the suspect was, and he began to describe how he was forced to implicate this man, along with about 100 others.

His statement was recorded in the court report as follows: "While I was driving in Etlik

172 Human Rights Watch (2017) 'Custody: Police Torture and Abductions in Turkey'. [online] Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/10/12/custody/police-torture-and-abductions-turkey> [Accessed 25th May 2023].

[Ankara], a vehicle blocked my way. A few people got out of that vehicle and jostled me into their car and took me away. They put a sack over my head. I was handed over to Ankara Police Department personnel by these people on April 16, 2018. I was tortured before this date. Since I was also subjected to psychological torture at the Ankara Police Department, what I did not actually say was written down as if I had told it. I was asked to sign a statement of identification even though I hadn't identified anyone. Moreover, before taking me to the police, the kidnappers used force to impose the details of the statement they wanted me to give.”

This is a very short summary of what happened to Ümit Horzum. It omits the gruesome details of the torture. He doesn't talk about the agonizing distress of his family at all times, as they live without knowing where he is, who took him, or what kind of ordeal he went through. And worst of all, not knowing if dead or alive.

Horzum had been working for the Turkish Accreditation Agency (TÜRKAK) until he was dismissed by a government decree under the state of emergency in August 2016 for alleged links to the Gülen movement. Horzum knew before he was abducted that the police were searching him to take him into custody as part of an ongoing investigation. Due to the fear of widespread and systematic torture in detention, he did not stay at home to avoid being caught. But he was caught by people worse than the police he feared.

Horzum's wife, Aynur, learned that her husband was missing from someone she had never seen before, who introduced himself as Ümit's friend. She wrote on her Twitter account that she went to every hospital, police station, courtroom and gendarmerie station to find her husband. The Gendarmerie sergeant told her to “stop his futile search as he is a [terrorist] group leader who will be sentenced to prison. He is of no use to you.” She wrote: “I am a mother of two, my children are constantly crying and asking about their father.”

Aynur Horzum knocked on every possible office door to find her husband, but no one was willing to take a step. She continued her struggle without giving up. “My husband was an innocent man who had not engaged in any illegal activity. The presumption of innocence is essential in law. If they have any claims, public prosecutors must investigate them, and authorized courts must judge them. Under a rule of law, it is out of the question for anyone to enforce their own law,” she told Ahval Haber.¹⁷³

The good news that she was longing for finally came after 133 days. Ümit Horzum

173 Yurt, Deniz (2017). Beyaz Toros'un yerini siyah Transporter aldı, son kurban: Ümit Horzum. (Black Transporter replaced the white Toros, the last victim: Ümit Horzum) [online] Available at: <https://ahvalnews.com/tr/kacirilma/beyaz-torosun-yerini-siyah-transporter-aldi-son-kurban-umit-horzum> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

was handed over to a police station by his kidnappers and was detained. He was brought to court 12 days later without any notification to his lawyer. His lawyer was also not allowed to meet with Horzum during this time. The court said that a lawyer had already been assigned to the case and that the suspect's statement was taken in the presence of this lawyer. But the court unexpectedly released him, most likely because of confessions extracted from him under 133 days of torture. Aynur Horzum shared her joy and said, "I wish from my Lord that everyone will experience the feelings that we experience now as soon as possible."



ORÇUN ŞENYÜCEL

Orçun Şenyücel went to a grocery store to buy milk for his two children on April 21, 2018. He did not return again. His family was able to capture the footage of the moment of the abduction from the store's security cameras. When Şenyücel's car stopped in a roadside park in front of the grocery store, a white Toyota approached about 5 meters behind him. The venue was in Ankara's Türkkonut district and it was about 4 minutes past midnight. The footage showed that Şenyücel was slowly making his way towards the footpath, apparently bending over to 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 was working as an expert at the Competition Authority until he was dismissed in 2016 after the coup attempt for alleged links to the Hizmet movement. A Twitter account, apparently owned by his father, wrote after his abduction: "My son was just a dismissed public servant. He has never been tried or convicted of any charge. I'm worried for his life, help me." This account was later deleted and is currently owned by someone else.

His relatives, who rushed to the police, demanded immediate action to save Şenyücel before anything happened to him. The Toyota's license plate could be read from the footage, and the police did a quick check to find its owner. But unfortunately, the plate on the white car was stolen from another car. The Transporter's license plate was not visible in the images. No further examination was made of city surveillance cameras, where

police could track where the two vehicles were going.¹⁷⁴ Orçun had been missing for more than 4 years by the time this report was updated in May 2022.



Hasan Kala

HASAN KALA

Hasan Kala was a lecturer at Çankırı Karatekin University until he was dismissed by decree law after the failed coup attempt for his links to the Gülen movement. For the past two years after losing his job, academic studies, and professional career, he struggled to hold on to his declining life. However, he was unaware that everything was about to get even worse on July 28, 2018. In the dark of the night, he was kidnapped in a black Transporter by unidentified people around his house in Ankara's Batıkent district. When his family realized that he had disappeared, they immediately

began to search for his place.¹⁷⁵

HDP Deputy Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu's tweet on February 27, 2019 was a modest attempt to break the silence surrounding Kala's misfortune. He said the academic had been missing for 222 days since his abduction and all legal attempts to find the man had been futile. The last hope was the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). A report by the Rights Initiative Association on the extrajudicial abduction of dissidents in June 2019 estimated that Kala was probably released after disappearing for about 250 days and then managed to flee the country.¹⁷⁶ The AST was not able to verify this information.

174 Gergerlioğlu, Ömer Faruk (2018). İnanılmaz bir kaçırılma olayı daha..! (Another incredible kidnapping incident..!) - Ahval - Medium. [online] Medium. Available at: <https://medium.com/@ahval/i%CC%87nan%C4%B1lmaz-bir-ka%C3%A7%C4%B1r%C4%B1lma-olay%C4%B1-daha-5dff23cd870> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

175 Tr724 Haber Merkezi (2018). Siyah transporterlar Ankara'da yine devrede: KHK ile ihraç edilen akademisyen kaçırıldı (Black Transporters are in action again in Ankara: Academician expelled by statutory decree abducted). [online] Tr724. Available at: <https://www.tr724.com/siyah-transporterlar-ankarada-yine-devrede-khk-ile-ihrac-edilen-akademisyen-kacirildi/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

176 Hak İnisyatifi (2019). 2016 Yılı Sonrası Kamu Görevlileri Tarafından Yasadışı Alıkonulma İddialarına İlişkin İnceleme ve Araştırma Raporu (Investigation and Research Report on Allegations of Unlawful Detention by Public Officials After 2016). [online] Available at: <https://hakinisiatifi.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Hak%C4%B0nisiyatifi.2019Al%C4%B1konulma%C4%B0ddialar%C4%B1Raporu.pdf> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].



FAHRİ MERT

On August 12, 2018, a group of men came to the house of 44-year-old Fahri Mert and introduced themselves as police officers. They said they needed to take him to the police station for an ongoing investigation. But they didn't. They kidnapped Mert with a black Transporter.

His family and friends later tried to find out about him, but this was not possible as there was no record of him being admitted to any nearby police station in İzmir, where the incident took place.¹⁷⁷ The person in question has been missing ever since then.



AHMET ERTÜRK

Ahmet Ertürk, an ordinary teacher, was abducted after leaving his home on November 16, 2018, when police teams raided his parents' home in another city and detained them. Two weeks after his abduction, his wife wrote on her social media accounts that all her attempts to find out her husband's whereabouts, and her applications to the police and prosecutor's office were unsuccessful. She had not received a single word from his petitions for 25 days. She sought help from opposition parties and human rights associations via Twitter messages to find Ahmet.¹⁷⁸ She wrote on 24 December:

"Today is the 40th day. I can no longer distinguish night from day. My daughter kisses the picture of her father, constantly looking at him. She is rummaging around the house calling out daddy, daddy. I am sinking into deep sorrow. Please help me." On December 25, she wrote: "For how many more days will my 15-month-old daughter remain orphaned like this. My house was shattered and we were shattered. I beg you, please help me." For-

177 SCF (2018). No news received from Fahri Mert since he was abducted in Turkey's İzmir 2 weeks ago - Stockholm Center for Freedom. [online] Stockholm Center for Freedom. Available at: <https://stockholmcf.org/no-news-received-from-fahri-mert-since-he-was-abducted-in-turkeys-izmir-2-weeks-ago/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

178 Twitter. (2022). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/AhmetErturk0625> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022]. This account has been inactive since Jan. 9, 2019.

tunately, Ahmet Ertürk was turned over to the police by his kidnapers on January 4, 2019. His wife gave the good news on Twitter, saying that Ahmet is in custody.



GÖKHAN TÜRKMEN

Gökhan Türkmen, who had been missing for 9 months, reappeared at the Antalya police station on 6 November 2019 and told the court about the tortures and many kinds of ill treatment he had to endure. Türkmen, who is currently in the high security Sincan prison, gave a statement at the Ankara 2nd High Criminal Court on February 7, 2020.

Türkmen was one of seven people kidnapped in Antalya in 2019, along with Salim Zeybek, Yusuf Bilge Tunç, Erkan Irmak, Yasin Ugan, Özgür Kaya and Mustafa Yılmaz. Of these seven, all but Yusuf Bilge were later released, and all were exhausted after months of severe torture.¹⁷⁹

Türkmen opened the curtain at the hearing with the frightening details of the inhuman treatment he was subjected to during his 271 days in captivity in a secret torture center.¹⁸⁰ According to the information given 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 by the bar to defend Türkmen without his consent, told the court that Türkmen would not make a defense. However, at that moment, Türkmen stood up and dismissed Güney and said he wanted to testify in his own defense.

After Güney left the courtroom, Türkmen began to tell the court how he was abducted by three people wearing police vests in Antalya and taken to a deserted place in the forest. There, his clothes were changed and then he was taken to a building in Ankara. There were several other people locked up in this building, but he said he didn't know any of them. "My eyes were blindfolded all the time. I was tortured during these nine months.

179 TurkeyPurge (2019). Another missing Gülenist mysteriously reappears at a police station in Antalya | Turkey Purge. [online] Turkeypurge.com. Available at: <https://turkeypurge.com/another-missing-gulenist-mysteriously-reappears-at-a-police-station-in-antalya> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

180 Tr724 Haber Merkezi (2020). Gökhan Türkmen: 271 gün gözlerim bağlı işkence gördüm, ayakta kalmaktan bayıldım (Gökhan Türkmen: I was tortured blindfolded for 271 days, I fainted from standing). [online] Tr724. Available at: <https://www.tr724.com/gokhan-turkmen-271-gun-gozlerim-bagli-iskence-gordum-ayakta-kalmaktan-bayildim-cok-az-yemek-verildi/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

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 drop of food and I became emaciated.” He said that after 271 days of torture, he was taken back to Antalya and shown as if he had never left there. Then the police took him to Ankara. The court decided that the statement be forwarded to the prosecutor’s office who is in charge of his investigation and a criminal complaint be filed against the torturers.

Türkmen showed the courage to divulge the torture he suffered, but this did not come without a price. His wife Zehra, who did not want to tell in detail what threats her husband had received, confined himself to recounting what Gökhan told her: “They are monitoring me all the time.” Lawyer Atak told TR7/24 news site that Türkmen was held alone in the cell built to house three prisoners, and that there were serious concerns for his life as long as he was held there.¹⁸¹ He said that there are extremely strict surveillance measures imposed on Türkmen and the other five men abducted in Antalya. These measures include videotaping all interactions with everyone, including their family, being accompanied by a bodyguard wherever they go, and sometimes banning their applications to meet their lawyers. Atak said, “This is not detention, it is plain bondage.”

Gergerlioğlu brought the Turkmen’s case to the Parliament.¹⁸² “Gökhan Türkmen was kidnapped in the middle of the city. We have been probing about his case with questions to the Ministry of Interior and the Presidency for nine months. Chief Advisor to the Presidency, Fuat Oktay, said, ‘There has never been a crime like kidnapping in the tradition of the Turkish state, and it will never happen.’ But this man spoke out in court.” Gergerlioğlu demanded that the Ministry of the Interior examine the allegations in depth and reveal the identity of these three people wearing police vests.

181 Ibid.

182 For a full account of Gergerlioğlu on the kidnapping of Türkmen and several others, please visit www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/genel_kurul.cl_getir?pEid=85472.



YASIN UGAN AND ÖZGÜR KAYA

On February 12, 2019, at around 3:00 pm, a group of approximately 40 police officers in plain clothes but carrying automatic rifles surrounded an apartment in Altındağ district of Ankara. Their target was two men living with their families in different flats of this building. Yasin Ugan and Özgür Kaya could not do anything but surrender to these armed people, who were pointed at their barrels full of bullets. Their heads were immediately wrapped in black sacks and they were pushed into minivans.



Their families were stunned, unable to make sense of what had just happened. The gang introduced themselves as cops, so the police should know where they are, they thought. Relatives of the two men rushed to the police station to inquire about the details of this extraordinary operation. No one knew about the operation. They began to look for a clue everywhere, to no avail. Clearly, two men have been kidnapped.

Despite introducing themselves as cops, the daring act of kidnapping people in broad daylight and the covering of men's heads with black sacks made them think that it could be MIT. There was a great reaction on social media, MPs Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu and Sezgin Tanrikulu brought the cases of these two men to the agenda of the Parliament, and even the ECtHR formally requested information about them; but all those calls turned into a stone-cold silence.

Kaya and Ugan's families were called by the police on the evening of 28 July, who said the two men were being held by the counter-terrorism units. No one revealed anything about the whereabouts of the two men during this time. The two men's requests to see their families and even their lawyers were denied. The families were told that the two suspects had already agreed with a lawyer and that their statements had already been taken under the watch of the lawyer.

Bold managed to interview this lawyer.¹⁸³ Answering Bold's questions on the phone,

183 Güven, Cevheri (2019). Kaçırılan Yasin Ugan ve Özgür Kaya'nın gizemli avukatına BOLD ulaştı (BOLD reached

Koçer denied the allegations that the suspects were abducted. She said the two men turned themselves over to justice on their own volition. She also denied Kaya and Ugan's allegations that they were not allowed to see anyone, including their lawyers and 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.

Neslihan Koçer was registered with the Ankara bar. She was known to be affiliated with the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), which was Erdoğan's staunch ally and his biggest supporter in his crackdown on Hizmet members. According to Bold's news, 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 tweeted: "I could not reach this lawyer, who is said to represent 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."

Tom Porteous, Deputy Program Director at Human Rights Watch, criticized this widespread unfair 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."¹⁸⁴

Apparently, things were not as pleasant as Koçer tried to show. For example, Kaya's trial began secretly, without informing anyone, in a courtroom where the family or the family lawyer were not informed. Even MP Tanrıkulu, who went to the Ankara Courthouse on October 24, 2019 at 09.30 to follow the case, learned that the case would be heard at the 34th High Criminal Court, which had been recently established to solely handle

the mysterious lawyer of abducted Yasin Ugan and Özgür Kaya.). [online] BoldMedya. Available at: <https://boldmedya.com/2019/08/15/kacirilan-yasin-ugan-ve-ozgur-kayanin-gizemli-avukatina-bold-ulasti/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

184 Human Rights Watch. (2019). Turkey: Concerns for Disappeared Men Now in Police Custody. [online] Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/08/06/turkey-concerns-disappeared-men-now-police-custody> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

MİT-related cases.¹⁸⁵ He began to seek the location of the newly established court. He was told it was on the fifth floor. He went there, but there was no one inside.

Ugan and Irmak, who were on trial, went to the hearing without seeing the indictment against them. In this trial, lawyer Koçer did not make a defense in favor of those on trial at the hearing. When the judge asked if the suspect needed additional defense, she answered “no.” After a two-hour-long hearing, the court decided to hold the next hearing on 20 November.¹⁸⁶

In his hearing held on June 23, 2020, Ugan stated that he dismissed the lawyer Koçer, who was appointed against his will, and told the court about the tortures he was subjected to. He said that he was taken away by the police on February 13 and tortured severely for 6 months. The sack on his head was never removed. His entire body was covered with bruises and wounds. He could take a bath 3 times in 6 months. Ugan also stated that he signed the 58-page statement without seeing it. The court decided to file a criminal complaint about Ugan’s allegations and postponed the hearing. The two people are still held in jail.¹⁸⁷



ERKAN IRMAK

Talking to MP Gergerlioğlu about her husband’s last days before he disappeared, Nilüfer Irmak said, “My husband could hardly stay at home. He was afraid of suffering the same fate as those who were abducted and rarely came home to protect his family.”¹⁸⁸ She went on: “He was at home that night. He played with the kids, we talked, and I sent him out at 11:03. He passed the part of the road that was under construction and just as he was about to pass the school on

185 BoldMedya (2019). Özgür Kaya bilinmeyen bir salonda yargılanıyor (Özgür Kaya is on trial in an unknown court room). [online] BoldMedya. Available at: <https://boldapp.de/2019/10/24/ozgur-kaya-bilinmeyen-bir-salonda-yargilaniyor/amp/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

186 Bold Medya (2019). Korsan Mahkemede ikinci duruşma: İddianamelerini görmeden yargılandılar (Second hearing in the sham court: They were tried without seeing their indictments). [online] Available at: <https://www.boldmedya.com/demo/2019/10/korsan-mahkemede-ikinci-durusma-iddianamelerini-gormeden-yargilandilar/> [Accessed 12 Apr. 2022].

187 Tr724 Haber Merkezi (2020). Yasin Ugan işkenceyi anlattı: Başımdan poşet çıkmadı, mosmor bırakıldım; 6 ayda 3 kere banyo yapabildim! (Yasin Ugan reveals torture: A sack over my head at all times, I was left livid; I was able to take a bath 3 times in 6 months!) - Tr724. [online] Tr724. Available at: <https://www.tr724.com/yasin-ugan-iskenceyi-anlatti-mosmor-birakildim-6-ayda-3-kere-banyo-ettim/> [Accessed 12 Apr. 2022].

188 Twitter, twitter.com/gergerlioluof

the corner of our house, two men rushed over to him. I saw him through the window. They ran. I couldn't make even the slightest sound."

The family, who could not sleep until the morning, ran to a lawyer first thing the next day and suggested that they wait 24 hours. The lawyer consoled the family by saying that if it was the police who took him, they would definitely inform them about it.

However, days passed without hearing from her husband. Nilüfer didn't wait idle and petitioned the police stations, the Police Department, the prosecutor's office and finally the Constitutional Court. "In the beginning they took good care of us; I mean you trust the state. But the next week they turned tough on us," she recalled. The lawyer stated 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 abducted in the same month. Despite this deafening silence of state institutions, the ECtHR was swift to show their care, she said. The court sent a response within just ten days and ordered the Turkish Ministry of Justice to provide an explanation as soon as possible concerning the abduction. But they too returned empty-handed.

Like Yasin Ugan, Özgür Kaya and Gökhan Türkmen, who disappeared in Ankara on different days in February, Irmak was abducted in February and, like the others, he appeared on the same day and was caught by the police.

Their emergence soothed concerns over their lives. However, Erkan Irmak's lawyer Emir Seydi Kaya complained that the prosecutor's office deliberately failed to take into account the seriousness of their abduction. "When I asked if there was an investigation into his client's abduction, he said, 'These people were detained yesterday. What happened before is none of my business.'" Kaya was 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 immediate abductions of Irmak, Ufan, Kaya, Zeybek, Yılmaz and Türkmen and their arrest after they reappeared at the same time out of the blue.¹⁸⁹

189 Özgür Topuz (2019). Kerem Altıparmak: Altı aydır kayıp olan biri neden avukat istemesin? (Kerem Altıparmak: Why doesn't someone who has been missing for six months ask for a lawyer?) [online] Gazete Duvar. Available at: <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/gundem/2019/07/31/kerem-altiparmak-alti-aydir-kayip-olan-biri-neden-avukat-istemesin> [Accessed 12 Apr. 2022].



MUSTAFA YILMAZ

Mustafa Yılmaz was a physiotherapist in Elvankent, Ankara. He was arrested in October 2018 on the charge that he had worked in a university preparation course in the past and that this course, which was officially authorized, supervised and completely legal at the time, was linked to the Gülen movement. He was released pending trial on 8 January 2019. He would soon be sentenced to 6 years and 3 months in prison for working there. Yılmaz, whose case went to the appeals court, was waiting for the decision while trying to keep his family afloat during this turbulent period of their lives.

His wife Sümeyye, who was a research assistant at Hacettepe University, also lost her job.

Sümeyye Yılmaz's told in a YouTube video about the incident and the troubles she had suffered following her husband's abduction.¹⁹⁰ (tr724 Haber Merkezi. (2019, June). Eşi, Mustafa Yılmaz'ın kaçırılma senaryosunu anlatıp, yetkilileri göreve çağırdı - Tr724. Tr724. <https://www.tr724.com/esi-mustafa-yilmazin-kacirilma-senaryosunu-anlatip-yetkilileri-goreve-cagirdi/>) On February 19, after leaving home for work, Mustafa took the bus and then the subway. After a while, he turned off his phone and disappeared as if he dissolved into thin air. Her application to the prosecutor's office to find his missing husband was rejected due to lack of evidence. But her doubts remained. She started to look for her husband's tracks as per the guidance of the Human Rights Association (İHD). That day she collected footage of cameras at certain points of her husband's route. Videotape of a kiosk near his home revealed the true story of what happened to Mustafa Yılmaz: Two men are seen beating Yılmaz with a sack over his head and frog-marching him. It's 07:26 in the morning. In a longer video taken between 7:00 am and 8:00 am, two black Transporter vans are seen patrolling the perimeter of the house.

Sümeyye rushed to the police once again, this time with the proof that her husband was kidnapped. However, the police calmly replied, "Yes, [apparently] he was indeed kidnapped. But that doesn't disprove the story that he later disappeared on the bus on his own." However, she submitted the recorded video clip to the prosecutor's office and had it placed in her husband's file. However, the prosecution sent this video to a legal expert for professional opinion, asking him to respond within three months, completely ignoring the

190 tr724 Haber Merkezi (2019). Eşi, Mustafa Yılmaz'ın kaçırılma senaryosunu anlatıp, yetkilileri göreve çağırdı (Wife tells how her husband Mustafa Yılmaz was abducted, calls on authorities to do what is needed) [online] Tr724. Available at: <https://www.tr724.com/esi-mustafa-yilmazin-kacirilma-senaryosunu-anlatip-yetkilileri-goreve-cagirdi/> [Accessed 12 Apr. 2022].

urgency of the case in which Mustafa Yılmaz's life was seriously at stake.

Sümeyye wandered around the corridors of the police station and court without a lawyer and with her 2-year-old daughter hanging on to her. She applied to exactly 12 different places, but to no avail. The police still insist on their scenario, saying that Mustafa Yılmaz's e-ticket was used on the bus and train. As it happens, a man wearing the same coat as Mustafa, but with no face visible, is caught on camera while passing through the toll roads at the bus station. However, the camera records of this bus are not available for the time it was used.

Sümeyye Yılmaz also applied to the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, which promptly sent a letter to the Ministry of Justice asking for information about Mustafa. The Ministry only sent the files related to the allegation that resulted in Mustafa's imprisonment. This action was ostensibly taken only to halt the process, as the ministry simultaneously asked the UN group to delay until September to prepare.¹⁹¹

On September 24, Yılmaz's family, fed up with all the developments and saddened by not seeing concrete progress, gathered in Ankara to explain their case to the public with a press statement. Deputy Gergerlioğlu was there to support them with his presence as a parliamentarian who could help should the police decide to use brute force to break up the family. An argument between the police and Gergerlioğlu during this press conference is seen in a video clip.¹⁹² A police officer said, "They are traitors. They fled the country." Gergerlioğlu responds, "You say that he escaped even though we have been looking for a trace of him for 7 months. That means you know where he is. Other people, who were reported to have fled abroad before, were found in police stations. ... I asked the Ministry of Interior about the abducted people many times, but they did not answer. The ECtHR asked the same question to the Ministry of Interior and did not receive an answer. ... So if you know where he is, hurry up and inform your minister as well." He also scolded the officer for calling a person a 'traitor' without any evidence and court decision.

Mustafa Yılmaz's family waited for 245 days with anxiety and hope for the slightest piece or news about his whereabouts. At 02:07 in October 2019, the police called Sümeyye to inform that her husband had surrendered at the Karapürçek police station in a desert-

191 Okatan, Derya (2019). Türkiye'nin 'kayıplar' utancı (2): İnanılmaz kaçırılma öyküleri (Turkey's shame of 'disappearances' (2): Incredible abduction stories). [online] *Arti Gerçek*. Available at: <https://artigercek.com/haberler/turkiye-nin-kayıplar-utanci-2-inanılmaz-kacirilma-oykuleri> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

192 Tr724 TV (2019). Kayıp Mustafa Yılmaz'ın eşi Sümeyye Yılmaz ile Harbiyeli Annesi Melek Çetinkaya gözaltına alındı (Sümeyye Yılmaz, wife of missing Mustafa Yılmaz, and cadet mother Melek Çetinkaya detained). YouTube. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVEguo32FgU> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

ed place on the easternmost border of Ankara. An arrest warrant was issued for him and he was taken to the Anti-Terror Branch. The police said that Mustafa Yılmaz did not want to hire a lawyer and that Sümeyye and her daughter could see him for a short time after first getting permission from the prosecutor's office.¹⁹³

"He was much leaner, he had lost about 20-25 kilos. His hands and skin were pale and white. I guess it was because he was staying in a dark place all this time. His hands were very cold, evidently from anemia. He suffered from malnutrition. He seemed anxious a bit, but was also relaxed," Sümeyye Yılmaz was quoted as saying by the DW.¹⁹⁴

What exactly happened in those 8.5 months is still unclear today. Gergerlioğlu told Deutsche Welle: "Why did they kidnap him and why did he appear in a police station? A missing person turns up at the police station in Turkey. It is imperative that the truth be told. We will not stop asking questions and investigating until this disappearance is clarified."¹⁹⁵

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, and ask them to perform the trial properly."

193 Okatan, Derya (2019). Türkiye'nin 'kayıplar' utancı (2): İnanılmaz kaçırılma öyküleri (Turkey's shame of 'disappearances' (2): Incredible abduction stories). [online] *Arti Gerçek*. Available at: <https://artigercek.com/haberler/turkiye-nin-kayıplar-utancı-2-inanılmaz-kacirilma-oykuleri> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

194 Köylü, Hilal (2019). KHK'lı Mustafa Yılmaz'a ne oldu? (What happened to KHK victim Mustafa Yılmaz?) [online] *dw.com*. Available at: <https://www.dw.com/tr/khk%C4%B1-mustafa-y%C4%B1lmaza-ne-oldu/a-50943284> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

195 Köylü, Hilal (2019). Kayıp KHK'lı TEM'de ortaya çıktı (Missing KHK victim appears in Anti-Terror branch). [online] *dw.com*. Available at: <https://www.dw.com/tr/kay%C4%B1p-khk%C4%B1-temde-ortaya-%C3%A7%C4%B1kt%C4%B1/a-50925957> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].



SALİM ZEYBEK

The six-year-old girl trembled with fear and asked her mother, “Mom, are they going to kill us?” His father, Salim Zeybek, has just been kidnapped by an armed team in front of her eyes that introduced themselves as the “state.”¹⁹⁶ It was February 21, 2019. Salim, his wife Betül and their two children were in a car driving from Ankara to Edirne, not knowing that they were rushing towards the worst experience of their lives. She recounted the day in an interview with Bold Media.¹⁹⁷

When Salim noticed a car tailgating him, he tried to evade and escape from its pestering chase. He had to stop after crashing into several cars. Betül took one kid and Salim the other to run to the side of the road, hoping to escape. Betül remembers how scared they were when she heard gunshots while trying to jump over a water channel along the road. “Don’t shoot,” Betül shouted. “There are children.” The men approached, aiming their guns at the family.

They forced Salim to lie down, then grabbed him by the collar and neck, dragged him to their car and sped away. The other three people put Betül and her children in a car and delivered them to Ankara after a long journey, mostly under the eerie shadow of guns, constantly changing license plates and changing the car once. They weren’t even allowed to stop for a toilet break.

The terrified women and children were traumatized. The armed gang, which introduced themselves as the state, told her not to go to the prosecutor or the police if she cared about her husband’s well-being. When Betül asked if this was a threat, they responded, “You haven’t seen what an actual threat is.” During the return trip to Ankara, one of the men handed Betül her phone and ordered her to speak to the person on the line. Her husband was Salim. His voice came out calm and said, “I’m fine. I asked them to drop you off at the bus station. Go back to Ankara and live your life normally from now on.” Betül said, “You say that to console me. How can we continue from now on? They want me

196 IPA News. (2019). Abductions on the rise in Turkey as the latest, horrific one see a father brutally kidnapped in front of his kids. [online] IPA NEWS. Available at: <https://ipa.news/2019/03/04/abductions-on-the-rise-in-turkey-as-the-latest-horrific-one-see-a-father-brutally-kidnapped-in-front-of-his-kids/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

197 Güven, Cevheri (2019). Ailesinin gözleri önünde kaçırılan Salim Zeybek’in eşi o an ve sonrasında yaşananları anlattı. [online] BoldMedya. Available at: <https://boldmedya.com/2019/03/02/ailesinin-gozleri-onunde-kacirilan-salim-zeybekin-esi-o-an-ve-sonrasinda-yasananlari-anlatti/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

not to go to the police.” “Then don’t go,” said Salim after a short silence. Still, she couldn’t wait long without doing anything. She lodged applications to the prosecutor’s office, the police, human rights associations, etc., for fear of being late to save her husband.

Salim was one of the tens of thousands of victims of the cultural genocide against members of the Gülen movement. He was fired from the Information Technologies and Communications Authority (BTK) after the failed coup attempt in 2016. His wife was also expelled from the school where she worked as a literature teacher. Their lives had already become very difficult as they both lost their jobs; however, with this latest disaster, much more stormy and difficult days were waiting for them. “They can pass judgment on my husband, but whatever they do, let them do it according to the law,” Betül said.

On July 29, she received the news that she had been dying to hear for months. She tweeted from her husband’s account that no longer exists: “One of the Ankara Police Department Anti-Terrorism Unit just called. He said that my husband is there now and is in good health. We are so excited as a family right now, I can’t even write. I will keep you informed about the developments. We were told that we could not meet him even if we went there.”¹⁹⁸

Salim Zeybek is being held in Silivri prison today. He’s alive but psychologically devastated. He can barely communicate with others and is no longer a normal person according to the people who talked to him. He is constantly mumbling, keeps repeating what is said to him.

198 Tr724 [Haber Merkezi (2019). Kaçırılan Salim Zeybek, Yasin Ugan, Erkan Irmak ve Özgür Kaya’dan haber var (There is news about the kidnapped Salim Zeybek, Yasin Ugan, Erkan Irmak and Özgür Kaya). Tr724. [online] Tr724. Available at: <https://www.tr724.com/kacirilan-salim-zeybek-yasin-ugan-ve-ozgur-kayadan-haber-var/> [Accessed 12 Apr. 2022].



YUSUF BİLGE TUNÇ

Former Ministry of Industry employee Yusuf Bilge Tunç, who was expelled with a decree law, was kidnapped in Ankara on 6 August 2019. His family started an extensive search everywhere, but he was nowhere to be found. The family began to worry about the possibility of abduction, similar to what they had been hearing about some members of the Gülen movement. They applied to the Ankara Police Department, but there was a deafening silence. The police deigned to finally answer the insistent calls from the family months after Tunç's abduction. In a written statement made on 25 December, it was stated that the person in question was already wanted as part of an ongoing investigation and that the police went to his house to look for him, but could not find him. There was no further operation to find Tunç. The statement read: "Apart from this operational work, it has been understood that no other action has been taken by our Directorate. In the UYAP inquiry, it was understood that the person had a SEARCH warrant with the decision of the 5th Criminal Judgeship of Peace and that he was a fugitive suspect in the investigation carried out by the Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor's Office."¹⁹⁹

"It's always the same story" Gergerlioğlu lashed out at the police response. "His family is devastated. It's been five months already. No city security cameras have been checked. His car has been waiting at the abduction site for months. His family has repeatedly applied for crime scene investigations, but no investigation has been performed. His family finally had to remove the car from where it was left." Tunç's car was found near the GIMAT wholesale food market in Ankara, and the family called the police to check for handprints or any other evidence that could lead to the kidnappers. However, the police refused to conduct any investigations at the scene and instead told the family, "It's likely that he left his car there and ran away" and advised the family to wait for his return.²⁰⁰

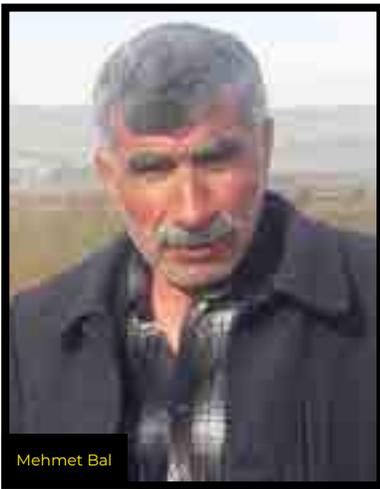
Saadet Party Deputy Cihangir İslam asked the Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu from the rostrum of the Assembly questions about the whereabouts of Yusuf Bilge. "We expect a clear explanation from you about what happened to Yusuf Bilge Tunç," he said, along

199 Kronos Haber (2020). Ankara Emniyeti 'cevap' verdi: Yusuf Bilge Tunç'u biz de arıyoruz (Ankara Police 'answers': We are also looking for Yusuf Bilge Tunç.). [online] Available at: <https://kronos35.news/tr/ankara-emniyeti-cevap-verdi-yusuf-bilge-tuncu-biz-de-ariyoruz/> [Accessed 12 Apr. 2022].

200 BoldMedya (2019). Another person was abducted: Decree-law discharged Yusuf Bilge Tunc. [online] BoldMedya. Available at: <https://boldapp.de/2019/09/12/another-person-was-abducted-decree-law-discharged-yusuf-bilge-tunc/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

with a series of questions about other abducted and tortured persons. While AKP lawmakers began to insult and verbally attack him, Soyly accused Islam of being a “traitor,” much less giving any answers to the questions he raised.²⁰¹

The family applied to the ECtHR on 6 August 2019, despairing of the indifference of the Turkish authorities. The ECtHR gave its decision on the enforced disappearance case of Tunç on 18 March 2022. The court rejected the application, finding that there was no serious flaw in the investigative proceedings carried out by the Turkish authorities.²⁰² His family reacted strongly to this decision. As of May 2022, when the report was updated, there was no news from Tunç.



MEHMET BAL

Mehmet Bal went from Batman to İstanbul on January 24, 2020 to see his son in prison. After his visit, he met with his relatives in İstanbul Bağcılar. Then he suddenly disappeared and has not been heard from since then. All the efforts of the family, who applied to the Police and Bakırköy Chief Public Prosecutor's Office, were also inconclusive.²⁰³ MOBESE records of the moments when Bal got on the Kadıköy ferry from Eminönü Pier, whose search efforts were initiated as a result of public pressure, were revealed. The family's requests for the investigation of the phone signals of Bal, whose whereabouts could not be determined, were turned down.

According to the news of the Mezopotamya Agency, a month after Bal's disappearance, a person named Rüstem Yılmaz called the family and said that he had spoken to Bal a week ago. The family reported the situation to the police, but this person's statement

201 Yıldırım, Ayşe (2019). Pazarda kadının, mecliste vekilin sesini kesmek (To silence the voice of the woman in the market and the deputy in the parliament) [online] *Arti Gerçek*. Available at: <https://artigercek.com/yazarlar/ayse-yildirim/pazarda-kadinin-mecliste-vekilin-sesini-kesmek> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

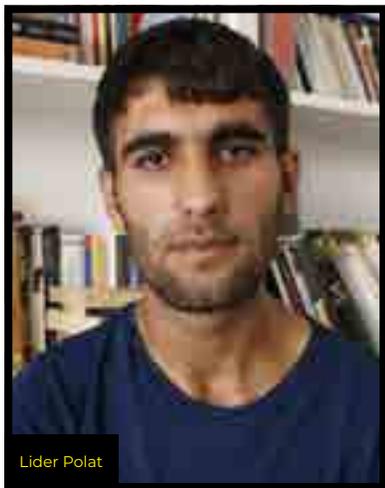
202 TurkeyPurge (2022). ECtHR rejects application against Turkey's failure to find Yusuf Bilge Tunç. [online] *Turkeypurge.com*. Available at: <https://turkeypurge.com/ecthr-rejects-application-against-turkeys-failure-to-find-yusuf-bilge-tunc> [Accessed 12 Apr. 2022].

203 Evrensel Gazetesi (2020). 52 gündür kendisinden haber alınamayan Mehmet Bal'ın dosyasına takipsizlik. [online] *Evrensel.net*. Available at: <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/399498/52-gundur-kendisinden-haber-alinamayan-mehmet-balin-dosyasina-takipsizlik> [Accessed 16 Apr. 2022].

was not taken. The family's request for the HTS records of the person in question to be examined was also not fulfilled. The Office of the Chief Public Prosecutor has decided that there is no need for an investigation into the disappearance of Bal "as there is no evidence or indication that he was abducted, forcibly detained or killed."

Mehmet Bal's son Ercan Bal expressed that they are worried about his father's life. Ercan said: "The police said 'Don't come here.' They said, 'If you come here, we will chase you away.' How can they say this to someone whose father is missing and who applied to the state authorities? After that, they showed us the images of my father getting on the ferry. But there is no footage of him getting off. Didn't he get off the ferry? Is there no camera on the ferry? From this, we understand that the state is not fulfilling its duty."

His cousin Sadık said "We don't know what to do and where to apply. They have to find out and tell us whatever happened to him. There is no justice, no law." Bal family's lawyer Ahmet Baran Çelik said: "The prosecution decided not to further the investigation in just a month. We applied to the AYM. The file is tagged as 'unsolved.' We cannot say outright he was shot or abducted as we don't have any evidence."²⁰⁴



Lider Polat

LİDER POLAT

Lider Polat, a member of HDP İstanbul Youth Assembly, was kidnapped in the Soğanlık neighborhood of Kartal on 27 August, 2020 in broad daylight by four people who introduced themselves as police. Polat described the incident as follows:²⁰⁵ "As I was walking towards the subway, someone rushed at me from behind, saying 'you need to give your testimony.' They cuffed my hands and put a sack over my head. We drove for an hour and a half on average and I didn't see anything, then I guessed they put me in an armored car, and the people also changed."

204 Birgün Gazetesi (2021). Gülistan Doku, Hurmuz Diril ve Mehmet Bal'ın yakınlarının adil soruşturma umudu (Relatives of Gülistan Doku, Hurmuz Diril and Mehmet Bal hope for a fair investigation) [online] birgun.net. Available at: <https://www.birgun.net/haber/gulistan-doku-hurmuz-diril-ve-mehmet-bal-in-yakinlarinin-adil-sorusturma-umudu-353143> [Accessed 16 Apr. 2022].

205 ANF News. (2020). 90'lardan bugüne: Seni gömeriz kimsenin haberi olmaz! [online] Available at: <https://firatnews.com/guncel/90-lardan-buguene-seni-goemeriz-kimsenin-haberi-olmaz-145634> [Accessed 16 Apr. 2022].

“He said to me, ‘We will take you to our senior brothers, you better be respectful to them.’ They threatened me saying, ‘You will do whatever they say. The people who came said they are from the intelligence agency. They threatened me saying ‘Why are you in HDP? We will not accommodate you here, you are behaving nicely. You should better return to your village.’ When I insisted that I was a normal HDP employee, they resorted to violence. They took off all my clothes, stripped me naked. I was subjected to physical violence for three hours. At the end of the day, they blindfolded me and left me on the highway in Başakşehir around 5 o’clock.

“They said to me, ‘In the forest, there are thousands of people like you all killed by the hands of unidentified murderers. If we kill you and bury you here, no soul will ever know about it’. Likewise, reminding the 90s, they said, ‘The state gave us authority. The state is behind us’. They even mockingly said, ‘Don’t forget to go to İHD [Human Rights Association] and make a press release, we get paid for it’.



HÜSEYİN GALİP KÜÇÜKÖZYİĞİT

Hüseyin Galip Küçüközyiğit was a former Turkish bureaucrat who had been missing since December 29, 2020 and was suspected of being a victim of enforced disappearance was found and is currently in a prison in Ankara.²⁰⁶

“Yesterday I got a call [informing me] that my father was in prison. I waited for some time to confirm it, but I can share the news now. My father is alive,” announced Nursena Küçüközyiğit, the daughter of Hüseyin Galip Küçüközyiğit, on Twitter.²⁰⁷ She posted another message on her Twitter account later: “I was able to see my father after many months. He was very weak but his smile was the same. He said ‘[I have learned] how much you struggled for me, my daughter.’ A big thanks to each and every one of you who worked hard to make this day come.” Since her father’s disappearance on December 29, Nursena has been campaigning on social media, going from courthouse to courthouse and knocking on the doors of local and international human rights

206 SCF (2021). Former bureaucrat missing for 9 months turns up in Ankara prison: daughter [online] Stockholm Center for Freedom. Available at: <https://stockholmcf.org/former-bureaucrat-missing-for-9-months-turns-up-in-ankara-prison-daughter/> [Accessed 12 Apr. 2022].

207 Twitter. (2022). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/NeredeBabam/status/1437685050057834500> [Accessed 16 Apr. 2022].

organizations to find her father and ensure an effective investigation.

The young woman said the news about the location of her father was first given to her grandmother by someone who introduced himself as a police officer in a phone call at around 1 a.m. on Tuesday. “Your son has been arrested. He is in Sincan Prison now. You can come and visit him,” the police officer told the grandmother, according to Nursena.

Küçüközyiğit was a lawyer and the chief legal counsel for the Turks Abroad and Related Communities Agency (YTB) before he was fired by a government decree in the aftermath of a coup attempt in July 2016. He was later sentenced to six years, three months in prison for “membership in a terrorist organization” due to his alleged ties to the Gülen movement. Before long, he was released from pretrial detention pending appeal.

A regional appeals court as well as the country’s Supreme Court of Appeals upheld the prison sentence given to him while he was missing. In May, Nursena filed an application with the European Court of Human Rights requesting an interim measure concerning her father’s case after Turkey’s Constitutional Court rejected a similar request.

Upon Küçüközyiğit’s appearance, Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu tweeted: “I wonder how the state will answer the question of where he was for nine months. Camera footage showed he was being followed by three people.”

Amnesty International issued a letter for an urgent call for action on February 1, 2020 asking Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor Ahmet Akça to launch a thorough investigation of Küçüközyiğit’s disappearance.²⁰⁸ The letter summarized the incident as follows: “I am writing regarding the suspected enforced disappearance of Hüseyin Galip Küçüközyiğit who was last heard of on 29 December 2020 at 3.40pm when he called his daughter Nursena Küçüközyiğit to arrange a meeting with her the next day in Kocaeli. Having tried to contact her father on numerous occasions in the following two days, the daughter reported him missing on 31 December at the local police station.

On 4 January, Nursena Küçüközyiğit tried to also report her father’s disappearance to the Kocaeli Chief Public Prosecutor but was told they were waiting for the referral from the police. On 5 January, her lawyer petitioned the Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor requesting that Hüseyin Galip Küçüközyiğit’s disappearance or abduction be investigated. On 27 January, the Kocaeli Chief Public Prosecutor ruled that there were no grounds for

208 Amnesty International (2021). Urgent Action Investigate Suspected Enforced Disappearance. [online] Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/fr/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/EUR4436032021ENGLISH.pdf> [Accessed 16 Apr. 2022].

a prosecution. On 29 January, Nursena Küçüközyiğit was informed that a prosecutor had been assigned to the case in Ankara.

In recent years, several men have disappeared in similar circumstances and appeared in official custody months later. Some of them described later in court the circumstances of their enforced disappearance and the torture and other ill-treatment they had been subjected to.

I urge you to ensure a prompt, impartial and independent investigation is carried out to determine the whereabouts of Hüseyin Galip Küçüközyiğit and the circumstances of his suspected enforced disappearance; any information relating to his location and wellbeing must urgently be shared with his family. I also urge you to ensure that all those suspected of criminal responsibility are brought to justice in fair trials.”



GÖKHAN GÜNEŞ

Gökhan Güneş, an electrical worker, was reportedly abducted on January 20th 2021. He held a press conference to share details of his experience, stating that he was kidnapped by individuals who referred to themselves as “the unseen”. The abduction took place in İstanbul’s İkitelli district and was caught on security camera footage.²⁰⁹

Güneş left his home to go to work and got on a bus around 12 o’clock. At the bus stop, four individuals approached him. They swooped down on him and their numbers increased by two or three. They attempted to get him into a vehicle and used an electric shock device to subdue him when he resisted. He woke up in a car with a black rag over his head.

He was then transferred to another car and brought to an unknown location. He was systematically tortured there, subjected to electric shocks, beatings, and occasionally doused with cold water, often while in his underwear or completely naked. He was confined in a section they called “the graves”, where he could only stand up, while blindfolded and handcuffed behind his back.

209 Bianet - Bagimsiz İletisim Ağı. (2021). Worker Gökhan Güneş tells what happened during his six-day abduction. [online] Available at: <https://bianet.org/english/human-rights/238207-we-are-the-unseen-worker-gokhan-gunes-tells-what-happened-during-his-six-day-abduction> [Accessed 19 May 2023].

During his captivity, they repeatedly threatened him, including with rape. They also asked him to cooperate with them. He was released one day later than he expected. They put his clothes back on him, sprayed perfume on him, and took his SIM card without explaining why. They then put him in a car, blindfolded him, and dropped him off. They told him to walk forward and not to look back.

After covering a certain distance, he removed the blindfold. It was morning, but he thought it was night. He didn't have his phone and had trouble finding transportation. He eventually took a taxi and returned to his family's home. He believes these attacks were carried out because of his socialist identity, a trend he says was common in the 1990s and expects to continue. The aftermath of Güneş's abduction has been controversial. Despite his detailed account, the Ankara prosecutors stated that there was no case to pursue, triggering criticism from human rights organizations and Güneş's lawyers, who have appealed against the decision.

UĞURCAN BAYNAL, SENA BADEMLİ AND ALİ BERKE AYDUĞAN

On February 18th, 2021, three university students from the "Ankara Students Solidarity" collective were forcefully abducted by individuals who identified themselves as the police. The abducted students, Uğurcan Baynal, Sena Bademli, and Ali Berke Ayduğan, were taken in front of their houses in the afternoon. Prior to their abduction, the students had reported in their collective's WhatsApp group that individuals claiming to be police officers were conducting criminal record checks on them and later forced them into civilian cars.

After being released, the students held a press conference at the Ankara branch of the Human Rights Association (İHD), where they shared their harrowing experiences. Ali Berke Ayduğan recounted that three police officers approached him after he left his home, attempted to conduct a criminal record check, and then forcibly dragged him into their vehicle. He revealed that they had threatened him with death and warned him to pass on the message to his friends that they would be targeted as well.

Another student, Uğurcan Baynal, shared his ordeal, stating that he and his peers were kidnapped and threatened under the pretext of criminal record checks. He recalled being told, "You are at the center of certain incidents, and we will come for all of you." After a period of captivity, Baynal was later abandoned in an empty field in the Pursaklar district.



Similarly, Sena Bademli, the third kidnapped student, was left in a location in the Sincan district after enduring threats. Nisan ıra, a friend of the abducted students, spoke during the press conference, highlighting that the police had warned the students not to participate in protests at Bođazii University.

Lawyer Sercan Aran, representing the students, revealed that they had contacted officials at the Ankara Police headquarters, who denied any detention order for the abducted students. The students were subsequently released, prompting the initiation of a legal process, including filing a complaint with the Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor's Office.

In response to the kidnappings, the Ankara branch of the Workers' Party of Turkey (TİP) issued a statement expressing concern over the torture of Ali Ayduđan and his abandonment in Gölbaşı.

Lawyer Gonen, who is representing Ali Ayduđan, confirmed that his client had suffered physical violence during the abduction. Ayduđan reported being threatened with phrases like "You are very sticking out," "We would kill you," and "We also know your friends and will take them." Although Ayduđan's overall health was stable, he experienced pain in his knee due to being violently pushed out of the car.

ÖDP MEMBERS

A member of the was kidnapped by individuals claiming to be police and intelligence personnel in Ankara. The incident occurred in front of the, as reported by the ÖDP Ankara Provincial Council.

In April 2019, a member of Freedom and Solidarity Party (ÖDP) was forcefully abducted and disappeared by two individuals who presented themselves as police and intelligence personnel at the Ankara MTA (Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure) building. The abducted party member was subjected to a method of abduction reminiscent of scenes from adventure movies. Having applied for a job through the Turkish Employment Agency (İş-Kur), the member received a job appointment at the Ankara MTA, allegedly from İş-Kur.

Upon arrival at the MTA premises for the supposed job opportunity, the ÖDP member encountered individuals presenting police and intelligence identification. These two individuals forcefully compelled him into a vehicle and subsequently disappeared them.

The ÖDP Ankara Provincial Council emphasized that the repetitive nature of these incidents has reached a distressing level. Previously, two other persons from the same party had been kidnapped. The council called upon the intelligence organization to cease such acts of intimidation and violence against ÖDP members.

Additionally, the ÖDP filed a formal complaint with the Prosecutor's Office, providing the license plate number of the vehicle used in the abduction, with the expectation that the Ankara Police Department will conduct a thorough investigation to identify those responsible for these unlawful actions.



ZEKİ OĞUZ

Zeki Oğuz, a Kurdish businessman residing in Germany and owning cafes and restaurants in Istanbul's Taksim and Antalya, was kidnapped in Istanbul in the first week of March. On March 18, 2023, three individuals abducted Oğuz in Kemberburgaz Göktürk. According to Oğuz's relatives, individuals who indirectly contacted them claimed that the MİT was behind the incident. These individuals also informed

the family that Oğuz was being interrogated and would be released in a couple of days.

CCTV footage shows Zeki Oğuz being forcefully taken into a vehicle by three individuals as he exited a supermarket before the abduction. A close associate who worked with Oğuz stated, “Zeki had undertaken significant projects in construction and healthcare in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region. This caused discomfort, and he received death threats twice in Erbil. He was coming to Turkey with fear. He had no involvement in illegal activities and was well-liked by his surroundings. He was threatened by the MİT. If he were not a German citizen, he would have been killed long ago. We learned that an MİT personnel, identified as I.A., was leading the operation against Oğuz, and he is stationed in Ankara.”

Following Oğuz’s abduction, his brother Yahya Oğuz, who resides in Denmark, arrived in Istanbul on March 19. Yahya Oğuz filed two criminal complaints with the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office, expressing suspicion towards the MİT and stating that they had been contacted by certain individuals. He said, “Our family is distraught. We are anxiously awaiting news. According to the information we received, my brother is not in police custody because the police have an obligation to inform the family within 24 hours after detention. All suspicions point towards the MİT’s involvement in his abduction. Indirect news suggests that he might be released on Monday or Tuesday. Some officials have assured us that his condition is fine and claim to be dealing with the situation.”

Yahya Oğuz also mentioned that German security forces are involved and have sent a representative to Turkey to investigate the matter.

Zeki Oğuz’s relative and lawyer, Abdurrahman Karabulut, also accused the MİT of being responsible for the abduction, stating, “We are certain that Zeki Oğuz is in the hands of the MİT and is in Istanbul because if he were in police custody, we would have found out. The police cannot detain him for such an extended period. Only the MİT can do that.”

CONCLUSION

The veil of secrecy over enforced disappearances has not been lifted, and it will likely take many years for them to be fully clarified. The first and most important fact: All these people have been kidnapped, their most basic rights have been usurped; their dignity was trampled upon by torture. Their families were also heavily affected. As reiterated in many of the cases in this report, their parents, spouses and children felt as if they were dying every day. Some of these victims have been found. Others have not been so fortunate yet.

Those found were mostly traumatized after long torture sessions. Their physical and psychological state was devastated beyond description. All of the families said that the police were not cooperative and in some cases did not even respond to even the most basic questions about the whereabouts.²¹⁰ After an abducted person is turned over to the police and is detained, their rights are extremely restricted. In some cases, they were not allowed to meet with family members and lawyers, and even if they were, a police officer was always present or all interviews were recorded with cameras.

Most of the people who reappeared after disappearing for months said they didn't want a lawyer. Even if they wanted to be represented by their own lawyers, they were not allowed. Some asked their relatives to stop the campaigns they had started while they were missing, and to withdraw all complaints and petitions made to human rights associations or courts in Turkey or internationally. They also asked their wives to withdraw their current complaints completely. In some cases, they adopted an introspective style of speaking, avoiding the looks of even their parents, spouses, and children, and deliberately avoiding talking about what had happened to them while they disappeared. All these signs suggest the possibility that these people were forced to withhold information.

In light of the principle of "beyond reasonable doubt," the cases presented in this report provide a comprehensive overview of enforced disappearances and abductions in Turkey and abroad. The evidence, including the modus operandi, involvement of state actors, testimonies, and state response, collectively establish a compelling argument for the state's conscious participation or, at the very least, acquiescence to these grave human rights violations. First, the fact that the kidnappings and enforced disappearances, which have been traditionally used by the Turkish state to eliminate dissidents, accelerated es-

210 Human Rights Watch. (2019). Turkey: Concerns for Disappeared Men Now in Police Custody. [online] Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/08/06/turkey-concerns-disappeared-men-now-police-custody> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2022].

pecially after 2016 by targeting the Gülen movement and the Kurds strongly points to the presence of the state behind them.

Secondly, the evidence and statements of eyewitnesses clearly show the involvement of intelligence agents and spies in all incidents. Third, the statements of the disappeared or those who were forcibly brought to the country, describing how they were abducted, how they were treated, and the inhumane practices they suffered, show that the secret units of the state were involved in these events. Last but not least, what happened to the victims after they were found, the statements, attitudes and policies of the Turkish state towards enforced disappearances, abductions and extraditions prove beyond any doubt that the state consciously participated in or at least condoned all these events.

The evidence and testimonies provided by eyewitnesses unequivocally point to the role of intelligence agents and spies in all instances of abduction and enforced disappearance. The accounts shared by the victims who have reappeared after prolonged disappearances reveal the abduction methods used, the treatment they endured, and the inhumane practices they suffered. These details strongly implicate secret state units in orchestrating these events.

Furthermore, the response of the Turkish state towards the victims after they were found, as well as its statements, attitudes, and policies regarding enforced disappearances, abductions, and renditions, provide conclusive evidence of the state's active participation or, at the very least, its complicity in these crimes. The Turkish state has exhibited selective acceptance or rejection of extraditions from abroad based on their perceived success, while rejecting the existence of enforced disappearances and torture within the country. However, effective efforts to locate forcibly disappeared individuals have been consistently avoided, and no proper investigations have been initiated after their reappearance.

The failure of Turkish authorities to conduct thorough and impartial investigations into abductions and disappearances further supports the view that the state is directly involved in these crimes. This lack of accountability, combined with the restrictive measures imposed on the rights of the victims, such as limited access to legal representation and the presence of police officers during meetings, demonstrates a deliberate effort to suppress the truth and obstruct justice.

It is crucial that the international community takes a strong stance against these actions, demanding accountability, justice, and the cessation of such human rights abuses. The Turkish government must be held responsible for its disregard of the rule of law,

violation of human rights, and perpetration of enforced disappearances and abductions. Efforts should be made to establish an independent and impartial investigative mechanism to uncover the truth, provide redress to the victims and their families, and ensure that such heinous crimes are not repeated in the future.

TABLE

VICTIMS OF ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE AND ABDUCTIONS AFTER 2016 IN TURKEY AND ABROAD

NO	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 Volkswagen 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."

NO	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
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.
4	Tamer Tıbık	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	Ayhan Oran	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.

NO	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
6	Mustafa Özgür Gültekin	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	Hüseyin Kötüce	IT technician	28-Feb-2017	Turkey-Ankara	Enforced Disappearance	Sentenced for 15 Years	Hüseyin Kötüce, an employee for the government-run Information and Communication Technologies Authority (BTK), was abducted at a parking lot of the Batikent 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.
8	Mesut Geçer	Intelligence Agent	26-Mar-2017	Turkey-Ankara	Enforced Disappearance	Sentenced	Mesut Geçer worked at MIT 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.

NO	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
9	Uğur Toksoy	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.
10	Cihan Özkan	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.
11	Hasan Hüseyin Günakan	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.
12	Kahraman Demirez	Educator	31-Mar-2017	Kosovo	Rendition	Sentenced to 8 years and nine months.	Kahraman Demirez, the principal of Mehmet Akif College in Cjarkova, 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.

NO	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
13	Mustafa Erdem	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.
14	Önder Asan	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.
15	Osman Karakaya	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.
16	Turgut Çapan	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.

NO	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
17	Yusuf Karabina	Educator	31-Mar-2017	Kosovo	Rendition	Jailed pending trial	Yusuf Karabina, the Vice Director of the Glistan 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.
18	Cengiz Usta	Educator	4-Apr-2017	Turkey-Izmir	Enforced Disappearance	Returned home safe and sound.	Cengiz Usta was a teacher at the Cumhuriyet Primary School in Torbalı district of Turkey's Izmir 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.
19	Mustafa Ceyhan	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.

NO	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
20	İhsan Arslan	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.
21	Turgay Karaman	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.

NO	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
22	İsmet Özçelik	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.
23-39	Anonymous 17 people	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.

NO	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
40	Mustafa Özben	Lawyer	9-May-2017	Turkey-Ankara	Enforced Disappearance	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.
41	Fatih Kılıç	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.
42	Durmuş Ali Çetin	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.

NO	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
43	Muhammet Furkan Sökmen	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.
44	Mustafa Emre Çabuk	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.
45	Cemil Koçak	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.

NO	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
46	Murat Okumuş	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.
47	Yusuf İnan	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.
48	Enver Kılıç	Educator	16-Sep-2017	Kazakhstan-Almaty	Abduction	Jailed pending trial	Enver Kılıç was the other person, alongside Zabit Kişi, 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.

NO	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
49	Zabit Kiři	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 MIT 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.
50	Meral Kaçmaz	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.
51	Mesut Kaçmaz	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.
52	Hakan İslamođlu	Businessman	19-Oct-2017	Indonesia	Rendition	Released	He was captured in Indonesia in an operation by the MIT and was deported to Turkey. He wanted to become an informant and provided the names of the some of the members of the Gülen movement in Indonesia and in several other countries and was released.

NO	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
53	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.
54	Memduh Çıkmaz	Businessman	27-Nov-2017	Sudan-Khartoum	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.
55	Ümit Horzum	Public Employee	6-Dec-2017	Turkey-Ankara	Enforced Disappearance	Released	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.

NO	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
56	Aslan Çelik	Superintendent	19-Jan-2018	Iraq	Abduction	Rescued	Aslan 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.
57	Ayhan Seferoğlu	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.
58	Erdoğan Taylan	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.

NO	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
59	Faik Semih Başoğlu	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.
60	Ayten Öztürk	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.
61	Fikriye Akbaş	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.

NO	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
62	İbrahim Akbaş	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.
63	Osman Özpınar	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.
64	Adnan Demirönel	Educator	22-Mar-2018	Gabon	Rendition	Jailed pending trial	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.

NO	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
65	Orçun Şenyücel	Public Employee	21-Apr-2018	Turkey-Ankara	Enforced Disappearance	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.
66	İsa Özdemir	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.
67	Salih Zeki Yiğit	Businessman	12-Jul-2018	Ukraine	Rendition	Jailed pending trial	Salih Zeki Yiğit 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.
68	Hasan Kala	Academician	21-Jul-2018	Turkey-Ankara	Enforced Disappearance	Missing	Associated Professor Kala was abducted after being forced into a black Transporter in Ankara's Batikent district at 11:30 p.m. on July 21, 2018.

NO	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
69	Veysel Akçay	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.
70 - 115	Anony-mous 45 people	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.
116	Fahri Mert	Businessman	12-Aug-2018	Turkey-Izmir	Enforced Disappearance	Missing	Fahri Mert was abducted in Izmir 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.
117	Ahmet Bilgi	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.

NO	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
118	Feridun Tüfekçi	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 Ceadir-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 sometime, representing a Turkish TV channel in Moldova. He was deported to Turkey.
119	Hasan Karacaoğlu	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.
120	Hüseyin Bayraktar	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.
121	Müjdat Celebi	Educator	6-Sep-2018	Moldova	Abduction	Jailed pending trial	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.
122	Rıza Doğan	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.

NO	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
123	Yasin Özdil	Public Relations Director	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.
124	Ahmet Ertürk	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.
125	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.
126	İbrahim E	Businessman	30-Jan-2019	Azerbaijan	Rendition	Jailed pending trial	İbrahim E. was the owner of the printing house that was publishing the Zaman newspaper in Azerbaijan. MIT 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.

NO	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
127	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.
128	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.
129	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.
130	Erkan Irmak	Educator	16-Feb-2019	Turkey-Istanbul	Enforced Disappearance	Jailed pending trial	Erkan Irmak was kidnapped in front of his house in Istanbul 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.

NO	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
131	Mustafa Yılmaz	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.
132	Salim Zeybek	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.
133 - 135	Fatih Keskin	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.
136 - 138	3 persons	ÖDP members	1-Apr-2019	Ankara	Enforced Disappearance	Released	Members of the ÖDP were forcibly abducted in front of the Ankara MTA by individuals claiming to be police and intelligence personnel. The party filed a complaint, providing vehicle details, urging for a thorough investigation into these unlawful actions.

NO	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
139	Yusuf Bilge Tunç	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 Çamlıca neighbourhood of Ankara.
140	Harun Ayvaz	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.
141	Harun Ayvaz	Dormitory director	16-Aug-2019	Montenegro	Attempted rendition	Free	Harun Ayvaz was the director of a student dormitory in Turkey, which was closed by the Turkish government over its alleged links to the Gülen movement. After learning that Turkish authorities were accusing him of affiliation with a terrorist organization, Ayvaz applied for asylum in Montenegro. However, the Bijelo Polje High Court ruled his extradition and this decision was later upheld by the Montenegrin Court of Appeal. However, the Montenegrin Constitutional Court annulled the decision to extradite Ayvaz to the Turkish authorities due to the risk of torture.

NO	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
142	Arif Komis	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.
143	Osman Karaca	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 ire from human rights associations in Mexico.
144	Harun Çelik	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 MIT officers were actively involved in his capture. Turkish media claimed Çelik was an active user of the communication program ByLock.

NO	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
145	Gülistan Doku	Student	5-Jan-2020	Turkey	Disappearance	Missing	Gülistan Doku, a student of Munzur University in Turkey's eastern province of Dersim, went missing on January 5, 2020. While search efforts continued for some time in the Uzunçayır Dam, where she was seen for the last time, these efforts were also ended as of August 18. Considering that the teams came across no trace of Doku, it has been confirmed that she is not in the water. There is also still no detention warrant against Zeinal Abarakov, the chief suspect in the investigation file.
146	Mehmet Bal	Farmer	24-Jan-2020	Turkey	Enforced Disappearance	Missing	Mehmet Bal went from Batman to İstanbul on January 24, 2020 to see his son in prison. After his visit, he met with his relatives in İstanbul Bağcılar. Then he suddenly disappeared and has not been heard from since then. All the efforts of the family, who applied to the Police and Bakırköy Chief Public Prosecutor's Office, were also inconclusive. MOBESE records of the moments when Bal got on the Kadıköy ferry from Eminönü Pier, whose search efforts were initiated as a result of public pressure, were revealed. The family's requests for the investigation of the phone signals of Bal, whose whereabouts could not be determined, were turned down.

NO	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
147	Lider Polat	Member of a political party	27-Aug-2020	Turkey	Enforced Disappearance	Free	Lider Polat, a member of HDP İstanbul Youth Assembly, was kidnapped in the Soğanlık neighborhood of Kartal on 27 August, 2020 in broad daylight by four people who introduced themselves as police. He was subjected to physical violence for three hours. At the end of the day, they blindfolded him and left him on the highway in Başakşehir around 5 o'clock. He was threatened that if he doesn't cut ties with the HDP, he will be killed by the deep state.
148	Hüseyin Galip Küçüközyiğit	Former bureaucrat	29-Dec-2020	Turkey	Enforced Disappearance	Imprisoned	Hüseyin Galip Küçüközyiğit was last heard of on 29 December 2020 when he called his daughter Nursena to arrange a meeting with her the next day in Kocaeli. Having tried to contact her father in the following two days, the daughter reported him missing on 31 December at the local police station. On 27 January, the Kocaeli Chief Public Prosecutor ruled that there were no grounds for a prosecution. The kidnappers later turned him over. He is in prison in Ankara.
149	Gökhan Güneş	Electrical Worker	20-Jan-2021	Istanbul's İkitelli district	Abduction	Missing	Gökhan Güneş was abducted by individuals who referred to themselves as "the unseen." He was forcefully taken into a vehicle after resisting, subjected to torture, including electric shocks and beatings, and released after being threatened and blindfolded.

NO	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
150 - 152	Uğurcan Baynal, Sena Bademli and Ali Berke Aydoğan	Students	18-Feb-2021	Ankara	Abduction	Released	Three university students from the "Ankara Students Solidarity" collective were forcefully abducted by individuals who claimed to be the police. After being battered and threatened, they were later released. The Ankara Police denied any knowledge or involvement in the incident.
153	Selahaddin Gülen	Teacher	3-May-2021	Kenya	Rendition	Convicted	Fethullah Gülen's nephew, Selahaddin, was brought back to Turkey by agents of the Turkish intelligence after he was arrested by Kenya's Interpol due to Turkey's red notice. On 5 June, he was arrested by the Ankara court on the charge of "managing an armed terrorist organization." The Ankara 27th High Criminal Court sentenced Gülen to 12 years in prison for "being a member of an armed terrorist organization" on March 22, 2022, but the sentence was reduced to 3 years and 4 months by applying "effective repentance provisions."
154	Orhan İnandı	Teacher	1-Jun-2021	Kyrgyzstan	Abduction	Convicted	In 2019, Turkey's request for the extradition of the head of the Turkish-Kyrgyz Sapat Schools, Orhan İnandı, from Kyrgyzstan was rejected. İnandı was kidnapped on 1 June 2021 by MIT agents from Bishkek, where he used to live. He was illegally abducted to Turkey and was locked in a 20 square meter room, which he called a 'grave'. There he was subjected to psychological and physical torture for 35 days. On 6 July 2021, he was handed over to the Ankara Police Department Anti-Terror Branch and was arrested on 12 July 2021.

NO	NAME	PROFESSION	DATE OF DISAPPEARANCE OR ARREST	PLACE OF INCIDENT	INCIDENT	CURRENT STATUS	DETAILS
155	Mehmet Cintosun	Turkish Citizen	20-Jan-2023	Azerbaijan	Abduction	Missing	Mehmet Cintosun was kidnapped in Azerbaijan and taken to an unknown location in Turkey. His family believes that he was targeted by Turkish authorities due to his political views.
156	Zeki Oğuz	Kurdish Businessman	1-Mar-2023	Istanbul's Kemberburgaz Göktürk	Abduction	Missing	Zeki Oğuz was abducted in Istanbul and taken to an unknown location. His family received indirect information implicating the MIT's involvement and expressing expectations of his release. They filed complaints and expressed suspicion towards the MIT.



BEYOND TURKEY'S BORDERS: UNVEILING GLOBAL PURGE, TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION, ABDUCTIONS

REPORT BY ADVOCATES OF SILENCED TURKEY
2023

WEB & SOCIAL MEDIA

www.silencedturkey.org

 [@silencedturkey](https://twitter.com/silencedturkey)

 facebook.com/silencedturkey

 youtube.com/advocatesofsilencedturkey

