



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

### **Written statement\* submitted by Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[20 August 2021]

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\* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



## **Systematic attacks, threats and intimidation perpetrated against Turkish opposition members in exile and members of the Kurdish population by the authorities of Turkey**

Society for Threatened Peoples is gravely concerned about the systematic attacks, threats and intimidation perpetrated against Turkish opposition members in exile and members of the Kurdish population by the authorities of Turkey in Europe and worldwide. Regarding the topic of transnational oppression the Republic of Turkey (TR) plays a leading role, as many European Union and NATO governments support the TR and remain silent on TR "actions" against exiles. Time and again, anti-government Turkish journalists, writers, activists and politicians have been threatened and attacked. Recently, the German government confirmed the existence of so-called death lists, on which up to 55 Turkish exiles are said to be named.

In July 2021 alone, two Turkish exiles were brutally attacked. On July 8, the journalist Erk Acarer was attacked by three people in front of his apartment in Berlin and hospitalized for head injuries. Shortly afterwards, however, he was released after outpatient treatment. Since then, he and his family have been under police protection. On July 21, Gökhan Yavuzel, an exiled writer living in Wales, was attacked by four Turkish-speaking people in a secluded park near his home. He was kicked, punched and insulted. He also required medical treatment after the attack.

On July 16, 2021, Frankfurt-based television journalist Celal Başlangıç received a police warning regarding the death list. The Kurdish musician Ferhat Tunç was also informed by the Darmstadt police that his name was on said list. The name of Hasip Kaplan, Kurdish politician and former HDP deputy, is also listed.

Erk Acarer and Gökhan Yavuzel have been under observation by the Turkish government for some time. Acarer formerly worked for the left-wing opposition daily *Birgün* focussing on reporting on Islamist terror, Islamic fundamentalism and the war in the Syrian Arab Republic. Before, he had already received threats in Turkey because of his critical reporting. In 2017, he was indicted alongside other journalists in Turkey. They were accused of publishing secret information on state security and intelligence activities. With the help of Reporters Without Borders, he arrived in Germany the same year.

Gökhan Yavuzel, a novelist and poet member of Pen International, moved to Wales in 2018. The reason was a smear campaign as well as threats against him.

Acarer recognized the perpetrators in the attack and was able to establish a direct link to the AKP, the party of Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and the allied nationalist and radical right-wing party MHP. His attackers are islamist and fascist supporters of the AKP and MHP.

Exiled journalists such as Engin Enes Sag, Fatih Akalan and Cevheri Güven are also targeted by Turkish nationalists and the Turkish government. Cevheri Güven was editor-in-chief of the later banned news magazine "Nokta." The journalist was sentenced to 22.5 years in prison for wanting to incite a civil war. The cover picture on which Erdogan was pictured taking a selfie of himself while coffins of Turkish soldiers were seen in the background served as evidence. At least ten other cases are pending against Güven, who lives in exile in Germany, for various terror offenses, including terrorist propaganda and membership in a terrorist organization. Güven is also on the death list of the 55 exiles of Turkish origin.

Engin Enes Sag and Fatih Akalan had already been warned by German security forces in 2016 that they were at risk. Both journalists were said to be targeted by the Turkish secret service MIT. After the coup attempt in 2016, Turkish intelligence chief Hakan Fidan allegedly passed on a list of around 300 exiles of Turkish origin to German Intelligence Chief, Bruno Kahl and demanded their extradition.

Most of them are alleged supporters of the United States of America exiled preacher Fethullah Gülen, whom President Erdogan sees behind the coup attempt. The movement has since been classified as a terrorist organisation in Turkey and its supporters are subject to massive persecution.

According to Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu, there have been 135,916 raids against the Gülen movement since the coup attempt. Additionally, there have been 312. 121 arrests as of July 2021.

The witch-hunt against exiles of Turkish origin continues unabated worldwide. Those who have been targeted by the TR security authorities no longer receive any consular services at Turkish consulates general and embassies. This also applies to their spouses and, oftentimes, their children. Anyone who dares to go to the Turkish missions abroad will have his or her passport taken away.

This denial of any consular services has fatal consequences for those affected: Those who cannot show a valid passport will not have their visas extended in the respective host countries. As a consequence, they face deportation.

In Kosovo, the Republic of Moldova, the Congo and Malaysia, the Turkish secret service had mainly abducted teachers to Turkey who were said to be close to the Gülen movement in schools. Most recently, the teacher Orhan Inandi Ene Mai was abducted in the Kyrgyz capital Bishkek. More than a month later, the national news agency "Anadolu" presented him in front of Turkish flags, with clear signs of torture. It later turned out that Inandi's right arm was broken in three places.

Society for Threatened Peoples therefore calls upon the UN Human Rights Council to:

- Reprimand Turkey for its persecution of exiles;
- Call on member states to grant asylum status unproblematically to exiles of Turkish origin given the denial of consular services;
- Call on member states to prevent any cooperation with the Turkish secret service to exchange information, etc.;
- Condemn the attacks on exiles by Turkish nationalists;
- Call on member states to intensify their protection of exiles.