



## **Turkey is on its way towards a dictatorship – the German government must act now!**

Turkey is facing a drastic slide to an authoritarian regime that increasingly disregards democratic principles: using the state of exception imposed after the attempted military coup, the government under president Erdoğan silences the political opposition and shuts down one critical media outlet after another as well as hundreds of Non-governmental organizations. Freedom of expression, freedom of press and the pluralistic society are at extreme risk. In view of these developments, the Network for Critical Migration and Border Regime Studies (kritnet) urges the German government to take concrete action to support and protect the democratic forces in Turkey and those who are already in exile.

Kritnet has been following the developments in Turkey for a long time with great concern. In the elections in June 2015 the AKP missed the absolute majority, and the eco-social, anti-capitalist and feminist HDP accomplished to enter the parliament. Subsequently, the government stirred up the conflict in the South-East once again, using massive military action and appalling human rights violations. In so doing it demolished a peaceful solution in the near term. After the provoked re-election in November 2015, the AKP government has criminalized more than 2.200 critical scholars, who since January have been advocating for a peaceful solution in the Kurdish region under the name of “Academics for Peace”. Since the failed coup attempt in July 2016 at the latest, the government has lead an open campaign against critical scholars accusing them wholesale of supporting terror organizations or the Gülen movement.

In line with those actions, the government cracks down on all social forces that appear inconvenient and remodel all governmental and non-governmental institutions massively in favor of the AKP. It has closed down 186 media outlets and has arrested many journalists of whom currently 144 are imprisoned. About 40.000 persons have been taken into custody since the attempted coup on July 15th, 80.000 are under investigation. At present, even the reintroduction of the death penalty is under discussion. Since the independent judiciary was defacto silenced, due to the forced change of attorneys and judges, a fair trial can hardly be expected.

More than 50.000 public service employees got sacked. The partial restriction, or sometimes complete blockage, of the internet is a massive infringement of the freedom of expression and information. The state of exception enables the government to legitimize the ongoing attacks on the freedom of press and the political opposition. Due to an emergency decree, Erdoğan is by now able to choose University principals himself who before had to be elected in a democratic process. Not even non-governmental organizations are safe – up until now, more than 300 social and political organizations are supposed to be or have already been shut down.

Moreover, Erdoğan's aggressive foreign politics, including ideas to expand the country's borders into the territories of other states, should not be ignored.

Until late September 2016, 3.800 Turkish citizens filed asylum claims in Germany, more than twice as much as in 2015 in total – a strong sign of the escalating oppression.

## **Demands**

We urge the German government to openly criticize the current situation in Turkey, however not to remain on a level of discussion but to take concrete actions. Sponsorships for persecuted opposition politicians or programmes similar to the strategy of 'scholars at risk', as they exist at some universities, are a first step in the right direction but still far away from being enough.

We urge the German government and the German parliament to stand up for a suspension of the EU-Turkey deal. Fleeing people must not be used as a protective shield for autocratic politics. Such developments have to be stopped immediately. A complete cancellation of accession negotiations, however, is not an appropriate consequence, as this would also mean a further isolation of the already weakened opposition and progressive parts of the society.

German arms export to Turkey have increased dramatically during the last 1,5 years. Especially in the light of last years' events, this is not acceptable in any way. We urge the German government to use its influence to prevent arms exports to Turkey.

Already, 3.800 Turkish citizens sought for asylum in Germany until late September. We urge the German government, the responsible parliamentary group as well as the Minister of State with responsibility for migration, refugees and integration to develop a special programme for Turkish citizens in need for protection.

We witness the constant fear of our colleagues – by now everyone can be affected. Especially those who signed the peace petition in January 2016 are subject to dismissal and are prohibited to leave the country. In the coups aftermath 6,337 academics lost their jobs. We urge scientific institutions in Germany to create additional jobs for them in Germany.

*Kritnet, founded 2008 in Munich, is a collaboration of more than 600 scholars, activists, artists and NGO representatives.*

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