

Resolution

We are on the side of all democrats in Turkey

The new and increased numbers of arrests and mass dismissals last week in Turkey are a source of great shock and concern for us. They mark another sad highlight in the ongoing erosion of the rule of law, democracy and social peace in Turkey that President Erdoğan and Turkey's government have been carrying out for quite some time.

ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS stand firmly on the side of those in Turkey who advocate democracy, the rule of law and cosmopolitanism. We strongly and vigorously criticize the latest arrests of Cumhuriyet journalists and numerous members of parliament belonging to the HDP party, including the chairs of this democratic opposition party. The European Union, and, above all, the German government, must once and for all express their criticism in no uncertain terms and respond with severity.

For us GREENS, Turkish society is part of Europe's society. Turkey and Europe have far more things that unite us than divide us. Close to three million inhabitants of Turkish descent live in Germany alone. Millions of Germans have friends in Turkey and regularly spend their holidays there – 5.5 million people in 2015 alone. Media coverage on both sides is intense and economic relations deeply entrenched as a result of the customs union. Numerous, valuable forms of co-operation can also be found in the areas of culture, education and science. The economic performance of both the EU and Turkey has also grown significantly over the past decades due to the close ties.

But these ties between Turkey and the EU have suffered enormously over the past years. Time and again, Turkey has veered off the path of rule of law and democracy. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is massively curtailing democracy and the rule of law in his country. Under Erdoğan, Turkey is transforming into a dictatorship. For us in Europe, the crisis in Turkey has direct implications.

During the first week of November 2016, the wave of repression enacted against dissenters in Turkey took on a whole new dimension: in particular, the arrest of 13 journalists working for "Cumhuriyet", a daily newspaper critical of the Turkish government, in the early hours of 4 November 2016, marks a sad highlight in terms of the Turkish government's drive to sideline the freedom of the press. The arrest of eleven members of parliament belonging to the opposition HDP party only a few days later, among them the party's two co-chairs, Figen Yüksekdağ and Selahattin Demirtaş, is a slap in the face for democratic and pluralist parliamentarianism in Turkey which gives religious and ethnic minorities a voice and equal participation. Through such actions, the democratically legitimized AKP government is abolishing democracy in Turkey. Due to the growing eradication of rule-of-law structures, there is increasingly less independent judiciary

and free press that could stop this development. The AKP government and President Erdoğan are increasingly transforming the country's politics into arbitrary rule of the majority over the minority as well as critical voices.

We must not allow the current propaganda being touted by members of the Turkish government to go unanswered. Our responses will be blunt, but objective and constructive. Everyone taking to the streets in Germany either to support or oppose Erdoğan must engage in peaceful protests. However, the deep divide within Turkish society must not be allowed to endanger the peaceful and tolerant coexistence of those living in Germany and Europe.

For a peaceful solution with the Kurds

Selahattin Demirtaş is representative of many others striving for a peaceful and political solution to the Kurdish question in Turkey. We, the Greens, supported the HDP during the parliamentary elections in June 2015 and November 2015. The party succeeded in mustering a broad alliance of progressive and liberal forces in Turkey that extended far beyond the Kurdish spectrum. We call for the immediate release of Selahattin Demirtaş, Figen Yüksekdağ, all detained members of parliament belonging to the HDP as well as all detained journalists. Moreover, everyone arrested, removed from their place of work, or otherwise politically persecuted and sanctioned in the aftermath of the failed coup d'état must be granted immediate access to fair legal proceedings.

Since the success of the HDP in the parliamentary elections of June 2015 and the termination of the peace process in the Kurdish territories a month later, repression levied at critical voices has skyrocketed. The Kurdish territories are particularly affected. The civil war has led to the destruction of several cities, such as the historical old town of Diyarbakir. Several hundred people have been killed, hundreds of thousands of people saw no other alternative but to leave their homeland. President Erdoğan, whom the EU has allowed to determine the fate of over two million refugees by virtue of the refugee deal, is thus creating new push factors in his own country.

One thing is certain: we, the GREENS, condemn any and every form of violence and escalation in Turkey's domestic conflict. The PKK has contributed to the escalation by carrying out horrendous terror attacks. By shutting down peaceful opposition and free media coverage in the Kurdish territories, Erdoğan is playing into the hands of the PKK, however, and is himself contributing towards the escalation. The civil war must not be allowed to spread to other areas of Turkey. Both sides must immediately lay down their arms and return to negotiations. The Kurdish question can only be resolved through a peaceful, political solution.

Through his extremely repressive policies and military actions against the Kurds, President Erdoğan is becoming a risk factor for Turkey, for the entire region, and also for Europe. His questionable unilateral sorties in the conflicts in Syria and Iraq are further heightening the exceptionally tense situation in the region.

“No” to any form of coup in Turkey

We strongly condemn the attempted coup that took place in Turkey in July 2016. For many people in Turkey, the night of 15 July was a traumatic experience. Many were reminded of previous coups d'états that were followed by a dark era marked by massive human rights violations and which set the country's democratic development back by many years each time. Against this backdrop, it is important to recognize how many people across all classes of society and political

camps courageously stood up to the rebels. Overall, the thwarting of the military coup represents a democratic achievement for which the people of Turkey deserve our respect. Violent acts were regrettably committed in the process, even lynchings, which urgently need to be dealt with through application of the rule of law. A military dictatorship would have resulted in the worst possible consequences for the country.

However, it was a fatal decision on the part of the government in Ankara to respond with a civil counter-coup. Under the pretence of the war on terror, repressions have since been ramped up immensely. Some 170 press media have been banned in the last weeks. Critical reporting by the local media in the Kurdish territories has become virtually impossible. Hundreds of critical journalists, authors and writers, such as Asli Erdoğan or the Altan brothers, were arrested for allegedly assisting a terrorist organization and are now being detained in prison without legal counsel. Even schools and universities are affected by the repression. President Erdoğan can now unrestrictedly appoint university principals.

Turkey is currently enshrouded in a climate of fear. Anyone expressing criticism of the government or its President runs the risk of being arrested. Under the pretence of the war on terror, anyone found to be expressing any form of criticism of the government can now either be arrested or lose their public service post. The Turkish government is using the state of emergency to also take action against judges and prosecutors. One very alarming development is the arming of officials and rank-and-file party members of the AKP with a view to replacing the regular security forces in emergency situations. Further radicalization and rising levels of violence are to be feared in Turkey as a result.

Developments in the general human rights situation are equally worrying. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have issued deeply disturbing reports of a return to acts of torture in Turkish prisons that were thought to have been overcome. The suicide rate in prisons has risen dramatically. Legal safeguards, such as legal redress, designed to guard against the use of torture are being curtailed.

We strongly condemn Erdoğan's announcement that parliament should vote on whether to introduce capital punishment. Should capital punishment indeed be reintroduced, the EU accession talks must be stopped immediately. Turkey's membership in the Council of Europe would therefore also need to be terminated.

Regrettably, the German government has turned a blind eye for far too long and ignored the massive plight in Turkey – and thus recklessly squandered vital means of exerting influence. The 2005 Christian Democratic/Christian Social/Free Democratic coalition government committed a huge error by devaluing the promising EU accession process at that time by holding a debate on a "Privileged Partnership". Instead of fostering democratic developments in Turkey, this thwarted them; democratic and liberal forces in Turkey were left disappointed instead of encouraged, and the German government has weakened the most influential tool – the accession process.

The German government must now take decisive action

The German government must – in harmony with its European partners – now send a strong message to Ankara: we object to Turkey, a candidate country for EU accession, turning its back on the values of democracy and the rule of law. If we in Germany and the European Union fail to let our voices be heard now, then we will not only be abandoning the many brave people in Turkey

who remain openly committed to maintaining their critical stance and are thus risking a great deal. We will also be damaging our credibility as a European community of values.

After the debate on the “Privileged Partnership” post 2005, the refugee deal marked another slap in the face for the reformers and support for Erdoğan’s process of de-democratization. The German government’s hesitant actions, coupled with the recurrent threats issued by Turkey against Europe, are evidence of how susceptible the EU is to being blackmailed by Erdoğan. The EU-Turkey Deal is the consequence of the EU’s refusal to reach a common supportive solution to the refugee crisis. We therefore call on the EU to develop an independent response to the refugee issue. We want to put an end to this EU-Turkey Deal. At the same time, we must do everything possible to meet the needs of the people arriving from Turkey.

Turkey is the largest host country for refugees. For this reason, the EU has a duty to work together with Turkey in the region to improve the circumstances facing the 3.1 million refugees currently in Turkey. We call on the EU to provide the refugees in Turkey with comprehensive humanitarian and political aid. The EU must insist on the human rights of these people being respected, deliver sufficient financial aid and ensure that it reaches the refugees and effectively improves their circumstances. This also entails lending far greater support to Greece during the initial reception process and when taking care of refugees. We in the EU should not leave full responsibility for the refugees in the hands of the AKP government and thus shy away from our own responsibility for a policy on refugees. This is a government that tramples over human rights and whose merciless policies in particular provide for the emergence of push factors in Turkey itself. We call for an immediate end to all deportations to Turkey.

As far back as 1963, Turks were promised the prospect of visa-free entry. By tying visa-free entry to the refugee deal, Turkey’s citizens have been turned into hostages for President Erdoğan’s omnipotence policy. Yet, today it is more important than ever to intensify exchanges between Turkish and European society, to open more channels and also to enable citizens to travel outside of Turkey while, at the same time, insisting on the EU’s terms and conditions – changes to anti-terror legislation and compliance with the rule-of-law principles – being met. Moreover, we call for victims of political persecution in Turkey to be generously received in Germany.

As critical reporting is virtually impossible in Turkey at the moment, we also want to aid access to information from Europe. To this end, Turkish-language media, such as the Turkish-language programmes of Deutsche Welle radio or Euronews, should be given greater assistance. We call for Turkish journalists residing in Europe to be sponsored through specific programmes.

President Erdoğan is meanwhile working to prevent his country’s accession to Europe because his political goals are not compatible with the values of democracy, human rights, rule of law and open societies. However, the majority of Turkey’s society wants democracy and supports the EU accession process. Completely breaking off the EU accession talks now would send the wrong message to Ankara and to Turkish society. The EU accession talks have de facto already been put on ice. It is currently inconceivable for the negotiations to be continued with a Turkish government that is regressing in all areas where progress is so urgently needed. It is up to Turkey’s government to make that change. At the same time, we should not penalize the wrong people, however. Turkey’s civil society and opposition need us now more than ever. The gateway to the EU must remain open for a democratic and cosmopolitan Turkey.

We reject the Grand Coalition’s move on 10 November to extend the military mandate in Syria (including the deployment of AWACS and Tornado jets) from its base in Turkey – especially since

the intelligence extracted by Germany's Tornado jets is shared with Turkey. Turkey's military operations in Syria and Northern Iraq, which are primarily directed against the Kurds, violates international law. The withdrawal of German armed forces from Incirlik is overdue. It is equally unacceptable that a request submitted by a German member of parliament to visit the facility in Incirlik is once again being blocked by Turkey. We also call for an immediate stop to all arms exports to Turkey so long as Turkey wages war against its own civilians in the south-east of the country. NATO members are also required to abide by human rights and democratic standards, which Turkey is presently violating to a massive degree.