

# **Turkish dilemma: Lack of good governance**

Friday 26 October 2007, by [Lale Sariibrahimoglu](#)

**During the three-and-a-half-day religious holiday between Oct. 11 and 14, 97 people died and 461 were injured as a result of traffic accidents in various cities across Turkey. This figure is much higher than the number of deaths that occurred in the first half of this year as a result of terrorist attacks perpetrated by the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) in the Kurdish-dominated Southeast.**

According to information released on the Web site of the Turkish General Staff, 55 soldiers died in the first six months of the year due to PKK terrorism.

The number of soldiers and civilians dying as a result of PKK terror has gone up since then, but in a mere three-and-a-half days, 97 people fell victim to traffic accidents. The number of deaths as a result of such accidents in Turkey is between six and 11 times higher than in EU countries, said Associate Professor Nebi Sümer from Middle East Technical University (ODTÜ) Psychology Department (Oct. 14, 2007, Milliyet).

Another story in Milliyet a day earlier detailed a telephone conversation between a member of an organized crime gang and a member of the Supreme Court of Appeals that reveals attempts by the latter to save one of the defendants from being tried (Tolga Şardan, Oct. 13, 2007, Milliyet).

As you all know, the Supreme Court of Appeals is the final point at which people seeking justice can make their case. But the same court's name has once again been tarnished by attempts to influence the prosecutors' investigation of criminal activity.

In any other democratic society, such an act involving the judiciary would result in a serious overhaul of the justice system to assure the supremacy of the rule of law and to prevent any further deepening of the citizens' disbelief in the capability of their nation's justice system.

*Mehmet Altan*, Star daily's chief columnist says ironically in his article, published yesterday, that he thought this story from Milliyet, revealing a connection between a defendant and a member of the judiciary, should have caused a serious uproar throughout the country. Because, he says, such uproar could be expected to take place in any society that places its trust in the rule of law.

Then he republished the telephone conversation between the defendant and the member of the Supreme Court of Appeals, leaving the conclusion to the readers but remarking that the details of the tapped telephone conversation reveal a terrible situation.

"If there is no judiciary that means there is no state. ...If there is no state.... forget about the Armenian issue and the Kurdish issue; you can't prevent people from dying when there is rain in İstanbul (yesterday). Anyway, we can't prevent any of this. Because a state that can't address the problems of the supreme court of appeals can't solve any of its problems..."(Mehmet Altan, Oct. 15, 2007, Star daily)

Isn't Altan right in his analysis of these latest developments?

## **No rational manner**

On the one hand, in only three-and-a-half days 97 people died as a result of traffic accidents and terrorism attacks have continued to take many lives. On the other hand, for many years now indictments of judges investigating organized crime have revealed a bizarre web of relationships between criminals and

significant figures in the state. In other words, failure to punish criminals has been increasingly damaging to the hearts and minds of many Turks. Many citizens are losing their lives as a result of both traffic and PKK terror but there has been no significant attempt to change these situations. None of the Turkish decision makers attempted to address the 23-year old PKK problem in a rational manner. Instead, they resorted to military retaliation.

The same lack of initiative marks the handling of the Armenian issue too. No convincing action has been taken against the allegations that Ottoman Turks perpetrated genocide against the Armenians during World War I. This has been an issue for almost the past 90 years yet the Turkish state has done nothing except deny the allegations.

Instead of using diplomatic methods as the first step in the resolution of disputes, Turkish decision makers have once again resorted to threats. I am referring to the current Turkish threats of entering northern Iraq and the possible adoption of retaliatory measures against the US over the adoption by the US House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs of a resolution labeling the World War I events as genocide. Unfortunately the parliaments of over 20 countries have already passed resolutions that accuse Ottoman Turks of genocide against the Armenians. In the meantime, we have never managed to counter such allegations with the evidence, which I am sure Turkey is in possession of, that those events could have never constituted genocide.

If a state does not seek equal justice for all of its citizens, it will never convince outsiders of the justness of its causes.

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## **Sources**

Source : TDZ, 16.10.2007