

Turkeys Deep State Surfaces Again

Posted on 8. März 2014 by Toros Sarian

In June 2007 Turkish police discovered large quantities of weapons in a house in Istanbul.

As a result of investigations 40 suspects were taken into Police custody, all belonging to the terrorist nationalist group called "Ergenekon". The Public Prosecutor accuses the Forty of having planned assassinations and military attacks with the aim of creating chaos and provoking military intervention. Numerous groups belong to this network, calling themselves "nationalists", "Kemalists" or "Ataturkists". Ergenekon is also suspected of being behind the murder of three Christians in the city of Malatya, the murder of the Italian priest Santoro in Trabzon and being involved in the murder of Hrant Dink. The arrest of members of this terrorist group has been headlined as a significant blow against the "Deep State".

Among the arrested is Kemal Kerincsiz, the Chairman of an extreme right-wing lawyer's association. He was also responsible for instigating court proceedings for Defamation of Turkishness which led to the prosecution of Hrant Dink and other critical intellectuals. A key figure within this nationalistic Network is the former general of the Gendarmerie and founder of the of the Gendarmerie secret service (JITEM), Veli Küçük. This secret organisation is responsible for numerous unsolved murders, mainly Kurds, who had been accused of supporting the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the Kurdish liberation movement. Veli Küçük openly threatened Hrant Dink during the court proceedings. Erdal Dogan, the lawyer of Dink's family, said later that Dink had taken the threat very seriously as Veli Küçük was already known to be the man behind the numerous assassinations carried out by paramilitary groups. The Ex-General has close contacts to high ranking members of the armed forces, security forces, common criminals and Fascist groups. It is doubtful, if the destruction of this terrorist organisation Ergenekon will have any real effect on the "Deep State". Lawyer and human rights campaigner Orhan Kemal Cengiz described Ergenekon as "just the Tip of the Tip of the iceberg".

While the world is still waiting for the proclaimed reform of Paragraph 301 the publishers and writers of Agos are still being terrorised by prosecutions. On the 11th October 2007 Arat Dink the son of Hrant Dink and Sarkis Seropyan the owner of Agos, both received 12 month suspended prison sentences in accordance with

paragraph 301. Their crime was to print an interview with Hrant Dink in Agos in which he said during an interview given to the Reuters Press Agency “I say, what is certain is Genocide. The results themselves describe the event and classify them. You see a race that for four thousand years had lived on this soil suddenly disappear from the face of the earth after this event”. This quote had already been used by many newspapers and also on television. But only as Agos printed the interview did the State start the prosecution proceedings for Defamation of Turkishness.

In the judgement against Arat Dink and Sarkis Seropyan the court drew on the events of 1915. The court was convinced that the Armenians had organised and carried out armed resistance against the Ottoman Empire between 1895 and 1915. Therefore, the government during the First World War decided on relocating the Armenians. Through the implementation of this policy many people may have lost their lives, but the events could not be described as Genocide. The court also pointed out that the European Court of Human Rights allows the restriction of Freedom of Speech when this aids the maintenance of National Security, Territorial Integrity, Public Security, Rule of Law and Prevention of Crime. According to the court judgement, the claim that during the Ottoman Empire period a Genocide of Armenians took place, aims “to destroy Public Order in Turkey”. Just one day after the Foreign Affairs Committee in the US Congress had through a resolution recognised the Armenian Genocide, Arat Dink and Sarkis Seropyan were sentenced to prison for Defamation of Turkishness.

Since 19th January 2007 there has been no obvious change in the judicial direction of the Turkish courts. This can be seen in the case of journalist Temel Demirer which shows clearly how the Turkish Legal system tries to silence and intimidate critical opposition intellectuals. Shortly after Dink's murder in a statement in Ankara he called for mass infringements against Paragraph 301. “Our history contains an act of Genocide, a Genocide of the Armenians. For discussing this openly, Hrant Dink paid with his life” said Demirer. One year after this statement Demirer was in court facing charges of Defamation of Turkishness.

The developments since 19th January 2007 show clearly that the AKP Government is unwilling to prevent the restrictions to Freedom of Speech and Freedom of the Press.

The trial against Hrant Dink's murderer, which began in July 2007 continued in January this year. The 19 accused standing before the court were charged with

murder, membership and support of a terrorist organisation and illegal possession of weapons. The investigations filled 8000 pages, but Dinks family's lawyers criticised the investigations as important evidence was destroyed. Members of the Security Department were not interrogated although it was obvious that they were involved in the murder.

Moreover, every pertinent question which could have led to the unveiling of the backers of the murder was avoided. Fethiye Cetin, Dinks family lawyer, believes that only the "small fry" were standing in the court. There are signs that the proceedings will be drawn out, perhaps over years and it is already clear that the authorities are not prepared to unveil the truth surrounding the murder of Hrant Dink. Etyen Mahcupyan wrote in an article published in the newspaper "Zaman" regarding the attitude of the Turkish Judicial system "What this stance really reveals is that the justice system is not only invested in protecting the bureaucracy but is also afraid of the bureaucracy. What this all leads to is the serious danger that the justice system will be perceived as being neither neutral nor distanced when it comes to cases, and that it in fact blocks the emergence and revelation of secret organizations within the bureaucracy."

Within the AKP there are forces which are resisting any changes to paragraph 301 and a comprehensive reform of the judicial system. The policies of this Government are hardly any different from previous Turkish Governments. Up until now, the AKP has succeeded in presenting the Party as a democratic Islamic reforming party.

Unfortunately, many Armenians voted for the AKP with the hope that their promises of more Democracy in Turkey would be kept. The AKP was also supported by Liberal Turks as a democratic alternative to the other more extreme nationalistic orientated parties. However, reality shows that the AKP Government is not really interested in a comprehensive democratisation of Turkey. Neither is it willing to prevent the growth of Turkish Nationalism. Exactly the opposite trend is identifiable, Turkish Nationalism within Turkey and Turkish foreign policy is becoming more and more aggressive.

First published in Massis Weekly, 08.03.2008