

# The Turkey Analyst

BI-WEEKLY BRIEFING  
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# THE TURKEY ANALYST

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**BACKGROUND:** ca. 500 words of analysis about what has led up to the event or issue and why this issue is critical to the region. Include background information about the views and experiences of the local population.

**IMPLICATIONS:** 500 to 700 words of analysis of the ramifications of this event or issue, including where applicable, implications for the local people's future.

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## TURKISH POLITICAL CORRUPTION: THE AKP, TOO?

M. K. Kaya

*Corruption allegations have a prominent place on the Turkish political agenda. In a sense, the history of Turkish democracy reads like a chronicle of corruption allegations directed at governments. With the evolution of Turkey's economy and the rapid urbanization since 1980, corruption has affected all governing parties following that year's military coup. The same has been true for the AKP, in spite of the party's self-proclaimed image of purity and its anti-corruption rhetoric. A recent German court case exposes the mechanisms of Islamist political and media finance.*

**BACKGROUND:** The urbanization process in Turkey, speeding up in the 1950s and subsequent decades, contributed to ingraining corruption in the system. Indeed, urbanization largely took place through the illegal building of slum houses, the so-called Gecekondu (literally "built by night", a reference to the fact that once standing, houses could not legally be torn down). Gradually, these illegal slums were turned into multi-story buildings by construction firms, a process that required a complex mix of bribes and kickbacks to obtain the necessary permits. This in turn lifted many people out of poverty, and allowed others to make fortunes, while making corruption systemic in local administrations.

But corruption has not been limited to local administrations. In fact, corruption has been the cause of marginalization for many political figures and entire parties. Over the years, especially center-right parties have been badly affected, partly because they have occupied longer stints in government. In the past two decades, the disintegration of the Motherland Party (ANAP) and the True Path Party (DYP) are the most visible examples. A number of high-level figures who had an impact in Turkish

politics but did not take measures against corruption became victims of this process, and their parties were marginalized.

The predecessor of today's governing AKP was



Ercan Akyol/Türkiye

"A little more light", says Kanal 7

the National Salvation Party (Milli Selamet Partisi), which sprung out of the *Milli Görüş* (National Outlook) movement. The Welfare and Virtue Parties (RP and FP), both successors of the MSP, besieged the center-right parties using religious references and accusations of corruption. In contrast to the perceived corruption of the center-right, they used values like honesty, ethics and virtue, together with the slogan of “clean rule” in order to gain support from the people. Similarly, today’s Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan seized the post of mayor of Istanbul from his predecessor – a member of the center-left CHP – after the latter succumbed to corruption allegations in 1994. Erdogan subsequently managed to use that post for his advancement, until climbing to the pinnacle of Turkish politics. In this process, his principal slogan was clean and honest politics.



*Saban Disli*

However, in its sixth year of government and having avoided closure by the constitutional court suffering only a slap on the wrist by seeing its treasury financing cut, the AKP is being confronted with increasingly abundant corruption

allegations. While various rumors of the enrichment of the AKP’s leading figures in both national and local government have abounded for years, the first documented case of high-level bribery concerned AKP deputy Chairman Saban Disli. Disli appears to have signed a deal whereby he would receive US\$ 1 million for turning a piece of land within Istanbul’s city limits from a green pasture area where nothing could be built into a commercial property where buildings could be erected. Allegations emerged also against the AKP Mayor of Gaziantep and the Head of the AKP’s office in Batman Province. In Gaziantep, similar to the Disli case, the allegation is that the AKP and businessmen close to it benefited from the Mayor’s decision to turn a property into a commercial entity.

More seriously, a German court case concerning embezzlement in a German-Turkish charity organization with close ties to the AKP, *Deniz Feneri* (Lighthouse) implicated the names of Prime Minister Erdogan peripherally, but much more directly persons close to him: the Chairman of the Radio and Television High Commission (RTÜK) Zahir Akman, and the CEO of the pro-AKP television channel *Kanal 7*, Zekeriya Kahraman. Three leading executives of *Deniz Feneri*, which shares the same building with *Kanal 7*’s German offices, were convicted by a Frankfurt court in September for embezzling 16 million of the ca. 41 million Euros that *Deniz Feneri* had collected among believers living in Germany over the past several years, for humanitarian purposes including aid to Tsunami victims in Southeast Asia. German prosecutors have argued – and the suspects confessed – that a substantial amount of this money was channeled to the pro-government *Kanal 7* television station, among other through suitcases of cash brought from Germany. Aside from that, large salaries were provided to leading figures such as Akman through shell companies,

while allegations of even more substantial cash transfers are included in the case – with Akman appearing to have served both as a courier and beneficiary. Yet millions remain completely unaccounted for, causing speculation that the money has funded the AKP and/or enriched its leaders. German prosecutor Kerstin Lötze stated at the conclusion of the court case that the masterminds of the plot are in Turkey, pointing specifically to Kahraman, a co-founder of *Deniz Feneri* and CEO of Kanal 7.

When these allegations were widely disseminated in the media, mainly in those owned by the Dogan Group, the AKP leadership at first took a defensive position and denied all allegations of wrongdoing. However, facing growing public pressure, Mr. Disli resigned from his post in the party following a 1 September party meeting. The AKP reacted most aggressively to the *Deniz Feneri* scandal, in which Recep Tayyip Erdogan's name was indirectly implicated and persons close to him directly accused of wrongdoing. At first, Erdogan and his associates termed the affair an invention by its enemies in the press. Erdogan argued that there was a systematic defamation campaign against him. Not staying at generalities, Erdogan singled out the country's largest media boss, Aydin Dogan. Erdogan accused Dogan of engaging in blackmail and claimed that the defamation campaign was created because Dogan had failed to receive licenses for alterations of his Hilton Hotel in the center of Istanbul, and because some of Dogan's demands concerning the CNN Turk television channel had been rejected. Only when the German court reached its verdict did Erdogan begin to backpedal, promising an investigation. As of this writing, though, Akman had not yet resigned despite strong urgings to do so. More damaging for Erdogan was his adamant insistence that he did not know Mehmet Gürhan, the chief convict in the German court – until

photographs of the two men together were revealed.

**IMPLICATIONS:** From the 1980s onward, heads of media groups established closer connections with government as they branched out into new business areas. Hence the magnates started to use their media power to improve their situation in other areas, by playing the card of their media outlets' attitude to the state. This card was played by alternately expressing criticism and admiration toward the government.



This relationship between media and government was quite effective in keeping a lid on corruption allegations during the first term of the AKP – indeed, few allegations leaked into the pages of newspapers. But as the political climate heated up this year and the government's attempts to secure control over the media expanded, (see Turkey Analyst June 4 issue) media outlets not under the AKP's control began to report on the various corruption allegations against the ruling party.

A main element that contributed to this development has been the worldview of the AKP leadership, which increasingly overtly divides bureaucracy, elites, and writers into categories. Some intellectuals and businesses are seen as being “with us”, while others are not, with ever sharper lines between them. Coupled with this is

Erdogan's growing ambition to seize or neutralize dissident voices. Indeed, the aim seems to be to achieve obedience. Up to now, the Dogan Group's behavior could be identified as more or less neutral. In keeping with the traditions of Turkish media, it remained within the limits of moderate opposition. But Erdogan's strategies toward the media – including harsher rhetoric and the takeover of media holdings (See Turkey Analyst June 4 issue [<http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/inside/turkey/2008/080604A.html>]) prompted those “who are not with them” to step up their independence. In particular, the fate of non-obedient media outlets that were taken over by the government like Sabah, ATV, Star, and Kanal Türk explain the recent evolution of the Dogan Group's behavior: raising the stakes in order to maintain its independence and survival, and indicating the very real damage that the AKP can be exposed to unless it back off the media.

The bribery scandal involving Saban Disli was a small and relatively trivial case – a direct solicitation for money. By contrast, the *Deniz Feneri* scandal provides a rare insight into the type of complex financial flows that observers have long argued played a key role in propping up Turkey's Islamist movement, as well as its closely associated media outlets. Indeed, it has been known for decades that the inner circle of the Islamic movement have institutionalized a financial wheel based on foundations and associations, often based on contributions and investments sent from Turks living in Europe.

Indeed, the movement took root and grew partly with the help of charity funds flowing from Europe. Many of the donors may not disapprove of the political appropriations of the money; for them, there is nothing necessarily wrong with that as long as the funds are used for the strengthening of political Islam. Indeed, as long as the sponsors

remain convinced that the leaders are using the money for the cause rather than for personal gain, the AKP leadership's legitimacy may not be endangered within its own ranks, where there is understanding for the need for shady transactions to evade state oversight.

In reality, of course, these informal financial transfer mechanisms provide immense avenues for collective corruption, to which the AKP leadership is not any more immune than other political forces. There is a growing suspicion that as the AKP's leadership's power has grown, the informal financial transfers taking place in the name of Islamic solidarity have come to be used at least partly for the enrichment of individual politicians.

Significantly, the allegations have struck a nerve even in the pro-Islamic press, where doubt over the honesty of the leaders appears to have begun to develop. This is more or less unprecedented in the Islamic movement, and may be the most significant implication of the recent scandals.

**CONCLUSIONS:** The struggle in Turkish politics, until recently centering on the issue of secularism, is now continuing over corruption. While this struggle is bound to affect the position of the AKP, it is unlikely to topple the government in the short run. Because the core AKP voters see politics as a means to an end, they have in the past accepted that gathering money through various channels is legitimate. And with the recent past in mind, many voters are bound to think that their current leaders may perhaps be corrupt, but that they at least govern the country well – and that by contrast, the alternatives may be equally corrupt but inept at governing. That said, should economic indicators worsen, corruption allegations may pave the way for the downfall of the AKP. Should the AKP leadership lose the moral high ground both in society at large, but even more importantly among its political base, the party's position may erode faster than expected.

## THE REVAMPED CHP CATCHES THE AKP OFF BALANCE

*Halil Magnus Karaveli*

*As the hopes that the AKP would get back on the track of reform and democratization recede, there is a real chance that the opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) could reinvent itself as a centrist alternative in Turkish politics. There are also encouraging signs that Turkish social democrats realize that they have to revert to their old ways and make peace with Europe.*

**BACKGROUND:** Kemal Kilicdaroglu, deputy chairman of the parliamentary group of the CHP and a former technocrat, is a soft-spoken man, not given to the kind of dramatic gestures and demagoguery that is typical of Turkish politics. Sitting in his office in the Turkish Grand National Assembly this May, the view he took of the role of the military as the supposed guardian of secularism was striking. Kilicdaroglu did not fit the common, Western preconception about Turkish secularists: far from being a supporter of military authoritarianism, he recalled the fact that secularism was dealt the severest of blows during the military dictatorship in the 1980s. "There are no deeper, secular sensibilities among the officers' corps", he bluntly stated. A few months later, Kilicdaroglu became the target of the General staff's irritation when he said the same in public, asserting that the moderate Islamist government and the military were indeed "the best of friends".

When asked what kind of country he imagined Turkey would become in ten to fifteen years, Kilicdaroglu's pessimistic expectation was that it would be a more religiously conservative country. While that is likely to be the case, that does not necessarily mean that the country will be ruled by the moderate Islamists of the AKP. Indeed, Kilicdaroglu himself has contributed to what may

very well turn out to be the beginning of the erosion of the AKP's public support. *Hürriyet* columnist Ahmet Hakan has called him "the rising star of politics" that is "shaking the AKP". His investigations into the alleged corruption among high-level AKP officials have already resulted in one resignation, that of party deputy chairman Saban Disli. This week, in a televised debate from parliament, Kilicdaroglu confronted another deputy chairman of the AKP, Dengir Mir Mehmet Firat, whom he has accused of being involved in illegal business activities and in drug smuggling. Kilicdaroglu's painstaking anti-corruption campaign, together with the corruption case with possible connections to the AKP leadership that has recently been unraveled in Germany have exposed the AKP and is changing the dynamics of Turkish politics.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's reaction to the corruption charges has been a call for a boycott against media outlets that have reported about the judiciary process in Germany; that has turned most of the media, including many columnists who have supported the AKP government, against the prime minister. "Has he lost his mind?" AKP loyalist Yasemin Çongar of *Taraf*, was led to wonder. Conservative columnists have even expressed solidarity with their secular



of democratization and transparency. According to a recent poll, the support for the AKP is down to 36 percent, with the opposition CHP rising to 24 percent.

What has made the AKP attractive to a broad electorate, and not just to the party's religiously conservative core, was that it was supposed to be different from the corrupt center-right parties that have held a near-monopoly on power for decades. The growing realization that the AKP does not deviate from the traditions of Turkish politics in that respect obviously creates new opportunities for the opposition.

**IMPLICATIONS:** The anti-corruption campaign led by Kemal Kilicdaroglu broadens the appeal of the CHP, as it demonstrates that the party is not only concerned with the protection of secularism. Until now, the CHP had failed to mount an effective opposition to the AKP. It has been unable to reach out to a broader

opponents who have been targeted by the prime minister. In one stroke, the AKP appears to have come close to losing the moral high ground which it has occupied for the last six years. After the several attacks against the freedom of the press, and the AKP's apparent unwillingness to allow for an investigation into the corruption charges, the moderate Islamists can no longer with any substantial credibility aspire to be seen as a force

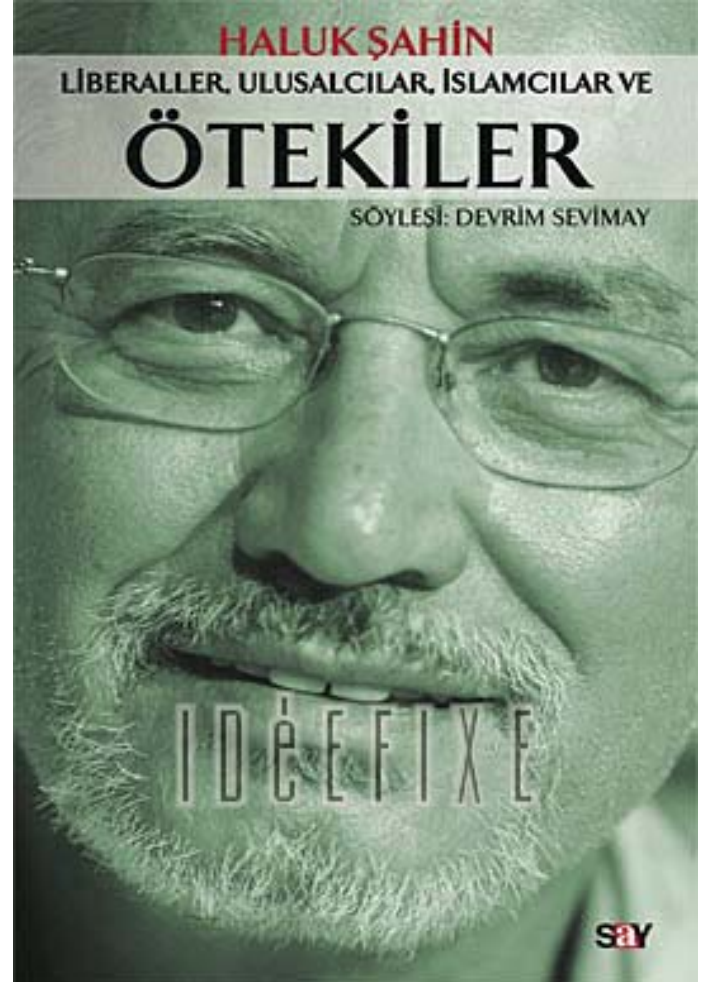
electorate, not so much because of its principled defense of secularism but because the party did not seem to offer alternatives in other policy areas, and as party leader Deniz Baykal fails to inspire confidence; his authoritarian leadership effectively prevents the development of a party democracy that would give a new generation a chance.

Indeed, the CHP has even managed to repel many centrist voters that otherwise might have

considered it their natural choice. While the defense of secularism strikes a strong chord among large sections of Turkish society, the CHP has appeared to be out of touch with the sensibilities of modernist voters in another important respect, as it has come to adopt an anti-European, neo-nationalist rhetoric. The CHP has done so largely in reaction to its perception of an alliance between the Islamists and the West. Indeed, secularist social democrats in particular in the CHP have been disoriented by the Islamists' change of tactics. In the beginning of this decade, the Islamists abandoned their traditional anti-European stance, providing the ground for their subsequent endorsement by Western opinion. This turning of the tables caught the CHP off guard, and propelled many of its members to a nationalist gut reaction – something that in turn connected with lingering suspicions of Western hidden agendas to weaken Turkey, which have existed since the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres that sought to dissolve the country. However, there are signs of a growing realization among social democrats that the CHP must learn of the success of the AKP, and stake out the center ground of politics and embrace Europe. Notably, the CHP is reported to be preparing to nominate candidates with a center-right profile in the upcoming local elections of March 2009.

Aydin Çingir, president of the Social democracy foundation SODEV, notes that “the EU is extremely important”. He exhorts the center-left to make peace with Europe, and reoccupy the ideological terrain that it has unwisely abandoned: “As opposition in Turkey is reduced to saying the opposite of whatever the government says, the CHP has been busy opposing the EU. Yet, the EU harmonization entails just the kind of reforms that a social democratic party would like to see realized. It is now up to the center-left to convince our friends in the EU that a modern, social

democratic mass party would in fact further EU harmonization better than the AKP”, Cingi says in a recent interview.



There are other, similar voices. Haluk Sahin, a liberal social democratic academic and journalist, has attracted wide attention with a recent book in which he pleads for a third way in politics, between moderate Islamism and isolationist nationalism. Ötekiler, “The Others”, as his book is titled, are those who belong neither to the Islamists (or the liberals aligned with them) nor to the neo-nationalists. The pro-European center-left and the likewise pro-European and secular center-right currently lack political representation. Given

the continued malaise of the center-right, the CHP would be well poised to become the rallying-point of these forces, on the condition that it rids itself of anti-Western nationalism.

It is difficult to imagine that Turkish politics will easily revert to “business as usual”, i.e. that the traditional center-right will take its “rightful” place at the helm of power after the AKP. Presently, the center-right is in shambles. The Democrat party and the Motherland party are hardly noticed at all in the debate. The Democrat party seems to pin its hopes on the eventual return of Tansu Çiller, once a dismal failure as prime minister, while the Motherland party chairman Erkan Mumcu is no less an Islamist than Recep Tayyip Erdogan; the former is in fact much more of an outspoken anti-secularist.

The center-right has basically reached the end of the road in ideological and tactical terms. The Turkish liberal-conservative parties were always marred by a duality: their leadership cadres have been modernist oriented, but in practice they have only paid lip service to secularism, as they have found it electorally expedient to bow to religious conservatism. Today, the religiously conservative part of the electorate has found a more natural home in the AKP, whose leadership is sociologically more representative of those voters. A reemerged center-right would face the challenge not only of re-attracting religiously conservative voters, but of simultaneously convincing secularist center-right voters among the urban middle class of its secular credibility.

**CONCLUSIONS:** There is strong reason to believe that the effects of the confrontation over secularism of 2007-2008 will reverberate for years. Although Turkish society has been marked by the

secularist-Islamic divide for decades, the events of the last two years represent a watershed; it would be a mistake to underestimate its consequences. The confrontation has raised the level of secular sensitivity in civil society. It has created a mass mobilization in favor of secularism as never before. For one thing, it cannot be taken for granted that center-right leaning secularist voters will content themselves anymore with the kind of semi-Islamic alternatives that they have traditionally been offered. That presents a window of opportunity for a CHP that moves to the center.

The fundamental question is whether a modernizing political force in a Muslim context must necessarily accommodate religious conservatism in order to stand a chance of succeeding. Turkish “secularist” liberal-conservatives have thought so. And conservative commentators usually attribute the absence of a strong social democratic movement in Turkey to the “disrespect” shown by the secularist, center-left CHP for the “people’s values”. In fact, secularism ranks high among those values. For a majority, there is nothing alien or repelling about secularism. The weakness of the center-left is more easily explained by the restrictions, and sometimes severe repression, to which the left of all shades has been subjected to during most of the history of the Turkish republic.

To assume that the culturally Westernizing CHP has the potential to evolve into a European-style liberal social democratic party is less far-fetched than the assumption that the AKP, whose leader has recently spoken about Western civilization as “immoral”, is akin to European Christian Democrats.

## THE FORTNIGHT IN REVIEW

### SECTION I: WHAT THE COLUMNISTS SAY

*The corruption charges and the new opposition tactics of the Republican People's Party (CHP), are shaking the ruling AKP, and are widely commented by Turkish columnists. Several of the columnists notably pay attention to the role played by CHP's Kemal Kilicdaroglu, who is described as a rising star that Prime Minister Erdogan has good reason to be afraid of.*

#### HAKAN: A RISING STAR

Ahmet Hakan of Hürriyet hails Kemal Kilicdaroglu, deputy chairman of the parliamentary group of the Republican people's party (CHP), as the rising star of Turkish politics. The prime minister, as well others in the AKP leadership, have every reason to be afraid of such a man. Kilicdaroglu is an "inspector" that pulls aggravating documents out of his pockets. He is the nightmare of our domestic Putin. People in the AKP admit that he has to be taken seriously. I think that Kilicdaroglu is doing more than shaking the AKP; he has changed his own party. Since he took the stage, we hear nothing about secularism. Deniz Baykal and those close to him can see that Erdogan loses his temper every time

Kilicdaroglu makes a statement, so they have left the stage for him.

#### YETKIN: CHP IS SHAKING AKP

Murat Yetkin of Radikal observes that the CHP has changed its opposition tactics since the decision of the Constitutional court not to close down the AKP. With the elevation of Kemal Kilicdaroglu to chairman of the parliamentary group, the CHP has been concentrating on concrete matters, related to corruption. The leader of the CHP, Deniz Baykal, who for years has been criticized for conducting an ineffective opposition, has caught a new momentum thanks to Kilicdaroglu. It was easy for Prime Minister Erdogan to fend off an opposition that concentrated on the issue of secularism;

Erdogan was indeed content with that confrontation. Now his task has become much more difficult.

#### **BIRAND: ERDOGAN'S TACTIC IS DANGEROUS**

Mehmet Ali Birand of Yeni Posta admits having chocked at Prime Minister Erdogan's call for a boycott of the media outlets of the Dogan group. That call represents a "first" in Turkey. There has never before been a Prime Minister who had issued such a call. There cannot be a more severe blow to the freedom of the press. What he has done is extremely dangerous. You can be sure that a day will come when the Prime Minister will bitterly regret his words.

#### **BERKAN: WHAT SETS AKP APART IS INGENUITY**

Ismet Berkan of Radikal notes that Prime Minister Erdogan and his government has consistently worked to create loyal business and media groups since the AKP came to power six years ago. The old, big business interests have never been able to shed their image of being "unreliable", however hard they have tried to ingratiate themselves with the AKP government. In that respect, the AKP is in fact no different from previous governments. Every government has been supported by its own business groups. What sets the AKP apart is rather ingenuity; the moderate Islamists have devised a method

that makes it possible for a wider group of "customers" to share in the business benefits.

#### **GÖGÜS: EUROPEANS REGARD US AS MORE EUROPEAN THAN WE DO**

Zeynep Gögüs of Hürriyet refers to a recent survey by the German Marshall Fund, according to which the support for Turkey's EU membership bid has decreased among Europeans, including the Turks. Four years ago 36 percent thought of the idea of a Turkish EU membership would be a "good idea". By 2007, only 19 percent thought the same. But what is noteworthy about the survey is the fact that we ourselves are the ones who are mainly responsible for this decrease! In 2004 73 percent of Turks supported EU membership. Today that share has dipped to 40 percent. If Turks are excluded from the survey, support for a Turkish membership is 21 percent, again a decrease in comparison with 2004, when the share was 30 percent. Another striking result of the survey is that while only 27 percent of Turks believe that there is a possibility that Turkey will become an EU member, nearly 60 percent of the Europeans believe that to be possible. It is also interesting that while only 29 percent of the Turks think that "Turkey is Western enough in its values to be regarded as being part of the West", 44 percent in Spain, 43 percent in Great Britain and 40 percent in the Netherlands subscribe to that view.

## SECTION II: DOMESTIC POLITICS

*Summary: The Deniz Feneri embezzlement case and the Prime Minister's confrontation with media magnate Aydın Doğan dominated headlines in domestic news.*

### GENERAL BAŞBUĞ INVITED CONSERVATIVE MEDIA

**10 September**

The General Staff partly lifted the accreditation limit imposed on a number of conservative media outlets. The headquarters sent an invitation to the newspapers Yeni Şafak and Star as well as to representatives of the television channel Kanal24 for the communication meeting, which will be organized on September 16-17. (*Hürriyet*)

### THE SCANDAL THAT SHOOK TURKEY

**11 September**

Labeling itself an “aid foundation” that collects money to provide aid to the poor, the Deniz Feneri Foundation is at the centre of one of the gravest corruption scandals in Turkish history. Located in Germany, the Deniz Feneri Foundation is accused of having embezzled 18 million Euros out of the 41 million Euros collected from Turks in Europe. The Deniz Feneri Foundation’s case began in Germany on September 1. For Turkish politics, the most important point of this scandal is the names pronounced in the indictment, including that of Prime Minister *Erdoğan*. In the indictment Mr. Erdoğan is referred to as follows: “In the document, titled “Empfangsbestätigung 2”, dated 02.02.05, Mehmet Gürhan acknowledged that he had received an undisclosed sum of money from Firdevsi Ermiş to give to the Prime Minister of Turkey to distribute to victims of the tsunami in East Asia.” Mr. Erdoğan denied this claim, which was brought to the agenda by CHP Chairman Deniz Baykal and published in the Turkish press. The sections of the indictment based on the testimony of Firdevsi Ermiş claim that the purpose of the foundation was to support the AKP and that the members of the foundation’s board had close ties to the government of Turkey. (*Radikal*)

### “DENİZ FENERİ” STATEMENT FROM THE PRESIDENCY

**12 September**

Following an allegation by Turkish Star TV claiming that old properties had been turned over to the Deniz Feneri Foundation after the restoration of the presidential residence, a response was delivered by the office of the presidency: “Yesterday Star TV broadcasted claims that old properties were given to the Deniz Feneri Foundation during the restoration of the presidential residence. These claims are completely baseless. It must be emphasized that it is unthinkable that properties would have been given to any foundation during the restoration. While broadcasting the allegations of CHP Deputy Ahmet Ersin as news, Star TV did not seek to confirm the veracity of the claims with the presidency and in doing so failed to meet the first principle of journalism. It should be strictly underlined that no aid was given to any foundation in any time by the presidency. All these claims seek to decrease the credibility of the presidency. It is unacceptable to see the highest office of the Turkish State being scandalized by such baseless claims”. (*Yeni Safak*)

### AYDIN DOĞAN’S CALL TO ERDOĞAN FOR A LIVE TV PROGRAM

**13 September**

Doğan Media Holding Chairman Aydın Doğan responded to Prime Minister Erdoğan’s criticisms and accusations in the AKP Beyoğlu Municipality congress. Aydın Doğan said in his statement that the baseless claims and accusations voiced by Prime Minister Erdoğan at every party congress were not appropriate for a person in his position. Mr. Doğan said, “It is unacceptable to see the Prime Minister of a democratic country targeting a media corporation at the party meetings. History is full of these negative examples”. Mr. Doğan responded to Mr. Erdoğan’s criticism regarding the reporting of the corruption charges against the AKP Gaziantep City Manager. He said, “The Prime Minister also argued that Gaziantep City Manager *Asım Güzelbey*’s response to the corruption allegations against him did not appear in the Doğan Group’s media. This is also baseless. Mr.

*Güzelbey's* defense was published in Milliyet, Radikal, Posta and at Hürriyet's website. There were also writers in our newspapers that staunchly defended Mr. *Güzelbey*. The Prime Minister can deny as much as he wishes but these things are evidence of the existence of the freedom of thought and expression". While responding to Mr. Erdoğan's criticisms regarding the Deniz Feneri issue Aydın Doğan said, "The Prime Minister initiated his attacks on our group upon the news of the corruption charges against the Deniz Feneri Foundation in our newspapers. The Prime Minister did not refer to the case in his speeches in the AKP congresses of the *Güngören* and *Bayrampaşa* municipalities. However, today Mr. Erdoğan felt the need to mention the case; an act which automatically de-legitimized the reason of his assault. It is encouraging to hear the Prime Minister say that those who are responsible, should their crimes be proven, will be punished accordingly. I wish that he would have said this before launching his assault on the Doğan Group." (*Sabah*)

## **PRIME MINISTER ERDOĞAN'S SPEECH IN ŞİŞLİ**

**15 September**

Although Prime Minister Erdoğan stated his intention to close the issue regarding the Doğan Media Group, he returned to the subject yesterday during his speech in the Şişli AKP congress. Mr. Erdoğan condemned the Doğan Group for the news that they published regarding the Deniz Feneri case in Germany and its affiliation claims in Turkey last week. He voiced a threat by saying that the claims must be corrected by Saturday; otherwise he would make new statements. The previous day, Mr. Erdoğan ended his speech in the AKP Beyoğlu congress by saying that he had given his answer and was closing the issue. However, Mr. Erdoğan took up the same issue yesterday during his speech in the AKP Şişli Congress. (*Radikal*)

## **SECTION III: FOREIGN RELATIONS**

*Summary: Aside from reverberations of the Deniz Feneri scandal, foreign news included continued speculation on Turkey's Caucasian initiative and relations with the United States.*

### **UNIQUE COOPERATION WITH THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT**

**11 September**

While emphasizing the "unique partnership" between Turkey and the U.S., Secretary of State Coordinator Responsible for the Fight against Terrorism Dell Dailey said that they want to see stricter laws against terrorism in Turkey. Ambassador Dailey said, "Turkish laws do not pose a problem for the cooperation against international terrorism. We cooperate in many areas and have very good relations. We have no obstacles for cooperation and exchange intelligence .... We want to see stricter laws against terrorism in Turkey. I think that the laws for fighting terrorism in Turkey focus on those who have Turkey as their target. They can be irrelevant when the issue is fighting against terrorism as defined by the EU or the UN. It would be more effective if Turkish laws

focused on terrorists in a global perspective". Mentioning the cooperation between Turkey and the U.S. concerning the PKK terrorist organization, Mr. Dailey said "We have a unique intelligence exchange level with Turkey". (*Sabah*)

### **JOINT DECLARATION WITH ARMENIA**

**12 September**

The Foreign Ministers of Turkey and Armenia are working on a joint declaration to be announced either in New York or Istanbul. The two Foreign Ministers are scheduled to discuss the issue in New York at the end of September. If a compromise is reached, the declaration will be announced in New York, otherwise it will be declared following the return match of Turkey-Armenia in Istanbul. Foreign minister Ali Babacan recently gave a statement in which he expressed his positive feelings and hopes

about the dialogue that had started with Armenia. He responded to a question about “what will be the first step for solution” by saying “I think that such issues should be discussed after the two sides have reached a compromise. We are presently in the middle of the process”. (*Sabah*)

## **TURKEY IS MOVING IN CIRCLES**

**13 September**

European Commission Turkey Delegation Chairman Ambassador Marc Pierini stated that they expect Turkey to show clear indications that their motivation for the EU membership has not decreased and added “Turkey’s EU membership process is going in circles. We want to see a direct and linear progress”. Ambassador Pierini said in a meeting that Turkey is an important partner of the EU in bringing solutions to regional problems and added that while EU regarded Turkey’s mediating efforts in the Middle East and Caucasus as positive, they would not suffice for membership. European Parliament member and British Parliamentarian Nirj Deva said that several European countries are negative to Turkey’s EU membership. Mr. Deva said, “Unfortunately, the fear of the Turkish armies at the gates of Vienna still exists in Europe. In the eyes of the European people the Ottoman Empire never collapsed”. (*Milliyet*)

## **TURKEY-EU TROIKA MEETING**

**13 September**

It is reported that the Turkey–EU Troika Foreign Ministers meeting will be held on September 15. Foreign minister of France Bernard Kouchner and next term president foreign minister Schwarzenberg of the Czech Republic, EU Commissioner Responsible for the Enlargement Olli Rehn and EU Council officers will attend. Turkey’s statement regarding the meeting is as follows: “In the meeting we will exchange our views with our EU counterparts regarding the reforms conducted during Turkey’s membership process and the steps that should be taken in the future. The meeting also poses an opportunity to discuss the various regional and international developments with the EU side”. (*Zaman*)

## **IRAN WANTS TO JOIN THE CAUCASUS PROJECT**

**14 September**

Iran wants to participate in Turkey’s project for permanent peace in the Caucasus, the Caucasus Cooperation and Stability Platform. Iran’s

Ambassador to Armenia Kemal Zare made a statement in the Armenian press in which he said that Tehran should participate in the Caucasus Platform. Underlining that Iran’s peaceful policies towards the three countries of the Caucasus; Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia cannot be ignored, Mr. Zare said, “We are ready to put forward our own experiences for peace in the Caucasus. Our efforts for the region should not be overlooked”. The Iranian diplomat advocated that the best way for the Caucasus Cooperation and Stability Platform mechanism to function would be a 3 + 3 formula (The three countries of the South Caucasus: Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia and the countries surrounding them: Russia, Iran and Turkey). (*Zaman*)

## **WE DO NOT INTEND TO AMEND MONTREUX**

**15 September**

After being invited by Turkish Chief of General Staff *İlker Başbuğ*, the Head of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Mike Mullen organized a press conference at the U.S. Embassy in Ankara. Mr. Mullen stated that they did not have a plan to amend the Montreux agreement (of 1936) and said all ships passing through the Turkish straits were in line with the Montreux regulations. Mr. Mullen stated that U.S. ships carrying humanitarian aid to the Georgian people by peaceful means was a normal application, and added that aid had previously been delivered by U.S. navy ships, such as in the case of the tsunami in South Asia. While stating that intelligence exchange against the PKK between the U.S. and Turkey will continue, Mr. Mullen said the fight against PKK terrorism should be sustained and added that the U.S. was determined about this issue. Mr. Mullen also said that Georgia was in the process of acquiring NATO membership; however he added that this is in a longer perspective. Underlining that if Georgia becomes a member of NATO and is attacked, action will be taken in line with the rules of alliance. (*Sabah*)

## **FOREIGN MINISTER BABACAN IS TO VISIT THE U.S.**

**16 September**

Turkish Foreign minister Ali Babacan will visit the U.S. tomorrow. He will attend the UN General Assembly. Mr. Babacan has many important issues on his agenda, such as Turkey’s candidacy for a Security Council seat for the 2009-2010 term as well as relations with Armenia. Mr. Babacan will also meet with the Azerbaijani and Armenian Foreign Ministers

in Ankara upon his return. Mr. Babacan will also discuss the steps that should be taken for the rapprochement with Armenia. In this context it is expected that the 'historians' commission' proposal of Turkey for the investigation of the 1915 events will be on the agenda. The impression in Ankara is that the new Armenian administration is positive to the proposal. *(Sabah)*

### **ZAPATERO: TURKEY WILL PROVIDE STRATEGIC POWER TO EU**

**16 September**

The Prime Minister of Spain attended the opening ceremony of the *Bahçeşehir* University with Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan. In his speech Mr. Zapatero said "If Europe wants to be an important player in the world politics, Turkey, as a member of the EU, will provide the strategic power and the leading role that the EU lacks". Mr. Zapatero stressed that Istanbul was one of the few places that illustrated how meaningless it is to divide the world in East and West. "My government supports Turkey's EU bid with determination. We know that it is not easy. However, if Europe wants to have a leading role in the contemporary world as I hope it will succeed in acquiring, a Turkey within the EU will provide the strategic power that Europe presently lacks". *(Milliyet)*

### **MESSAGE TO THE EU: WE DO NOT WANT AID**

**17 September**

Inviting all foreign ambassadors in Ankara to an "iftar" meal, Prime Minister Erdoğan gave the message "If you see us as a burden, please let us know. We do not want aid from you". Mr. Erdoğan said "Reforms opened the way of accession to the EU for us and this journey continues with the membership process. However, when we entered this process there were no such mentality of threatening or nullifying the process by opening and closing chapters. We try to open chapters and point to that behavior as unfair. We do not want aid from the EU. We want the same rights that you recognize and give to others. If you see us as a burden, it is of course different. Turkey does not wish to be a burden, but wants to carry burdens. We see a non-declared tradition-like behavior as opening two chapters in every term of the presidency. While Turkey is putting forward its determination for membership, we face discouraging statements from the EU side". *(Radikal)*

### **IT IS WORRYING TO SEE TURKISH CITIZENS BEING SENTENCED**

**17 September**

With regard to the Deniz Feneri case that was finalized in Germany, Minister of Justice Mehmet Ali Şahin said "It is worrying to see Turkish citizens commit crimes and be sentenced. Crimes being committed abroad are particularly worrisome. My ministry will fulfill its duty should there be any need of legal cooperation". When asked "Did the German authorities sent any request to you? Can you start the legal process on your own? Mr. Şahin replied "No requests came to the ministry. However, I heard that the Ankara Republic Head-Prosecutor has started an investigation because of the claims reflected in the media. I have not received any information from the personnel yet". *(Sabah)*

### **TURKEY CAN NOT IGNORE "DENİZ FENERİ" RULING**

**18 September**

Parliament Speaker Köksal Toptan stated that the sentences in the Deniz Feneri case in Germany could not be ignored by Turkey. Evaluating the reflections of the case in Turkey, Mr. Toptan said "Turkey cannot ignore the ruling of the German court." Mr. Toptan said "In such situations, the relevant institution (the state prosecutors) should act immediately. If not, political discussions will get started and those institutions will find it problematic to process. Thus, after yesterday's decision our prosecutors should act and finalize the issue." We should not say "Nothing happened, that decision stays there, Turkey has nothing to do with it. There are many reasons for that. Our religious values were abused, humanitarian values were abused. This abuse was sentenced by the German jurisdiction. This is a very sensitive issue for Turkey. We know our people's charitable feelings. Because of that we should show that those who do wrong will face the consequences in Turkey too". *(Radikal)*