

The Turkey Analyst

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ANALYSIS:

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CONCLUSIONS: ca. 200 words that strongly state your conclusions about the impact of the event or issue.

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TURKEY DIVIDED OVER THE MEANING OF THE ERGENEKON CONSPIRACY

Halil M. Karaveli

As the investigation into the alleged Ergenekon conspiracy continues unabated, the polarization of Turkish society deepens. According to one interpretation of the unfolding drama, a mortal threat to democracy has been averted by the prosecutors. The opposing narrative holds that a “republic of fear”, intolerant of political dissent, is being instituted. In the final analysis, one interpretation does not exclude the other.

BACKGROUND: The New Year got off to a politically dramatic start in Turkey as police rounded up a new set of suspects in the Ergenekon conspiracy case. The prosecutors claim that they have unraveled a coup plot against the Islamic conservative AKP government. In what was the tenth wave of detentions, three retired generals, a

former head of the Higher Education Council (YÖK), a formerly indicted representative of the shadowy Turkish “deep state”, and an eccentric writer known for his anti-government views were

hurried off from their homes at wee hours by the police. The police also raided the home of one former chief prosecutor of the High appeals court, Sabih Kanadoglu, who although not detained or presented with any specific allegations, had to

accede to a search of his archive that lasted several hours.

Two of the generals – including Tuncer Kiliç, who once served as secretary general of the then-powerful National Security Council – as well as Kemal Gürüz, the former head of YÖK, were

subsequently released.

Others detained in the “tenth wave”, significantly a group of ultra-nationalists in the province of Sivas, were arrested. The latter group had reportedly planned to assassinate Armenians in

the city. And for the first time since the investigation began, acting upon evidence found in the homes of among others a serving lieutenant-colonel, the police were able to locate a staggering



amount of weapons of presumably military origin, which had been hidden in caches in Ankara as well as in other parts of the country.

The recent escalation of the Ergenekon investigation, which has been pursued for more than a year and which has resulted in over one hundred suspects being rounded up and imprisoned, is significant for several reasons. The revelation of the arms caches strengthens the case, as it represents hard evidence of a conspiracy, although it remains to be seen if the prosecution will succeed in linking them to the alleged conspirators.

It was an unprecedented event when two former four star generals Hursit Tolon and Sener Eruygur were arrested last summer. The latest detentions of two other formerly high ranking generals as well as officers on active duty further underlined that former and active representatives of the Turkish armed forces no longer enjoy any tacit

impunity. Liberal and other pro-AKP commentators rejoice at the fact that “those who have thought that they stood above the law” no longer do so. Representatives of the secular opposition, on the other hand, castigate what they regard as being an outrageous attempt to defame the military and the secular opposition in general.

In fact, the position of the military remains opaque. The General Staff abstained from opposing the arrests of Tolon and Eruygur, and did not make any public statement about the recent detentions. The Chief of the General staff, General Ilker Basbug, nevertheless immediately requested meetings with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and President Abdullah Gül. It has been speculated that these meetings were instrumental in the subsequent release of the generals Tuncer Kilinc and Kemal Yavuz.

The military has to walk a fine line, protecting its prestige without giving the impression that it does

not accept the rule of law. Moreover, at one level, far from pitting the General staff against the AKP government, the Ergenekon investigation may actually converge with the interests of the General staff. The two retired four star generals that were imprisoned last summer, as well as the two detained in the latest round-up, have been known to entertain the notion that Turkey should seek new alignments with Russia, Iran and China, which obviously runs contrary to the traditionally pro-U.S. stance of the Turkish military. The fact that generals holding such unorthodox views are targeted may imply that the prosecution has the endorsement of the General staff, which in such a scenario would be seeking to send a



Kemal Gürüz

“corrective” message to those in active duty who might be tempted by the “Eurasian alternative” to Turkey’s current western alignment.

Turkish media is awash with information – or perhaps disinformation – emanating from the investigation about what the Ergenekon conspirators have allegedly been up to. However, the prosecution has so far failed to establish any links between the two categories of people targeted: on the one hand the intellectuals, academics, journalists, justices and generals that have been implicated in the case; and on the other, the criminals and shady personalities who more easily fit into the suspected and well-known pattern of “deep state” activities.

IMPLICATIONS: Having failed to establish such a linkage, the Ergenekon case has in fact succeeded in creating and sustaining a suspicion about the existence of such a linkage. There is now a widespread perception that being in opposition to the rule of the AKP and to the Islamicization of Turkish society in general is tantamount to being a coup-plotter. More specifically, that is a perception that has been established on one side of the line that divides Turkish society. While those who support the AKP government are encouraged to be suspicious of the political opposition, those on the other side of the divide tend to be altogether dismissive of the Ergenekon case, not because they would approve of and support such a conspiracy, but because they have come to perceive the allegations as an instrument used to delegitimize and ultimately silence the opposition.

The perception that the case is political was not rendered less credible when Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan at an early stage declared himself to be the “prosecutor of the case”. Even commentators who are supportive of the AKP and the prosecution acknowledge the damage done to the case by the detention of so many reputable individuals, known to be in opposition to the

government. Indeed, these figures were typically detained and subsequently released a few days later without any criminal charges or even less, any incriminating evidence being brought against them. This certainly casts a shadow over the investigation. Taha Akyol, an influential conservative and pro-AKP columnist recently exhorted the police and the prosecution to display more restraint and act more carefully.



Riza Türmen

There is a worry that the instances of disrespect for due process will damage the legitimacy of the case. Riza Türmen, a former Turkish judge with the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), warns that Turkey risks having troubles with the court, which according to Türmen could find ground for a declaration of mistrial. The former judge calls attention specifically to the ECHR principle that as a general rule, those standing trial should not be incarcerated unless there is a risk

that they will escape, destroy evidence or murder witnesses. Several of those incarcerated weeks or months ago as Ergenekon suspects are yet to be charged with any crime.

Türmen also mentions that many of the detentions in the Ergenekon case collide with the ECHR's principles, according to which there must be sufficient legal ground for the belief that a crime has been perpetrated by the detained individual in order for such a restriction of individual liberty to be acceptable. And Türmen notes that since the proceedings of the Ergenekon investigation are followed on television by millions, those who are detained and subsequently released are "paying a price not foreseen by the law". The television images of Kemal Gürüz, the former head of the Higher Education Council, being somewhat brutally forced into a police car by officers acting like they had apprehended a street criminal, were a case in point.

As Türmen observes, the two opposing poles of Turkish society are prone to view the Ergenekon case strictly from their respective ideological perspectives. But in fact, the two divergent narratives about Ergenekon are far from being mutually exclusive. It may at one and the same time be about averting a real threat to democratic values, while also serving as an instrument for the establishment of the ideological preeminence of Islamic conservatism by delegitimizing and dispiriting, if not silencing, the forces of secular opposition.

CONCLUSIONS: Turkey may very well be faced with a right-wing nationalist conspiracy. The murder of the Armenian-Turkish journalist Hrant Dink in 2007 is a reminder that the recent revelations of what is described as plans to assassinate other Armenian citizens of Turkey cannot be taken lightly. Likewise, enough circumstantial evidence suggests that a number of the figures rounded up in the case have indeed been plotting against the current government.

Nevertheless, it is understandable that the secular opposition, feeling increasingly victimized by the Ergenekon proceedings, reacts against the linkage that the Ergenekon prosecutors and their supporters more or less assume exists between themselves and extreme right-wing nationalists. As columnist Murat Yetkin in *Radikal* points out, that leads the secular opposition to be oblivious to the fact that such a right-wing threat does exist, while the advocates of Ergenekon are only too prone to equating opposition with coup conspiracy.

Assuming that they are motivated by a sincere desire to secure Turkish democracy, the supporters of the Ergenekon case would need to display a much stronger sensitivity about the legal improprieties that bedevil the investigation.



ANKARA AND THE CRISIS IN THE MIDDLE EAST: DOMESTIC CONSIDERATIONS

M. K. Kaya

The unexpectedly harsh Turkish reaction to the Israeli offensive in Gaza has raised many eyebrows, given the implications of a shift in Turkey's foreign policy. It remains unclear to what extent Prime Minister Erdogan's rhetoric is related to a growing sense of Islamic solidarity underpinning Turkish foreign policy, and how much can be related simply to the upcoming local elections, where Erdogan is anxious not to be outflanked by the growing, rival Islamist Felicity party. In any case, the event – and the growing emotional character of Turkish leaders' behavior – is an indicator of the shifting decision-making structure in Turkish foreign policy, whereby the traditional foreign policy establishment is being marginalized in favor of the Prime Minister's own inner cabinet.

BACKGROUND: Since coming to power in 2002, the AKP Government has adopted a more proactive approach to foreign policy, compared to the cautious approach taken by its predecessors.

The government's leading policy mantra has been the "zero problem" policy with Turkey's neighbors. To a certain extent, this policy has been successful. Turkey has stepped in to improve

relations with Syria and Iran, while Ankara has stepped in to help neighbors sort out some of their regional problems. Hence, Ankara has sought to play the role of a mediator between Iran and the West, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan, Syria and Israel, and in the recent Russian-Georgian war.

As regards the conflict in the Middle East, the AKP government has for some time sought to take on a role as a mediator between Israel and the Arabs. This ambition has coexisted uneasily with a growing level of public criticism of Israel. Hence when an Israeli rocket strike killed Hamas leader Sheikh Yassin, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan condemned Israel and subsequently invited the recently elected Hamas leaders to Turkey, ignoring Israeli and Western protests. On the other hand, Ankara began facilitating talks between Israel and Syria. Likewise, during the recent Israeli offensive in Gaza, Tayyip Erdogan was among the world leaders most bitterly critical of Israel; meanwhile, Erdogan tried to carve out a role among the various mediation initiatives. Erdogan visited Syria, Jordan, and Egypt in order to sustain a ceasefire, but failed to reach tangible results.

Indeed, the tension between Erdogan's diplomatic ambitions and his public rhetoric is beginning to appear untenable. Speaking to a recent Party group meeting, he spoke in harsh terms about Israel in general and about Ehud Barak and Tzipi Livni personally. His statements included allusions to God punishing Israel for inhuman actions that could lead to its self-destruction, while Erdogan said that Barak and Livni will be "punished by history".

IMPLICATIONS: Erdogan's words need to be analyzed from various perspectives. Connecting the Israeli offensive to the coming elections in Israel and accusing Israeli leaders of electioneering, Erdogan inadvertently provides a

hint about the reasons of his own statements. The upcoming March local elections have generated growing political tension in Turkey. Politically, the AKP seems to have crushed the Turkish center-right. However, the Felicity Party – which shares with the AKP an origin in the Welfare and Virtue parties of a decade ago – continues to preserve its dynamism both in terms of ideology and cadre. When Virtue was closed down by the Constitutional Court in June 2001, it split into the moderate Islamist AKP and the more orthodox Islamist Felicity party (Saadet Partisi, SP).

Having spent half a decade on the margins of Turkey's political system, the SP has increased its activities following the election of Numan Kurtulmus as the leader. This appears to disturb Erdogan. Under the leadership of Kurtulmus, it was the SP that organized a meeting to protest the Israel's recent offensive towards Gaza in Istanbul in which approximately 300,000 demonstrators participated. Understanding the mindset of the voters, and the slide towards Islamic conservatism that Erdogan himself has contributed to during his tenure in power, Erdogan does not want to be outflanked on the religious right, losing over the most Orthodox Islamic conservative electorate to the SP.

Here, the Constitutional Court's warning to the AKP, issued this past Fall, plays an important role. The Court found that the AKP had become the focal point of anti-secular activities, a ruling that effectively prevents the party from using religious references or pushing its Islamist agenda openly, for fear of the Court re-opening the case and closing the party down. The ruling in effect drew the political borders of the AKP's behavior, at least for a time. In such an environment, Erdogan appears to be using the conflict in the Middle East, which has transformed into a Jewish-Muslim conflict, to influence the conservative voters in Turkey.

To this apparent need for populist rhetoric should be added the number of recent corruption scandals involving AKP elites, and the increasingly serious economic crisis. Both have begun to cause uneasiness among the AKP leadership. The Gaza offensive and its impact on the Turkish public have hence changed the agenda in favor of the AKP, something Erdogan managed to utilize astutely.

The arrests of leading secularist figures that played key roles in the “February 28” process, meaning the 1997 process that ended the Welfare party’s time in government, should be understood in the same light. The timing of the arrests in the Ergenekon investigation, clearly masterminded by political rather than judicial actors, appear to be geared toward strengthening the AKP ahead of local elections. The Government, of course, insists that this issue is the business of judicial institutions, it is obvious in every detail that the Government itself is in the business. Erdogan even once referred to himself as “the prosecutor” in the Ergenekon case.

While Erdogan’s own electioneering is clearly at play here, it is also increasingly obvious that the AKP leadership feels comfortable with the leaders of Middle Eastern countries and movements, on

account of their shared Islamic codes. It is telling that Erdogan’s recent trip to Brussels was the first in four years, and that for the past several years the Foreign Minister has concomitantly served as



EU top negotiator – only in early 2009 was a special negotiator separate from the Foreign Minister appointed. While this suggests the lack of interest in the EU, the AKP leadership has spent substantial efforts and time welcoming leaders from the Muslim world, including isolated figures such as Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir and Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

What will this mean for Turkish-Israeli relations? Their basis was laid under previous governments,

and rests on the military cooperation between the two countries, Israel's support to Turkey in terms of defense industry, and the Israeli lobbies' pro-Turkish stance in the international arena. However, the political elites that had formulated and implemented ties with Israel in Turkey have been marginalized. The secular establishment's most powerful institutions that support this relationship, that is specifically the Turkish Armed Forces and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, are also in the process of marginalization.

The formulation of Turkish foreign policy is no longer the domain of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Instead, it has been eclipsed by a group of conservative intellectuals under the leadership of Erdogan's main foreign policy advisor, Ahmet Davutoglu. Identified as the "neo-Ottomanists" in the west, the architects of this policy are gradually transforming Turkey's western-oriented foreign policy. Given the West's apparent support or indifference toward the AKP, the political and military secular elite – which have so far defended Turkey's western-oriented foreign policy – started to take on a firm nationalistic stance distancing themselves from West. One of the principal reasons is their perception that the AKP's coming to power in Turkey was made possible by the efforts of western countries. That anti-western stance is in turn heavily counter-productive, as it paradoxically strengthens the hand of AKP in international platforms.

CONCLUSIONS: Firing his harsh criticism towards Israel, Prime Minister Erdogan may primarily be making an investment in the upcoming local elections. But a harsher tone toward Israel cannot be seen in isolation from the Islamic conservative ideology that is spreading in the country, which Erdogan encouraged and may now be entrapped by. While rising the populist wave internally, Erdogan appears to be trying to find a solution that avoids significant harm to Turkish-Israeli relations on the external front. Given its regional isolation, Israel is unlikely to want to lose Turkey, no matter the language used by the Turkish Prime Minister. Whether pro-Israeli lobbies in the U.S. will draw the same conclusion remains to be seen.

The AKP's behavior in the Gaza conflict is illustrative of a growing importance accorded to Turkey's Eastern vocation, primarily directed toward the Islamic world. As the West is itself alienated from the Middle East, it tends to evaluate this drift in Turkey as an opportunity, an impression the AKP is eager to promote – hence, perhaps, the number of abortive mediation initiatives. The point ignored by the West and everyone else is the extent of the transformation taking place in Turkey's domestic and foreign policy, and its long-term implications.

THE FORTNIGHT IN REVIEW

SECTION I: WHAT THE COLUMNISTS SAY

The issue of the alleged Ergenekon conspiracy, whether or not such a conspiracy does exist and the way the investigation is being conducted preoccupies Turkish columnists. While the most pronounced, secularist critics of the Islamic conservative rule dismiss the allegations altogether, seeing them as a way of silencing opposition, commentaries on the opposite side of the ideological spectrum unreservedly salute the investigation. A third group in the middle, while taking the threat of a coup conspiracy seriously, is worried that the prosecution is mishandled from a legal point of view.

CEMAL: LET US NOT BE NAÏVE

Hasan Cemal, a liberal, pro-AKP columnist in *Milliyet*, exhorts those who still may harbor suspicions about the existence of a conspiracy against the government to stop being naïve. There is no way of denying that there were plans ready for a military coup in 2003-04. The fact that those who have up until now thought that they stood “above the law” now are forced to realize that they no longer enjoy such a privileged status, is a huge step. All these arms that had been stored away, hidden in caches beneath ground were indeed intended to be used in order to create an atmosphere of chaos, which in turn would have cleared the way for a military takeover. And journalists, academics and others did all have roles to play in this scenario. I know it from my own experience, because I once played a similar role, back in the 1970’s, when as a radical leftist I sought to encourage a military coup. By all means, let us show sensitivity about how the investigation is pursued, and deplore that certain improprieties

from a legal point of view have occurred and call for a just trial. But let us not lose sight of the big picture. Turkey cannot afford such naïveté.

BIRAND: WHY I AM CONCERNED

Mehmet Ali Birand in *Posta*, a liberal columnist not unsympathetic to the views of the secularist opposition, responds to what he describes as criticism directed at the likes of himself in the column of Hasan Cemal cited above. I realize perfectly well what Cemal means when he urges us not to be naïve about the Ergenekon threat. Yet, I found myself in a quandary about this investigation. I recognize the importance of pursuing this matter; there are undeniably groups within the state who commit the most serious crimes in the name of the state. Still, I have grown ever more concerned over the way this investigation is pursued. What worries me is that people against whom there is no credible evidence are summarily detained. Parts of the allegations of the prosecution are so far-fetched as to create the suspicion, not that everything is

fabricated, but that actual wrong-doers and innocents are being confused. If the investigation is not straightened out, there is a risk that in the end nothing at all of importance will have come out of all of this.

TÜRMEEN: THE LAW AND SUSPICION

Riza Türmen, a former Turkish judge at the European court of Human rights, writing in *Milliyet*, finds it problematic that people are summarily detained, only to be released a few days later. The restriction of the individual freedom is a serious matter. The European court of Human rights demands that there should be reasonable doubt, that there is sufficient ground for believing that the detained individual has actually perpetrated a crime in order to justify detention. The Ergenekon case is also hampered by another fact. Millions of people follow the developments in the investigation in front of their television sets every evening like a TV-show. They see that academics, generals and justices are dragged away from their homes like criminals. And after a few days these individuals are released. But they pay a price not foreseen by the law. Those watching these scenes in turn think that justice must prevail, but also begin to worry; what guarantees are there that the police will not hurry off others at random the next time? Then, an atmosphere of fear begins to spread in society.

SAHIN: WHICH ERGENEKON?

Liberal and pro-secular columnist Haluk Sahin in *Radikal* observes that as the Ergenekon case

keeps swelling, it becomes ever more difficult to ascertain what it really is about. Ergenekon is about different things simultaneously, according to Sahin. First of all, it should be understood as a purge of the “Eurasian alternative”; that is, of those nationalists, who also are secularists, within the military who during recent years have toyed with the idea of turning Turkey’s back on the West, aligning the country with Russia, Iran and China. General (ret.) Tuncer Kilinc who was among those that were detained the other day has made such remarks. No doubt, external and internal power centers are happy to see the Eurasian alternative purged.

ÇANDAR: THE REAL “REPUBLIC OF FEAR”

Pro-AKP columnist Cengiz Candar in *Radikal* vehemently rejects the notion that the pursuit of the Ergenekon investigation amounts to the institution of any so called “republic of fear”. In a real “republic of fear”, a term that was once coined by the Iraqi intellectual Kanan Makiya to describe the Iraq of Saddam Hussein, the vociferous advocates of Ergenekon who occupy most of the power positions in the media would hardly have enjoyed the freedom to decry the investigation as they are now free to do. On the contrary, it is the continued impunity of the Ergenekon monster that would have really locked us into a republic of fear. Which “republic of fear” do you prefer? A republic of fear, in which the future would have been darkened by waves of assassinations, or a transparent democracy in which the basic rights of the citizens are secured?

SECTION II: DOMESTIC POLITICS

DEVLET BAHCELI: PEOPLE IN TURKEY WANT DEMOCRACY

MHP, Nationalist action party, leader, Devlet Bahçeli pointed out the importance of not letting the case of Ergenekon overshadow Turkey democratic development and stressed that it is a national responsibility to fight the criminal gang Ergenekon. Bahçeli is fully supporting the operation against Ergenekon and said that, it is important to find out if there are any illegal formations within the political power and to investigate in a proper way whether there is a threat against democracy. Bahçeli raised concerns about the political environment in Turkey and claimed that people in Turkey have lost their trust of politicians. The political parties are claiming that they advocate reforms and democratic development, but they are just using democracy as a by-pass and the shortest way to get into power. Bahçeli continued by saying that Turkey has gone through a dark and painful democratic process and is today approaching its goal. When anti-democratic elements in the society threaten democracy, means have to be taken to prevent this. "MHP knows that the people prefer democracy and it is not a surprise for us in our party." *Yeni Safak December 14*

BAYKAL IN HARSH SPEECH AGAINST ERDOGAN

In a speech the CHP, Republican people's party, leader, Deniz Baykal said to Erdogan something that was regarded as a threat. He said, "I recommend Erdogan to not involve himself with the CHP." Erdogan responded by asking, "Why is the main opposition and the media in panic, what are you afraid of?" Baykal said that Erdogan should not accuse CHP for anything because it would be something he could not handle. Baykal

commented on the Ergenekon case. He raised questions about the arms caches that have been revealed. "Who planned it? Who put it there? Was it just one or a few persons, or was it whole organization? Does the organization exist within the state or outside of it, and who are behind the organization? These are questions that need to be answered". *Yeni Safak December 14*

DTP REQUESTS OPEN MEETING OVER CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS

The pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party, DTP, called on Parliament to hold a general meeting concerning the illegal crime organizations in Turkey. A DTP deputy in Diyarbakir said at a press conference, "The reason for the existence of such organizations has always been the perceived 'enemy'. These enemies sometimes were in the shape of minorities, Armenians, Greeks and those with different identities. Now, the enemy of the organization is the Kurds and the deadlock of the Kurdish problem" and pointed out the alleged Ergenekon gang. He continued by saying that, "Those taken into custody defend themselves saying they are struggling against the PKK (outlawed Kurdish Workers' Party). All advocacies of the Ergenekon suspects are based on animosity to the PKK and to the Kurds. If there's a will to struggle against Ergenekon, determination should also be shown to solve the Kurdish problem in a democratic and peaceful way" and stressed the importance of establishing a Parliamentary Research Committee to unveil Ergenekon. *Hürriyet December 15*

LOW SCHOOL ENROLLMENT NUMBERS IN TURKEY

The ministry of Education announced that last year 289,000 school-age children did not attend any classes, with Istanbul leading the pack of Turkish provinces with insufficient enrollment numbers. Istanbul with 34 000 unregistered school-age children was followed by Sanliurfa (25,000), Van (23,000) and Diyarbakir (14,000). A new campaign started with the aim to increase enrollment in compulsory schools to 100 percent. Girls constitute the dominant part of the children missing out on mandatory education; out of the non-school attending 289,000 children, 171,000 are girls. The campaign stated a “door – to – door child school registration” and out of 326,000 unregistered children in October 2008, 37,000 were registered in schools. The idea is to continue to register the remaining 289,000 children. In 2003 cooperation between the Ministry of Education and UNICEF started and a campaign to encourage families to enroll their girls in school have proved to be successful. The campaign is called “Girls Let’s Go to School” and it includes e-registration and e-education. Over 220,000 girls have entered the school system as a result of this campaign. The ministry is now taking it a step further and seeks to enroll all Turkish children. The ministry held a meeting between the governors and education directors for the 15 districts of Turkey with the highest number of children who are not enrolled and gave each of the districts its own “report card” on unregistered students. Follow-up reports will be issued in April and November. *Zaman December 15*

DETENTION REVEAL ERGENEKON’S COVERT ASSASSINATION PLOTS

The terrorist network Ergenekon was planning to assassinate Alevi and Armenian community leaders, the Prime Minister and members of the Supreme Court of Appeals. If this would have been a reality it would have created chaos in Turkey. Around 40 individuals were detained last week during police operations staged in six cities as part of the ongoing investigation into Ergenekon. Among others, military officers, and

academic with left-wing political activist background, the former head of the Police Special Operations Unit, seven retired generals and the former head of the Higher Education Board (YÖK) was detained. The police had been monitoring the suspects’ phone conversations for months and it was due to that they found evidence that Ergenekon was engaged in preparations for a number of assassinations. The police have established that two attacks were acts of the Ergenekon terrorist organization. The first attack was on the Cumhuriyet daily in May 2006 and the second one was a shooting at the Council of State in 2006 that left a senior judge dead and two others injured. *Zaman January 12*

THE PARLIAMENT RECEIVES A NEW REPORT ON THE POLICE’S RIGHT TO USE FORCE

After the political activist Engin Ceber was beaten to death in prison, a new report was submitted to the Parliamentary Human Rights Committee. According to the report the police should only have the right to use force in a way that will not harm the person or cause minimal harm. The report said; “While shooting someone in the foot would be enough to demobilize them, shooting at the head and killing them is an authority that the law does not delegate. The police should observe the right to use force in a way that will not harm the person or will harm him minimally”. The report stressed the importance of police officers not to abuse their authority with acts of cruelty, revenge or punishment and urged them to make a recording of the whole depositions process. The report revealed that due to mistreatment allegations, 35 suits were fielded against 431 police officers in Istanbul in 2008. *Hürriyet January 12*

THE CAR INDUSTRY RESUMED PRODUCTION

In the car industry 2000 workers resumed production. Companies, such as Tofas,

Renault, Ford Otosan and Toyota had to cut down their production in December 2008, but had workers resume manufacturing in the beginning of the New Year. The German automotive company CRH proclaimed that it is planning to build a factory in Kocaeli, which will create 400 new jobs. One of the

main food companies in Turkey, Ülker, is opening a new baby food factory, situated in Ankara. At the same time the retailer Carrefour is establishing a company in the Black sea province of Samsun. *Sabah January 13*

SECTION III: FOREIGN RELATIONS

GÜL REACHES OUT TO OBAMA CONCERNING ISRAEL'S OFFENSIVE ON GAZA

The Turkish President Abdullah Gül's first diplomatic note to the U.S President-elect Barack Obama contained a request that Obama would consider the Turkish public's sensitivity on the Palestine issue. It stated: "Take heed of Turkey's words. The incident is not just between Palestine and Israel, but is an event that will bring instability to the entire region". Gül gathered the board of administrators of the Turkish Businessmen and Industrialist Confederation (TUSKON), together with U.S academics at Cankaya, the presidential palace. Among other matters, the Israeli offensive in Gaza, Russia's shutting off gas supplies to EU via Ukraine and the EU negotiations with Turkey were discussed. During the meeting U.S academics asked Gül if he had a message for Obama, and Gül responded by stating; "Understand us correctly on the Palestine issue. The Turkish press and public have reacted more sensitively than others to the development in Gaza. Turkey's sensitivity and sensibility on the issue should be well understood. What has happened is upsetting". *Sabah, January*

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DIPLOMATIC CONTACT WITH ISRAEL WILL NOT BE CUT OFF

During a press conference in Pristina, the Turkish foreign minister Ali Babacan stressed that even under very difficult conditions the relations with Israel will not be suspended. Babacan first of all noted that Turkey recognizes Israel, "Turkey has diplomatic relations with Israel. Turkey is a country which is in contact with Israel at different levels. This contact will not be cut off, even under the most difficult conditions. It goes on at different levels. However, on the other hand, the content of these contacts and possible visits are by all means important. We are always open to meetings aimed at yielding results and particularly to meetings that are related to maintaining a permanent peace following an immediate cease-fire in the region". Turkish officials say Prime Minister Erdogan told his party in a closed-door session last week that he would not contact Israeli officials until a cease-fire is in place. Babacan said in an interview that "Our door is open if you want to come. But if you're coming just to show that everything is alright with Turkey, then don't come. Let's talk cease-fire conditions when you come. If you feel ready to do so, then you should come". *Zaman December 15*

TURKEY STEPS IN TO HELP END GAS CRISIS

Turkey's energy minister traveled to Moscow to meet officials in an attempt to find a solution to the gas crisis between Russia and Ukraine. The energy minister, Hilmi Güler said that Turkey is working as a mediator between the two parties. "As part of the solution, our talks with the two parties continue. I do not know what you could call it but we are doing our best for a solution to the problem". A question was put to Güler, whether Russia would consider joining the Nabucco project to lessen its dependency on Ukraine as a transit country, Güler responded by saying that it is up to Moscow. A solution to the crisis is of great importance for Turkey, since Russia is its major trading partner and since Turkey is highly dependent on Russia's natural gas. *Hürriyet January 15*

ERDOGAN CALLS THE UNITED NATIONS TO PUSH ISRAEL TO END THE VIOLENCE

The U.S and Turkish presidents in a telephone conversation over the weekend discussed ways to end the violence in Gaza and to reach a case-fire deal. Despite the fact that Israel has ignored the case-fire, Turkey is continuing its diplomatic efforts to bring about an end to the war. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said yesterday to the UN that the organization must put pressure on Israel to admit to the recent U.N resolution aiming to end the violence in Gaza. During a meeting in Ankara Erdogan said that "Turkey is continuing its initiatives to end the embargo and dispatch basic humanitarian needs to Gaza". A representative from Turkey, Erdogans special foreign policy advisor Ahmet Davutoglu was attending the mediating meeting in Cairo and foreign minister Ali Babacan continued his shuttle diplomacy to find a solution to the conflict. Bush said to Gül that the only way to make sure a case-fire will continue is to ensure that the smuggling arms by Hamas ends. The U.S national security spokesman said in a statement; "President Bush emphasized the importance of bringing an end to rocket-fire against Israel and preventing arms smuggling

into Gaza as the basis for a durable ceasefire". The U.S is also positive to a Turkish involvement in the Egyptian-French mediation efforts. According to Turkish diplomats, Bush compared Turkey's fight against terror and the Turkish military operations into northern Iraq with the Israeli operations. Gül dismissed the comparison and claimed that "no civilians were hit during Turkey's operations". There have also been speculations whether Turkey should provide with troops in the region, if Hamas and Israel agree to the peace plan provided by France and Egypt. Foreign minister Ali Babacan said that Turkey was ready to send a monitoring group to the region. *Hürriyet January 12*

MEETING WITH BARZANI IN ARBIL

A meeting was held between Turkey's special envoy to Iraq, Murat Özcelik and the Iraqi Kurdish leader, Massoud Barzani in Arbil. This was the second meeting between the two and Ankara had said there will be more contact between the two administrations if the Kurdish administration is willing to cooperate with Turkey's efforts to fight PKK, which has bases in Northern Iraq. The Kurdish administration in Iraq is very concerned about the PKK launching attacks from their territory, but they are not willing to take military actions against them, preferring a peaceful solution. After the meeting, Iraqi Kurdish officials said political and economic relations between Turkey and the Kurdish administration were discussed. Another issue that was discussed was the new Iraqi-US agreement that concerns the withdrawal of American forces from Iraq. *Zaman January 12*

TURKEY APPOINTS A FULL TIME EU NEGOTIATOR

Turkey has appointed its first full time EU negotiator, Egemen Bagis. Bagis said on Tuesday that Turkey will be an honorable member of the EU and not the sick man of Europe. He stressed the importance for Turkey to join the bloc, but pointed out that Brussels must treat Turkey in the same way as other candidates are treated. At a

conference in Istanbul he said, “We have a steep road in front of us but we are determined to complete negotiations in the end – no one should doubt this”. Bagis and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan will travel to Brussels next week to start the new year for Turkish membership negotiations. There are speculations that Erdogan appointed a full time EU negotiator just to show EU that Turkey is serious in its EU ambitions. This is something EU has requested. *Hürriyet*
January 13

STRONG REACTIONS FROM ISRAEL TO TURKEY'S STANCE ON THE ATTACKS IN GAZA

An extensive e-mail sending in Israel requested Israelis to not travel to Turkey, due to Turkey’s response on the country’s attack in Gaza. Under the title “We must beat them through their pockets and boycott the Turkish hotel industry”, Israelis were encouraged to boycott Turkey as a

tourist destination, due to both Ankara’s reaction to the development in Israel and Palestine and to the mass demonstrations held in the country against the attack in Gaza. The e-mail included a short caption, “No more Turkey! No more traveling to Turkey! The Turks should go search for their friends in Gaza. We are not coming.” A photo was also attached to the e-mail with a picture of a store in Turkey where a sign was hanging in the window, saying, “For children-killer Israelis, no sale, no entry.” The Israeli defense industry executives are also concerned that as a result of the war in Gaza, Turkey will cancel orders from Israel. Local companies have about \$2 billion in Turkish orders on their books. Israeli companies expect Turkey to delay negotiations on future purchases to canceling contracts that have already been signed. *Hürriyet*
January 15

