



# TURKEY REPORT

No 8

## Peace talks: a chance for solution?

The peace talks between the National Intelligence Organisation (MIT) and Abdullah Öcalan have been on the top of the domestic agenda. The role that the imprisoned PKK leader could play was reexamined after his intervention for the ending of the hunger strike by Kurdish inmates at the end of November 2012. MIT Undersecretary Hakan Fidan held a meeting with Öcalan on 16 December. Independent lawmaker Ahmet Türk and pro-Kurdish BDP deputy Ayla Akat went to İmralı to meet Öcalan at the beginning of 2013, marking the first political visit after his imprisonment. A second delegation has given the green light to visit Öcalan in February.

PM Erdoğan's consultant Yalçın Akdoğan has said that the primary goal was to make armed PKK militants leave Turkey. "The aim here is laying down arms and retreating outside the country...Retreating outside the country is a first step." The Prime Minister has offered safe passage for PKK members wishing to lay down arms and leave the country. There have been several speculations in the press about the content of the talks and the timeframe. According to most media sources change in the law of political parties and the election law, the release of the KCK suspects and the definition of citizenship are some of the issues that have been touched upon. As regards PKK's traditional demands for "democratic autonomy" or for a "separate state," it seems that Öcalan has promised to abandon them.

What has created cautious optimism for a positive outcome of the procedure is that the initiative is backed by the opposition, while the pro-Kurdish BDP has reaffirmed its commitment on several occasions; even the criticisms of the nationalist MHP have not been as loud as one would expect. The Gülen movement and the civil society have extended their support as well. A setback in the process was the murder of one of the co-founders of PKK and two other PKK affiliated women in Paris. However, the fact that the funeral of the women took place in Diyarbakir without incidents is generally perceived as a statement of commitment.

Amid negotiations the parliament has approved provision permitting defendants to use their mother tongue in the court.

<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/paris-sabotage-will-not-stop-talks-with-ocalan.aspx?pageID=238&nid=39002>

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## **Terrorist Attack at the American Embassy in Turkey**

A suicide bomber, 40 years old leftist terrorist Ecevit Şanlı, blew himself out at the entrance of the American Embassy compound in Ankara on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February. After Turkish police identified the perpetrator and exposed the evidences linked to the former with the outlawed terrorist organisation of People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (DHKP-C), the organisation claimed the responsibility.

Once this strong organisation, DHKP-C lost most of its influence and its capability after the mid-1990's, when Turkish special police teams stormed and killed many senior and militant members of the organisation in 1992. In additionm the organisation suffered of internal stiff that resulted in the loss of its militants and its already-narrow popular base. Although it experienced major ideological and practical setbacks, DHKP-C never stopped its terrorist activities in Turkey. Along with some other marginalised, extreme leftist organisations, it formed alliances with PKK, which provided arms and training to the organisation, in return of the co-operation in some provinces of the Northeast Turkey in where PKK could not operate but the DHKP-C could, thanks to its sympathizers among the Alawite population. After the relatively silent period that lasted more than a decade, DHKP-C intensified its attacks recently. Since last fall, the organisation staged three attacks to police stations in Istanbul. Although all terrorists were either arrested after incidents or were killed during clashes, the organisation succeeded to attract the attention.

The timing of the latest attack deserves to be analysed carefully. The incident took place while the Turkish state started negotiations with PKK through Öcalan and DHKP-C stated, in its affiliated news bulletin, that the PKK leadership betrayed Kurdish people and became an apparatus of the Turkish state and the imperialism generally. Having undergone intensified police operations, DHKP-C might have wanted to prove that it is still an actor that needs to be taken into consideration. It is also highly possible that the terrorist organisation, by exposing its operational capability, wants to enlist extreme leftist cadres who have been critical of the peace negotiations between the PKK and the Turkish state. Another important point regarding the attack is the organisation's external links. Like many other terrorist organisations in Turkey, DHKP-C has maintained good relations with Syria. In this regard, the organisation may have decided to go beyond its usual discourse of "unified progressive front against American Imperialism" and pay back the Assad regime for the support it enjoyed for decades.

<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/dhkpc-claims-responsibility-for-the-attack-on-us-embassy.aspx?pageID=238&nID=40308&NewsCatID=341>

<http://www.akintiya-karsi.org/koxuz/node/1275>

<http://www.yuruyus.com/www/turkish/pdf/350.pdf>

## Are good old days in sight? : Update on Turkish –Israel Relations

As predicted, Netanyahu's Likud- Beytenu alliance came first in the elections held on January 22, 2013. Having been tasked with the formation of a new government, Netanyahu hopes to form a new coalition government which will have to deal with the vital foreign affairs issues like Iran's nuclear programme, the uncertainty in the ongoing civil war in Syria and its possible spillover effects in Lebanon, the uneasy relations with Obama administration, the Islamist Musri rule in Egypt and the possibility of a united Palestinian front.

Undoubtedly, the restoration of the deteriorated relations with Turkey is on the agenda of the major Israeli political actors as well as the Israel's security institutions. Actually, the relations between the two countries improved to "bad" from "hostile" since last summer. Under the mediation of the USA and the UK, both countries' diplomats, intelligence officers and military delegations met in various occasions. At first glance, things seem to have stayed the same. The Turkish side still insists on a formal apology along with the compensation for the 9 Turkish citizens' families killed on board of the Mavi Marmara. On the other hand, Israel expresses its will to improve the relations with Turkey but still avoids from issuing a formal apology statement. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the Turkish side, including Erdoğan and Davutoğlu, has lowered the tone of its criticism against Israel significantly. Remembering that the Turkish side lifted its vetoes for Israel's participation in the NATO's Mediterranean Partnership programme last November, it can be understood that the Turkish side's new attitude signals something more than the softening harsh rhetoric against Israel.

What caused this change is a little bit complicated. The existence of a Shiite belt that included Maliki's Iraq, Syria and Hezbollah of Lebanon and was led by Iran is perceived by Turkey, along with other Sunni states, as a direct threat to its interests in the Middle East. In this context, Turkey's and Israel's interests overlap in the issues of breaking the Shiite belt and preventing Iran to have nuclear weapons. As known, Israel was one of the Turkey's biggest arms suppliers until a couple of years ago. Turkey benefited greatly from know-how provided by Israel through major arms deals like modernisation of Turkish F-4 E fighter planes, of M-60 tanks and co-production of Popeye I-II standoff missiles. Turkey's flourishing local arms industry, to some extent, owes to its success to the expertise and technology acquired from Israel. Today, for a Turkey, determined to gain self-sufficiency in arms industry, Israel could provide high-end technology in many areas, particularly in missiles, satellites and electronic warfare. On the other hand, Turkey is a very promising market for Israel's arms, IT, energy and agriculture companies. With its still-growing economy in recessed world economy, and unsaturated markets Turkey present huge opportunities for Israel. Turkey can also be both buyer and transit – country for Israel's newly discovered offshore natural gas fields.

Taking heretofore solid reasons into considerations, Israel-Turkish rapprochement, if not strategic alliance, is inevitable for both countries. It is just matter of months.

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<http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2012/12/03-turkey-israel-arebell>

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/01/cold-war-turkey-israel.html>

## Hrant Dink and the “deep state”

Hrant Dink, a Turkish journalist of Armenian origin and an advocate of the Turkish-Armenian reconciliation was commemorated on the 19<sup>th</sup> of January on the 6th anniversary of his murder. The anniversary coincided with a request by the chief prosecutor of the Court of Cassation to annul the Criminal Court’s verdict of January 2012 according to which the murder was not an organised assassination.

Six years ago, on 19 January 2007 Hrant Dink, the chief editor of Agos, a bilingual Turkish-Armenian weekly newspaper was assassinated outside the Istanbul offices of the newspaper. Hrant Dink’s views on the Armenian issue had always been negatively perceived by Turkish nationalist circles, and he had been frequently threatened, prosecuted and ultimately convicted for denigrating Turkishness. The gunman, a teenager with ultranationalist views was convicted to nearly 23 years of imprisonment. However, the court also ruled that the murder was not an act of organised crime and acquitted 19 suspects of charges for links with a secret network. The decision of the court has provoked strong reactions among the public, but also among the political parties that continued to call for the attribution of justice. It was later reported that a number of police and intelligence units had been informed about the plans to murder Hrant Dink and failed to take the necessary measures to protect him. One year after the initial verdict the chief prosecutor of the Court of Cassation asked for the review of the case arguing that the murder was an organized assassination, aimed at disrupting the unity and the integrity of the state and create chaos in the society and that it was committed by a network established to fight against non-Muslims minorities. The prosecutor’s opinion has raised hopes for a re-trial of the case and the conviction of the actual perpetrators. Fethiye Cetin, the lawyer of Dink’s family, has welcomed the prosecutor’s notice as a positive step but has stressed the need of political will for the resolution of the murder.

A report that has been submitted to the parliamentary Coup and Memorandum Investigation Commission by the National Intelligence Organisation (MİT) seems to be the key for the resolution of the murder and other assassinations of non-Muslims. The report reveals the operation of illegal structures and forces within the Turkish military. The Tactical Mobilisation Group (STK), one of the illegal structures, had, according to the report, orchestrated Dink’s murder, as well as the massacre of three Bible publishers in Malatya in 2007 and the murder of a Catholic priest in Trabzon in 2006.

<http://www.todayszaman.com/news-304579-lawyer-cetin-mit-knows-about-dink-murder-but-does-not-release-facts.html>

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