Erdogan’s Hostage Diplomacy
Western Nationals in Turkish Prisons

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Introduction

At least two American citizens are currently sitting in Turkish prisons, where they have been held for the last two years.¹ One is Andrew Brunson, a pastor from North Carolina who ministered to a small Protestant congregation in Turkey for over 20 years until his arrest by the authorities in the fall of 2016. The other is Serkan Golge, a Turkish-American physicist who worked for NASA's Mars program until the Turkish police picked him up while on vacation in Turkey, also in 2016. Both men stand accused of plotting or partaking in a failed coup attempt that transpired that July against Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who has ruled the country for 15 years – increasingly with an iron fist.

Turkish prosecutors charged both U.S. citizens with “membership in a terrorist organization.” Golge received a seven-and-a-half-year prison sentence in February 2018 for his involvement with the Fethullahist Terrorist Organization (FETO), a group Turkey designated and accused of planning the July 2016 putsch. The term “FETO” was first used in 2015 to refer to the followers of U.S.-based Turkish cleric Fethullah Gulen, Erdogan's closest political ally between 2002 and 2013, who later turned into his sworn enemy following the Gulen network's role in exposing and publicizing the massive corruption scandal that threatened Erdogan's government in December 2013. Prosecutors have charged Brunson not only with membership in FETO, but also in a group that is one of Gulen's archrivals, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a Marxist Kurdish insurgency group seeking self-rule in Turkey.

Ankara sees both groups as top national security threats, and has repeatedly branded and jalled dissidents across the political spectrum by accusing them of membership in these organizations. The two Americans are among some 100,000 people detained in Turkey after Erdogan declared a “state of emergency” following the failed coup. Since then, the Turkish president has ruled the country by decree. By the end of the summer of 2016, 150,000 people were dismissed from their jobs. Blatantly targeting Turkey's secular and liberal opposition alongside the supposed coup-suspects, the dismissals amounted to no less than a mass political purge.²

Brunson and Golge were not the only foreign nationals ensnared in these purges. Not only did authorities begin to target Western human rights advocates – an attempt to intimidate Turkish dissidents who collaborate with foreign colleagues – but Turkey's pro-government media also launched a slander campaign against Europeans and Americans, accusing them of supporting terrorism and conspiring coups to make them into targets for the mass crackdown. With Gulen's residence in the United States and Washington's partnership with Syrian Kurds fueling state-propagated anti-Americanism throughout Turkey, Americans came under particular scrutiny.

But other Western nationals experienced similar pressures. More than 30 Western nationals have been jailed in Turkey following the coup attempt, and at least nine remain in prison as of June 1, 2018.³ Under the state of emergency, they could be legally held up to seven years in pre-trial detention, with limited access to legal or consular support, and are not entitled to attorney-client privilege. Pastor Brunson, for one, has had no due process in his case, with authorities even withholding his indictment for 17 months – based on the testimony of secret witnesses – and keeping him in a maximum-security prison. His lawyer claims he has lost 50 pounds since his arrest.

Increasingly, another aspect of these mass arrests has emerged: Since last summer, American and European officials have on several occasions condemned Turkey's “hostage diplomacy” – efforts by the Turkish

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¹ The authors believe more than a dozen Americans are in jail in Turkey, based on private discussions with U.S. officials.
³ See Appendix.
government to make political bargaining chips out of Western prisoners arrested in Turkey since the coup.4 Following the arbitrary detention of Western nationals in Turkey, they argue, the government uses the prisoners as pawns to extract concessions in bilateral relations with the U.S. and EU countries. As one Freedom House analyst observed, “Turkey’s new foreign policy is hostage-taking.”5 Indeed, as President Erdogan turned increasingly autocratic at home, Turkey’s international reputation and relations with its traditional transatlantic partners have also frayed.

This hostage diplomacy is not only hurting Turkey’s global standing, but also propelling its transatlantic partners to consider sanctions against Ankara. Germany and the United States have issued several travel warnings to their citizens, advising against visiting Turkey. Business communities and investors across Europe fear Turkey’s repressive climate and lack of fundamental human rights and freedoms. Turkey’s relations with the Netherlands unraveled in March 2017, after a diplomatic row ahead of the Dutch elections. While the main reason for the breakdown was Erdogan’s incitement of Turkish immigrants in the Netherlands, the deportations and detentions of dozens of Dutch citizens in Turkey did not help.

The harshest denunciations of Ankara’s hostage diplomacy, however, have come from the United States Congress, where members have issued multiple calls for imposing sanctions against Turkish officials involved in the wrongful arrests of American citizens. The arrest of Brunson on dubious charges, in particular, has animated Washington, where Congress has held numerous panels and hearings on the pastor’s Kafkaesque case and the conditions of his confinement. Meanwhile, authorities have arrested at least three Turkish employees of U.S. consular missions in Turkey, prompting a visa crisis between the NATO allies in late October 2017. While the crisis was ostensibly resolved by December the same year, all three employees remain in prison or under house arrest.

The United States and various European Union countries have so far dealt with Erdogan’s hostage diplomacy at the bilateral level, using discreet talks with Ankara to plead for the release of their nationals and employees. The Turkish president has chosen to bargain with each country according to his calendar, using his hostages as leverage to gain concessions. The U.S. and the EU need a coherent, transatlantic strategy to counter Erdogan’s hostage diplomacy, not only to ensure the release of Western nationals in prison, but also to prevent other incidents in the future.

American Prisoners in Turkey

On October 7, 2016, U.S. nationals Pastor Andrew Brunson and his wife Norine Brunson were summoned by a local police station in the western Turkish province of Izmir to discuss their applications for a residence permit renewal.6 The couple had been living in Turkey for more than 20 years. The pastor, a member of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, had been working at the Izmir Resurrection Church. After being kept at the center for 13 days, in isolation and without access to an attorney or consular services, Turkish authorities formally detained the pastor.7 While his wife was released without any explanation, Brunson was transferred to a high-security migration management center in Izmir.

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The legal process followed for Brunson’s case is testament to the pitfalls of Turkey’s “state of emergency” provisions, which bestow upon the authorities broad powers to carry out arbitrary police searches and detentions. Brunson did not appear before a judge for nearly two months after his detention. Until then, he was held in solitary confinement and repeatedly denied U.S. consular services, or even any legal counsel. Finally, on December 9, a judge formally accused Brunson of “membership in an armed terrorist organization,” and the pastor was transferred to Izmir’s maximum-security prison. The hearing marked the first time Brunson met with a lawyer.

The exact charges against Brunson, meanwhile, remain imprecise and multi-faceted. He appears to be accused of both inciting Turkey’s Kurdish citizens against the state and of plotting the July 2016 coup with the Gulen network – a faction historically opposed to Kurdish political movements.

In May 2017, the Turkish daily Hurriyet reported that the pastor was charged with delivering religious sermons to Kurdish citizens “with a special purpose.” In his defense, Brunson stated that he did not speak Kurdish and that he delivered sermons to all kinds of people, including Kurds. In August, however, fresh charges were added to the Brunson case, accusing the pastor of “gathering state secrets for espionage, attempting to overthrow the Turkish parliament and government, and to change the constitutional order” – a clear reference to the July coup attempt.

While prosecutors only released Brunson’s indictment to the pastor’s lawyers in March 2018, just weeks before Brunson’s first court hearing, Turkey’s pro-government media had published myriad stories throughout 2017 speculating on Brunson’s possible offenses against the Turkish state and his alleged links to the Gulenist network. These reports offered little evidence, instead systematically promoted a conspiratorial smear campaign against the pastor, portraying him as an agent of broader conspiracies attributed to the United States.

The Turkish daily Takvim – owned by the Turkuvaz media company, which includes President Erdogan’s son-in-law and his son-in-law’s brother as board

Brunson was actually the second American to be jailed after the coup attempt. The first was a Turkish-American dual citizen, Serkan Golge, who was a physicist studying the effects of radiation for NASA’s Mars program at the Johnson Space Centre in Houston, Texas. While on summer vacation with his family in southern Turkey, Golge was detained in August 2016, only weeks after the coup attempt. Like Brunson, he was accused of membership in a terrorist organization, as well as espionage. The only evidence the court produced against him was a $1 bill found in Golge’s parents’ house. (Turkish authorities claim that Gulen handed out a specific series of $1 bills to his followers to designate their rank within the movement.) In early February, Golge was tried and sentenced to a seven-and-a-half-year prison term. He continues to be held in a prison in the southern Turkish province of Hatay. Because Turkey treats detained dual citizens as Turkish citizens only, Golge was denied any U.S. consular access—a move the United States failed to dispute for months.

In August 2016, Turkish authorities also detained American academic Clyde Forsberg, who was teaching at Turkey’s Karabuk University. Forsberg was accused of “aiding and abetting terrorism,” and providing assistance to the Gulen network. He was released after appearing in court five days after his detention. But Forsberg feared further action against him, citing the publication of his court appearance, along with his full name and citizenship, by local newspapers. He was immediately dismissed from the university upon his release, and he left Turkey shortly after.

Meanwhile, in October 2016, Ryan Keating, an American PhD student and aid worker, was detained as he was trying to enter Turkey and deported from the country. Keating, who had been living in Turkey for

18. Elena Becatoros, “Turkey: Dollar bills seen as evidence of coup-plotter links,” Associated Press, August 5, 2016. (https://apnews.com/039b0dd1be854a3fbcfc3b0a244d1b5)
21. Ibid.
more than two decades, had set up a relief organization in partnership with the Kurtulus Church in Ankara, one of Turkey’s largest evangelical churches, to support refugees in the Turkish capital. Keating was labeled “a threat to national security” and banned from entering Turkey. Other Protestants, such as Patrick Jansen, a church leader who had been based in Gaziantep, were barred from the country.

Turkey’s main opposition challenged the cases against these Americans at the Turkish parliament on multiple occasions. The government never issued a response.

Four days later, on November 8, CHP Izmir Deputy Zeynep Altıok also submitted a parliamentary question about the charges against Brunson, the validity of the evidence, the identities of the officials preventing Brunson from seeing his attorney, and more. Altıok pointed to the claim that more than 100 Protestant clergymen had been deported from Turkey since 2012, asking the minister of interior whether the Protestants were being systematically targeted. The government, once again, never responded.

All four Americans – the pastor, the physicist, the academic, and the aid worker – were ultimately accused of threatening national security. But Ankara’s post-coup purges also targeted Turkish workers of U.S. consular missions.

On February 23, 2017, Turkish counterterrorism police detained Hamza Ulucay, a Turkish employee of the U.S. Consulate in the southern province of Adana, home to the U.S.-Turkish Incirlik airbase used by the anti-Islamic State coalition for military operations in Syria. Ulucay had worked for the consulate as a translator for 36 years before his detention. Although he was initially released from custody on probation, he was detained for a second time on March 7, after a prosecutor objected to his release. A court later ordered his formal arrest on charges of “membership in a terrorist organization” after authorities found $1 bills at his residence.

Metin Topuz, another Turkish citizen and employee of the U.S. diplomatic staff in Turkey, was detained on October 4, 2017. Topuz, who worked for the U.S.
Consulate General in Istanbul, was accused of espionage and working to destroy Turkey’s constitutional order, another reference to the coup attempt. He was accused of being a Gulenist due to his alleged contact with a former Turkish prosecutor and former police chiefs with links to the U.S.-based cleric. Washington issued a statement noting that Topuz was a liaison for the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and had contacted many Turkish officials over the years as part of his duties.

Turkish authorities targeted a third consular employee, Mete Canturk, only days after the arrest of Topuz. After raiding Canturk’s Istanbul home, the police visited Canturk’s wife in her family’s residence in the province of Amasya, detaining her and the couple’s daughter, both accused of membership in the Gulen network. After being detained for more than a week, the two were released ahead of a State Department delegation visit to Turkey.

At this point, Washington appeared to be losing patience with Ankara. Within four days of Metin Topuz’s arrest, on October 8, U.S. authorities suspended all nonimmigrant visa services at its diplomatic facilities in Turkey. The next day, Ambassador John Bass – whose service in Turkey was coming to an end – issued a press release, stating that Topuz’s arrest had “raised questions” about “whether the goal of some [Turkish] officials is to disrupt the long-standing cooperation between Turkey and the United States,” adding that U.S. officials were “not sure” whether the detentions were isolated incidents. Bass condemned the so-called “leaks” from Turkish officials to pro-government media outlets regarding allegations against Topuz as “disturbing,” echoing the consulate’s statement that called the leaks an “attempt to try Topuz in the media rather than a court of law.”

The Turkish embassy in Washington soon retaliated by suspending its own visa services for American citizens. At home, Erdogan made every effort to pin the blame for the visa crisis on the outgoing ambassador. Erdogan publicly urged Washington to recall Bass, declaring that Ankara no longer considered him a legitimate
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envoy. The State Department, however, dismissed all allegations, stating that Bass’s decision had been made with the full coordination of Foggy Bottom, the White House, and the National Security Council.

On October 16, a U.S. delegation, chaired by Assistant Secretary of State Jonathan Cohen, travelled to Ankara to resolve the crisis. Following a meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Turkey said that the talks were going in a “good direction.”

Weeks later, on November 6, the United States declared its partial resumption of visa services in Turkey, adding that it had obtained assurances from Ankara about the safety of U.S. consular staff at its missions. Turkey again matched the U.S. move and resumed visa services, but denied that any assurances were made, signaling that the crisis was far from over.

The next day, Prime Minister Binali Yildirim travelled to Washington to discuss a variety of issues, including the visa crisis and the release of the consulate employees. But after working-level meetings failed to yield results, Yildirim’s scheduled meeting with Vice President Mike Pence was pushed back by two days. The two sides could not even produce matching statements after their meeting on November 9, with Yildirim calling the talks “very fruitful” and the White House emphasizing its “deep concern” over the arrests in Turkey.

The crisis ultimately came to a “resolution” on December 28. While Ulucay and Topuz remain behind bars (and Canturk remains under house arrest), both countries announced a full resumption of visa services. Washington noted that the Turkish government had adhered to “assurances” given earlier, adding that there were no additional embassy employees under investigation, that local staff “would not be detained or arrested for performing their official duties,” and that Turkish authorities had agreed to inform the U.S. if they intended to detain or arrest any members of the American missions in Turkey.

The Turkish Embassy in Washington, however, again denied any “assurances concerning the ongoing judicial processes,” adding that foreign mission personnel were not investigated for performing their official duties. “It is inappropriate to misinform the Turkish and American public that such assurances were provided,” the statement read.

As if to underscore this, in January

2018, U.S. consulate employee Canturk was asked not to leave his house as part of an “effective house arrest.”

“Brunson has been given no due process, she argued, adding that the pastor was convinced that even if he were tried, the court proceedings would be a sham. Jolley described Erdogan’s statements suggesting a trade between the pastor and Gulen as explicitly revealing the Turkish president's intentions in holding Brunson hostage.”

Meanwhile, in a November congressional hearing in Washington, Brunson’s American attorney CeCe Heil described Brunson’s condition to U.S. legislators. The pastor was unable to sleep and had lost over 50 pounds due to stress, Heil said. They still had no access to evidence since his file was sealed, she explained, adding that they had learned of an alleged secret witness whose testimony provided the basis for the charges. If Turkey had any evidence against him, she asserted, they would have revealed it and charged him by now. In a Senate briefing on November 14, Sandra Jolley, the vice chair of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), described her recent visit to Brunson and the conditions of his confinement. Brunson has been given no due process, she argued, adding that the pastor was convinced that even if he were tried, the court proceedings would be a sham. Jolley described Erdogan’s statements suggesting a trade between the pastor and Gulen as explicitly revealing the Turkish president’s intentions in holding Brunson hostage.

EU Nationals in Turkish Prisons or Unable to Leave the Country

The foreign nationals targeted by the Turkish government’s post-coup mass arrests are not limited to American citizens. More than 20 European nationals have also been imprisoned since the failed coup. Due to the large Turkish immigrant community in Germany, many of the targets are German citizens of Turkish background, eliciting a harsh response from Berlin. But Dutch, Finnish, French, Greek, and Swedish citizens, among others, have also fallen victim to Ankara’s repression, facilitated by Erdogan’s ongoing state of emergency.

The first post-coup arrest of a European national came in November 2016, a month after Pastor Brunson’s arrest. That month, authorities detained French journalist Olivier Bertrand in Gaziantep and held him behind bars without charge for two days. Turkey's semi-official Anadolu Agency reported that Bertrand was detained for working without proper accreditation, adding that he had written “favorable” articles about the perpetrators of the failed July 2016 coup attempt.

European officials may have viewed Bertrand’s arrest as an isolated arrest at the time, but in 2017, the picture changed dramatically. Turkish police detained German journalist Deniz Yucel on February 14, 2017. They officially arrested him two weeks later for spreading terrorist propaganda and inciting hatred. The only evidence the authorities cited were his published articles

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and interviews.\(^{47}\) He was put in solitary confinement and remained there until his release one year later, on February 16, 2018.\(^{48}\)

Yucel, the Turkey correspondent for the German daily \textit{Die Welt}, had earlier reported on the leaked emails of Turkey’s Energy Minister Berat Albayrak, who also happens to be President Erdogan’s son-in-law.\(^{49}\) Yucel was originally detained as part of Ankara’s crackdown on social media. But prosecutors also claimed that Yucel’s interview with a leader of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), a designated terrorist organization in Turkey, was evidence of incitement.\(^{50}\)

German Chancellor Angela Merkel soon came out in Yucel’s defense, urging the Turkish government to respect the rule of law and follow due process.\(^{51}\) Erdogan quickly shot back, calling Yucel a “PKK representative,” as well as a German “spy” who had been “in hiding” in the German consulate.\(^{52}\)

In April, Turkey arrested another German journalist, Mesale Tolu. One month later, prosecutors charged her with membership in a terrorist organization and with issuing terrorist propaganda. Authorities cited Tolu’s membership in the Socialist Party of the Oppressed (ESP) – a legal political party accused of having ties to the outlawed Marxist-Leninist Communist Party (MLKP)\(^{53}\) – arguing that she had attended funerals and memorial services of party members. Authorities also noted her attendance at anti-government protests after a massive corruption scandal was exposed in December 2013, as well as publications on Marxist-Leninist theory that the police seized in her apartment.\(^{54}\)

Tolu appeared in front of a judge for the first time in October 2017.\(^{55}\) In November, Tolu’s two attorneys were also detained, with both accused of membership in a terrorist group.\(^{56}\) The two lawyers were taken to the Bakirkoy Women’s Prison in Istanbul, where Tolu was also being held.

On December 18, Tolu was released pending trial after eight months in prison, but she was prohibited from leaving Turkey. Germany, which had earlier called for Tolu’s unconditional release, stated that the release “in no way” marked an end to Tolu’s case.\(^{57}\) A month after her release, Tolu’s husband and fellow journalist Suat Corlu was arrested along with at least four other


\(^{48}\) “Deniz Yücel 200 gündür özgürlüğünden yoksun (Deniz Yucel deprived of his freedom for 200 days),” \textit{Deutsche Welle} (Germany), September 1, 2017. (http://www.dw.com/tr/deniz-yuel-200-gündür-özgürlüğünden-yoksuna-40318661)


\(^{50}\) “Deniz Yücel 200 gündür özgürlüğünden yoksun (Deniz Yucel deprived of his freedom for 200 days),” \textit{Deutsche Welle} (Germany), September 1, 2017. (http://www.dw.com/tr/deniz-yuel-200-gündür-özgürlüğünden-yoksuna-40318661)


\(^{53}\) “HDP’nin masasından STAR’a 2. tehdit (Second threat from HDP pawn to STAR),” \textit{Sabah} (Turkey), July 31, 2015. (https://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2015/07/31/hdpnin-masasindan-stara-2tehdit)


\(^{55}\) “Mesale Tolu hakim karşısında çıktı (Mesale Tolu brought in front of a judge),” \textit{Deutsche Welle} (Germany), October 10, 2017. (http://www.dw.com/tr/mesale-tolu-hakim-karsisinda-ciktu/a-40899147)

\(^{56}\) “Zwei Anwältinnen von Mesale Tolu verhaftet (Two lawyers for Mesale Tolu arrested),” \textit{Bayerischer Rundfunk} (Germany), November 3, 2017. (https://www.br.de/nachrichten/schwaben/inhalt/zwei-anwaeltinnen-von-mesale-tolu-verhaftet-100.html)

members of the ESP and the Federation of Socialist Youth Associations (SGDF). Corlu had also been detained earlier and released in November 2017.\(^{58}\)

Turkish authorities also arrested German pilgrim David Britsch on his way to Jerusalem while trying to cross into Syria.\(^{59}\) Despite his deportation order, Britsch was held at the Erzurum Removal Center in eastern Turkey for nine months. He said authorities withheld legal aid and any information on charges against him. He speculated that his arrest was due to the tense relationship between Turkey and Germany.\(^{60}\)

Also in April, a Dutch Foreign Ministry spokesperson stated that dozens of Turkish-Dutch dual citizens, many of them linked to the Gulen movement, were being prevented from leaving Turkey. The media had earlier reported that as many as 100 Dutch citizens were unable to leave the country; the ministry spokesperson said that they did not have exact numbers, since the ministry only knew of those who had sought consular help.\(^{61}\)

The next month, Turkey detained the Istanbul-based French photojournalist Mathias Depardon, who was working in the southeastern province of Batman on a long-term project for National Geographic regarding the ancient city of Hasankeyf there.\(^{62}\) After officials stopped and searched Depardon’s phone and found images on his Instagram account of photographs of members of the PKK or other nationalist Kurds, he was interrogated for 16 hours and taken to a detention center in Gaziantep. He was accused, though never formally charged, of disseminating propaganda for a terrorist organization. The evidence consisted of screenshots of images of the PKK from Depardon’s social media pages, which the journalist had also published in French media outlets.\(^{63}\)

\begin{quote}
“Depardon was held in isolation for the first ten days of his detention, without access to a lawyer.”
\end{quote}

Depardon was held in isolation for the first ten days of his detention, without access to a lawyer.\(^{64}\) He was allowed to meet with a French embassy official only after he went on a hunger strike for six days.\(^{65}\) It later emerged that a court had ordered Depardon’s deportation three days after his detainment, but he was held in custody without charge for over a month.\(^{66}\)

In July 2017, authorities took Loup Bureau, a 27-year-old French journalism student, into custody on the Turkish-Iraqi border after he returned to Turkey from


\(^{59}\) “Tatilci Türk Türkiye'de gözaltına alındı (Turkish vacationer arrested in Turkey),” Deutsche Welle (Germany), July 28, 2017. (http://www.dw.com/tr/tatilci-türk-türkiyede-gözaltına-alındı/a-39878789)

\(^{60}\) “Another German, pilgrim David Britsch, released from Turkish jail,” Deutsche Welle (Germany), December 22, 2017. (http://www.dw.com/en/another-german-pilgrim-david-britsch-released-from-turkish-jail/a-41898333)


\(^{64}\) Ibid.


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Erbil. Bureau was imprisoned in Sirnak after being charged with membership in the Syria-based Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), a PKK affiliate and therefore a terrorist organization in Turkish eyes. The evidence consisted of his photos and interviews with YPG fighters.

Meanwhile Kadim D., a Turkish citizen who had been living in Germany for 40 years (and whose last name was left out of reports), was detained while on vacation in Turkey in July 2017. Unlike the others, Kadim D. was not accused of terrorism, but of insulting Erdogan. A screenshot of one his Facebook posts was presented as evidence. He was conditionally released after a day, and was banned from leaving Turkey until his trial, which could be scheduled for up to two years from detention.

The hunt against journalists and activists soon expanded to include human rights activists. German

Peter Steudtner and Swedish Ali Gharavi, the organizers of a digital security workshop in Istanbul on protecting the work of human rights defenders, were arrested on July 18, along with ten participants of the workshop, which included Amnesty International's Turkey director. They were all accused of membership in a terrorist organization. Pro-government media launched a systematic smear campaign, calling the prisoners foreign "agents," and implying their involvement in the July 2016 coup attempt.

Merkel came to Steudtner’s defense, condemning his arrest and calling it "absolutely unjustified," adding that the German government, at all levels, would work to secure his release. A Foreign Ministry statement read, “linking a fighter and spokesman for human rights and democracy like Peter Steudtner to supporters of terrorists is absurd.”

After more than 100 days in prison, Steudtner and Gharavi were both released on bail and returned to Germany in October 2017. Their Turkish colleagues, including Amnesty International’s Turkey director Taner Kilic, meanwhile, remain in jail as of June 1, 2018.

German citizens of Turkish background have long been targeted by Turkey’s draconian anti-terrorism laws.


68. “Tatilci Türk Türkiye’dede gözaltına alındı (Turkish vacationer arrested in Turkey),” Deutsche Welle (Germany), July 28, 2017. (http://www.dw.com/tr/tatilci-türk-türkiyede-gözaltına-alındı/a-39878789)


73. “German activist Peter Steudtner returns from Turkey on bail,” Deutsche Welle (Germany), October 25, 2017. (http://www.dw.com/en/german-activist-peter-steudtner-returns-from-turkey-on-bail/a-41113789)

Of course, German citizens of Turkish background have long been targeted by Turkey’s draconian anti-terrorism laws. In early 2016, before the coup attempt, a Turkish court barred Sharo Garip, German sociologist of Kurdish descent, from leaving the country. Garip was accused of terror propaganda after he signed an appeal, along with more than 1,000 other academics, urging the Turkish government to end its human rights violations in the country’s predominantly Kurdish southeast. After almost two years, an Istanbul court finally lifted the travel ban, and Garip was allowed to return to Germany that December. His trial is set to continue in 2018.75

Since the failed coup, Turkish targeting of Turkish-German writers has even spilled beyond Turkey’s borders. In August 2017, Spanish police arrested Dogan Akhanli, a German writer of Turkish origin on vacation in Granada, citing an extradition request filed by the Turkish government through Interpol. Akhanli had been jailed in Turkey for over two years following the military coup of 1980, due to his membership in Turkey’s Revolutionary Communist Party.76 Since then, he has written extensively on human rights and persecution of minorities in Turkey.77 Akhanli’s lawyer claimed that his client was targeted for “advocating the recognition of Turkey’s mass killing of Armenians as genocide.”78

Akhanli gave up his Turkish citizenship for a German one in 2001. Since then, he has been a vocal critic of President Erdogan. Akhanli was arrested again while on a trip in Istanbul in 2010, on charges dating back to a 1989 armed robbery case. He spent four months in prison before being acquitted and leaving for Germany. Three years later, he was sentenced in absentia to life imprisonment with no chance of appeal, and has not returned to Turkey since. Upon his arrest in Spain, the German foreign minister – who was visiting Spain after a terror attack in Barcelona – personally intervened, and Spanish authorities released Akhanli a day later.79

Meanwhile, Spanish authorities carried out a second arrest in August 2017, acting on another Turkish request through Interpol of Turkish-Swedish writer Hamza Yalcin. Yalcin, a chief columnist for a socialist news website, was accused along with his colleagues of “insulting the president” and “denigrating the military,” due to an article published on their website.80 Held by Spanish authorities for 57 days, Yalcin was finally released in late September.81

In October, a Turkish court sentenced Ayla Albayrak, a Wall Street Journal reporter, to more than two years in prison.82 Albayrak, who is a dual citizen of Turkey and Finland, was found guilty in absentia of promoting terrorist propaganda based on a 2015 article she had authored on Turkey’s ongoing fight with the PKK in the country’s southeast.83 The Finnish foreign minister has reportedly shared his concerns about Albayrak’s

78. “Spain releases Dogan Akhanli, German author detained on Turkish warrant,” Deutsche Welle (Germany), August 20, 2017. (http://www.dw.com/en/spain-releases-dogan-akhanli-german-author-detained-on-turkish-warrant/a-40163753)
80. Ibid.
case with Turkish authorities and stated that “Turkey’s stance on freedom of the press and speech is taking on disturbing features.”

Hostage Diplomacy

In the spring of 2017, a series of statements, reports, and actions by the Turkish government and its Western counterparts began to indicate that Turkey’s detentions of American and European citizens served a purpose beyond the harassment and intimidation of Erdogan’s foreign and domestic critics: They helped Ankara gain leverage in its dealings with Washington and European governments.

In April 2017, in the midst of a war of words with German Chancellor Merkel about the arrest of reporter Deniz Yucel, Erdogan vowed in a public speech that Yucel would not be released “as long as I remain in office,” citing the reason as Germany’s refusal to extradite suspected Turkish coup fugitives seeking asylum there.

That same month, an infamous Turkish prisoner in New York, the Iranian-born sanctions-buster Reza Zarrab, hired former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani and ex-U.S. Attorney General Michael Mukasey as his lawyers. The two attorneys told the court that they had met with Erdogan earlier in February – a meeting the duo described as part of their efforts to seek “a state-to-state resolution” to the sanctions-buster’s case, adding that “senior officials in both the U.S. and Turkish governments remain receptive to pursuing the possibility of an agreement.”

In July 2017, the German daily Bild reported that Turkey had allegedly offered to release Turkish-German prisoner Deniz Yucel in exchange for Berlin’s extradition of two former Turkish generals who had fled to Germany after the failed coup, but that German officials had refused.

Meanwhile, the July 5 Turkish raid on human rights activists and Amnesty International, including Steudtner and Gharavi, came a day before high-level meetings in Ankara with the European Union enlargement commissioner, exacerbating suspicions about Turkish intentions behind the arrests.

On August 18, BuzzFeed published a report, citing European security officials accusing Turkish representatives of repeatedly linking the arrests of Americans and Europeans to the extradition of Turkish citizens sought by Ankara abroad – mostly ones accused of involvement in the 2016 coup attempt. The report cited European officials from different countries, including Germany and France. Critically, it quoted German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel responding to BuzzFeed’s question on why Deniz Yucel was still imprisoned without an indictment: “Turkey, in my opinion, holds him as a hostage.”

On August 25, Erdogan issued an emergency decree that authorized him to trade foreign detainees in

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Turkey for Turkish citizens held abroad.90 The decree, which followed the issuing of additional charges against jailed Pastor Andrew Brunson, signaled that Erdogan might be seeking to trade the American prisoner for the Turkish prisoner in New York, Zarrab, who possessed damaging information on how Erdogan’s government executed a massive scheme to launder billions of dollars to Iran at the height of international sanctions targeting Tehran’s nuclear program in 2012-2013.91

On September 28, 2017, Erdogan suggested swapping Pastor Brunson for the U.S-based cleric Fethullah Gulen, whose extradition Ankara had been demanding from Washington for over a year since the coup attempt. In a televised speech, Erdogan linked the fates of the two men and said, “Give us the pastor back”, they say. You have one pastor as well. Give him to us, then we will try [Brunson] and give him to you.”92 The U.S. State Department promptly dismissed the possibility of such a deal.

Ankara’s hostage diplomacy flared up in German politics in January 2018, with Germany’s Tagesschau news service reporting a “dirty deal” between Berlin and Ankara – pointing to Foreign Minister Gabriel’s invitation of his Turkish counterpart to Germany on January 6, only a day after Gabriel had made remarks connecting Yucel’s potential release to the blocking of German arms exports to Turkey.93 In September, Gabriel had explained the German decision put a significant amount of defense exports to Turkey on hold due to Turkey’s deteriorating human rights record and strained ties between Berlin and Ankara, adding boldly, “That will remain the case for as long as the Yucel matter remains unresolved.”94

The connection between Yucel’s release and German arms exports to Turkey became increasingly clear. Within a week of the first reports, Yucel conducted a print media interview via his lawyers, rejecting any such “dirty deals” to be made on his behalf: He said that he did not want his release to be the result of “a more liberal German stance on arms exports to Turkey or a prisoner exchange.”95 Responding to Yucel’s statement, Foreign Minister Gabriel said that he had never offered such a deal to Turkey, and that the normalization of relations between the two countries was unrelated to Yucel.

On January 25, Germany’s caretaker government announced that it would put on hold any decision regarding the upgrading of German-made tanks in Turkey until a coalition deal was sealed to form a new government in Berlin – with Gabriel noting that the arms export issue would be an important topic of discussion in coalition negotiations.96 The Turkish Foreign Ministry also emphasized that the decision was merely postponed, and that the move did not amount to halting defense industry cooperation.97

93. Arnd Henze, “Einen schmutzigen Deal darf es nicht geben (There cannot be a dirty deal),” Tagesschau (Germany), January 6, 2018. (http://www.tagesschau.de/kommentar/cavusoglu-145-origin-976319cf-fba7-48f4-8df5-69acdd6482d.html)
Meanwhile, Erdogan repeated his calls for a prisoner swap with the United States. With the New York trial against Zarrab now over and the sanctions-buster cooperating with U.S. investigators against Ankara, Erdogan doubled down on his cleric-for-cleric rhetoric, announcing that Ankara would not extradite any suspects to the United States unless Washington handed over Gulen to Turkey. “If you’re not giving him (Gulen) to us, then excuse us, but from now on whenever you ask us for another terrorist, as long as I am in office, you will not get them,” he snarled.98

100. “Başbakan Binali Yıldırım: Türkiye Almanya ilişkilerinde bazı sikintilar bugün giderilmiş görülmüyor (Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım: Some troubles in the Turkey-Germany relationship appear to have been resolved),” Cumhuriyet (Turkey), February 16, 2018. (http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/dunya/927949/Basbakan_Binali_Yildirim__Turkiye_Almanya_iliskilerinde_bazi_sikintilar_bugun_giderilmis_gorunuyor.html)
101. “Deniz Yücel nasıl serbest kaldı? (How was Deniz Yucel released?),” Deutsche Welle (Germany), February 20, 2018. (http://www.dw.com/en/deniz-yucel-nas%C3%BCl-serbest-kald%C4%B1/a-42666019)
103. Marketa Vselichova and Miroslav Farkas were arrested in November 2016 and charged with membership in the YPG. They are currently serving their six-year prison term in Turkey. Daniela Lazarová, “Friend Of Czechs Arrested In Turkey: Their Main Goal Was To Establish A Field Hospital,” Radio Praha (Czech Republic), November 24, 2016. (http://www.radio.cz/en/section/panorama/friend-of-czechs-arrested-in-turkey-their-main-goal-was-to-establish-a-field-hospital); Martin Ehli, “Česko zadrželo na tureckou žadost vůdce Kurdů (The Czech Republic detained the Kurdish leader at the Turkish request),” Aktualni (Czech Republic), February 25, 2018. (https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/zahrani%C5%BE/policie-zadr%C4%9Belo-na-tureckou-zadost-v%C5%A1dce-kurd%C3%BD-dosavadnich/r-f22ad68c1a1c11e8a72bca1f6b220ce8/); Jan Velinger, “Turkish Court Sentences Czechs To More Than Six Years In Prison,” Radio Praha (Czech Republic), August 2, 2017. (https://www.radio.cz/en/section/currafrf/turkish-court-sentences-czechs-to-more-than-six-years-in-prison)
crossed the Turkish border. Although the Greek army said the soldiers were “lost in bad weather,” Turkish courts charged them with espionage. As rumors surfaced the next day that the pair might be exchanged with eight Turkish soldiers seeking asylum in Greece, a Greek official called the claims “pure fantasy,” stating that the country would not “conduct an exchange of prisoners.”

Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Kotzias urged Ankara to “apply the provisions of international law and not turn a routine procedure into a major legal and political problem.” On March 18, Greek media reported the Greek government’s fears that the two soldiers could be used as a bargaining chip to force Greece into extraditing Turkish asylum seekers. Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras accused Turkey on April 3 of intensifying provocations and “escalating the situation on all fronts,” and urged the release of the soldiers as a goodwill gesture. On April 7, he further added that “human life and human freedom are not, and should not be, pawns to power games and blackmail.”

The U.S. Response

The United States’ responses to Erdogan’s hostage diplomacy appear to have failed to yield results: Pastor Andrew Brunson remains in jail awaiting conviction, and physicist Serkan Golge was just sentenced to seven-and-a-half years this February. All three Turkish consular workers of the U.S. Mission in Turkey continue to remain in custody or under house arrest.

Since coming to office in January 2017, the Trump administration has stepped up pressure on Turkey regarding Brunson’s case. During his visit to Turkey in March 2017, then-Secretary of State Rex Tillerson took time to meet with Pastor Brunson’s wife Norine Brunson. Vice President Mike Pence sent her a letter in April, assuring her that the State Department and the White House “consider Andrew’s release and reunification with you and your three children extremely important.” In May, in his first presidential meeting with Erdogan at the White House, President Trump “raised the incarceration of Pastor Andrew Brunson and asked that the Turkish Government

expeditiously return him to the United States.”

Reports suggest that Pence separately mentioned the pastor to the Turkish president during the visit. In August, meanwhile, Secretary Tillerson publicly called for Brunson’s release, stating, “The United States continues to advocate for [Brunson’s] release, who has been wrongfully imprisoned in Turkey.”

Even with this flurry of activity, the administration’s efforts have remained limited. Congress, on the other hand, has arguably been more active on the issue, especially regarding Brunson’s arrest. Senator James Lankford (R-OK) took a special interest in Brunson’s case, publishing several editorials calling attention to the pastor’s arrest. As early as January 2017, Lankford called upon the Turkish government to treat properly and respect American citizens, as well as to respect religious freedom more broadly.

“In February 2017, 78 U.S. senators and representatives issued a joint letter to Erdogan, urging the Turkish president to return the imprisoned pastor.”

The call appears to have galvanized colleagues. In February 2017, 78 U.S. senators and representatives issued a joint letter to Erdogan, urging the Turkish president to return the imprisoned pastor. Acknowledging the close relationship and long-time strategic partnership between Turkey and the United States, the letter asked Erdogan to consider “how the recent treatment of Mr. Brunson places significant strain not only on him and his family, but also on the robust bilateral relationship between the United States and Turkey.”

By fall, Erdogan’s desire for a deal that would involve swapping Brunson for Gulen provoked the ire of Congress. Senator Lankford issued a press statement in September dismissing any prospects of a deal, warning that the president’s suggestion “should not be taken seriously,” and that “Turkish officials responsible for the prolonged, unjust imprisonment of Dr. Andrew Brunson, or any American, should be denied the privilege of entry in the US.” He soon followed up by proposing, together with Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), to amend the Department of State’s 2018 Foreign Operations and Related Programs Appropriations Act to identify and restrict entry into the U.S. for any Turkish officials knowingly responsible for the wrongful or unlawful prolonged detention of U.S. citizens. The proposal was accepted. Senators Lankford and Shaheen pulled the sanctions language from the omnibus spending bill of March 2018 to give “the State Department’s newly established dialogue with Turkey more time to succeed.” Both senators, however, have indicated that the sanctions language may very well be included in legislation later this year if Brunson is not released.

In a *Washington Examiner* op-ed in October 2017, Lankford called Erdogan’s suggestion for a prisoner swap “appalling,” stressing that the U.S. “will not stand idly by as these oppressive tactics target American citizens.” He also urged the U.S. government to use its sanctions authority to secure the release of Brunson and others. On the one-year anniversary of Brunson’s arrest, Lankford brought the issue to the Senate floor. “Turkey is not the same NATO ally and friend to the United States that they have been,” he said, adding that Ankara was becoming “more and more of an authoritarian government.”

He called upon the State Department to use authorities provided by the recently passed amendment on the appropriation bill to take action against Turkish officials that are unfairly detaining American citizens. That same month, Senators John McCain (R-AZ) and Bob Menendez (D-NJ) issued a letter calling on the U.S. administration to support the suspension of non-immigrant visa services in Turkey following the arrests of U.S. consular employees there, and even encouraging further measures to be taken to pressure Erdogan to respect human rights and the rule of law.

On November 14, 2017, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) held a Senate briefing on religious freedom and human rights in Turkey. Senator Lankford gave a speech advising U.S. citizens against investing in Turkey, noting that it is unclear what could happen to them, their businesses, and their employees under the state of emergency. USCIRF Vice Chair Sandra Jolley said that Brunson was a convenient pawn in a game of international diplomacy, and asserted that Erdogan’s statements revealed his true intentions in holding Brunson hostage.

“Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Jonathan Cohen called on the Turkish government to release all detainees not proven guilty of criminal offenses.”

On November 15, the United States Commission on Security and Cooperation, or the U.S. Helsinki Commission, held a hearing examining the factors contributing to the detention of American citizens and U.S. consulate employees in Turkey. In his opening remarks, Senator Thom Tillis (R-NC) referred to Erdogan’s proposal to swap Brunson for Gulen and said, “This is not justice, it is ransom,” and expressed his approval for the suspension of non-immigrant visa services in Turkey in response to recent events.

Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Jonathan Cohen called on the Turkish government to release all detainees not proven guilty of criminal offenses. Cohen confirmed that fewer than a dozen U.S. or dual citizens were detained in Turkey, but also confirmed that the Turkish government had delayed access to consular services for dual nationals, and some detainees had trouble getting access to legal counsel. He stressed that the U.S. government was working at all levels to secure the release...
Erdogan’s Hostage Diplomacy: Western Nationals in Turkish Prisons

of U.S. citizens, including dual nationals, and added that President Trump, Vice President Pence, and Secretary Tillerson had all publicly called for Brunson’s release.126

Senator Tillis, after his visit with Brunson in prison on March 26, 2018, announced that the pastor is “the victim of false accusations,” and “is being used as a political pawn by some elements of the Turkish government.”127

Following Brunson’s first hearing in Turkey on April 16, USCIRF called for the “imposition of targeted sanctions against those involved in this miscarriage of justice.”128

Four days later, a bipartisan group of 66 senators penned a letter to Erdogan demanding Brunson’s release and warning that punitive measures may be necessary.129 On April 26, Senators Lankford, Shaheen, and Tillis introduced a bill to prevent the transfer of F-35 Joint Strike Fighter aircraft to Turkey, citing Erdogan’s “reckless governance and disregard for the rule of law.”130

On May 10, following North Korea’s release of three American prisoners,131 Senator Lankford reiterated his call for the immediate release of Brunson, saying, “I thought I would never say this sentence, but I would like to see Turkey follow the example of North Korea and release American hostages they’re holding.”132

The German Response

In Europe, Berlin has been the most vocal critic of Ankara’s hostage diplomacy. In July 2017, Germany toughened its response to the arrests of its citizens and signaled it could take measures to hinder German investment in Turkey, as well as the flow of German tourists.133 Foreign Minister Gabriel cautioned Germans travelling to Turkey for business or pleasure, and advised companies against investing in Turkey where “even completely innocent companies are judged as being close to terrorists” – referring to the mass post-coup purges and the erosion of property rights. “I can’t see how we as the German government can continue to guarantee corporate investments in Turkey if there is the threat of arbitrary expropriation for political reasons,” the minister said.134 Signaling that the German government would be discussing further consequences, he added that financial sanctions were also being considered.135

Gabriel also issued new travel advisories for German citizens in Turkey that month, recommending that they exercise “heightened caution” due to the denial of consular access to Germans detained there. In August 2017, the minister called on the European Union to take harsher measures in response to Erdogan’s policies, which he said were “in blatant contradiction to our European value system.” He recommended that the EU reduce pre-accession funds to Turkey and direct funds towards civil society instead of the government. He also called on the European Investment Bank to refrain from launching new projects in Turkey.

136. Ibid.

A month later, Chancellor Merkel said that Germany would further reduce economic cooperation with Turkey in an effort to pressure Ankara to release detained German citizens. As a high-level German official expressed to the authors in May 2018, the current German policy is that there will be no normalization of relations with Turkey as long as there are German citizens in Turkish prisons for political reasons.

The Greek Response

Turkey’s Greek neighbors have also responded to Erdogan’s hostage diplomacy. Athens has occasionally pursued a tit-for-tat strategy, while also showing some leniency toward Ankara in the hopes that it reciprocates.

Soon after the July 2016 coup attempt failed, eight Turkish putschists stole a helicopter and fled to neighboring Greece, where they have been seeking asylum ever since. Despite Ankara’s calls for these fugitives’ extradition, Greek courts have been slow to respond. So when Turkish officials arrested the two Greek soldiers Angelos Mitretodis and Dimitris Kouklatzis in early March, Ankara, in effect, reciprocated.

Greece responded to this move by condemning what Prime Minister Tsipras called “power games” and “blackmail.” Yet, on April 19, a Greek court decided to release one of the eight Turkish fugitives. But then, on May 2, another Greek court slapped a five-month prison term and a 1,500-euro fine on a Turkish municipal worker for his accidental “illegal border crossing” into Greek territory. This time, unlike their Turkish counterparts, Greek authorities released and sent the Turkish municipal worker back to Turkey within three days of the hearing. Upon his return home, the worker told Turkish reporters that he “was not subject to any mistreatment” during the ordeal.

Another three days later, however, on May 8, Greece accepted the asylum request of a second Turkish coup fugitive. The saga continues.
A Transatlantic Strategy to Defeat Erdogan’s Hostage Diplomacy

Faced with the challenge of hostage diplomacy, American and European officials have chosen to engage Ankara quietly and at the bilateral level. This has only emboldened Erdogan and strengthened the Turkish president’s bargaining position. The perceived willingness of NATO member states to consider pragmatic deals with Erdogan to rescue their nationals must not continue. There is need for a coordinated transatlantic policy to transform the nature of the interaction with Ankara from bilateral and transactional bargaining to a multilateral engagement based on values. The U.S. and the EU member states need to provide a clear message and joint response to Erdogan’s hostage diplomacy.

All bilateral and multilateral deliberations with Turkey should start with the issue of hostages. American and European officials need to unequivocally convey to their Turkish counterparts that this is a top priority for their governments and the transatlantic alliance. Berlin’s policy of no normalization as long as there are German political prisoners would be more effective if implemented by its Western partners.

U.S. and EU authorities need to be more blunt in their travel warnings about Turkey, clearly spelling out the risks of becoming a hostage with no due process, attorney-client privilege, or consular access, and the possibility of up to seven years of pre-trial imprisonment. Western officials stationed in Turkey and their families, as well as Turkish nationals working for Western consulates, take great risks when they serve in Turkey.

Washington and its transatlantic partners must also reject the spurious issuance of red notices through Interpol. Indeed, authorities need to develop improved checks against Ankara’s abuse of the Interpol system.

“Ultimately, only a strong, coordinated, and unwavering response can deter the Turkish president from further using Western nationals as pawns to advance his political agenda.”

Ultimately, only a strong, coordinated, and unwavering response can deter the Turkish president from further using Western nationals as pawns to advance his political agenda. The U.S. and the EU should consider targeted sanctions, such as visa bans for Turkish officials responsible for hostage taking and withholding of international aid, such as the EU’s Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance. The U.S. could also use Global Magnitsky designations to freeze the assets of Turkish officials facilitating hostage diplomacy. Visa bans and other sanctions could be extended to private-sector partners of the Turkish government who help smear and frame Western nationals in pro-government propaganda outlets, precluding the possibility of fair trial and due process for detained victims.

Only a concerted transatlantic strategy can put an end to Erdogan’s hostage diplomacy, free Western nationals wrongfully detained in Turkey, and prevent American and European citizens from becoming bargaining chips. Without resolute action from its allies, Ankara’s drift from transatlantic values is sure to continue.
Appendix: Full List of Western Detainees in Turkey and the Charges Against Them (Since July 15, 2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name(s)</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Charges</th>
<th>Detainment</th>
<th>Release</th>
<th>Days in Custody</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ece Heper</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Turkish-Canadian</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Insulting the president</td>
<td>30-Dec-16</td>
<td>27-Mar-17</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>Kars Women's Prison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miroslav Farkas</td>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>Czech</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>14-Nov-16</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>Sirkak, Van</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketa Vselichova</td>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>Czech</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>13-Nov-16</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>Sirkak, Van</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivier Bertrand</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Journalism</td>
<td>Les Jours</td>
<td>No charges</td>
<td>11-Nov-16</td>
<td>13-Nov-16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Gaziantep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loup Bureau</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Journalism</td>
<td>Freelance</td>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>26-Jul-17</td>
<td>15-Sep-17</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Sirkak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathias Depardon</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Photojournalist</td>
<td>Freelance</td>
<td>No charges</td>
<td>8-May-17</td>
<td>9-Jun-17</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Gaziantep Immigration Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dogan Akhanli</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>German of Turkish origin</td>
<td>Writer</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Armed robbery</td>
<td>19-Aug-17</td>
<td>20-Aug-17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Granada, Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enver Altayli</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Turkish-German</td>
<td>Retired intelligence officer</td>
<td>MIT</td>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>20-Aug-17</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>Sirkak, Ankara</td>
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<tr>
<td>David Britsch</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>No charges</td>
<td>2-Apr-17</td>
<td>22-Dec-17</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>Erzurum Removal Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suat Corlu</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Turkish married to a German citizen Mesale Tolu</td>
<td>Journalist, activist</td>
<td>Socialist Party of the Oppressed</td>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>5-Apr-17 and 19-Jan-18</td>
<td>29-Nov-17 and last week of Jan-18</td>
<td>233+</td>
<td>Silivri Prison, Istanbul</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kadim D.</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Turkish, resident of Germany</td>
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<td>n/a</td>
<td>Insulting the president</td>
<td>28-Jul-17</td>
<td>29-Jul-17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Unknown border crossing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adil Demirci</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Turkish-German</td>
<td>Journalist, social scientist</td>
<td>ETHA News Agency</td>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>13-Apr-18</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Istanbul</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

KEY
- Western nationals
- Western dual nationals
- Western employees, residents, or relatives
## Erdogan's Hostage Diplomacy: Western Nationals in Turkish Prisons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name(s)</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
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<th>Detainment</th>
<th>Release</th>
<th>Days in Custody</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sharo Garip</strong></td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>Anthropologist</td>
<td>University of Van</td>
<td>Terror propaganda</td>
<td>Travel ban began on 13-Feb-16</td>
<td>Travel ban until 19-Dec-17</td>
<td>1 day;</td>
<td>Van</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peter Steudtner</strong></td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>Human rights consultant</td>
<td>Humanist Institute for Cooperation (Hivos), Amnesty International</td>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>5-Jul-17</td>
<td>25-Oct-17</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>Silivri Prison, Istanbul</td>
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<td><strong>Mesale Tolu</strong></td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>German-Turkish</td>
<td>Journalist, translator</td>
<td>ETHA News Agency, Ozgur Radyo, Socialist Party of the Oppressed (ESP)</td>
<td>Terrorism; terrorist propaganda</td>
<td>30-Apr-17</td>
<td>19-Dec-17</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>Bakirkoy Women's Prison, Istanbul</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Deniz Yucel</strong></td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>German-Turkish</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>Die Welt</td>
<td>Terrorist propaganda; inciting hatred</td>
<td>14-Feb-17</td>
<td>16-Feb-18</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>Silivri Prison, Istanbul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unknown</strong></td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>German-Turkish</td>
<td>Advisor at the Bundestag group of Die Linke</td>
<td>The Left (Die Linke)</td>
<td>No charges</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Istanbul Ataturk Airport</td>
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<tr>
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<td>German-Turkish</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
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<td>Unknown</td>
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<td>Unknown</td>
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<td><strong>Dimitris Kouklatzis</strong></td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Soldier</td>
<td>Hellenic Army</td>
<td>Espionage</td>
<td>2-Mar-18</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>Edirne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Angelos Mitretodis</strong></td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Soldier</td>
<td>Hellenic Army</td>
<td>Espionage</td>
<td>2-Mar-18</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>Edirne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bram Janssen</strong></td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>Photo journalist</td>
<td>AP</td>
<td>No charges</td>
<td>25-Jun-17</td>
<td>25-Jun-17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Istanbul</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Olaf Koens</strong></td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>RTL</td>
<td>No charges</td>
<td>25-Jun-17</td>
<td>25-Jun-17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Istanbul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unknown</strong></td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Turkish-Dutch</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Insulting the president</td>
<td>Jul-17</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Istanbul Ataturk Airport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ali Gharavi</strong></td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Iranian-Swedish</td>
<td>Information security consultant</td>
<td>Humanist Institute for Cooperation (Hivos), Amnesty International</td>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>5-Jul-17</td>
<td>25-Oct-17</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>Silivri Prison, Istanbul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hamza Yalcin</strong></td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Turkish-Swedish</td>
<td>Writer</td>
<td>Odak</td>
<td>Insulting the president; terrorism</td>
<td>3-Aug-17</td>
<td>29-Sep-17</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Barcelona El Prat Airport, Spain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**KEY**
- Western nationals
- Western dual nationals
- Western employees, residents, or relatives
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name(s)</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Charges</th>
<th>Detainment</th>
<th>Release</th>
<th>Days in Custody</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joe Robinson (Joseph R.)</td>
<td>U.K.</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>YPG</td>
<td>Terrorism; terrorist propaganda</td>
<td>27-Jun-17</td>
<td>28-Nov-17</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>Didim, Aydin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miya Rojkan (Mira A.)</td>
<td>U.K.</td>
<td>British resident, Bulgarian of Turkish descent</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>No charges</td>
<td>24-Jun-17</td>
<td>4-Jul-17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Didim, Aydin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veselina Rojkan (V.P.R.A.)</td>
<td>U.K.</td>
<td>British resident, Bulgarian of Turkish descent</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>No charges</td>
<td>28-Jun-17</td>
<td>4-Jul-17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Didim, Aydin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hakki Akdeniz</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>Turkish-American</td>
<td>Restauranteur</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>No charges</td>
<td>15-Aug-17</td>
<td>15-Aug-17</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
<td>Silvan, Diyarbakir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Brunson</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Pastor</td>
<td>Izmir Resurrection Church</td>
<td>Terrorism; espionage; insurgency</td>
<td>7-Oct-16</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>602</td>
<td>Sakran Prison, Izmir; Kiriklar Prison, Izmir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norine Brunson</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Pastor’s wife</td>
<td>Izmir Resurrection Church</td>
<td>No charges</td>
<td>7-Oct-16</td>
<td>19-Oct-16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Harmandali Migration Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K. Canturk</td>
<td>U.S. employee's daughter</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>No charges</td>
<td>10-Oct-17</td>
<td>16-Oct-17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Istanbul; Amasya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nazmi Mete Canturk</td>
<td>U.S. employee</td>
<td>Turkish, employed by U.S. government</td>
<td>Staff member</td>
<td>U.S. Consulate General in Istanbul</td>
<td>No charges</td>
<td>10-Oct-17</td>
<td>16-Oct-17, currently under house arrest</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Istanbul; Amasya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Canturk</td>
<td>U.S. employee's wife</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>No charges</td>
<td>10-Oct-17</td>
<td>16-Oct-17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Istanbul; Amasya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clyde Forsberg</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>Karabuk University</td>
<td>Aiding and abetting terrorism</td>
<td>13-Aug-17</td>
<td>17-Aug-17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Karabuk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serkan Golge</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>Turkish-American</td>
<td>Physicist</td>
<td>NASA</td>
<td>Terrorism; espionage</td>
<td>6-Aug-16</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>664</td>
<td>Iskenderun Prison, Hatay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan Keating</td>
<td>U.S. employee</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>PhD student</td>
<td>Ankara University, volunteer at Ankara Kurtulus Church</td>
<td>Detained for threatening national security</td>
<td>17-Oct-16</td>
<td>18-Oct-16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Istanbul Ataturk Airport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dion Nissenbaum</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>Wall Street Journal</td>
<td>No charges</td>
<td>27-Dec-16</td>
<td>30-Dec-16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Istanbul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindsey Snell</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>Freelance</td>
<td>Violating a military zone</td>
<td>6-Aug-16</td>
<td>12-Oct-16</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>Hatay</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**KEY**
- Western nationals
- Western dual nationals
- Western employees, residents, or relatives
## Erdogan’s Hostage Diplomacy: Western Nationals in Turkish Prisons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name(s)</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Charges</th>
<th>Detainment</th>
<th>Release</th>
<th>Days in Custody</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Metin Topuz</strong></td>
<td>U.S. employee</td>
<td>Staff member</td>
<td>U.S. Consulate General in Istanbul</td>
<td>Espionage; insurgency; attempting to overthrow the government</td>
<td>4-Oct-17</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>Silivri Prison, Istanbul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hamza Ulucay</strong></td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>Translator</td>
<td>U.S. Consulate in Adana</td>
<td>Inciting the public to rally; terrorism</td>
<td>23-Feb-17</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>Mardin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>15 International Medical Corps Staff</strong></td>
<td>U.S.-based</td>
<td>11 Syrians and 4 other foreign nationals</td>
<td>Aid workers International Medical Corps (IMC)</td>
<td>No charges</td>
<td>20-Apr-17</td>
<td>5-May-17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Gaziantep</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**KEY**
- Western nationals: 25
- Western dual nationals: 9
- Western employees, residents, or relatives: 22
- Total: 56
Acknowledgments

The authors wish to thank FDD’s Jonathan Schanzer, David Adesnik, Boris Zilberman, and Merve Tahioglu for their feedback and edits, both substantive and stylistic. We also wish to thank our external readers Lisel Hintz, Sinan Ciddi, and Nate Schenkkan for taking time out of their busy schedules to provide crucial feedback on our work. We are also grateful to our Turkey Program intern Deniz Yuksel for her research assistance; FDD’s Nicole Salter for her copy edits; as well as Daniel Ackerman and Erin Blumenthal for the graphics, design, and production of this report. This report and the issues discussed within it have benefited greatly from the tremendous thought leadership of the advisors to FDD’s Turkey Program.

Cover Illustration by Daniel Ackerman
About The Authors

Dr. Aykan Erdemir, senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, is a former member of the Turkish Parliament (2011 to 2015) who served in the EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee, EU Harmonization Committee, and the Ad Hoc Parliamentary Committee on the IT Sector and the Internet. As an outspoken defender of pluralism, minority rights, and religious freedoms in the Middle East, Aykan has been at the forefront of the struggle against religious persecution, hate crimes, and hate speech in Turkey. He is a founding member of the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief, and a drafter of and signatory to the Oslo Charter for Freedom of Religion or Belief (2014), as well as a signatory legislator to the London Declaration on Combating Antisemitism.

He has edited seven books, including Rethinking Global Migration: Practices, Policies, and Discourses in the European Neighbourhood (KORA) and Social Dynamics of Global Terrorism: Risk and Prevention Policies (IOS Press). He is co-author of the 2016 book Antagonistic Tolerance: Competitive Sharing of Religious Sites and Spaces (Routledge).

On April 27, 2016, Dr. Erdemir was awarded the Stefanus Prize for Religious Freedom in recognition of his advocacy for minority rights and religious freedoms.

Amb. Eric S. Edelman is a senior advisor to the Foundation for Defense of Democracies’ Turkey Program. He retired as a career minister from the U.S. Foreign Service on May 1, 2009. Amb. Edelman has served in senior positions at the Departments of State and Defense as well as the White House where he led organizations providing analysis, strategy, policy development, security services, trade advocacy, public outreach, citizen services and congressional relations. As the undersecretary of defense for policy (August 2005-January 2009) he oversaw strategy development as DoD’s senior policy official with global responsibility for bilateral defense relations, war plans, special operations forces, homeland defense, missile defense, nuclear weapons and arms control policies, counter-proliferation, counter-narcotics, counter-terrorism, arms sales, and defense trade controls.

He served as U.S. ambassador to the Republics of Finland and Turkey in the Clinton and Bush Administrations and was principal deputy assistant to the vice president for national security affairs. In other assignment he has been chief of staff to Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, special assistant to Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Robert Kimmitt and special assistant to Secretary of State George Shultz. His other assignments include the State Department Operations Center, Prague, Moscow, and Tel Aviv, where he was a member of the U.S. Middle East delegation to the West Bank/Gaza autonomy talks.

He is currently distinguished fellow at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, a visiting scholar at the Philip Merrill Center for Strategic Studies at the Johns Hopkins University and a senior associate of the International Security Program at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University.

About the Foundation for Defense of Democracies

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