



**Input to the
Global Study on the Impact of Counter-Terrorism Measures on Civil Society
and Civic Space**

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Please indicate whether your organization or entity would like your inputs to be published online (Yes/No): Yes
Please provide any descriptions, examples, or assessments of the below issues:
<p>HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM IN TURKEY: TARGETING OF BELGIUM-BASED NGOs</p> <p>Background</p> <p>Following coup attempt in July 2016, the Turkish government declared a state of emergency and issued emergency decree-laws that saw the closure of a total of 3942 private institutions across Turkey¹. These included educational institutions, media outlets and trade unions affiliated with the faith-based Gülen movement².</p> <p>Thousands of individuals who worked at these institutions as employees or executives were later prosecuted for alleged links to terrorism despite the fact that the institutions were operating perfectly legally up until their closure.</p> <p>Transnational repression on NGOs</p> <p>The Turkish government's post-coup response, which in many ways amounted to a crackdown on dissent, also reached beyond Turkey's borders.</p>

¹ "Closed and confiscated institutions," Solidarity with OTHERS, <https://www.solidaritywithothers.com/closed-institutions>

² The Turkish government accuses the Gülen movement of orchestrating the July 2016 coup attempt. The movement denies any involvement in the putsch and calls for an international investigation into it. The Turkish government deems the movement a terrorist group. A majority of the international community has refrained from adopting Turkey's views on the matter.

Ankara used³ a variety of methods to confiscate Gülen-affiliated educational institutions in the Balkans, Central Asia and Africa.

Organizations operating in Europe and North America were more frequently the target of judicial harassment. The Turkish judiciary, whose already faltering independence and impartiality were further undermined with the mass post-coup purge of judges and prosecutors, produced indictments against the representatives of a number of Belgium-based NGOs.

In an indictment submitted by public prosecutor Mehmet Ersin Berber to the Konya 9th High Criminal Court, these organizations, which operate legally under Belgian laws, are described as terrorist organizations. The indictment, accepted by the court under file No. 2017/1474, accused representatives of non-profit and volunteer organisations in Belgium such as Fedactio (Federation of Active Associations in Belgium), Beltud (Association d’Amitié Belgo-Turque), Intercultural Dialogue Platform (IDP), Golden Rose women’s association, Foryouth, Time to Help humanitarian relief organization and local schools Lucerna and École des Étoiles of attempting to undermine Turkey’s constitutional order.

Fedactio⁴, founded in 2010, is a non-profit entity with a wide range of member organizations in Belgium. According to its website, it aims to promote dialogue between different communities regardless of their background and strengthen ties by organising encounters and conducting projects in collaboration with its members and external partner institutions.

Beltud⁵ is one of the main organizers of the “International Festival of Language and Culture” (IFLC)⁶, an annual celebration of language diversity that showcases talent from across the globe. Intercultural dialogue is central to Beltud’s activities, which all focus on fostering peaceful coexistence and social cohesion.

Intercultural Dialogue Platform (IDP)⁷ is a Brussels-based non-profit civil society organization, aiming at mutual understanding and harmonious interaction among the people of different cultural backgrounds. Some of its projects have been funded by local authorities as well as the European Commission.

Time to Help⁸, a humanitarian relief organization, was also listed as a terrorist organization. Time to Help has successfully completed major projects in a range of countries, including sinking wells, providing medical care for cataract sufferers and setting up food tents and bringing relief to people affected by disasters.

The lists were gathered by Turkish officials who were employed in the Turkish consulate and even imams Turkey sent to Belgium to provide religious services⁹.

According to judicial documents released by the Ankara 4th High Criminal Court on January 16, 2019,

³ “Turkey’s Maarif Foundation: Institutionalizing Theft in Mob Style,” Politurco, August 19, 2021, <https://politurco.com/turkeys-maarif-foundation-institutionalizing-theft-in-mob-style.html>

⁴ <https://en.fedactio.be/>

⁵ <https://beltudlimburg.weebly.com/over-ons.html>

⁶ <https://intflc.org/>

⁷ <https://dialogueplatform.eu/>

⁸ <https://www.timetohelp.be/>

⁹ “Espionage of Turkish mosques in Belgium,” N-VA, December 15, 2016, <https://english.n-va.be/news/espionage-of-turkish-mosques-in-belgium>

Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs had compiled a long list of foreign entities that were owned and/or operated by people who are seen as close to the Gülen movement in 92 countries in the Americas, Europe, Asia and Oceania. The indictment, which includes information gathered by Turkish diplomatic missions and Turkish imams sent by the government, confirms once more how the country's diplomatic network engaged in overseas spying activities that triggered politically motivated criminal prosecutions in Turkey.

According to leaked official documents, Turkish nationals and/or EU citizens with Turkish roots in Belgium were profiled by the Turkish diplomatic missions in the country and reported to the Foreign Ministry in Ankara. The information was later sent to the Afyonkarahisar¹⁰ Police Department to build a case. The file fabricated in the Turkish Embassy triggered many criminal prosecutions that included terrorism charges.

Information gathered by Turkish diplomats in Belgium was conveyed on June 24, 2019 to the Afyonkarahisar Chief Public Prosecutor's Office by Arif Alpaslan, deputy chief of the counterterrorism department of the Afyonkarahisar Police Department, to initiate criminal proceeding against a Turkish national who was named by the Turkish Embassy in Brussels. The confidential police communiqué also included the residence address of the critic in Belgium.

Police document dated June 24, 2019 reveals the spying on critics in Belgium by the Turkish Embassy.

According to a note attached to the documents, a Turkish national resident in Belgium was accused of serving as a steering committee member of an NGO that is believed to be affiliated with the Gülen movement.

This case of Belgium is only a small part of the Turkish government's ongoing systematic campaign of harassment targeting its critics living abroad and obstructing their efforts at civic engagement, particularly in Europe.

¹⁰ In Belgium, a significant portion of the Turkish diaspora have roots in the province of Afyonkarahisar.