

David L. Phillips  
People's Tribunal  
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## **Turkey's Support for Terrorist Organizations**

### Summary

The Turkish National Intelligence Agency (MIT) established an infrastructure to support terrorist organizations, including (i) weapons transfers, (ii) logistical support, (iii) financial assistance, and (iv) the provision of medical services. Assistance was provided to al-Nusra, Ahrar al-Sham and other jihadists who joined the Islamic State after the U.S. failed to intervene when Syria used chemical weapons against insurgents in Ghouta (21 August 2013).

### U.S. Knowledge

U.S. officials knew about MIT's role. During remarks at Harvard University (5 October 2014), Vice President Joe Biden indicated: "Our allies in the region were our largest problem in Syria. The Turks, the Saudis, the Emiratis...were so determined to take down Assad and essentially have a proxy Sunni-Shia war...they poured hundreds of millions of dollars, and thousands of tons of weapons into anyone who would fight against Assad. The people that were being supplied were al-Nusra and al-Qaeda and extremist elements of jihadis coming from other parts of the world." Biden elaborated, "President Erdogan told me, he's an old friend, 'You were right. We let too many people through.'"

### Research

Columbia University established an investigative team in the United States, Europe, and Turkey. We identified scores of credible sources documenting Turkey's collaboration with jihadi groups. Columbia's study concluded:

- MIT helped "midwife" the Islamic State, according to Cengiz Candar, a well-respected Turkish journalist. Almost all the passports of deceased jihadis in collected in Syria had been stamped in Turkey.

- MIT sanctioned and supported the jihadi highway from Sanliurfa to Raqqa. The border was called, “The Gateway to jihad.” According to an ISIS commander, “Most of the fighters who joined us in the beginning came from Turkey and so did our equipment and supplies.”
- Many cell phones of jihadis collected in Syria had SIM cards that come from Turkey. There is an extensive record of financial transactions involving hawala systems in Gaziantep and the Istanbul Grand Bazaar.
- The Turkish government facilitated weapons supplies, as evidenced by an official directive signed by the Interior Minister sanctioning support to al-Nusra (13 June 2014).
- Turkish truck drivers documented their delivery of weapons to combatants in Syria. MIT agents on the border tried to prevent customs agents from inspecting the vehicles. Can Dundar, *Cumhuriyet* editor in chief, and Erdem Gul, the Ankara Bureau Chief, received sentences of 5 years and ten months and 5 years respectively for reporting MIT’s involvement. The Turkish Grand National Assembly passed a law prohibiting the media to report on MIT’s activities.
- Turkey colluded with ISIS during the battle for Kobani. According to Anwar Moslem, Mayor of Kobani, “There is evidence, witnesses, and videos of trains from Turkey full of ammunition...”
- Ex-Turkish Special Forces provided training to jihadis. ISIS posted training videos in Turkish. Fighters were recruited in Turkish towns like Konya, as well as in Germany.
- Especially in Gaziantep and Sanliurfa, Turkey provided and paid for the medical care of jihadis wounded in Syria, including members of Abu Bakr Baghdadi’s inner circle. *Taraf* quotes the Minister of Health: “It is a human obligation to care for ISIS wounded.”

- Turkey was the chief beneficiary of ISIS oil trade. Oil was transported by convoys of trucks across the border arranged the Powertrans, an oil trading company controlled by Berat Albayrak, Erdogan's son-in-law. According to the ISIS Finance Ministry, trade with PowerTrans generated \$3.5 million/day. The supply chain of oil and refined oil products ended up in Adana. The BMZ Group, owned by Bilal Erdogan, was allegedly shipping ISIS oil at discount rates.

### AKP Ideology

The Justice and Development Party (AKP) functions like a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. For example, Deputy Prime Minister Bulent Arinc reproached women for laughing in public, referring to laughing or smiling as "moral corruption." President Erdogan proposed restrictions on women's dress and appearance. He also prescribed the number of children women should bear.

### Conclusion

Turkey has provided jihadis and the Free Syrian Army with weapons, financing assistance and other material and services used to commit terrorist acts. These groups have committed atrocity crimes such as beheadings, mutilating bodies and mass executions. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court is the latest description in international law of how this kind of support constitutes participation in the crimes of terrorist organizations. Turkey's support, including arms indispensable to military operations used to commit terrorist acts, makes Turkey complicit in the crimes of terror groups.

### NATO Implications

NATO is more than a security alliance. It is a coalition of countries with shared values. If Turkey under Erdogan applied today, it would not qualify for membership based on its support for jihadis and virulent anti-democratic ideology.

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