



TURKISH  
DEMOCRACY  
PROJECT

July 9, 2021

The Honorable Merrick B. Garland  
Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20530

Re: Criminal Activity Associated with the Launch of the Turkish Democracy Project

Dear Attorney General Garland:

Please accept this letter on behalf of the Turkish Democracy Project (TDP), a new U.S. nonprofit organization that has been the subject of serious cybercriminal activity. We respectfully request that you direct the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to commence an investigation into the origins of these attacks that targeted U.S. citizens and others on June 23 and June 24, 2021 and to take appropriate prosecutorial action.

For your background information the TDP's mission is to inform the public about Turkey's recent turn towards authoritarianism and its implications for global policy. Its Advisory Board consists of former U.S. government officials. TDP launched its website ([www.turkishdemocracy.com](http://www.turkishdemocracy.com)) and its activities on June 23, 2021.

Immediately upon its launch, TDP's website was the target of a cyberattack. At the same time and through cyber space and conventional means, criminals targeted U.S. and Turkish citizens associated with the organization with death threats, intimidation and other hostile acts. We detail these attacks below and have included an outside investigation of these acts which we are prepared to share with your investigators.

As you are no doubt aware, various member states of the European Union (EU) have seen these sorts of malicious activities emanating from Turkey under President Erdogan. EU countries have taken action against the Grey Wolves and other groups and persons, calling for their [ban](#) in some cases and their [designation](#) as a terrorist group by the European Parliament. Their criminal behavior is designed to silence criticism of President Erdogan. He has brutally [repressed dissent](#) inside Turkey, and that effort has [expanded](#) to include Europe and other countries around the globe. Most recently, on July 8, 2021 a Turkish journalist was [attacked](#) outside his home in Germany by a group he suspected were Turkish right wing extremists. Unfortunately, the TDP and its associated persons appear to be the beachhead of this malicious behavior in the United States.

Under separate cover we have asked that the Treasury Department take action to investigate and sanction the Grey Wolves and other known groups and persons associated with President Erdogan's Turkey that are the subject of legal censure in the EU. We are concerned that left unchecked, Turkish cyber and other criminal activity will grow in the United States.



Among the individuals targeted through various telecommunications are former U.S. National Security Adviser Ambassador John R. Bolton, former Governor Jeb Bush, an American staffer who is not a public figure, and prominent U.S.-based critics of the Turkish government [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. (Names redacted for safety and security).

Moreover, TDP Board contacts have been detained by Turkish authorities and questioned about our organization. While this undemocratic and illiberal behavior is beyond the reach of your office, it underscores our belief that those responsible for the attacks and threats reside in Turkey and are organized, funded and/or directed by the Government of Turkey, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) or far-right extremist nationalist groups aligned with the AKP, such as the Grey Wolves. Notably, contemporaneous with the attacks, TDP was the focus of extensive hostile media coverage from Erdogan and AKP related and controlled “news” outlets.<sup>1</sup>

TDP retained subject matter experts and commenced an outside investigation into the attacks of June 23 and 24. That investigation concluded that TDP’s website was targeted with illegal Mirai botnet hosts. Several of the source Internet Protocol (IP) addresses could be attributed to Internet of Things (IOT) hacking and IOT malware in the U.S. and elsewhere around the globe. The Mirai Botnet is a botnet that is commonly resold on the dark web for Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks. Because of strong security protocols TDP’s website did not fail.

Threats made against U.S. persons associated with TDP appear to have originated with Turkish hackers, including actors associated with the Grey Wolves. The Grey Wolves have utilized cyber attacks in the past, and its members are generally protected from prosecution in countries like Turkey and Russia through the decriminalization of their tactics.

TDP believes that the botnet attack and subsequent telecommunications threats were organized, funded and/or directed by the Government of Turkey, the AKP or aligned groups like the Grey Wolves. However, if the attacks instead originated in the U.S. or involved U.S. persons, the activities would constitute unlawful criminal behavior under applicable federal law.

TDP welcomes criticism and debate but it will not stand for cyberattacks, death threats and attempts at intimidation.

Please be advised that the TDP, its staff, and its current and former advisory council members stand ready to cooperate and support the FBI/DOJ in the course of such an investigation.

Also under separate cover and as attached TDP has asked President Erdogan to investigate the June 23 and June 24 attacks in order to ensure that they were not supported or sponsored by his Government in any way — either directly or indirectly through de-criminalization and incendiary rhetoric.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

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<sup>1</sup> By this letter TDP does not complain about critical press coverage from Erdogan and AKP controlled outlets. TDP stands for a free and fair press. Nonetheless, TDP notes that such ‘coverage’ mirroring many of the online attack narratives is revealing.



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Yours truly,

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