Erdogan is Covering up his Crimes against Syria

As of late, various media have been publishing numerous reports about the involvement of Turkish law enforcement agencies and special services that are supervised directly by Erdogan in blatantly illegal operations in several countries.

Thus, in recent years, the Turkish agencies have kidnapped dozens of people in various countries. Since 2016, or after the attempted coup d'état which Ankara pinned on the well-known preacher and opposition figure Fethullah Gülen, now living in the US, the estimated total of the "Gülenists" abducted outside Turkey has reached 200 people. Back in the day, this figure was disclosed by Turkish Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu.

For one, in 2018, Veysel Akcay, the leader of the local educational network Sebat, was kidnapped by three “unidentified persons” in the Mongolian capital. At the time, those schools were built and opened by people close to Fethullah Gülen in many countries of the world. A similar incident recently occurred in Kyrgyzstan: on June 1, 2021, amidst the beginning of Kirghiz leader's visit to Ankara, Orhan Inandi, the head of Turkish lyceums in the country
and the citizen of Turkey and Kyrgyzstan (where he was also in charge of the network of private Turkish educational institutions Sebat), “vanished” in Bishkek.

Such “incidents” have become increasingly frequent in Ukraine, a home to a significant number of Turkish immigrants, including those who are anti-Erdogan. And indeed, on September 11, 2020 Turkish National Intelligence Organization (MIT) abducted a famous Kurdish politician, Isa Özer in Odessa. The Ukrainian media report, this was not the first abduction of Erdogan’s opponents by Turkish special services in Ukraine. In 2018, two persons were smuggled away — the politician and businessman Salih Zeki Yiğit and the journalist and blogger Yusuf İnan.

Turkish opposition figures were first persecuted under the Ukrainian president Petro Poroshenko in 2018 when the raids on Turkish political refugees were staged. It was back then that the Turkish secret services, with the approval of the Ukrainian government, took away Yusuf İnan, Salih Zeki Yiğit, critics of current Turkish authorities, from Odessa and Nikolaev. According to the Ukrainian media sources, this “extradition” hinged on “personal agreements between Poroshenko and Erdogan”, including the deal on the establishment of an autocephalous Ukrainian church, a move for which the support of Istanbul-based Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew played a crucial role.

Yunus Erdogdu, a Turkish journalist blacklisted as an opposition leader in Turkey and now living in Kyiv, also fears to be extradited by Ukraine to Ankara, as does a hundred or so Turkish dissidents.

Indeed, on 26 January, Turkish special services kidnapped another political emigre and a former Turkish army officer, Nuri Gökhan Bozkır on Ukraine’s territory. Today, several Turkish media outlets reported that he had been brought over to Turkey as they published his photo with a bruised face. By the time of the abduction, Gökhan allegedly filed a request for political asylum in Ukraine. The Turkish media state that this “forceful extradition” of Gökhan by the Turkish intelligence could have been personally approved by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan with the explicit consent of Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky.

The retired officer of the Turkish special forces Nuri Gökhan Bozkır, however, was not just a “Gülenist” or another Erdoğan critic. As of recently, he gave several revealing interviews in Ukraine and disclosed that the Turkish special forces had been delivering massive shipments of weapons and ammunition to Syria and other flashpoints in Asia and Africa for a long time. Gökhan used to take part in illegal shipments of weapons from Turkey to the Middle East, another Turkish political emigre and journalist Yunus Erdoğdu previously told Ukrainian media outlet Strana. Gökhan corroborated that story to Ukrainian journalists and went out to describe in detail his active involvement in those MIT special ops as a liaison officer.

Gökhan previously served as an officer in the elite special forces units of the Turkish army. He took part in Turkey’s military operations in Iran, Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia and Azerbaijan, for which he was more than once decorated by the government.

In 2007, the Ankara military tribunal dismissed Gökhan in the rank of yüzbaşı (captain) accusing him of divulgence of state secrets and sentencing him to six years in prison. Gökhan’s prosecution, as several Turkish political emigres in Ukraine contend, started after his had revealed the data on the arms shipments from Turkey to the Middle East, an activity this Turkish servicemember had been previously involved in. Once released from prison, Gökhan went into business. He was primarily engaged in supplying his clients with support military materiel — equipment, food supplies and humanitarian aid in the countries marred by armed conflicts. The main recipients of his goods were the Turkmen tribes in Syria, a volatile place even at that time. In 2012, when civil conflicts in Syria spiraled into open war, Gökhan received an offer from his Syrian partner, the field commander of the Turkmen militia Khalil Harmid, to start arms shipments instead of humanitarian aid. Khalil Harmid vouched that Turkish authorities would look favorably upon such business and introduced Gökhan to MIT officials who would be supervising the arms shipments. According to Gökhan, funds for arms shipments were funneled in a peculiar way: containers with cash arrived in the Turkish city on Syria’s border. Gökhan says he bought arms throughout Eastern Europe and Central Asia from 2012 to 2015. In other words, the suppliers were mainly former members of the now-defunct Warsaw Pact and CIS (although contracts were documented as arms shipments to Turkey). On average, depending on the type of the “good”, an arms package would cost from $2 to 4 million. From 2012 to 2015, Nuri Gökhan Bozkır delivered 49 weapon transports to the Turkomans. To support his words, Gökhan handed over to Ukrainian reporters his video archive featuring several such operations.

In 2015, Gökhan emigrated to Ukraine and received a residence permit there. In 2018, acting via his trusted lawyer, former officer filed a lawsuit with a Turkish court to exculpate and reinstate himself in the military rank as he threatened to expose in the media the truth about the pressure and harassment army officers had to endure as well as corruption schemes in Turkish government structures. On July 10, 2019 those moves led to the former Turkish
Roman Denisyuk, Gökhan's lawyer, told the Ukrainian newspaper Strana that “there is a lot of information coming from various sources saying that the Ukrainian authorities promised to assist the Turkish president in the extradition of Nuri Gökhan Bozkır back to Turkey. This was one of the conditions for Turkey's support of Ukraine's foreign policy and economic cooperation.”

No doubt that this witness and perpetrator of criminal actions of the Turkish intelligence agencies has become dangerous for the current Turkish authorities, and as a result, he was kidnapped by MIT operatives on January 26 in the Ukrainian territory.

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