

15 JULY COUP ATTEMPT: UYGURS AT DIASPORA

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Dear professors and guests, welcome to all of you with respect!

Before starting my speech, I present my condolence and God's grace to the Martyrs who sacrificed their lives during the 15 July Coup attempt, I wish patience to their families, I hope the wounded veterans get well soon and I wish condolence to dearest Turkish people, and to our Turkey: the Cradle of Turkishness!

While I express the honour I have for being among you in such an important conference, I present my gratitude to the organisers who host this meeting and bring us together. Yet, I should also state that I do not have a title to address you from this university chair and my speech does not have a scientific basis. I will only try to share what I personally witnessed, know and heard through the capacity of my Turkish.

I am one of those Uygur Turks who were located in Kayseri 50 years ago after being permanently brought to Turkey during the government of late Süleyman Demirel who was the prime minister then. After completing my military service in Turkey, I went to Europe to work and have been living in Munich in Germany for 40 years.

In this respect, I want to talk about the loyalty of East Turkistan Turks, namely Uygurs, to

Turkey and Anatolian Turks. As it is already known, Uygur Turks had paid homage to Sultan Abdulhamid around 1870s which was during Governor Yakup Bedevlet era. The rulers of East Turkistan Republic which was declared in Kasgarda in 1933 appealed Turkish Republic in the first hand to be recognised as independent state by sending compliments from the Sky Flag to the Red Flag. At the cover of Altay newspaper published in Urumchi in 1940s, it was written “Our People are Turks, religion is Islam and nation is East Turkistan.” Hence, Uygur Turks who are tortured by the cruelties of Chinese government now, named themselves and their independent states with the word ‘Turk’ between 1933 and 1944.

So, the close interest by Anatolian Turks, the governments and the people has confirmed the same connections since we first came to Turkey half a century ago. Personally, I felt at home and homeland wherever I went and whomever I met. When Isa Yusuf Alptekin, the leader of East Turkistan people, died in 1994 December, I had come to Istanbul from Munich the same day. While prayer was made at the deceased in the evening hours our President Recep Tayyip Erdogan who was the Mayor of Istanbul Greater Municipality, got involved in the recitation of Quran by gracing everyone with their presence together with the then Governor of Istanbul at the house of Isa Yusuf Alptekin in Atakoy. In the following years, Mr Recep Tayyip Erdogan named some recreation areas and bridges in Istanbul after Isa Yusuf Alptekin and did not yield to pressures by the Foreign Office upon the demand of Chinese government aimed at removing these names.

After the former Soviet Union dismantled in early 90s, many Uygur Turks started leaving their homelands and sought for asylum in foreign countries after the increase of Chinese cruelties in East Turkistan. Today Uygur Turks live in almost 40 different countries in a geography spanning from New Zealand to Canada. Naturally it was Anatolia Turks who embraced Uygur Turks the most and also approached us with fraternity. In this process of the number of Uygur Turks who settled in Germany was 1000 and 150 families of these, namely 650 people, live in Munich. The migration of Uygur Turks to Germany starts with those who left Turkey either to work or for education in 1960s,

1970s and it reached the current number with the waves who fled East Turkistan in 90s.

Uygur Turks who live in European countries, especially in Germany, are in close contact with Anatolia Turks in this country: Turkish Societies there always helped us a lot and Turkish society has embraced us. We are together in the mosque and the society, we go to Hajj and Umre with Turkish groups; and we watch Turkish TV channels in our houses. 5 brothers of us from Munich have just bought houses from Alanya in the last year. The average age of Uygur Turks in Germany is below 30 and they have high level of education, the number of our students at higher education institutions is far better than other communities.

We are closely interested in what happens in our brother country Turkey. Especially in the recent years we have been attracted to issues like 'One Minute', General and Presidential Election, Mavi Marmara Incident, War on Terror, Syrian refugees, the takedown of Russian war plane. While we were so focused, 15 July Coup Attempt first shocked us all, but that the attempt was rebuffed within hours has been a milestone for the stability of Turkey.

On the night of 15 July, we also a sort of stood guard for Democracy while watching TV in Germany! The short speech and the call made to Turkish people by our President through mobile phone on CNN Turk, and his following speech at Ataturk Airport, the first clashes on Bosphorus Bridge and that the people stood still against the coup attempters by flocking to streets and lying before the tanks all impressed us so much.

What cheered and relaxed us was that the coup attempt was overthrown within hours after it was realised; that all the state and government officials as well as our President demonstrate that they were in charge with their firm stand, actions and operations with no waste of time, that the air traffic went on with almost no problems, that the media informed the people in a transparent way and above all that the Turkish people protected the government they elected and the democracy. We watched the struggle Turkish people made during Independence war, and the sacrifices in

Çanakkale and Sarikamis on movies, read from books or listened what was told us about these. But now we witnessed, lived and directly saw what Turkish people could do to protect their land regardless of the differences between man and woman, young and old people, and right and left politics. We have understood better why the line ‘What makes a flag is the blood on it, the land is a nation if there is one who dies for it’ was written and what it means since the night of 15 July.

The second day after the coup attempt, on 17 July, when I looked around after landing at Ataturk Airport and kissing the earth I never found any sign of the coup attempt, I looked for something, I wanted to find a clue. But I could not find or see anything: everything was smooth at passport check, exit way, the taxi driver etc. until I arrived home in Zeytinburnu. Turkey welcomed me as if nothing happened, nobody did, saw or heard anything, nothing happened to people. And even I did not find any signs when I got to Ankara from Istanbul on the night of 19 July. Namely, what I found in Turkey and the people I talked gave me the impression that a coup attempt did not occur just two days ago since everything was on the way, people were not in rush, transportation vehicles worked, planes landed and took off, the government, the army, the police were in charge, people had a positive manner and they were self-confident and proud.

One of my brothers living in Istanbul took me to Democracy Guard one night. When I got back to Munich, the first question my Uygur citizens asked me to hear about the wellbeing of our dearest Turkey was How is Istanbul? What did you see? Is Turkey like the one before?

My fellow citizens who went to Istanbul and Alanya for holiday from different European countries phoned me last week and told me ‘Enver, what an amazing group of people are Anatolian Turks here! May Allah protect them, as long as these people exist nobody can harm Turkey!’.

Through the firm stand starting from call to people via phone he made upon hearing about the coup attempt, his strong leadership, assuring speeches and addresses, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has displayed his highly qualified sense of managing crisis as his status and personality

requires. The government officials, ministers and especially Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım proved that they were in charge in many ways; Glorious Turkish Army has also displayed an assuring standpoint to our people under the commandership of General Hulusi Akar, the Chief of General Staff.

And especially the collaboration of opposite parties with the state and the government against the coup, the unity manner displayed at Democracy Rally was observed to make Turkish people happy, and encouraged and assured them.

In short, it was made clear to everyone around the world that there was only one, united Turkey as the state, the government, the Army, the opposition and the people against 15 July coup attempt and that national will and democracy were embraced.

As the details were uncovered in the days and weeks following the rebuff of coup attempt, the resistance of people, effort to convince the soldiers, what happened inside and outside the military commanding hierarchy, what happened behind the scenes, the footages shown by the media about what could happen if the attempt was not overthrown and the debates on the screen made us understand better what happened that night. The awakening during the era of Justice and Development Party, specifically in the last 10 years, the restoration, the self-confidence and the motivation of the society have revealed Turkish people in the struggle against the coup attempt and demonstrated that Turkey is not like it was in 80s and 90s.

Finally, the united stand of Turkish people as one body, their sacrifices and love of nation were the major factors in throwing the coup attempt away with such few losses in a few hours.

As Uygur Turks living in different countries across the world, especially in Germany since the homeland is occupied by China, we have watched the incredible struggle, the reaction by Turkish people against the coup attempt, and their patriotism and bravery with appreciation and gratitude and we took our lessons from this effort. We told ourselves in our meetings that we will

take the struggle by Turkish people against the coup attempt as our model.

Dear guests, I want to end my speech with these humble and short words:

In the recent years, while the Justice and Development Party has been trying to build friendly relations with China on the one hand, they also held it as foreign policy to protect the humane and cultural rights of Uygur Turks, and while they were interested in Uygur Turks who migrated to Turkey, they also took care of those in difficult conditions like in Thailand.

Our President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is the first and the only statesman to have declared the Chinese policy against Uygur Turks as “genocide”.

In this respect, I want to present my gratitude to our President, the higher officials of Justice and Development Party and to everyone who gave their hands to those from East Turkistan, namely Anatolian Turks.

Just as our dearest Turkey is a bridge between Europe and Asia, East Turkistan is also a strategically important bridge between China and Eurasia. China needs the region of East Turkistan to open up to Central Asia and secure energy lines. It is impossible to maintain peace, stability and security on the tears of Uygur Turks.

Hence, I believe that it is the realistic, beneficial, longlasting and future-oriented way to resume efficiently the policy of “protecting the humane and cultural rights of East Turkistan residents in their homeland which is in the borders of People’s Republic of China now by enhancing the policy further.

Thanks for listening, respect to all of you!