

SAUDI ARABIA’S ATTITUDE AGAINST THE FAILED COUP ATTEMPT IN TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

Saudi Arabia and Turkey are two sister countries that have established mutual fraternal relationships. The mentioned relationships have rapidly developed after King Salman bin Abdülaziz succeeded to the throne initiating a new step towards the long-run relationship between two countries.

On July 15, Turkey experienced a military coup attempt that aimed at disturbing the security and stability within Turkey and creating a gap at the Islamic World as Turkey represents the heart of the ummah through providing support for the persecuted and wronged Islamic peoples. From the very first minute of the failed coup, with the start of the disturbance which intended to disrupt the public order in Turkey and to take over the legitimate government all the Muslim people opposed and condemned it. Although some Arab governments and Islamic states were late in condemning the coup attempt, it should be noted that the Arab and Islamic people stand at the side of the Turkish people and the legitimate government of Turkey. Saudi Arabia has condemned the coup attempt and took sides with and declared her support to the Turkish people and the legitimate government of Turkey with her

people, scholars, thinkers and government as this military coup attempted not only to weaken Turkey and Turkish people but also the entire Islamic ummah.

REFLECTIONS OF THE FAILED COUP ATTEMPT IN SAUDI ARABIA

Turkey has witnessed a failed coup plot in mid-July. The coup plotters desired to put Turkey under military domination and dictatorship reversing all the investments and achievements that had taken place since Justice and Development Party rose to power in 2002. Turkish republic witnessed several military coups that overthrew civil governments after these coups chaos/tumult took over the country. Yet, the present coup attempt differs from the previous ones in view of local and international responses.

Locally: Turkish people went out to streets regardless of their political orientation and fought to suppress the plots that aimed at overpowering Turkish republic and people.

Internationally: During the first hours of the failed coup attempt, most states condemned the attempt, kept silent or made careful comments on the issue. However, after the Turkish public went out to streets and made the military coup fail and public order was restored, many states declared their support to the legitimate Turkish government elected by the public.

Our concern is how Saudi Arabia responded to the failed coup attempt.

During early hours of the coup, Saudi Arabia issued formal announcement condemning the attempted coup. However, after this, the Saudi government kept silent about the affairs in Turkey and refrained from making announcements other than those condemning or supporting the coup.

When it was noticed that the coup attempt failed (after July 15), the king of Saudi Arabia announced that he welcomed the soothing state of affairs in Turkey.

There are some reasons for the delay in Saudi Arabia's condemning the coup. These reasons will be presented in this paper.

However, before explaining the reasons, the news about the failed coup in Saudi media needs our attention:

During the first moments, some of the Saudi media, like other Arab channels that distorted the truth, declared that the regime in Turkey was taken down by the military. Nevertheless, after the coup attempt was rebuffed by the public, the media groups that announced that the coup in Turkey was successful renounced their claims and accepted the truth. The daily papers and journals in Saudi Arabia also stated and emphasized in their morning issues that the coup attempt in Turkey failed as the Turkish nation took sides with the legitimate government.

The Saudi scholars and thinkers were very clear since the beginning of the coup attempt. They supported the Turkish nation and its legitimate government and condemned the coup in their writings and comments.

El-Arifi, one of the figures of the Sahwa Movement of Saudi Arabian government, supported the Turkish nation and government in his twitter feed. The Saudi preacher and professor of comparative law at High Saudi Law Institute, Abdülaziz el-Fawzan, also noted that the failed coup would be taken as a blessing and the parallel state structure betrayed their country. Saudi preacher Salman wrote prayers for the sister state Turkey in his tweets: "There is a plot against the confident and strong Turkey. May Allah save Turkey from the plots of the world and the Zionists". The Saudi people stood aside their beloved sister country from the

very beginning as expressed in their comments and campaigns in social media and also through their prayers concerning the Turkish people and their legitimate government.

SAUDI ARABIA CONDEMNS THE COUP WITH AN OFFICIAL DECLARATION

During the first moments of the failed coup attempt witnessed by Turkey in the middle of July, most states condemned the attempt, kept silent or made careful comments on the issue. However, after the Turkish public went out to streets and made the military coup fail and public order was restored, many states declared their support to the legitimate Turkish government elected by the public. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia noted that they welcomed the developments in Turkey the following day. Although Turkish-Saudi relations have improved in many areas -including a bilateral security agreement between both nations- numerous politicians and thinkers question why Saudi Arabia has not adopted an attitude against the coup given the fact that countries like Qatar have already declared their position against the coup attempt of 15 July 2016.

Such a delay in an official declaration against the military coup intended to overthrow the legitimate and elected government of Turkey stirred the Turkish lobbyists within the country.

It might be interpreted that Saudi Arabia did not adopt a clear stance in the issue given that the support for the Turkish government was declared and the military coup attempt was condemned 15 hours after the event and only after things settled.

The Turkish side might like to revise their foreign policy because the coup attempt should have been condemned from the very beginning and the support for the Turkish people and the legitimate government should have been already expressed.

WHY SAUDI ARABIA HAD A DELAY IN CONDEMNING THE FAILED COUP ATTEMPT IN TURKEY

Many political analysts say that a series of reasons apply for the delay in Saudi Arabia's deliberating her position. Most important of these is the discrepancy among the members of the Saudi royal dynasty. This might stem from various difficult and critical political problems concerning local, regional and international law issues experienced by Saudi Arabia directly in the royal house and such conditions might not have allowed the decision on condemning the coup attempt in Turkey in a swift manner without proper consideration but political improvisation. Especially almost one and a half year after the decision to declare war against Yemen, which cost them dearly, some claim that the delay in the declaration stems from Saudi Arabia's usual conduct in making decisions in regional and international affairs. Some of them also assert that they badly need a strategic ally like Turkey under such conditions. While others claim that the kingdom wanted to see the winner. But how does an ally that supports the coup plotters keep on good relations? The reserved policy of the Saudi side might be applicable in the previous years when alienation and secession were observed between the two countries, but the recent practically strategic cooperation between the two great Islamic states encompassing coordination in security and military matters and the bilateral relationships desired by the Muslim community around the globe and the region all point at an unacceptable attitude.

Today Saudi Arabia has to realise the size of her responsibilities towards not only her own people but also towards the entire Islamic world and carry out her unavoidable political and religious responsibilities even under toughest conditions and without considering the extent of the risks.

The Turkish side, after the failed coup attempt, decided on the exact criteria concerning the evaluation of her enemies among her purported allies. Any claims for support without sending delegations to Ankara would be unacceptable. This criterion also applies to Saudi Arabia who has failed the test until now. Unfortunately, her deadly enemy Iran has cunningly turned the tide in her favour. Tehran, though late compared to Qatar, sent their foreign secretary Muhammed Cevad Zarif to Ankara. The Iranian media made a great effort to expose the weakness of Saudi Arabia in deciding their attitude during the coup attempt and worked hard to benefit from the circumstances. However, Turkish foreign ministry refuted the rumours about Saudi Arabia's position and accepted that Riyadh had a clear attitude against the coup attempt. This is a clear message from the Turkish side showing their support to the kingdom. The Saudi side has to make every effort to balance the disparities in the forthcoming period based on the saying "better late than never". Saudi Arabia must achieve a new higher position such as Tehran and Moscow in the eyes of the new Turkey. At the same time, Saudi Arabia might benefit from the close relations among Turkey, Russia and Iran and the Turks might be mediators between Iran and Saudi Arabia to fix the unfavourable relationships.

Conclusion

History has witnessed a series of military coups realised in Turkey against the good of the country and her people. During these dark periods of great Turkish history, many institutions became corrupt; economy worsened under stagnation, and levels of health and education provisions decreased.

Turkish people realised the forthcoming plots aimed at overpowering new Turkey with all her giant institutions from the very first moment and went out to streets to refute this ruthless coup shouting out to the world, the enemies of Islam and the Turkish people that the

period of coups and plots were over. Turkish people are more mindful about things now. Turkey can even stand against all plots that aim to subdue the entire Islamic ummah.

The world of Islam has openly declared that they sided with the Turkish people and their legitimate government. Saudi Arabia was among the leading countries that refuted the coup and supported Turkey. However, Saudi government experienced a disorder in recognizing the situation during the early hours of the failed coup attempt. The declaration 15 hours after the attempted coup disbanded the black clouds over the Saudi government. Contrary to the initial position of the Saudi government, the public took sides with their Turkish brothers and their legitimate government in a clear tone. It is possible to comprehend the many reasons behind the delay of Saudi government's official condemnation of the coup attempt. It is better to have a delay in this declaration than never having a declaration. Every one of us needs a better acknowledgement that the ummah needs cooperation and solidarity against plots attempted by the enemies of the Islamic faith. Thank Allah it is over.