

# Turkey at a Crossroads

Notes for David Kilgour, moderator  
**Anatolian Heritage Federation Friendship Reception and Panel Discussion**  
**Room 200, Sir John A. MacDonald Building, Parliament of Canada, Ottawa**  
**March 19, 2018**

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Bon soir, Mesdames et Messieurs,  
 Je m'appelle David Kilgour et je vais vous presenter les interlocuteurs et l'interlocutrice:

**Lorne Waldman**, refugee and immigration lawyer in Toronto, will join us on Skype  
**Elizabeth May**, MP and leader of the Green Party of Canada;  
**Alex Neve**, Secretary General, Amnesty International of Canada-the latter two of whom  
 are no doubt well known to most of you; and  
**Kadir Yildirim**, Fellow, Baker Institute for Public Policy, Rice University, Houston,

Dr. Yildirim's research includes political Islam, the Middle East and Turkish politics. His book, *Muslim Democratic Parties in the Middle East*, analyzes Islamist parties and their impact in Egypt, Morocco and Turkey. Our guest's current book project is tentatively entitled *Invoking God: Institutions and Religious Party Evolution in Western Europe and the Middle East*. He leads two research projects at the Baker Institute. One examines pluralism and inclusion in the Middle East since the Arab

Spring. The second analyzes the relationship between religious authorities and U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East.

Thanks to the **Anatolian Heritage Federation** for hosting this event, and to our co-sponsors from across the political spectrum, Members of Parliament **Tom Kmiec**, **Michael Levitt**, **Elizabeth May**, **Irene Mathysen** and the Hon. **Judy Sgro**.

## Overview

The Gülen Movement, also known as *Hizmet*, meaning "service" in Turkish, is respected by many across the world for its message of a blending of moderate, tolerant Islam with democracy. Fethullah Gülen-inspired institutions and organizations are active in promoting cultural and humanitarian activities, business, health and education, and have functioned successfully in many parts of the world. As Mr. Gulen says, "Tolerance is our safest refuge and our fortress against the handicaps that arise from schism, factions, and the difficulties inherent in reaching mutual agreement."

Since President Erdoğan made unfounded allegations against the Gülen Movement for the attempted coup in Turkey in mid-July, 2016 (See, for example, **Erdogan's Coup** report by Stockholm Center for Freedom: [https://stockholmcf.org/wpcontent/uploads/2017/07/15\\_July\\_Erdogans\\_Coup\\_13.07.2017.pdf](https://stockholmcf.org/wpcontent/uploads/2017/07/15_July_Erdogans_Coup_13.07.2017.pdf)), his increasingly totalitarian regime has sought to weaken the movement by categorizing it as a "terrorist" organization. Mr. Gulen appears to have ceased supporting Erdogan in part over unanswered corruption allegations against the latter in 2013/2014, but had moved to the U.S. in 1999. Turkey subsequently fell to among the worst 15 of 113 nations on the Rule of Law Index published in 2016 by the World Justice Project.

Prior to 2016, the Gülen Movement ran schools in about 150 countries prior to 2016. Since that time, the Turkish government has pressured governments to close schools linked to the Movement.

As a participant in various Intercultural Dialogue Institute activities in Ottawa, I was invited to join a bi-partisan delegation of U.S. state legislators visiting Gülen-inspired schools and universities in the four countries of Georgia, Macedonia, Kosovo and Albania in late February. (Full disclosure: our transportation and accommodation was paid by the Movement).

Let me screen now a few photos from the visit:

- Tbilisi, **Georgia**

Among school visits, we witnessed a bail hearing in a packed court of an administrator, teacher and Turkish citizen, Mustafa Çabuk, and later visited his school right after he was granted bail. Çabuk, his family and colleagues were reunited after his nine months in jail. The court has yet to decide on the extradition issue despite his 15 years of teaching in Georgia, but the Public Defender of Georgia has indicated that removing him to Turkey "contradicts the norms of international law and national legislation."

- Skopje, **Macedonia**

We visited Gülen schools and some elected persons.

- Pristina, **Kosovo**

We visited several Gülen schools and parents of some students.

- Tirana, **Albania**

We visited Gülen schools and universities-one of which, Epoka, is reputedly the best in the country.

Other delegation members included Democratic and Republican legislators from New Mexico. I think it is accurate to say that all of us were highly impressed by the teachers, students, curricula, academic awards, and facilities of the 12 or so schools and universities we visited in the four countries.

### **Presentations by Panelists...**

### **Comments by members of the audience...**

### **Conclusion**

We hope that you will all continue to show support for building a world of tolerance and inter-cultural/interreligious dialogue and harmony.

Let me give Fethullah Gulen the final word: *“To defeat terrorism, we must acknowledge that we are all human beings. It is not our choice to belong to a particular race or family. We should be freed from fear of the other and enjoy diversity within democracy. I believe that dialogue and education are the most effective means to surpass our differences.”*

Merci.