

**Additional Written Evidence to Foreign Affairs Committee
on UK's relations with Turkey**

**By Alliance for Shared Values & Dialogue Platform
3 February 2017**

I. Clarifications of some questions asked by the Committee during the oral hearing

1. Mike Gapes asked (Q62) about Hizmet in the UK. In answer, we explained that Hizmet had formed a consortium for Hizmet-inspired organisations in the UK and that it had six member organisations. This number has now increased to 10.
2. Mike Gapes asked (Q63) about the UK-based Hizmet-inspired independent school. The Committee has been provided with details of this school in a separate communication.
3. Mike Gapes asked (Q67 and more) about the number of schools in the U.S. Reports have featured in the U.S. media suggesting that there are approximately 100 – 120 charter schools in the U.S. founded and run by charities and companies with Hizmet-inspired people sitting on their board of trustees or directors. We find this estimate to be broadly accurate. We cannot give an exact number because the Hizmet movement does not have a membership system nor does it operate on the basis of such strict and definitive lines of affiliations which would allow it to produce such lists and exact numbers.
4. In asking a question (Q82), Ann Clwyd said

Your submission described an informal, loose network, but that does not really square with the organisation you are describing that is associated with dozens of schools, lots of media outlets, a large number of companies and billions of dollars in assets. Is there not a contradiction between those two things?

5. To clarify, in no part of our written statement do we describe Hizmet as a “loose network”. Rather, we state that:

As a social movement, Hizmet does not have a corporation-style centrally organised, top down, hierarchical structure that encapsulates the entire movement. Rather, it relies on informal networks, moral authority and organic leadership to mobilise the grassroots to support Hizmet's formal activities. In Hizmet, these correlate to practices such as *sohbet* (religious conversations), *istishare* (consultative meeting), *mütevelli* (board of trustees), *abi and abla* (brother and sister), *gönülü* (participant/volunteer), and *himmel* (giving/donation). (para 7, written statement)

6. As explained during the hearing, social movements are predicated on informal networks and Hizmet has many formal and informal networks criss-crossing within the movement. To elaborate the point, we gave the example of VOICES in Britain:

To coordinate and to achieve greater transparency, Hizmet-inspired organisations founded VOICES in Britain in 2013. As its website states, “VOICES is a consortium network comprising voluntary organisations founded by Hizmet-inspired people to inspire, connect and empower society in Britain.” The VOICES website has listed its member organisations since the consortium was founded. (para 9, written statement)

7. We have been proactively open about this by not only setting up a consortium and creating a webpage for it but by also writing to communicate this coordination and consortium to central government departments.

In 2015, VOICES sent letters to stakeholders including the Prime Minister's office, Home Office, Department for Communities and Local Government and Foreign Office to inform them of VOICES, its aims and member organisations. **The letter also stated (with prior permission) the names of Hizmet-inspired organisations in the UK that had not yet joined VOICES**, and listed significant Hizmet

developments in the UK. In early 2016, VOICES launched its new website, which included details of its member organisations and their directors as well as the names and roles of Hizmet participants who did not have formal positions within Hizmet organisations but were nonetheless influential within the Hizmet community in the UK. However, VOICES was forced to revert to its old webpages when it became clear that AKP supporters were targeting Hizmet participants and organisations in the UK. VOICES is more than happy to provide the list of individuals that were named on that website to the Committee in confidence and answer any further questions on Hizmet in the UK. (para 10, written statement; emphasis added)

8. Furthermore, we are not the only ones in Hizmet to declare how we work. While VOICES was formalised in 2013, many other Hizmet-inspired organisations have formally come together through consortiums, networks and even federations, before and since. We referred to two out of many examples in our written statement where we noted FEDACTIO in Belgium and Turkic American Alliance in the U.S., which were founded in 2010. By setting up formal networks, Hizmet participants and organisations not only accept but also demonstrate how they coordinate with each other, which helps them to achieve the type of output that they do. Therefore, there is no reason for us to deny local or sectoral coordination among Hizmet-inspired organisations. However, coordination is not the same as top-down hierarchical management that encapsulates the entire movement.
9. In reply to Q82, we stated that all areas of Hizmet-related activity in the UK were formalised into legal entities such as charities or non-profit companies and that many of these were members of VOICES in Britain. The only area of activity that had not been formalised was what we referred to as “the grass roots religious activism” and that this comprised activities such as “sohbets” (religious study circles or talks) as well as other forms of activities. We explained that we had advised colleagues in the UK to formalise this area of activity as well. We are pleased to inform you that a group of Hizmet-inspired people engaged in this “informal religious activity” in the UK have now come together to formalise this area of activity as well and that its website is soon to be launched (www.sohbetsociety.org) including details of their work and practices. This organisation will also be a member of VOICES in Britain.
10. On January 31, 2017, the Committee heard from the Rt Hon Sir Alan Duncan MP, Minister of State for Europe and the Americas and Lindsay Appleby, Director Europe, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (hereafter “FCO”). During that hearing, Sir Duncan appeared to endorse, to a large extent, the Turkish government’s version of events both in relation to the coup and the “parallel state” allegation. When Sir Duncan was specifically asked what “evidence” and “information” (Q176) he had to justify his position on the coup, he replied “the trouble is that the nature of that [Gülen] organisation itself is not entirely clear... so it is a complicated phenomenon to analyse” and on the “parallel state” allegation (Q177), he replied “[i]s it absolutely crystal clear? That is impossible to answer... I am a Foreign Minister, not the world’s greatest expert on Fethullah Gülen.” When pressed on the matter of “evidence”, “information” or “intelligence” the FCO had on the coup (Q178), Sir Duncan allowed to Mr Appleby to reply. Mr Appleby’s response is illuminating.

It might be helpful to explain from a kind of official perspective, in the Foreign Office, **what kind of information we do have** and **what kind of information we don’t have** on the coup. We know quite a lot about the individuals who seem to have been involved in the coup, because that was quite evident by their actions; **we know much less about the organisations to which those individuals belonged.**

Many of the key individuals, by the nature of an attempted coup, were from the military. It is not consistent with membership of the military to be a member of an alternative organisation, so **it isn’t clear how many of the military people were Gülenists, nor is it clear the degree to which the organisation—or the multiple organisations that make up Gülenism—were themselves directing or driving any of the activity.** (emphasis added)

11. In our view, this appears to suggest that (i) the FCO knows the identity of many of the putschists, (ii) the FCO does not know whether these putschists are affiliated with the Gülen movement or any other organisation, and (iii) the FCO does not have any intelligence to show that the wider Gülen movement as a whole and/or Gülen as an individual was behind this coup or even supported it. Mr Appleby’s response is clear and unambiguous on the repeated questioning of what information, intelligence, or evidence the

FCO has. We would suggest that Mr Appleby's response on this matter does not justify that provided by Sir Duncan. We would respectfully suggest that the Minister's response is at least partly motivated by political expediency. As a Committee independent of government, we would respectfully invite its members to consider Mr Appleby's above-mentioned response as more authoritative on the question of what intelligence and evidence the FCO has – albeit unseen and uncontested by the various parties concerned – and does not have.

12. Mr Appleby's statement is corroborated by Gareth Jenkins' January 26, 2017, piece where he analyses the evidence put forward so far by the Turkish government. Mr Jenkins,¹ known for his extensive links within and knowledge of the Turkish military, states that "[r]emarkably, despite months of vigorous interrogation, no convincing evidence has yet been made public about how the coup was planned or coordinated. There can be no doubt that, if such evidence had emerged, the Turkish authorities would have ensured it was in the public domain." On the so-called confessions Mr Jenkins states:

In the weeks following the putsch, officers accused of participating were routinely denied access to lawyers and frequently physically abused. During this time, a handful of statements were leaked to the Turkish media in which alleged participants apparently confessed to being Gülenists. Several of these statements have since been disowned by those who were reported to have made them. Even if the remainders are taken at face value, no one has yet confessed to participating in the organization of the putsch, merely to joining it when it was already underway. Not only is the number of these alleged confessed Gülenists very small but, in terms of the alleged statements leaked to the media, they are considerably outnumbered by those who have denied – often vehemently – ever having any connection with the Gülen Movement.²

II. Significant development since our written and oral evidence

13. On January 17, 2017, the Times newspaper published an exclusive story titled 'Erdoğan plotted purge before coup, says Brussels spies' on a report prepared in August 2016 by the European Union intelligence centre INTCEN, which has recently been leaked to the media. The report would have been shared with a range of EU bodies and with EU member states. EU INTCEN's mission is to provide intelligence analysis, early warning and situational awareness to the High Representative Federica Mogherini and to the European External Action Service, to the various EU decision-making bodies in the fields of the Common Security and Foreign Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy and Counter-Terrorism, as well as to the EU Member States.³

14. The Times story, based on a reading of the leaked INTCEN report, states that:

President Erdoğan of Turkey planned to purge opposition forces in the military before July's attempted coup, according to a secret EU intelligence report. The European intelligence contradicts the Turkish government's claim that Fethullah Gülen, an exiled cleric, was behind the plot to overthrow the Turkish government... The report by INTCEN, the EU intelligence centre, concluded that the coup was mounted by a range of opponents to Mr Erdoğan and his ruling AK Party.

"The decision to launch the coup resulted from the fears of an incoming purge. It is likely that a group of officers comprising Gülenists, Kemalists [secularists], opponents of the AKP and opportunists was behind the coup. **It is unlikely that Gülen himself played a role in the attempt,**" said the report, dated August, 24, 2016, seen by The Times... "It is unlikely Gülen really had the abilities and capacities to take such steps. There is no evidence that the army, [which] considers itself as the guardian of Turkey as a secular state, and the Gülenists were willing to co-operate with each other to oust Erdoğan. The Gülen movement is very disconnected and somewhat distant from the secular opposition and Turkish army," the report said.

¹ Gareth Jenkins is a Non-Resident Senior Research Fellow with the Joint Center's Silk Road Studies Program and Turkey Center. He is a writer and analyst based in Istanbul, Turkey, where he has been resident since 1989.

² <https://www.turkeyanalyst.org/publications/turkey-analyst-articles/item/572-myths-and-mysteries-six-months-on-from-turkey%E2%80%99s-curious-coup.html>

³ http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/sede/dv/sede041011cvsalmi_/sede041011cvsalmi_en.pdf

According to EU intelligence agencies, the military coup began after reports of a “far-reaching purge” began to circulate in the days running up to the attempted seizure of power of July 15. The expected purge drew in secular opponents of Mr Erdoğan and galvanised sections of the military opposed to Mr Erdoğan’s policies of intervention in Syria and against the Kurds.

During the peace process from 2013 to 2015 with Kurdish guerrillas, the military was ordered to turn a blind eye to the Kurdish separatist PKK building up weapons stocks which were then used against the army when the conflict resumed. Senior military figures were opposed to Mr Erdoğan’s demands for a ground operation in Syria, which began in August only after they were purged... “Erdoğan exploited the failed coup and the state of emergency to launch an extensive repressive campaign against the opponents of the AKP establishment,” said the report, dated five months ago. “The huge wave of arrests was already previously prepared.”⁴ (emphasis added)

15. There have also been other stories in the media corroborating the leaked INCEN report. For example, a senior Turkish/NATO military officer who has been purged from the military like many other Western-educated, NATO-supporting Turkish military officers, gave an interview to Vocal Europe January 23, 2017, where he said that

I believe those involved [in the coup] are threefold... I don’t think there are that much Gülenists in armed forces, especially not in senior ranks. For me, it was an alliance of convenience between Erdoğan and Ultranationalists. It was to be used as an excuse for Erdoğan to get rid of the secular elite and the ones that opposed his policies and for the ultranationalists to take prominent role in armed forces and impose their Eurasian agenda. There are lots of inconsistencies one could find in the “most clumsy” coup attempt in Turkish history (Keep in mind that Turkish Armed Forces are no strangers to coups, they would have succeeded if there was a real attempt). The three types of people involved in the coup are:

1: A very small group who initiated the coup attempt and stepped aside afterwards. This is the group that masterminded the coup plot. Judging by who benefited from the coup attempt; this group included Ultranationalists (Perincek Group), and those with ties to Erdoğan regime or were simply bought off.

2: Those who believed that the coup was being done in chain of command so obeyed the orders. This included seculars and other Erdoğan opposers, who were aware of the widely circulated purge lists and thus might have felt relieved by what they thought was a coup in chain of command. The secular elite had too much with the Erdoğan’s policies.

3: Those who saw it as an opportunity to rise in the ranks. Those simply, did not care too much whether it was done in chain of command or not, but saw it as an opportunity to rise in the ranks.⁵

16. While none of this conclusively proves one version of events over another, it does demonstrate that there is more than one version; that the Turkish government has a vested interest in having its narrative endorsed by Western governments; that there are serious grounds to judge that version of events and that therefore the best course of action is to suspend judgement on the culprits of the coup and their motives and rather stress the importance of an impartial judicial process. Expressing an opinion on the identity and motives of the putschists would not only endorse the Turkish government’s narrative but also the way in which that narrative is sustained: through the suppression of evidence and judicial independence; the closure and imprisonment of journalists and opposition figures and the mass purge and incarceration, torture and inhuman treatment of detainees. Providing a view that appears to ascribe guilt to certain people, a group or an ideology on the basis of “confessions” where Amnesty and Human Rights Watch have reported systematic torture inadvertently undermines the significance of allegations of torture. Where judges cannot rule on bail hearings without then being arrested and detained themselves (e.g. two judges have been incarcerated since 2015 for granting a bail application), it would be unwise to

⁴ <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/erdogan-plotted-purge-before-coup-say-brussels-spies-2hh8mgx6h>

⁵ <http://www.vocaleurope.eu/monday-talk-with-the-purged-former-turkish-nato-officer/>

assume that we are in a better position to judge culpability. Unlike the Turkish government, we are not offering the above INTCEN report etc to “prove” the guilt of this or that group; merely to show that there are many grounds to doubt the official version of events. In the face of this, impartial judicial process is the only way forward, which is what we ask the Committee to stress.