



## **AFFINITY'S POSITION ON THE DEVELOPMENTS IN TURKEY**

**Affinity Intercultural Foundation, 19 July 2016**

On Friday 15 July 2016, Turkey witnessed a coup attempt by sections of the military, which has left hundreds dead and over a thousand injured. We pray for God's mercy on the deceased and express our sincerest condolences to their families and loved ones.

As Affinity Intercultural Foundation, we condemn, in the strongest terms, the attempted military coup in Turkey and reiterate that there is no place for military interventions in a democracy.

While admitting the scarcity of information at the early hours of the night, President Erdogan and figures close to him were quick to lay blame on the *Hizmet* ("service") Movement, a global faith-inspired civic movement inspired by the teachings of Turkish Muslim scholar Fethullah Gulen.

This is not surprising as President Erdogan has previously blamed oppositional developments in Turkey on the *Hizmet* Movement and, as a pretext to purging state and civil society, claims that the *Hizmet* is acting as a "parallel state" aiming to take over the country.

*Hizmet*-affiliated or supporting organisations and persons have been targeted as a result with media organisations and schools being shut down, journalists jailed and many others arrested without sufficient evidence.

As the Affinity Intercultural Foundation, we have always stated that the founding of our organisation was inspired by Gulen's teaching and that we are part of the *Hizmet* Movement. We aim to promote social harmony locally and condemn any attempts to bring further discord into our already conflict-fraught world.

While we cannot speak on behalf of the movement, we can clearly state that we and our affiliated organisations in Australia have never had nor have any such agendas or aims.

We hope those responsible for trying to overthrow the government will be tried in courts of law and this incident becomes a source of motivation for strengthening Turkey's democracy.

We praise the people of Turkey who took a stand against a violent takeover, some at the expense of their own lives. We can only hope and pray for a peaceful resolution to this matter.

We are particularly concerned that Turkey's domestic troubles are used as a source of polarisation of the Turkish-speaking communities overseas.

#### Response from Fethullah Gulen and the *Hizmet* Movement

Gulen issued a statement early in the night condemning this coup in the strongest terms, adding “*as someone who suffered under multiple military coups during the past five decades, it is especially insulting to be accused of having any link to such an attempt. I categorically deny such accusations.*” Gulen also called for an independent international inquiry into the coup attempt implicating his involvement and was willing to accept the findings even before it commences.

Leading *Hizmet* NGOs in Turkey and abroad also issued condemnatory statements almost immediately as news broke out of the coup. *Hizmet* participants have consistently demonstrated categorical condemnation of such anti-democratic and violent practices and showed unequivocal commitment to the rule of law and a functioning democracy.

Both Gulen's teachings and the *Hizmet* participants' activities around the world in dialogue, democratic engagement, active citizenship and social cohesion are the embodiment of this commitment.