

**VISIT OF THE OSCE PA AD HOC COMMITTEE ON COUNTERING
TERRORISM TO TÜRIYE**

6-7 May 2024, Ankara

NOTE-TO-THE-FILE



Executive Summary

On 6-7 May, the OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism (CCT) conducted an official visit to Ankara, Türkiye.

Led by the CCT Chair Reinhold Lopatka (Austria), eight CCT members, including OSCE PA President Pia Kauma (Finland), discussed regional threats and explored new trends with senior government officials at the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of National Defense, Ministry of Treasury and Finance, Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Members of the delegation also engaged in a timely round-table discussion on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and counter terrorism with experts at Ankara Social Science University.

The visit - facilitated by CCT Vice-Chair Kamil Aydın (Türkiye) - proved instrumental to get better acquainted with Türkiye's extensive experience in fighting terrorism domestically and internationally. According to the Global Terrorism Index¹, Türkiye is the most affected country by terrorism in the OSCE region, with important lessons to be drawn by all participating States.

The threats stemming from prominent terrorists networks such as Daesh - also known as the Islamic State (IS), or the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) - and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), as well as the relevance of international co-operation in the fight against all forms of terrorism and violent extremism, were among the key issues discussed during the two-day visit. Moreover, the need to ensure human rights-compliant responses in countering all forms of terrorism and terrorist financing, as well as the growing interlinks between terrorist networks and organized crime emerged vividly. Finally, the visit enabled CCT members to better ponder how Artificial Intelligence (AI) can be misused for terrorist purposes.

The Terrorism Threat in Türkiye

At the **Ministry of Interior**, the CCT delegation was briefed by Deputy Minister Münir Karaloğlu on the terrorism threats and challenges faced by Türkiye. The Deputy Minister stressed the many losses Türkiye has suffered as a result of numerous terrorist attacks and underlined how the fragile geopolitical situation of the region contributes to make Türkiye one of the most affected countries by terrorism.

The Ministry of Interior distinguished four different categories of terrorist threats in the country, namely:

1. Threats stemming from so-called "left-wing terrorist organizations", including the DHKP/C (Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front),

¹ <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/GTI-2024-web-290224.pdf>

2. Threats stemming from so-called “separatist terrorist organizations”, including the PKK,
3. Threats stemming from so-called “terrorist organizations abusing religion”, including Daesh, and,
4. Threats stemming from the “Fetullahist Terrorist Organization”².

According to the Ministry, the aim of left-wing terrorist organizations like DHKP/C is to establish a communist regime in Türkiye through an armed uprising. So far, based on the Ministry’s information, 186 civilians and 161 law enforcement officers have been killed by “left-wing terrorist organizations”. The DHKP/C is considered a terrorist organization in Türkiye, the European Union and the United States of America.



The PKK, a Kurdish militant political group and armed guerrilla force historically active across several countries, but now primarily concentrated in the mountainous Kurdish-populated territories of southeastern Türkiye and northern Iraq, is also classified as a terrorist organization by Türkiye, the United States and the European Union. According to the Ministry, PKK is responsible for more than 47 thousand civilian deaths, of which 5,654 just in 2023-2024. The Deputy Minister highlighted Türkiye’s efforts in fighting PKK in the region and condemned PKK’s alleged involvement in organized crime, particularly drug trafficking to Europe. In 2023, 7,723 alleged PKK terrorists were detained and 1,561 were arrested.

Daesh, which is globally recognized as a terrorist organization, aims to exploit political instability for their terrorist purposes, for example in Afghanistan. In Türkiye, so-called “terrorist organizations abusing religion”, including Daesh, have carried out 212 terrorist attacks and killed 358 civilians. In addition to fighting Daesh in active military operations, where Turkish security forces spearhead international efforts,

² The Gülen movement, also known as Hizmet, constitutes a network of religious, educational, and social organizations both in Türkiye and abroad, as well as individuals within the state institutions, initiated and influenced by Religious figure and leader, Fethullah Gülen, an Islamic preacher who lives in a self-imposed exile in the US. In May 2016, Türkiye officially labelled the movement as a terrorist entity, naming it the Fethullah Terrorist Organization (FETÖ), as the Turkish government attributed an attempted coup on July 15, 2016, to the Gülen movement. The initial events of the coup attempt resulted in over 250 casualties, more than 1400 injured persons, as well as the declaration of a state of emergency on July 20, 2016, which remained in effect until July 18, 2018.

Türkiye has set up a Risk Analysis Groups to prevent the transit in Türkiye of Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) travelling to and from conflict zones. In this regard, the Deputy Minister stressed the need for coherent approaches among countries' criminal justice systems in dealing with FTFs. He also highlighted that an emerging, worrisome threat with regards to Daesh is the recruitment online of lone wolves who are vulnerable to online propaganda and capable of conducting terrorist attacks with limited weapons, such as knives. In 2023, 2,978 alleged Daesh terrorists were detained and 740 arrested.

Finally, the Deputy Minister shared lessons learned in Türkiye's struggle against the 2016 coup attempt, which left 253 citizens killed and 2740 wounded. In 2023, 4,053 alleged "FETÖ" terrorists were detained and 1,450 arrested.

He concluded by manifesting Türkiye's readiness to co-operate internationally on countering terrorism, including by contributing to relevant capacity building efforts and by sharing its experience with interested countries.

Members of the CCT delegation thanked Deputy Minister Karaloğlu for his detailed overview and inquired about the Ministry's use of digital technologies in the prevention of terrorist attacks, about the threat level currently posed by Daesh, and about relevant the lessons learned regarding the identification of FTFs. Lastly, President Kauma commended the resilience of Turkish society and expressed continued support for Türkiye in its fight against terrorism and radical extremism.

Counter-Terrorism in Türkiye

At the **Ministry of National Defense**, the OSCE PA delegation met with Deputy Minister Alpaslan Kavaklıoğlu to discuss the role of Türkiye's armed forces in fighting against terrorism. The Deputy Minister explained that Türkiye has been fighting against Daesh on the ground since 2015, where it has "neutralized" approx. 4,500 Daesh terrorists. Moreover, over the years Türkiye has denied access to approx. 10,000 FTFs and deported another 9,500.



The Ministry representatives emphasised that the main objectives of Turkish armed forces in their fight against terrorist groups include the prevention of "terror corridors"

- meaning safe havens for terrorists to move and operate freely - especially in the border regions with Syria and Iraq, the broader stabilization of the region, the protection of Turkish citizens and halting/preventing mass migratory movements.

According to the Ministry, Türkiye conducted its first military operation against Daesh in Syria - “Operation Euphrates Shield (OES)” - in 2016, which was followed by several other operations by the Turkish armed forces in Syria and Iraq, including “Operation Olive Branch (OOB)” against PKK and affiliates in 2018, “Operation Peace Spring (OPS)” against PKK and affiliates in 2019, “Operation Spring Shield (OSS)” in 2020 and the “Claw Series Operations” in Iraq 2019-2020.

Deputy Minister Kavaklıoğlu highlighted Türkiye’s right to self-defense against terrorist groups, but also stressed the importance of “stabilization” activities in Türkiye’s fight against terrorism, for example the provision of humanitarian aid by the Turkish army to the affected population, the facilitation of the safe return and resettlement of displaced populations and refugees, and the rehabilitation of infrastructure, to reduce the negative impact on the civilian population. Türkiye is currently hosting approximately four million Syrians in Türkiye, and aiding five



million Syrians inside Syria. The armed forces’ work to rebuild key infrastructure in Syria, including for housing, education, religious institutions, hospitals and roads, was also duly highlighted.

The CCT delegation expressed their gratitude for the engaging presentation and inquired about emerging threats stemming from the unstable security situation in the region, about

the recruitment of children by terrorist organizations, and about the economic cost of Türkiye’s counter-terrorism efforts. In response to the latter, the Ministry confirmed that the cost of Türkiye’s countering terrorism efforts is indeed very high, as its armed forces are not just defending Türkiye, but the entire NATO region.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism

At the **Ministry of Treasury and Finance**, the CCT delegation met with Deputy Minister İsmail İlhan Hatipoğlu, who provided an overview of Türkiye’s extensive experience in combating the financing of terrorism. During the meeting, it was repeatedly stressed that effective cross-border co-operation is key in combating the financing of terrorism, which, in turn, is imperative to the overall fight against terrorism.

The Ministry's division responsible for combating terrorist financing is the Financial Crimes Investigation Board (MASAK). The Head of MASAK stressed that Türkiye is faced with many different terrorist groups which employ different means for financing their activities, which makes the work of MASAK, and especially its data collection efforts, indispensable to Türkiye's counter-terrorism work.

MASAK combats the financing of terrorism by 1) collecting, analyzing and evaluating data, including criminal complaints, seizure proposals and financial intelligence; 2) supervising legally obliged parties, including banks and intermediary institutions, such as insurance companies and crypto asset service providers; 3) initiating administrative measures and targeted financial sanctions, including administrative fines, suspension of financial transactions and asset freezing; 4) coordinating the Board for Combating Financial Crimes, the Asset Freezing Evaluation Commission and the Audit and Cooperation Commission; 5) facilitating international information exchange, through its membership in the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and EGMONT Secure Web.



In 2023, MASAK received 601,555 suspicious transaction reports, out of which 4,037 reports were related to terrorist financing activities. In the years 2021- 2023, domestic asset freezing decisions were enforced for 657 "FETÖ" real or legal persons, 274 PKK real or legal persons and 265 DAESH, AL-QAIDAH and other affiliate real or legal persons.

Major terrorist financing threats emphasized by the ministry included the alleged involvement of PKK in organized crime to finance their terrorist activities and the growing use of crypto assets by Daesh. A key challenge voiced by the ministry in this context is the lack of effective international co-operation, which can be attributed to numerous reasons. Sometimes, for example, the terrorist organization for which an international request is made is not recognized as such by the foreign authority/country.

The CCT members commended the Deputy Minister and MASAK representatives for their considerable efforts and further inquired about key challenges to international co-operation, for instance in the context of asset freezing.

Türkiye's Counter-Terrorism Legislation

At the **Ministry of Justice**, the OSCE PA delegation met with Deputy Minister Hurşit Yıldırım and several other high-ranking officials. Deputy Minister Yıldırım stressed that terrorism is one of the biggest threats to international peace and security and that international co-operation is of utmost importance in the fight against terrorism.

To address this threat, Türkiye has progressively developed a rather comprehensive counter-terrorism legal framework, that, *inter alia*, defines the acts which - if perpetrated - classify someone as a member of a terrorist organization.



Besides the Counter-Terrorism Law No. 3713 of 1991 - which is the primary legal text addressing terrorism in Türkiye - Türkiye has since adopted and amended several more specific laws, for example the Law on the Prevention of Financing Terrorism (2013) and the Law on Compensation of Damages

Arising from Terrorism and Combating Terrorism (2004).

Deputy Minister Yıldırım noted that subsequent reforms of Türkiye's counter-terrorism legislation have steadily strengthened human rights considerations. Further, he stressed that Türkiye is a founding member of the Council of Europe and that, accordingly, due process is guaranteed throughout legal proceedings, including through the right to appeal, right to a legal council and right against self-incrimination, as well as through principles such as the legality of punishment and the presumption of innocence. In this context, the challenge of striking the right balance between upholding the human rights of all individuals and effectively countering terrorist organisations, especially in the technological sphere, was duly emphasised.

The Ministry also briefed about Türkiye's prison reform, which introduced different categories of prisons with different levels of security for different types of offenders. Most terrorist offenders are incarcerated in high-security prisons. The maximum sentence for terror-related offences is aggravated life imprisonment, to which approx. 1,500 terrorists have been sentenced.

The ministry finally briefed CCT members about its special training programs for prisons' personnel, including for those dealing with convicted terrorists, and various de-radicalization programs for inmates.

In closing, the CCT members thanked the Ministry’s representatives for the detailed presentations and further inquired about how Türkiye is safeguarding human rights in counter-terrorism investigations.

International Cooperation in Counter-Terrorism

At the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, the CCT delegation met with Deputy Minister Mehmet Kemal Bozay, who briefed members about the security challenges stemming from Türkiye’s eastern borders, including the high number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Syria, and of FTFs in Türkiye.

The Ministry’s Director General of Research and Security Affairs, Ms. Fatma Ceren Yazgan, noted that political will is a key prerequisite to effectively fight terrorism internationally, for instance in the context of FTFs. Unfortunately, increasingly polarised electoral campaigns make long-term political commitments in this field rather elusive. It was also noted that many countries in the region do not yet have the appropriate legal framework to repatriate FTFs and their families to the respective home countries.

In seeking greater allied support in its counter-terrorism efforts against PKK in northern Syria, Ms. Yazgan underlined the need for greater co-operation in this context. Finally, she emphasized how armed conflict prevention and combating transnational organized crime are mutually reinforcing goals to counter terrorism by breaking up self-supplying terrorist networks.



The CCT delegation thanked the Ministry’s representatives for the interesting discussion and inquired about the complex geopolitical situation in the region, and how it affects the terrorism threat in Türkiye.

Terrorism and Artificial Intelligence

At the **Ankara Social Science University**, the CCT delegation had the opportunity to exchange views on one of the Committee’s focus topics of this year - Artificial

Intelligence (AI) and terrorism - with three renowned academics, Prof. Dr. Murat Yeşiltaş, Prof. Dr. Giray Sadık, and Doç. Dr. Erman Akıllı. A key takeaway of the fruitful discussion was that international terrorism is transforming significantly, with



terrorists employing new instruments and technologies to pursue their goals. While nation states still possess a strategic advance in the access to new technologies, terrorists are starting to make greater use of them as well, including AI, for example for the distribution and translation of propaganda. The more technologically advanced terrorist organizations become, the

lower is the threshold for a terrorist attack.

As terrorism is always evolving, so is counter-terrorism, with new technologies offering valid alternatives to more traditional security/military approaches to fight terrorism and violent extremism. AI, for instance, can help prevent terrorist attacks by analyzing vast amounts of data, revealing patterns online beyond human capacity, and pioneering innovative methods for detecting potential threats.

Members briefly introduced the draft resolution on AI and counter terrorism that the Committee will present at the OSCE PA Annual Session in Bucharest. Turkish experts welcomed the CCT focus on AI, and underlined the need to improve the technological literacy of the population and to build trust among citizens, as terrorists exploit planted distrust in state authorities. It was also stressed that the balance between over- and under-regulation in this area is delicate, as is the involvement of the private sector. Finally, all interlocutors concurred that policy action on this topic is imperative and must be multilateral, bringing the OSCE PA to the forefront of this emerging issue.

Annex 1: List of Participants

OSCE PA Member of Delegation

Title	First name	Surname	Country	Job title
Mr.	Reinhold	Lopatka	Austria	Chair of the CCT
Mr.	Kamil	Aydin	Türkiye	Vice-Chair of the CCT
Ms.	Pia	Kauma	Finland	Member of the CCT
Mr.	Emanuele	Loperfido	Italy	Member of the CCT
Ms.	Paula	Cardoso	Portugal	Member of the CCT
Mr.	Sverre	Myrli	Norway	Member of the CCT
Mr.	Ricardo	Tarno	Spain	Member of the CCT
Ms.	Madeleine	Van Toorenburg	The Netherlands	Member of the CCT

Staff of Delegation

Title	First name	Surname	Country	Job title
Ms.	Nadine	Gabron	Austria	Advisor - Parliament of Austria
Ms.	Ana	Isidoro	Portugal	Advisor - Parliament of Portugal
Mr.	Juho	Takkunen	Finland	Advisor - Parliament of Finland
Ms.	Ecem	Danik Gökçe	Türkiye	Secretary of Turkish Delegation
Ms.	Tugçe	Okumus	Türkiye	Staff of Turkish Delegation

OSCE PA Secretariat

Title	First name	Surname	Job title
Mr.	Marco	Bonabello	Senior Advisor
Ms.	Pauline	Hennings	Research Fellow
Mr.	Tim	Knoblau	Senior Programme and Administrative Officer

Annex 2: Press Release



ANKARA, 7 May 2024 – Members of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly’s Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism (CCT), led by President Pia Kauma (Finland) and Committee Chair Reinhold Lopatka (Austria), have been in Ankara this week to assess regional challenges, discuss the Turkish experience in fighting violent extremism, and boost

international co-operation on counter-terrorism.

During the two-day official visit, the OSCE PA delegation met with high-level representatives of the government and parliament, as well as experts in the field of counter-terrorism. Following meetings at the Turkish Parliament, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Treasury and Finance, Ministry of Justice, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the OSCE PA delegates attended a Round-Table on Counterterrorism and Artificial Intelligence which included academics from leading Turkish universities. They also met with the Turkish Delegation to the OSCE PA, led by Selami Altınok.

Commending Türkiye’s counter-terrorism work, the OSCE parliamentarians noted that Türkiye is the country most affected by terrorism in the OSCE region, and that there is much to gain from learning about the Turkish experience and exploring ways to build synergies in this field. The delegates expressed support for Ankara in the struggle against terrorism and noted in particular their solidarity for the terrorist bombing attack targeting the Ministry of Interior on 1 October 2023.

“The current volatile geopolitical context, including the situation in the Middle East, is having profound impacts on all of our countries and in some cases may be fueling violent extremism,” President Kauma said. “Türkiye is at the forefront of countering this threat and therefore it is important that we learn as much as we can from their experiences. International co-operation is crucial in preventing and combating terrorism, with increasing numbers of young people and even young girls getting recruited into terrorist groups.”

CCT Chair Lopatka underlined that Türkiye’s resilience against terrorism and prominent role in combating terrorist organizations like Daesh serve as practical examples for OSCE states in effectively addressing terrorist threats across the region. He also expressed profound solidarity with all the Turkish victims and survivors of terrorism and heartfelt condolences to their families. “This week’s visit of the OSCE PA’s Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism has reaffirmed our determination to remain united in preventing and countering terrorism through increased international co-operation, as well as through human rights-centered and gender-sensitive approaches at all levels,” he concluded.

“Artificial intelligence is transforming the security and radicalization landscape in the OSCE area and requires operational frameworks that are fit for purpose,” added Kamil Aydin, a member of the Turkish OSCE PA delegation and Vice-Chair of the CCT. “In our joint fight against terrorism, new technologies such as artificial intelligence can be potent allies, for instance in identifying hidden patterns that can help prevent attacks. AI development, deployment and utilization should reflect stringent ethical considerations and be fully subject to the rule of law and human control,” he concluded. The CCT intends to submit its policy proposals in this context at the upcoming OSCE PA Annual Session in Bucharest through a dedicated resolution.

In addition to Aydin, Kauma and Lopatka, the delegation included Emanuele Loperfido (Italy), Paula Cardoso (Portugal) Sverre Myrli (Norway), Ricardo Tarno (Spain), and Madeleine Van Toorenburg (The Netherlands).