

As Turkey gathers together, Gülen is the biggest loser of the coup

İBRAHİM KALIN @ikalın1

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The bloody coup attempt on July 15 brought the people of Turkey together in surprising and promising ways. Contrary to the expectations of some, it did not lead to a political and/or economic crisis. Rather, it created a new sense of national unity and political consensus. The biggest rally in the history of the country, attended by millions in Istanbul's Yenikapı district and joined by millions across Turkey, is a clear indication of this new social and political consensus.

The new consensus, displayed so powerfully at the Aug. 7 rally, is based on the principles of merit, transparency and accountability against all attempts to infiltrate state institutions. Regardless of one's political views, everyone in Turkey is united in establishing these principles as the foundational elements of a healthy and well-functioning democracy. There is also wide consensus that Fethullah Gülen and his followers violated and brutalized these principles over the years in order to place their people in every critical position of the state. They stole state exam questions and gave them to their devout followers; they fabricated evidence to get rid of their opponents in the military, the police and the judiciary, and they leaked documents to the media and ran smear campaigns to vilify and defame their rivals.

Since everyone has paid a price during the Gülenist Terror Organization's (FETÖ) heyday in Turkey especially between 2008 and 2013, the general mood is one of "enough is enough". People demand merit-based, transparent and accountable governance, one that will serve the people and the country and not the interest of a particular group and/or deranged imam. People demand the end to the FETÖ nightmare that destroyed so many innocent lives over the last six years to seven years. The government is determined to respond to this demand and has the support of the people.

In this new process, the biggest loser is certainly Gülen and his global network known as FETÖ in Turkey. With the coup attempt, Gülen has lost everything, including members, schools, companies, money and more importantly, support, credibility and respect. He and his followers may have thought of taking over the country through a military coup and demonization of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, but the greatest mistake of his life turned out to be an opportunity for Turkey, whereby the entire country came together in unity and solidarity against him and his criminal network.

The Aug. 7 rally was not only the largest in numbers of attendees, but also in its symbolism. It brought together President Erdoğan, Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım and opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) Chairman Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu and Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) Chairman Devlet Bahçeli along with members of various political parties. All the leaders gave similar messages of unity against the Gülenist coup attempt and criminal, immoral tactics to take power at all costs.

This new spirit is critical for the future of Turkey's democracy as it deals with the process of getting rid of Gülenist infiltration from all state institutions. Gülen and his people have already been indicted in people's minds and conscience. The state will follow suit.

Seeing his total demise and destruction in Turkey, Gülen will now try to use all of his resources and firepower to organize his group outside Turkey and seek to strike again with his usual tactics of spending money, running smear campaigns and basically allying himself with anyone who has a score to settle with Erdoğan. The publicity he has gotten in the Western media since July 15 should be seen in this context. His self-positioning as a moderate alternative to religious radicalism has no credibility in Turkey or the rest of the Muslim world. It is a strategy he uses to win the support of the West. But such disingenuous claims are bound to fail when they have no trust of Muslims themselves. They only turn Gülen into a stooge and pawn of power-holders around the world.

The Western media's coverage of the July 15 coup attempt over the last three weeks has been far from fair or accurate. It does not reflect the professional and ethical standards of journalism in either news reporting or opinion making. Putting aside the anti-Erdoğan animus that drives some Western journalists, this approach falls short of presenting an accurate picture of the social and political dynamics in Turkey. It also leads to deep suspicions about the credibility of Western media and feeds conspiracy theories, which the Western media then blame on the people in Turkey. It is shameful, to say the least, that some reporting downplayed the magnitude and severity of the bloody coup attempt and instead sought to use the post-coup measures to attack Erdoğan again. It looks like the standards of media accountability are very low when it comes to covering Turkey.

The July 15 coup attempt targeted Turkish democracy and sought to undermine the legitimacy of the elected president and the government. It had just the opposite effect, as Turkey is united more than ever around the principles of legitimacy, transparency and accountability against any and all groups that may seek to subvert them for their own interests.