

Turkey: What Can We Expect After the November 3 Election?



November 14, 2002

Briefing of the
Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe

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The OSCE Secretariat is in Vienna, Austria, where weekly meetings of the participating States' permanent representatives are held. In addition, specialized seminars and meetings are convened in various locations. Periodic consultations are held among Senior Officials, Ministers and Heads of State or Government.

Although the OSCE continues to engage in standard setting in the fields of military security, economic and environmental cooperation, and human rights and humanitarian concerns, the Organization is primarily focused on initiatives designed to prevent, manage and resolve conflict within and among the participating States. The Organization deploys numerous missions and field activities located in Southeastern and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. The website of the OSCE is: <<http://www.osce.org/>>.

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The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, also known as the Helsinki Commission, is a U.S. Government agency created in 1976 to monitor and encourage compliance by the participating States with their OSCE commitments, with a particular emphasis on human rights.

The Commission consists of nine members from the United States Senate, nine members from the House of Representatives, and one member each from the Departments of State, Defense and Commerce. The positions of Chair and Co-Chair rotate between the Senate and House every two years, when a new Congress convenes. A professional staff assists the Commissioners in their work.

In fulfilling its mandate, the Commission gathers and disseminates relevant information to the U.S. Congress and the public by convening hearings, issuing reports that reflect the views of Members of the Commission and/or its staff, and providing details about the activities of the Helsinki process and developments in OSCE participating States.

The Commission also contributes to the formulation and execution of U.S. policy regarding the OSCE, including through Member and staff participation on U.S. Delegations to OSCE meetings. Members of the Commission have regular contact with parliamentarians, government officials, representatives of non-governmental organizations, and private individuals from participating States. The website of the Commission is: <<http://www.csce.gov/>>.

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The briefing was held at 10:00 a.m. in Room 2200, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC, Donald Kursch, Senior Advisor, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, moderating.

Participants: Abdullah Akyuz, President, Turkish Industrialist's and Businessmen's Association, U.S. Representative Office; Sanar Yurdatapan, Musician and Champion of Freedom of Expression; and Jonathan Sugden, Researcher for Turkey, Human Rights Watch.

Mr. KURSCH. Good morning. My name is Donald Kursch. I am the Senior Advisor to the U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe. On behalf of our Commission's Chairman, Senator Campbell, and Co-Chairman, Congressman Chris Smith, I would like to thank you for participating in this briefing on Turkey's post-election future.

The expertise of our witnesses here will be very valuable to us as we develop recommendations for Members of Congress and our Executive Branch for promoting the U.S. partnership with Turkey in the post-election environment. From our perspective, the recent Turkish elections have all the characteristics of what we would describe in the United States as a political earthquake. New political forces, led by Mr. Recep Erdogan's Justice and Development Party [AK Party], have won a decisive victory, while long-term fixtures on the Turkish political scene have been obliged to relinquish political power.

The process in which these changes have taken place appears to be totally consistent with the fundamental principles of democracy that both Turkey and the United States strongly endorse, and that we jointly try to promote in third countries through our common membership in OSCE. Yet the changes are so sweeping that we also feel the need to make a special effort to determine their meaning for Turkey and its future relationship with us. This is why we felt it important to schedule today's briefing as quickly as possible.

We are confident that our future relationship with Turkey will be at least as productive as the relationships of the past. This past relationship has provided a very strong foundation between our nations that we can build upon. Our ties have been tested through half a century of Cold War, as Turkey staunchly defended NATO's southeastern flank, as well as in actual conflict in military operations from the Korean War to peacekeeping activity in the Balkans.

We have great sympathy for Turkey's aspirations to draw closer to European institu-

tions, including its efforts to become a member of the European Union, and are confident that this dynamic will reinforce and not weaken trans-Atlantic ties.

What do the recent changes mean for Turkey and for our most important bilateral relationship, a relationship that may be tested again in view of the crisis we are facing with Iraq? We are confident that the experts who are joining us today will be able to help provide answers to these fundamental questions.

Our panelists will be Mr. Abdullah Akyuz, president of the Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen's Association U.S., perhaps better known by the acronym TUSIAD; Mr. Sanar Yurdatapan, a musician and activist on the issue of freedom and expression; and Mr. Jonathan Sugden, an expert on Turkish affairs with Human Rights Watch.

Following our panelists' presentations, which ideally would be from 7 to 10 minutes in length, I would hope that we can have a lively discussion. Questions from all of you will be most welcome.

If we could start perhaps, Mr. Abdullah Akyuz.

Mr. AKYUZ. Thank you, Chairman, and good morning. I will start with a quick overview of the election results, and then I will briefly touch upon three main areas that are of relevance to our discussions today: E.U. [European Union] and Cyprus, I consider them together; economy; and Iraq, which is more important maybe for the U.S. audience than our European friends.

As the Chairman has just said, November 3 elections had been an important chapter for the future of Turkey. I think it was important, first because of the significance of its outcome, and secondly because of its timing. Upcoming E.U. summit, proposed U.N. Cyprus plan and a possible U.S. operation in Iraq are all contributing to the significance of the timing of these elections.

As you all know, the Justice and Development Party—I will call this party by its Turkish acronym, the AK Party, from now on—which has consistently claimed to be conservative rather than Islamist, received about one-third of the votes and gained two-thirds of the seats in the Parliament. Therefore, after 11 years of coalition government, Turkey is set to have a single-party government with these elections. I think this is the first and most important outcome of the election.

Another interesting figure is about the unrepresented votes. Due to the 10 percent electoral threshold, almost 45 percent of the votes remain unrepresented in the Parliament. Consequently, the government has a great responsibility on its shoulders in seeking reconciliation with the opposition both in and out of the Parliament, especially on major issues such as E.U., Iraq and others.

Thirdly, as again the Chairman has pointed out, this election outcome also means a radical overhaul in the Turkish political scene. All three parties of the coalition government were left out of the Parliament, along with all the others except for the People's Republican Party [CP], which became the distant second.

In the wake of the elections, many leaders declared their decisions to abandon their leadership positions. Now, 88 percent of the Parliament is composed of newcomers, and this fact represents the highest renewal rate since 1950.

These elections were not about Islam or whether or not Turkey would turn its back to a long history of recognized modernization and secularization. Rather, it was a sign of a strong distrust and resentment toward the current politicians to put an end to the economic and political crises.

Again, one confusing outcome of the elections is that the leader of the winning party,

the AK Party, Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, was not able to participate in the election and, consequently, he cannot become prime minister after the election. The party seems to handle the situation cautiously and the response of the establishment seems to ease concerns about the tension over this matter. However, in these days we see that there is an ongoing debate and search to resolve this issue in the short run.

Now I would like to say a few words on the Turkey–E.U. relations.

Again, you would all recall, with the declaration of Turkey as an official candidate in the Helsinki Summit in December 1999, a new dimension has been opened in Turkey–E.U. relations. Turkey has made several breathtaking steps since 1999 to fulfill the Copenhagen criteria that represent common democratic values shared by all European countries. There are still some shortcomings, but most of them are more technical than of substance after all these reforms.

I do not want to go into the details, but if there will be questions, we can talk all these reforms. We also have a publication on the table outside, a yellow book, which has the details of all these reform areas.

The political criteria of the E.U.—Copenhagen criteria—mean more than a mere prerequisite to start negotiations with the E.U. Indeed, they overlap with the demands and accords by various circles and organizations in Turkey for enhancing democratization and establishment of the rule of law. TUSIAD and many other NGOs have always supported these efforts leading to political and economic restructuring in the country. Unlike the Nationalist Action Party [NAP], which is now out of the Parliament, the AK Party has been a supporter of Turkey’s E.U. vocation since its foundation.

The very first statement coming from Erdogan following the electoral victory was about the E.U. Erdogan said, for example, that his party would consider Turkey’s bid to join the E.U. as its top priority, and he has been acting accordingly since the beginning of last week.

We think, as TUSIAD, Turkey’s progress along the full E.U. membership is highly critical at this juncture. We are well aware of the fact that the United States has always been supportive and vocal in this process. We would like to see the United States to keep reminding our European friends of the importance of a positive assessment of Turkey’s achievements in the Copenhagen summit next month.

Another issue that taxes E.U.–Turkey relations is Cyprus. This is an issue of great importance for the United States as well, as it embodies implications for maintaining stability, particularly in the Eastern Mediterranean. Erdogan’s first statements about the relevance of Belgium and Swiss models in Cyprus created confusion among policy circles in Turkey and outside Turkey, but he later made some corrections and compromised with the established set of policies in many respects. At least we can argue that the AK Party understands the urgency and importance of finding a solution in the island.

As most of you know, the United Nations issued a new Cyprus peace plan Monday envisioning a unified island of Greek and Turkish Cyprus with a common government encompassing two component states along the lines of the Swiss model.

Both the Turkish and Greek Cypriot leaders stated that they would consider the plan in a positive way. Again, the first reactions coming from both Greece and Turkey have been very positive.

Erdogan’s first reaction to the proposed plan has been very positive too. He will soon be meeting with Greek Prime Minister Simitis to find a common ground before the E.U. summit in December.

Now I would like to say a few words about the economy, which was the reason—the main reason—opening the way for the AK Party’s victory. We all know that the sharp decline in economic output, sharp decline in per capita incomes, and a sharp increase in the rate of unemployment over the course of 1991, has been the determining factor in the AK Party’s victory.

We at TUSIAD believe that the current IMF-backed economic program should be fully implemented to stabilize the economy and achieve the projected targets. I am aware of the fact that there are several contradicting objectives here, the objective of the IMF-backed stabilization program and the sufferings of many in the country. But we also believe that there are ways of opening the way for increased growth while maintaining the main pillars of the stabilization program, because the most difficult part of the program has been implemented and I think the AK Party is in a very fortunate position in taking the power toward the end of this difficult period in terms of the implementation of the program. So they will be reaping the benefits of this program more than causing further suffering among millions. So in that sense, we believe that this is a very sensitive time and we hope that the government will be able to manage this successfully.

Again, Erdogan, right after the elections, pledged that his party would be supportive of the IMF-backed stabilization program. However, we have also heard from other party leaders that they are under enormous pressure from their constituents about the relaxation of the program to open the way for further growth. How the AK Party is going to manage this remains to be seen again. That will be a critical test for this party in the coming months.

On Iraq, almost all the Turkish circles have been trying to shift the focus on the aftermath of the operation in Iraq. We are aware of the fact that the focus in the United States has been on ousting Saddam, but not what is going to come next. As a country neighboring this difficult and problematic country, we think that what is going to come afterward is more important for not only Turkey but for the people of Iraq and for the people of the region. We have been trying to voice our concerns regarding the importance of preparation for the aftermath of this operation. We are quite sure that this operation will severely harm Turkey’s economy. We had seen this 11 years ago, and we have all the figures. They have been published recently, and we can easily say that we are going to see more or less the same economic implications in this operation.

This cost is estimated to be around \$15 billion to \$20 billion in 2003 alone. If this is going to take longer and if the coverage of the operation is going to be broader, these costs are likely to increase over the course of time.

The political implications are equally important. Turkey fears that a U.S. operation relying on Iraqi Kurds might lead to an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq, an area that currently enjoys an autonomous status.

This, in turn, could ignite Kurdish secessionist movements within Turkey, something over which many circles are extremely worried, especially those who still have memories of the 15-year-long war in southeastern Turkey.

Regarding the question of whether an AK Party government would be supportive of a U.S. military operation in Iraq, the response of Abdullah Gul, a leading figure in the party, is quite illustrative. “We will ask the military,” he said. So it appears that their policy will be determined by the establishment and will not differ significantly from the current position of the Turkish military and Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

One thing that is clear is that Turkey will need economic support, particularly in the short term, to recover from the negative effects of the Iraqi operation, as the restructur-

ing of Iraq will not start in the immediate period following the operation.

This is, again, in response to the arguments that say Turkey would benefit greatly from the opening of new markets in Iraq, the stability in Iraq. Nevertheless, we do not think that will happen soon, so in case this operation is going to take place, Turkey should be compensated for the immediate losses that will occur.

I was in Belgium and France last week, and I have talked to several people from the tourism industry, and they say that even now, because of the fear of this operation, many reservations have been canceled in the tourism area, which is an important sector in the Turkish economy. It represents about 10 percent of the Turkish economy.

Chairman, I will finish with some concluding remarks about the prospects and risks that are awaiting us. How the AK Party, and particularly its leadership, will handle a sweeping victory and how the establishment will respond to this will be the critical steps in the coming months and years.

The state bureaucracy, and primarily the military, will be watching carefully over every step the government takes. Therefore, it will not be naive to claim that the AK Party will overall follow established rules in both major domestic issues and foreign policy.

However, a wait-and-see attitude is likely to prevail until the concerns about the AK Party's and Erdogan's new identities or visions are illuminated. I believe that the previous experience of the Welfare Party, which is the predecessor of the AK Party in a way, and its coalition with the True Path Party in 1996 and 1997, has taught important lessons to both pro-Islamist and the secular establishment. Therefore, I expect that the same mistakes and confrontations will not be repeated this time.

There is a good chance that a single-party government in Turkey will become successful and bring the long-awaited political stability to the country. The AK Party leaders and spokesmen are careful to emphasize that they will seek consensus with the opposition parties and civil society institutions before introducing any major policy.

Again, given the situation I explained in my introduction, I think this dialogue will be very important for not only the country, but the success of the AK Party government.

The new government faces a dilemma between the need to implement the IMF program and at the same time to address demands coming from impoverished groups, in terms of unemployment and poverty. This creates a risk of populist policies.

Lastly, we think that this represents—the AK Party's victory—a golden opportunity to show that Turkey can indeed be the role model in the Middle East and prove the compatibility of Islam and democracy if the AK Party can carry out the successful agenda and advance Turkey's E.U. bid with the support of all sectors of the society, as well as the secular establishment.

I will stop here, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Mr. KURSCH. Thank you. Thank you very much for a very comprehensive presentation.

Mr. Yurdatapan?

Mr. YURDATAPAN. It's very good that Mr. Akyuz is here and he made a good summary to you about the political situation, because otherwise I might disappoint you. I'm not a politician and I don't like to speak on that political level. I'm a human rights activist, and mainly on freedom of expression theme.

So I was also ready that a person coming from Turkey where after elections I would face many questions, like: Will Turkey be an Islam country? Is there danger of being like Iran or Algeria? Or questions like that. So I have very short answers to them. I keep them to the end of my speech.

And I want to give you a brief picture about freedom of expression especially in Turkey, because we believe it is the key for all other closed doors, because those doors could be kept closed just because we did not have this key. This is why, after a long struggle about many freedoms, I thought that I must concentrate on freedom of expression.

By way of background: during the course of time, many efforts were taken in Turkey for larger freedom of expression. Many things have been done, but nothing has changed. And there was a great disappointment, everybody thought that whatever we do, the state does not care. We have a Turkish expression that “the words are coming in one ear and going out the other.”

In 1995, our famous writer, Yasar Kemal, was invited to the State Security Court of Istanbul to be questioned about an article he wrote to the German magazine, *Der Spiegel*. That was the last straw, I believe. Many intellectuals went there to support him, and with a signature campaign, a new step was begun. We decided to use the weapon of civil disobedience to get a result to force the state to make a change, then to declare that if Yasar Kemal is a criminal, then we would be criminals too.

The weapon we used is a very beautiful article in Turkish Penal Code, Article 162. The text is something like this: Republishing any article which is a crime commits a new crime, and the publisher must be sentenced equally as the author. See what it means: If a crazy man comes out and would like to say things that the Turkish state would not like, he will not be able to publish them.

The rest of the article goes in a better way. It says that even if the publisher states that he or she disagrees with the content of the thing originally published, he is still responsible.

This is a very good article, and now we decided to use it as a boomerang. With this campaign in that year, over 1,000 people put their names as the collective publishers of our book, *Freedom of Thought in Turkey*, which came out in 1995. And in this book we had 10 different articles: all banned articles, including Yasar Kemal’s article, and also including Dr. Ismail Besikci—he was a very famous prisoner of conscience—about the Kurdish problem. And also Mrs. Leyla Zana and her friends, the MPs who are still in prison—the former Kurdish MPs.

So we published this book and went to the state prosecutor and gave a copy to him: “Please do your duty; you have to open a case against us.” And among those 1,080 people there were very, very famous writers, journalists, artists, trade unionists, people from every branch. So the case should be opened. And we were hoping that they would have to change the legislation, because it’s impossible to put all these well-known people all together into prison. It would be a big scandal.

What has happened? Nothing. The state chose the third way and broke their own legislation, own rules, using some arbitrary steps. They never changed the legislation, nor put those people into prison. But from time to time—every two and a half or three years, they make one little amendment—we call them suspension laws, which effectively halt these embarrassing cases.

This means that all the trials with respect to crimes committed via media and so on will be suspended for three years. This means that if within three years you commit a similar crime then you’ll serve both sentences. But if not, then you will be OK. It is just like a Damocles’ sword above our heads. But for us, it meant that we’d been turned back to the start point just like in the game Monopoly.

This has happened two or three times. So we changed the tactic. Instead of making big books like that we started publishing small, tiny things, like this one here: this is one

of our booklets. Every week, every Wednesday, we published one of them, with up to five publishers at most, and we had a rendezvous with the State Security Court prosecutor and we were forcing him to open the cases.

Many cases were opened, many sentences came, and then once again the same story — turned back to the beginning. Then when this has happened two times in the year 2000, we published all the articles again in this book here. This time there were not so many publishers, but they were very important people.

Among them were three presidents of three trade union confederations, president of the Human Rights Association, president of Mazlumder, a similar organization, from the Islamic side of society, the president of the Turkish Writer's Union and the president of another writer's union that represent Islamic writers.

Well, then, acquittals came this time. But this should be impossible: you remember the article of the criminal code that I mentioned? We applied to the court of appeals. We appealed and now there are three cases waiting at the European Human Rights Court.

I know that it sounds really funny to appeal when you've been acquitted, but we believe that this is another form of violating the right of fair trial with arbitrary practices.

So, we're in such a position that things are going on and now the government has changed. Mr. Erdogan himself has been on our records with his so-called crime which we have shared by reprinting four times. In fact, I am being tried for repeating his so-called crime.

Maybe I have to remind you what his crime was. In one of his speeches, he repeated a verse of a poem which is taught to little children, even in primary schools. And under Article 312 of the Criminal Code he's been sentenced.

Later on, in the last [reform] package, this article was amended and the thing he has done, violating something with only speaking—is no longer a crime. You have to do something concrete; this is in new form.

But yet, the actual practice of the state is different. First he applied to courts that sentenced him and the same court gave a decision, yes, OK, now it should be erased from the files.

But all of a sudden the chief prosecutor of the supreme court directly brought the subject in front of the court. The court gave a different decision, so he's not a criminal at the moment but still his right to stand for election was taken from his hands.

Let me jump again to the point: since he has faced the same thing we hope that some changes, at least in this field, should take place.

As I told you, during those years we have participated the crimes of all sort of people, from all different parts of society. Among them were some people who were talking about the Kurdish problem, or in some of them there were Islamic writers: Even criticizing Islam is accepted by some articles as insulting the religion. There are such criminals, too. We included all kinds of media: every type, songs, and even caricatures.

Before this, the Islamic side of society was only taking care of their own freedoms not the others. But the ice between us melted a little bit and we came to see that we have to do many things together for our collective rights, mainly freedom of expression.

The new campaign we have started is called Opposites Side by Side. There are many different groups that their rights are violated at the same time, but each group is only concerned on their own rights and, unfortunately, I have to say that from time to time they are silently happy because their opposite's rights are violated. But it is possible to change it backward, so that the opposites should come side by side and start doing collec-

tive things for their collective rights.

And as a first step, I found among my opposites the best one, and this gentleman's name is Abdurrahman Dilipak. He's a well-known Islamic writer and column writer, and a journalist, too, a very charismatic person. He criticized all the Islamic parties or other groups, but he's loved by all Islamic society in Turkey. So they cannot do anything to him.

OK. He's my best opposite. We came together and made a declaration to other groups, all groups. And as a first step, for example, we wrote this book here together, around 12 subjects, including whether God exists or not, and politics, women, children problems, chauvinism, everything. We wrote different articles; he wrote and I wrote. We didn't even read what the other wrote, so that we would not try to answer the other side. A third person helped us to make the balance.

And then, this book came out. On this side you read my ideas. And you turn it upside down and on that side, you can read his. And there are links at the bottom of each chapter if you're reading the green side, and want to see red ideas you have to go to red side. Well, green is the symbolic color of Islam in Turkey and the red of the left.

Now, for the further steps: as soon as I go back to Turkey we hope that by that time the government will have been established. We will now address the prime minister and the others, so we are planning to make, again, an open letter and ask for some appointments with Mr. Erdogan, the new prime minister, the minister of interior, who will send or not send the policeman to our peaceful demonstration, etc., and minister of exterior, minister of defense, I should say.

Now, what are we hoping to have? Two things. In Turkey, the secular side of the society has been frightened by the Islamic side. Some extremist Islamic words made that result. Also, in the past, the actions of the former religious party. And more than that, the Turkish army all of a sudden one day said, "Wait a minute. We have changed the strategy. Our number one danger is no longer terror, but Islam." And then came all those problems. So we have to put an end to this, too, for our interior peace.

Also for exterior, after the 11th of September in many countries the people started thinking that Islam equals terror. Of course not. And this has been a great big problem for over 3 million of Turkish people living in Europe and other countries, too, and other Muslims. Turkey is a sort of country which is much nearer to Western civilization from many other Islam countries. So we must give a good concrete example to the others.

So this small action has such a meaning, I believe, that if we can succeed in doing something, melting the ice between or among the groups in our society, it can be shown as a good example to the others, some Turkish-speaking countries in Middle Asia or the other countries of the Middle East, we hope.

So this small action has such a meaning, I believe, and if we can succeed in doing something, melting the ice between or among the groups in our society, it can be shown as a good example to the others, some Turkish-speaking countries in Middle Asia or the other countries of the Middle East, we hope.

And let me jump to questions about the last item, let me say: war. In Turkey, if we exclude a very small minority who are hoping to have some gain from that war, believe me the whole society is against the war, mainly because during the last war, the Gulf War, those people have lived the bitter circumstances. First, they saw human tragedy. Kurds in Iraq have been first provoked or encouraged to revolt, but then left alone.

When Saddam attacked them, millions of people came to borders of Turkey. So the people of Turkey really saw on television and journals every day the people living in the

region, that tragedy. And it was also very difficult for Turkey because of our economic problems to do something urgent for them.

And then came the other things: the pipeline was cut and Turkey lost a lot of economic—lost a lot of money for that. This is, I mean, the second reason.

And the third reason, in practice we have seen that if once you close your eyes and ears when your neighbor is bombed and those planes are coming from bases in your country, we will have to live together with Arabs and Kurds after the planes go back. And, of course, we believe that. Let me say that we believe it's easy to understand how they will feel about this. We don't want this, either.

Therefore, first I hope that war will not take place. But if it takes place, I'd like all U.S. administration and all American people know that the people of Turkey, whether they raise their voice or not, in their hearts will feel too bad against these policies.

And one more thing: People of Turkey are not convinced that Saddam was preparing to attack anywhere else.

And of course there are other questions, like who gave that much money and that much arms to Saddam in the past?. That's another question. But it's a too political question. So I just want to erase it from here and turn back my last point here.

OK, we want freedom, interior freedom, and as a key, freedom of expression. And we are not expecting that somebody will come and solve this problem. There is an election in Turkey. I hope that with that unique chance we will have better — we will have the chance to enlarge the frames of freedom of expression, will give us the chance to discuss all other subjects, including war, interior war, Kurdish problem, Islam, in a free base, and it will be better for Turkey and for Middle East and the world, I believe.

Thank you.

Mr. KURSCH. Thank you.

Mr. Sugden?

Mr. SUGDEN. There has been a good deal of mention of the forthcoming Copenhagen summit, and the question of whether Turkey gets its much hoped-for date for the beginning of negotiations. It is increasingly presented by Turkey as a make-or-break date. This may be a bargaining tactic in order to up the chances of a positive response; I do not know.

But in the past year we have seen the accession process really work for human rights, and this is the first time that the relationship between the E.U. and Turkey has worked conclusively and effectively for human rights. For a decade, I have heard journalists say, "Well, surely there is a great deal of leverage from the E.U. angle because we know that Turkey has aspirations in that direction and therefore they'll be surely keen to improve their human rights record for the purposes of pressing their candidacy."

In fact, until now, the relationship produced really nothing in the field of human rights reform. But this year we have seen the abolition of the death penalty, and we have seen the language reforms, and we have seen some smaller improvements on the area of freedom of expression, as well.

The abolition of the death penalty was a very big goal for the human rights lobby. It is a very important goal for Europe to create an execution-free zone. It was politically very difficult for the Turkish Government to achieve. It took courage to do it.

Similarly, for the changes on the language. It was a bold, bold, bold move.

So we feel optimistic. We have seen the fruits of the process this year, and we want to see the reform process continue.

Well, I am talking to you about the E.U. process, and here I am in the United States;

why am I not in Brussels? I have said the same things in Brussels too, but the reason I am here is that the United States has always been seen as perhaps Turkey's strongest ally in the E.U. candidacy process. The United States, for example, was a great help in getting Turkey its customs union in 1996.

This government is new and it is inexperienced. As we have heard, 88 percent of the members of the Parliament are new to Parliament, let alone government. The new administration does not know what sort of cooperation it is going to get from the army. It does not know what sort of cooperation it is going to get from the civil service. But it knows that as a party with a strongly religious discourse, it is being watched very closely by the military.

For these reasons, the new government may not be sufficiently focused on what it has to do before Copenhagen. Because it is a government that feels it is watched, it may feel nervous that any strong and radical steps for reform may provoke a negative response from the state and the army. It may therefore be tempted to try to square the circle between the demand for reform and the military's opposition by supplying more of the cosmetic reforms we have seen so often in the past.

The government wants to produce something to show to the E.U. On the other hand, the interests of the state are very much opposed to radical reform, so the temptation will be strong to produce a shell-like empty reform to give the E.U. something to put in its report.

But this is not going to work this time. It is going to have to produce some very substantial steps between now and December if it wants to establish real confidence as it goes in toward the summit. And in what areas should it move? Well, Mr. Verheugen, who is the commissioner for enlargement of the E.U., has mentioned two points on which he expects to see progress. One is torture. He also said that he expected to see the release of the four Kurdish parliamentarians who are currently in prison: Leyla Zana, Orhan Dogan, Hatip Dicle and Selim Sadak.

First, on the question on torture, there is something that the Turkish Government can do very quickly. There is still systematic and widespread torture in Turkey. Human Rights Watch did some research earlier this year and we found that between February and July, there were 30 cases involving 50 victims in various parts of the country. Other research done by Amnesty International produced a similar number of cases and a similar number of victims. So it is clear that, unfortunately, torture continues.

But there is a way of stopping it, and that is to ensure that all detainees are given access to legal counsel from the first moment of their detention.

When I was covering torture in Turkey in the mid-1990s, we saw upwards of 40 deaths in custody in 1994. In the last two years there have been no proven cases of death in custody. The dramatic fall was reduced by changes in 1997 that shortened the detention period and improved access to legal counsel. These are effective methods of tackling this problem.

I want the government to feel confident that if it ensures access to legal counsel to all detainees, it will see a change, that this will feed through as a further reduction in allegations of torture. It will finally rid itself of the label of a torturing state. This is a change that is going to be effective.

Now, the outgoing justice minister produced a draft law that would provide access across the board for all detainees to legal counsel. At the moment, that access can and is legally held for the first 48 hours for political detainees. In practice, we observed that no

other detainees had access to legal counsel either.

So the justice minister submitted this draft law to the prime minister's office with a view to the law being legislated as soon as possible.

Human Rights Watch would like to see this draft made law as the very first action of the new government. I have been worried that, as a new and inexperienced government, newly taking power it may take its eye off the ball. We want this to be action item number one on the agenda of the government.

The second issue Mr. Verheugen mentioned was the release of the four DEP Parliamentarians. This would be a very, very difficult task for the government between now and December and in fact, it is not the proper role of the government to do this. It is for a court to review the original judgment and come to a new decision. Human Rights Watch welcomed the August reforms and praised them very highly. One of the measures that it put into place was that any person who suffered a judicial abuse that had been taken to appeal at the European Court of Human Rights, and where the European Court of Human Rights found in favor of the plaintiff, then that plaintiff can force Turkish courts to review the decision in that case. That, of course, is a valuable reform, because it gives people who have been victims of human rights violations the opportunity to force Turkish courts to review the violating decision.

But unfortunately, there was a provisional article at the end of the law that made it not retrospective. So any person who had suffered an abuse at the hands of the court prior to the passing of the law will not have the right to have it challenged in the Turkish court.

Well, in fact, there is only one significant case that this would apply to, and that is the Parliamentarians. So in effect, what was called the August reform, explicitly and deliberately excluded HADEP parliamentarians from access to review in the Turkish courts of their unfair trial. Because there is no question about it, they were imprisoned after a clearly and grossly unfair trial.

So if the government does want to follow the signposts given by Mr. Verheugen, it is very clear what they should do. Step one should be to enact the very, very positive draft reform that the justice minister has submitted to the prime minister's office. It is a good draft. In fact, it would actually put Turkey, with regard to compliance with the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture, ahead of France, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Portugal and Italy. It would be a new and unaccustomed experience for Turkey to be able to take the high ground on safeguards against torture. This, of course, would put Turkey in a very good position as it is approached Copenhagen by demonstrating a real commitment to combat the continuing practice of torture.

Step two: the government should repeal the provisional article of the August legislation that rules out any remedy for the DEP parliamentarians. They would then be able to force the Turkish courts to reconsider their case. That would be a first step toward fulfilling Mr. Verheugen's second recommendation.

I would like to add a final comment at Human Rights Watch, like other human rights organizations, no doubt, will be watching very closely to see what developments emerge between now and December. And Mr. Akyuz asked that the United States should remind the European Union of the importance of a positive evaluation.

Well, Human Rights Watch also would like to see a positive evaluation. But what we are appealing for is that the United States should also remind its friend Turkey to give us positive steps to report. If the new Turkish Government gives us substantial, concrete and effective reforms, and clear indications that it is going to continue on the reform

program on which it campaigned during the election, then we'll certainly welcome those changes very warmly and very loudly.

Mr. KURSCH. Thank you very much for those specifics. This was very useful.

We have ended the formal presentation part of the briefing, and as I said when we started, we would invite your queries of our panelists here. I will be happy to recognize whoever is brave enough to raise their hand. Otherwise I have—ah, yes? Ah, you are brave.

QUESTIONER. Yonca Payraz Dogan, Voice of America. I have a question to any of the panelists about the question of the question, who is the prime minister going to be in Turkey? And how do you think this should be addressed? If each of you can address this, I would be glad. Thank you.

Mr. YURDATAPAN. I think that at the beginning some of the second-degree people from that party, probably Mr. Abdullah Gul seems to be the prime minister, but everybody will still know that the real prime minister is Mr. Erdogan.

In order to change this formation, there are ways, but I don't know what they can do. I just heard that it's also a possibility that they change the legislation first and then make a new election and then Erdogan takes the seat. But it will cost a lot to make an election. Is it worth it? I don't know. But better than playing a childish game that everybody knows he's the prime minister; somebody else is sitting there. I think.

Mr. AKYUZ. OK. Can I say a few words?

I think most of the support that was shown to the AK Party was primarily going to Mr. Erdogan. I think we should accept the reality that there is a support for this leader of the party.

There are some legal problems right now that prevent him from becoming a prime minister. But I think the right step, the right move would be making these changes as soon as possible, so that he becomes the leader of his party. So that instead of managing the party from behind the doors, he should be openly leading his party. He should also bear the responsibility. I mean, he cannot manage the party without being the responsible leader.

So whether this can be done or not, we will see. But I think that is the way it should be.

Mr. SUGDEN. I do not have a view on this particular topic. I will be really very vigilant to see who he picks for other members of the cabinet. What we would like to see are a justice minister and a interior minister who are very strongly committed to a rights program. I must say that they did run a rights-based campaign. So we would like to see people with a history of supporting and working for human rights in the justice ministry and in the interior ministry.

Mr. YURDATAPAN. We have a Turkish expression: We say, one crazy man throws a stone into a well, and 40 clever men cannot take it out again. Look at the funny position we are in at the moment.

There is one more possibility. If somebody unknown applies to election board in some way, because you remember what the chief prosecutor has done. He is totally wrong. He is not authorized to bring such a subject directly by himself. Only a case should be opened or judgment should come from a court, and then he could do that. He could directly take the subject to the high court. In Turkish legislation, this should be impossible. But he has done this.

I would like to cancel this decision so that OK, Erdogan could be elected since he took lots of votes because his name was in the first line in Istanbul. So maybe the ...

Mr. AKYUZ. Higher election board.

Mr. YURDATAPAN. ...the Higher Election Board should change the decision again. And one of the Istanbul MPs should fall and he'll take his place. There are many funny possibilities there, but one way or the other, he is the real prime minister now.

QUESTIONER. Would any of the panelists like to address the 10 percent threshold system and how that should be handled in the future government?

Mr. AKYUZ. Actually, the main reason of having this 10 percent threshold in the Turkish election system has been promoting consolidation of votes and bringing stability into the political system. But for some reason until this election we always had this 10 percent threshold, at least since 1980, I do not know the history before, but it did not bring much stability to the Turkish election system since at least 1991, after Ozal, and this time it has brought stability. But at the same time, as I said in my presentation, 45 percent of the votes have remained outside the Parliament. So this creates a lot of problems and there are many views, many political opinions that are not represented in the Parliament.

So there are again discussions now—and before the elections also—to reduce it to a lower level, say 5 percent, 7 percent. Of course, this can be discussed, but then if we do that then again we will face this problem of instability and, unfortunately, unlike the United States, we do not have this two-party and relatively stable system by nature, but through these rules we are trying to promote the stability.

But this is again open to, I think, discussions whether we should lower it to have more representation but at the same time to face more likelihood of having instability after the elections.

Mr. YURDATAPAN. I have to say to you, first, I am also a German citizen. I had to live in Germany for 12 years as a political exile. And in Germany there is a 5 percent threshold, and from time to time the same dangers appears there. A party, this could also be the Green Party, but this has happened one time to FDP in, I think, '95 and they could not get into Parliament. This was not good even in such a society, but in Turkey this gives very bad results.

This is the third time, I think, that the voice of the Kurdish people could not be reflected in the Parliament. This is something too bad for us if we do not allow them, now that's the problem. Of course, if they gained more 10 percent then maybe we would be discussing different things at this moment. But if we do not allow this voice to take part in Parliament, then what choice do we offer them? To take weapons again in their hands? Yes, there's a lot to do to solve the Kurdish problem, really from its origin. If we do not do that maybe PKK the goes, but QKK may come, or the RKK may come after that, and blood may be shed once again.

So we have to really change this system.

Again I remind you of the story of the one crazy man and the forty clever ones. Well, in 1985 the crazies put this in place and that was the military junta. But the other very clever men who came after benefited from This bad rule, so nobody changed it. But all of them lost their seats now, and they should take a lesson from that.

For a country like Turkey, we believe that each different voice should be reflected in Parliaments so that we can have interior peace.

QUESTIONER. Asli Gurkan, TUSIAD. I was wondering how closely do you work with the civil society groups in Turkey in getting your demands about torture and about legal counsel, so they can be the means to also get their demands to the state?

Mr. SUGDEN. I would just like to just add something, if I may, on the question of the

barrier or the election process. I did some monitoring of the last election and I had a colleague who was in Istanbul who was very happy with what she saw there, and I traveled through some villages in the southeast.

Well, whatever the barrier is, it is very important that people feel at the end of Election Day that they've had a fair day at the polls with their right to a secret vote respected.

A lot of the people that I met during my tour around various villages in the southeast told me that although they felt that it was much better than the 1999 vote, they still did not feel they'd had their fair and secret day at the polls.

There was straightforward intimidation by the local authority forces, but also by local tribal leaders, as well.

Clearly there is room for technical improvement, not just in the system of voting but on the practical arrangements for voting as well. I mean, it is a very extraordinary experience to be on a tiny village way up on the side of a mountain, and at the end of the day's voting to see the doors closed and the votes to be counted by five state-appointed members of the voting committee, with a gendarmerie officer wandering around the voting room. He wasn't interfering in any way but it was a, you know, it was an arrangement that was just dreadfully open to abuse.

So there are many ways in which the election procedure could be improved.

Mr. AKYUZ. I think I need to correct one thing: These people who are in the committee counting the votes in each center are not appointed by the government but there are representatives of each party participating in the elections. So they are freely appointed by the parties.

There might be some others...

Mr. YURDATAPAN. Now I want to oppose. On paper this is true. Maybe in Istanbul, Ankara is better out of all the spotlights are there, it's true. But in that part of the country, no.

Yes, some parties were also oppressed by military directly, and still there are some people, some members of HADEP that disappeared, and they were very openly oppressed. The military was giving the message that, "Either you stop these actions or close the branch of HADEP here, otherwise you'll see what happens."

And this is the result. So I'm not sure that in small parts, small towns or villages, etc., there could be observers of HADEP.

Mr. SUGDEN. On that, there are appointed party witnesses there, and in fact, you know, as I approached one village, I met a group of party witnesses who had been forcibly ejected from the polling station.

As I said, most people were much happier with their election experience this time than they were in 1999. That is quite clear. But it does seem that, as well as in the structure of the election system, just on the practicalities on the ground there is a good deal that could still be done to make people in the southeast feel that they'd had a fair day at the polls.

As regards working with civil society in Turkey, well, civil society in Turkey is quite young, but it is very vibrant as far as human rights organizations are concerned.

Yes, I do have yet a very effective collaboration with partner organizations in Turkey such as the Human Rights Association, the Human Rights Foundation, and also Mazlumder, the human rights organization with a devout religious membership.

I am very impressed by the ability of these organizations to collaborate, that has increased much more over the years. You see more activities that reflect the principle of

not simply defending the rights of people of your own community, but other people. Some of the credit needs to be given to Mr. Yurdatapan for that, because that is a principle that he has pressed very strongly.

I would like to give you an example of this. In the August reforms, there was a provision that increased protection for religious foundations in Turkey—that is, Armenian, Christian, Greek Christian and Jewish Foundations that are protected by the Treaty of Lausanne. These protections for non-Muslims were increased, and that particular amendment to the law was very strongly championed by Mazlumder, that is an Islamic human rights organization. They were very strongly and publicly defending the Christian and Jewish foundations. I think it is a very wonderful development.

But also we have another NGO that's been very effective in its work on human rights since 1997 at least. This is TUSIAD. In my filing system, material relating to TUSIAD is filed in the section on human rights NGOs. TUSIAD's 1997 publication "Perspectives on Democracy" was a remarkable document and should have been taken by the government right then as a model reform program. It is the best overview I have ever seen of what has to be done in Turkey in terms of human rights law and constitutions. TUSIAD's influence throughout the European Union accession process, from what I have seen of it, has been very positive indeed.

QUESTIONER. Mr. Clerides, Cyprus Embassy. I just wanted to ask about the Turkish public opinion's position on the Cyprus issue, especially after the submission of the U.N. solution plan. Is there any change? We read the Turkish press, and we can see that many journalists are urging a change on the Turkish stance on the Cyprus issue. But at the same time, we are not able to see any change on the official stance. So I wanted to hear your opinion on this issue. Thank you.

Mr. AKYUZ. I think maybe we are getting some mixed signals, but I think overall the reaction to Monday's proposals by U.N. has been very positive.

We have heard from most of the institutions or individuals representing official circles. They openly say that this is a set of recommendations or plan that requires a very detailed study.

I think a lot of discussions and meetings are taking place on that front. On the front of public opinion, I think many Turks are willing to see a solution to the problem on the island because it has been a problematic issue in Turkey's foreign policy agenda. We all know that, despite, you know, some open statements again from both the E.U. and Turkey side, saying that Cyprus issue is not related to Turkey's E.U. issue, we see a very strong connection in these two issues.

So again, the timing of this plan justifies this strong connection as it was presented right before Copenhagen criteria. So everyone expects that these two issues have been discussed together and will be solved together.

So I think this is a fair proposal. We do not know the details, but this is a fair proposal worth studying. But, of course, it is not an easy issue for both sides then. It may take some time and energy to really come to a decision.

QUESTIONER. Patricia Carley, USCIRF. I have a question. I am curious about your views on a particular issue. As you know, Turkey has a number of problems with regard to religious freedom. Just on one particular issue, which is, say the issue of head scarves in that—as you know, Muslim women are not allowed to express themselves and express their religious faith and attend universities. I will not even get into the issue of public buildings. But let's just talk about universities.

What do you think are the chances that this new government is going to be able to do anything about what is essentially a very basic human right, religious freedom? And will this government be able to do anything, or is this issue still so unbelievably sensitive in Turkey that the military will possibly react too strongly, even to something as relatively small in terms of religious freedom as the wearing of head scarves at universities?

Mr. YURDATAPAN. First, it's very clear that the head scarf ban is a very clear violation of human rights, not only of the right of belief, but also the right to education and the right to work. Because many ladies are not allowed to enter, for example, hospitals. And they lose their jobs, etc. This is very clear violation.

But this policy is promoted this way to the secularists: "Do you like to be in Iran? There all the women are forced to have head scarves." What's the difference between forcing a lady to have a head scarf or taking it away? It's totally the same.

About Erdogan's position, well, in some fields it is a mine field for him, of course. As a religious person and according to his past, he must find an urgent solution to that. But it's also when he tries to do it then he'll be in danger in being in a new contradiction and conflict with the army.

I don't know what his decision will be but I know what his decision should be. If we keep on thinking, "If I take the step, what will the army say?" we will get nowhere. Let them say whatever they like. Let them come and make a military putsch. How can we live like that?

In a civil society, democratic country, the place of the chief of staff is just behind the ministry of defense, that's all. Something like Turkey's State Security Council may never happen. Maybe you all know about our State Security Council. If you don't, let me explain to you. Imagine a long table. Our president is not like the U.S. president, he is not head of the executive in Turkey, it's more symbolic. He sits at the front and on one side there are civilians, and on the other side, the military. The civilians start with the prime minister, continue with ministers of interior, exterior, justice.

And according to the subject under discussion some other ministers may come. And on the other hand, there is the chief of staff, chief of army, navy, air force, gendarmerie. And the secretary of this state security council is also a general, and the secretariat is in the military.

OK, on paper—that paper is not a small paper, it's the constitution—it is said that this is an advisory commission or something like that. But ever since 1961 when this was established I have never heard any advisory decision they gave that the governments rejected.

Again, in Turkey everybody knows that military rules this country. Not only military, together with the high-rank officials, universities, justice, etc., a sort of oligarchy, they are doing it. This is why when foreigners come to Turkey and while speaking they say to us, "Your government does this, your government did that," we say, "Wait a minute, not our government, you will say your state." Because in Turkey, government and state is not the same thing. You may be elected but you cannot govern.

I know all of you here know this because you ask this question, but we in Turkey always ask, "Is there a contradiction with the army or not?"

By the way, my father was a three-star general. That's another Subject, but in my childhood, as a little child, this was the idea in my brain. We, the military—I'm among them, I'm also military—are good, we do everything well, and the others, civilians, they come and turn everything upside down.

And then at the military parades on national holidays, there stand the governor of whatever the city is, in the first line and my father behind him.

I was thinking, “Those adults are playing some silly games. Everybody knows that my father is the strongest man in this city, not that governor whoever he is.” How come those ideas came to my brain?

This is long-term reality of Turkey and if we cannot overcome this we can never speak of any democracy or freedom, etc. Thank you.

Mr. AKYUZ. Of course, I understand the sensitivities expressed by Mr. Yurdatapan. From the human rights and democracy point of view, this is a reality. But on the other hand there is also another reality, the reality of the country. Also the fact that Mr. Erdogan got only around—I mean, he got 34 percent, but about only 10 percent of his 34 percent came from his pro-Islamist or Islamist background. So he also represents 25, 24 percent which are coming from a different background. So I think, practically, what he will be doing may not be the best thing he can do, but practically, in order to avoid any confrontation on this sensitive issue with the establishment, he will avoid addressing this issue until he feels comfortable in the government.

So then, depending on the circumstances and depending on the progress made on the European front, we may have a better environment to discuss this issue in a proper way.

Mr. YURDATAPAN. This is why we need freedom of expression, you see?

Mr. SUGDEN. Human Rights Watch has published a number of statements making clear our position that a woman’s right to choose her own dress and also a woman’s right to get an education are quite clearly human rights that must be respected.

Our research on the topic makes it clear that many thousands of women are being denied access to a higher education because of this ban. It is extremely destructive. It is very obviously a self-defeating policy, because it creates martyrs or victims, it creates disaffection—a disaffected and alienated group of people whose members who can only identify themselves through the signs of their religious belief.

The headscarf ban is, you know, a senseless policy.

The one rather curious factor is that this is one human rights reform that is not mentioned in the accession partnership—because Europe itself is rather internally conflicted about this. Europe’s ongoing difficulty with absorbing such cultural differences was illustrated again in Mr. Giscard D’Estaing’s extremely unhelpful statement of earlier this week.

So it is probably right that the government will wait for a while until they think it is safe to move on the topic. The question is, how long is the military going to have to wait?

The Erbakan Coalition Government, back in 1996 and 1997, never got anything done on the subject. Since then, many of these women have completely foregone their education or indeed gone abroad for it.

QUESTIONER. Maren Anderson. A few of you mentioned the conflict that the new government faces between fulfilling international regulations and trade and its own people, they are so impoverished. One of the issues the United States has had with Turkey is there is a substantial amount of black market trading with Iraq—well, there are sanctions against Iraq. Particularly there is a report that vaccine for a chemical or biological weapons were sold to Iraq in high quantities. I am wondering how you see the new party responding to those sanctions and to trading with Iraq.

Mr. AKYUZ. I have no idea. Since right now they have not formed a government and they are not really, you know, administering those operations, I cannot say anything.

But what Mr. Erdogan has said regarding the Iraq issue in general, was that Turkey

would support any decision taken by the U.N. So, in that sense, I think if we can take this as a clue, I think if those restrictions are written, U.N. resolutions, those limitations or trade restriction sanctions, then it will follow them all. So I am not sure whether this particular item is part of these restrictions or not, so I cannot answer it.

Mr. KURSCH. Any other questions?

Let me ask one, if I might. I remember in 1998 asking a very senior member of the European Parliament, who is still there, about Turkish accession prospects for the European Union. He answered me, "Turkey will become a European Union member when Mexico becomes the 51st state of the United States." We noted Mr. D'Estaing's recent remark. My question to all of you who follow this today much more closely than I do: How much really has changed since then on the E.U. side?

Then, I would also ask how truly committed is the Turkish population to E.U. membership, how fundamentally important is it for them? And how well do Turkish citizens understand what that means including surrendering part of the nation's sovereignty?

Mr. AKYUZ. I think as Turkey got closer to full membership, the real discussions have started to take place, not only in Europe, but also in Turkey. Remember the discussions that were made throughout this year and last year—I mean, some people who were defending the E.U. accession and at the same time some people, and even some generals, have openly said that E.U. will never take Turkey in and we should not seek an E.U. membership. But, they said, we should seek further cooperation with our ally, United States, but also Russia and Iran. Openly or secretly, several circles have taken a position regarding this issue. We are seeing now similar discussions taking place in Europe.

I think the delay of these discussions regarding the issue of Turkey's accession was the fact that they never believed that Turkey would take all these steps and would make it close to this membership. So when they see that this might happen, I think they start discussing.

I agree with Jonathan that the E.U. objective has helped Turkey to make several significant steps and improve its democracy, human rights and also its economy. You might recall that Turkey has been a member of the customs union or has signed a customs union agreement. And Turkey is the only country that did so. So economically in a way we are part of Europe. We can freely export and import, so it is like free trade agreement of Mexico with the United States. We have it with the E.U.

When signing this agreement, many circles within the E.U. were expecting that this would be the last step Turkey and E.U. would make. But we have gone far beyond that and we have received full membership candidacy in 1999.

So right now it appears that Turkish population—70, 75 percent of the population support this accession. By the way, this is one of the highest, if not the highest, rate among all candidates.

How well they are aware of this membership requirement and benefits of this membership, that is questionable but it is questionable everywhere. I mean, this whole E.U. project is a decision in all the countries, including France, Germany and England, taken by politicians. There are strong arguments that say that populations, people are not really willing to go in that direction. But, of course, when we look at the progress so far, people are getting adjusted to this new environment, they even now have a common currency, common central bank: certain things that were dreamed 20 years ago are now the reality.

I do not want to lengthen my remarks, but I think this is a very positive project for Turkey, and I think the majority of Turkish population is aware of the benefits that will come with it. An Islamist party is supporting this accession, thinking and believing that

this will bring more democracy, so that they can express themselves more freely with this membership.

Maybe every segment of the society has its own expectations from membership, but overall there is a consensus on this membership, and Turkey has made significant progress along this project. Whether they will take Turkey in or not, it is, of course, up to the E.U., but so far this project has helped Turkey.

Mr. YURDATAPAN. It is very clear that the majority of Turkish people want Turkey to be a member of E.U. Maybe different social groups have different hopes of that, but it is a fact that a great majority wants it. And even the army in the past said very clear things against membership of E.U. Maybe they do not say the words, "No, we don't want Turkey to be"; they say "Yes, we want Turkey to be a member, but ..." However, that "but" was a very strong and thick "but." Now it's small something, small like that.

If the majority of people did not really want it, this could never happen. This is another proof to what he says is really correct.

Mr. KURSCH. Any more questions from our audience?

Well, I would like to thank our panelists, and particularly those who have journeyed from so far, for being with us today, and also those who have organized this event. I think it has been very, very timely and informative.

We will be following events closely. I think you can see that you have very good friends here, not only in Congress, but in our Commission. We are very interested that democracy moves forward and that we continue the close and productive relationship that we have enjoyed in the past half century.

Thank you very much.

[Whereupon the briefing was concluded at 12:00 p.m.]

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