

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

CHP'S VISION FOR TURKEY:
AN ADDRESS BY CHAIRMAN KEMAL KILIÇDAROĞLU

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. PICCONE: Good morning. Good morning, everyone. Let me just mention right at the start that your interpretation/translation device, English is Channel 2, and Turkish is Channel 10.

Good morning, I'm Ted Piccone. I'm the Acting Vice President and Director of the Foreign Policy Program here at the Brookings Institution. And we're delighted to have so many of you come out today after our long holiday weekend.

It's a distinct honor to have with us the Turkey's Republic People's Party, known by its Turkish acronym, CHP -- Mr. Kemal Kiliçdaroğlu. Or, for those of us someone challenged, like me, by the Turkish pronunciation -- Kemal Bey.

As many of you know, the CHP has a long and prominent history in Turkey. Founded by the Father of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk over 90 years, the party has played a critical role in the democratic development of Turkey, both as the party of government, and as the main opposition party.

It's my understanding, however, that throughout this long history of the party, no sitting CHP chairman has ever visited Washington, D.C. So it is indeed a real honor and privilege for us to welcome Kemal Bey here to Brookings, and to our capital city.

We look forward to hearing your thoughts about CHP's vision for the future of Turkey, its democratic and economic development, and its Euro-Atlantic relations. I also want to congratulate the CHP on opening an office, a new office, in Washington, and appointing Yurter Ozcan as the U.S. representative. We believe that CHP's representation here in Washington will play an important role in furthering our bilateral -- close bilateral relations.

Today's event is part of our Turkey project. This is an initiative within our Center on the United States and Europe, which was launched in 2004, to provide a forum for independent scholarship and events focused on the increasingly important role that Turkey plays in its region and around the world. I'm please to say the Turkey project has been particularly active in its efforts to realize this mission. We've been very happy to host a number of Turkey's senior statesmen, including Prime Minister Erdoğan earlier this year, and Foreign Minister Davutoğlu just a few weeks ago. We also hosted leaders from the Peace and Democracy Party, representing a good part of Turkey's Kurdish citizens last year.

All of these activities underscore one of Brookings' core values of ensuring that we are an independent nonpartisan venue for high-level dialogue, reflecting the full range of policy perspectives and voices.

You all should have Kemal Bey's full biography in front of you, so I will not go into all the details of his exceptional background and experience. But, as you can see, he has had a long and distinguished career as a Turkish public servant, and a leading political figure, in and out of parliament.

This morning, following Kemal Bey's remarks, another Kemal, our own Kemal Kirişçi, will moderate the discussion. Kemal is the Brookings TUSIAD Senior Fellow, and Director of our Turkey project.

As I mentioned, you have the simultaneous interpretation headsets. If not, they're available at the front desk when you come in.

And, with that, I turn the floor over to Kemal Bey.

(Applause.)

MR. KILIÇDAROĞLU: It is indeed a pleasure for me to be with you, and therefore, I'd like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Brookings Institution, which enabled this occasion.

I will briefly talk to you about CHP's -- People's Republican Party's -- vision. And in the Q&A session we will go into the details.

Now, this vision is actually -- or I will try to build it on three main pillars, and these will be strong democracy, strong economy, and a responsible foreign policy.

Now, when it comes to strong democracy, what are our thoughts? Now, we know that for the democratic system in Turkey to function in an efficient and proper way, there is a sine qua non rule which we call the separation of powers: the legislative, the executive, and the judiciary. And the boundaries between these have to be more balanced, and have to be more healthy, if you will. If there is no healthy balance between the legislative, the executive, and the judiciary, then democracy suffers great damages in such a country.

Now, President Obama delivered a speech on the fourth of June 2009. And in this speech in Cairo University, President Obama actually says the following: "And we will welcome all elected peaceful governments, provided they govern with respect for all their people.

"This last point is important because there are some who advocate for democracy only when they are out of power. Once in power, they are ruthless in suppressing the rights of others. So, no matter where it takes hold, government of the people and by the people sets a single standard for all who would hold power. You must maintain your power through consent, not coercion. You must respect the rights of minorities, and participate with spirit of tolerance and compromise. You must place the interests of your people and the legitimate workings of the political

process above your party. Without these ingredients, elections alone do not make true democracy."

In fact, this speech reflects not only the conditions or the circumstances prevailing in Cairo, but conditions prevailing in the whole region. President Obama said it right: elections are not everything. When CHP, the People's Republican Party, comes to power, it will redraw the boundaries between the different forces, and it will render our democracy functional.

And the way to a democratic legislative is ensuring equality in representation. The People's Republican Party will certainly abolish the 10 percent election threshold, because this threshold of 10 percent in elections victimizes people. So our party will ensure equality in representation, and we will favor, we will try to do our best in order to favor a pluralistic approach rather than a majoritarian one.

On top of that, an independent judiciary that can reach the conclusions in a fast and reliable manner is actually a guarantee of a democracy. A judicial system which is under the influence of a political party, political power, cannot establish justice. And the People's Republican Party will do away with the shadow of the political authority that is cast on the High Council of Judges and Prosecutors. And we will rebuild confidence in the judiciary.

The shortcomings in the judiciary are not related to the membership structure of the High Council of Judges and Prosecutors. And the special authority courts, which were established as continuation of the State Security Courts are actually the shame of our democracy. The People's Republican Party defends the immediate resolution of special authority courts, and a speedy retrial of the cases concluded by this court.

The People's Republican Party thinks that the executive making excessive use of decrees with the force of -- or executive orders in order to rule out the legislative. On top of that, we do not accept the proposals for a presidential system which would actually give an institutional structure to the single-man rule in Turkey, and it will also bolster the authoritarian tendencies and habits in our country.

Now, a new constitution is one of the important matters that is currently discussed in Turkey. And we have been actively participating in the Constitution Reconciliation Committee established within the parliament. And the People's Republican Party wishes to see a constitution which focuses on the rights and freedoms of the individual, which is secular in nature, democratic in nature, which preserves the achievements of the republic, and which also builds on these achievements, on an egalitarian and libertarian way.

The People's Republican Party believes that all obstacles standing in the way of freedom of thought and expression have to be abolished. We believe that free press is a founding stone of a democratic nation. We do not want to see a Turkey which has now turned into the largest jail for journalists in the world. During CHP's rule, Turkish media will breathe a sigh of relief, and there will be no censorship whatsoever during CHP's rule. Turkey will no longer rank 154th out of 179 nations in the freedom of press. It will definitely rank in the top.

During CHP rule, all parts of the society -- and especially academics, students, lawyers, and even members of the parliament -- will again breathe a sigh of relief. Our universities and scientific institutions will get rid of all sorts of pressures.

In a dysfunctional democracy, women are the ones who feel the pressure of the ruling party the most. CHP does its best -- is doing its best, so that women get their desired place in the society. And as the party which gave the right to cast votes and be elected to women, our quota of 33 percent women candidates is actually a result of that initiative. And our political understanding believes in the gender equality between men and women, and that they should get equal and free places as equal individuals in societal life.

Another very important topic in the democracy discussion in our country is the Kurdish issue. The Kurdish issue cannot be solved with religious preferences which -- with electoral investments, or with showing. And in a society which is so divided, both mentally and spiritually, we cannot find a lasting solution to such a problem. So, CHP, the People's Republican Party, will be the one defending social consensus for the solution of this problem.

And the People's Republican Party believes that this problem can only be solved on the basis of rights, freedoms, respect for different identities, and an equal citizenship concept which rules out violence, and which prioritizes human rights and the rule of law. Our party has actually prepared a Declaration of Democracy and Freedoms, and this freedom makes our party the one with the most concrete recommendations on this matter. And in addition to this declaration, we have also put forward the idea of establishing a committee on social consensus at the Turkish Grand National Assembly for a comprehensive solution to the Kurdish issue.

Distinguished guests, CHP -- the People's Republican Party -- has been coming up with consistent and healthy recommendations for a better and stronger economy. And for this goal to be achieved, first of all,

the central bank will be rendered on autonomous institution in the right sense of the term.

Two, the revenue administration will also become an autonomous institution, and it will no longer allow for a politicization of tax inspections.

Three, in order for universities to genuinely create knowledge, the political pressures on universities will be abolished, and universities will be rendered free and autonomous.

Four, the cooperation between universities and the industry, will be incentivized, will be privatized, and the needs of the information economy will also be done.

Five, transparency in public spending is actually very important. We have the Court of Accounts, which looks into public expenditure on behalf of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, and the Court of Accounts will be made more effective, and international standards will form the basis for the healthy inspection of public spending.

Six, the public procurement law will be revised, and public tender processes will become more transparent.

Seven, autonomous public economic institutions will also get rid of certain regulations which enable the political authority to apply

pressure on them, and these sorts of institutions will be given freedom of movement and operations.

Our main objective is actually to create a society which produces, and which shares the production in a fair manner. The injustice in revenue distribution and production will be corrected through an economic policy which prioritizes production, not consumption.

Distinguished guests, the People's Republican Party sees Turkey as part of Euro-Atlantic family, and our place in foreign policy is the West. For the past 200 years, we have been trying to westernize ourselves, and the People's Republican Party does not have any hesitations on that matter.

And we do endorse the view that Turkey has to become a full member to the EU. We attach importance to the North Atlantic Alliance, and we do believe that NATO's role, importance, and effect have all been bolstered in our today's world. And Turkey is a country that is loyal to its alliances.

And we do believe that allies have to be in harmony when it comes to defense matters. The People's Republican Party believes that relations between Turkey and the United States have to take place on an equal footing, and around the concept of common values and mutual interests. And these will enable that we will have healthy, strong, and

lasting relations. And we do not see our countries as partners only when it's necessary, only when crisis strikes.

And the Turkey envisaged by CHP and the United States share a love of common values, among these, democracy, rule of law, gender equality, and freedoms. On the other hand, the field of security and energy can also give our two nations new opportunities.

The Republican People's Party actually goes by the idiom of "peace at home and peace in the world" in its foreign policy. And we see diplomacy as a tool in the solution of problems in our region, and peace, stability, and welfare are the outcomes, are the objectives. And we only have a single guide when we approach problems and try to solve these, and these are international law and legitimacy. And we take it for a fundamental principle to pay respect to the territorial integrity of other nations, and we especially shy away from meddling in their internal affairs. Now, we do believe that it is always a useful idea to strengthen regional institutions and improve coordination.

And now I will not go into detail of issues regarding Syria, Iraq, Egypt, and Israel. If there are questions, I will try and elaborate on those.

Now, Republican People's Party is the only political institution that can actually fulfill the ideas of full democracy, the rule of

law, human rights, freedoms, and the principle of secularity. And we will do so by creating a healthy economic policy, and a responsible foreign policy, as well.

These are my initial remarks. Thank you very much. And I will be looking forward to your questions. (Applause.)

MR. KIRIŞCI: If you will allow me, I would like to continue in Turkish, on the occasion of hosting Kemal Kiliçdaroğlu.

Thank you Mr. Kiliçdaroğlu. As our director said, it's a great pleasure for us to see you here. I'd like to welcome you, as well. It's always a pleasure for me to entertain someone who also shares my name -- which is not very often.

Today we have quite a participation, and there's been quite a lot of interest in your speech. And your position with respect to the importance you place on trans-Atlantic relations as the CHP has been very important, and we value that importance a lot in Brookings. And I do that, too, because the geography surrounding Turkey is going through rather turbulent times and, unfortunately, the Arab Spring has not evolved along the lines of the expectations of having more democracy and stability in the region. To the contrary, we are faced with very turbulent times, a lot of suffering, as well.

And the same thing holds true for the countries in the north. We are all following closely what is happening, for example, in the Ukraine recently. And we see how the people in the Ukraine place a lot of importance on their relations with the West, and how they'd like to integrate with the West.

So, under these circumstances, your speech with respect to democracy in Turkey, and the importance of supporting democracy is indeed very significant, because as Turkey's democracy develops and progresses, the probability of democracy taking root in our region will also grow, because there will be some interaction. And this is a goal which the trans-Atlantic community is very focused on.

And, rather than asking you my questions here, I'd like to turn to the audience and ask the audience to direct their questions to you.

We usually take two to three questions all at once, and then ask you to respond to them.

I welcome questions. We will take two or three questions at the same time. As Brookings tradition goes, I would like you to briefly refer to your institution and mention your name. And keep the questions as briefly as possible.

We're delighted that the Chairman is allowing considerable time for questions and answers.

The floor is yours. Two and three, and then we'll move backwards.

SPEAKER: What are the suggestions of CHP with respect to the Kurdish issue?

SPEAKER: (Inaudible.)

MR. KIRIŞCI: You asked three questions actually. But let's get the other questions.

(Inaudible) question here in the front, please.

Thank you very much. I am Dr. (Inaudible), with (inaudible) Pakistani-American League. Pakistani people and Turkish people have really long, outstanding friendship and relations with each other. They are bonded together, actually. And it was a joy to listen to the ideas you have given, the agenda you have given, the commitments and beliefs, and your ideology and philosophy you extended to all these people.

Certainly, they are all ideals, and I hope you can accomplish them, also. This is in the best interest of the country.

My question is, given the past regime wants enduring relationship between the U.S. and Pakistan -- the U.S. and Turkey, and also they want good relationship with all their neighbors, and they never refused to become -- or join the European Union.

On domestic policies, I think it is wonderful. I can see we have many compatibilities, and many differences.

But where do you think you will have a different direction or differences in foreign policy with the present regime of Turkey?

Thank you very much.

MR. KIRIŞCI: Thank you. We had one more question here, and then I'll turn the floor to Kemal Bey.

MR. KORMAN: Welcome, Mr. Kiliçdaroğlu. My name is Can Korman. I'm from the George Washington University. I'm vice dean there, and we're really pleased to see you here in Washington.

In your speech you stressed the importance of democracy, economic relations, and foreign policy. And in your speech yesterday, you said that you're not able to effectively convey your message to the young people, especially.

How do you plan to communicate your message to the youth? What is your message to the youth for 2023? How do you plan to convey this message? What are your activities in this regard? And, especially after these Gezi Park events, the young people have become very prominent in the democratic discussions in Turkey.

So, how will CHP embrace the young people?

MR. KIRIŞCI: Kemal Bey, before turning to you, let me also welcome your colleagues from the CHP. And we forgot to welcome them.

So, welcome to all the colleagues.

MR. KILIÇDAROĞLU: Yes, please. Yes, we have quite a lot of people here. I have members of parliament on my delegation. And we're very pleased to be here with you.

There were three questions that were directed at me. One of those questions was the changes in the constitution with respect to the solution of the Kurdish issue. And a question about whether we can continue to talk to Ocalan, how will this process achieve results? And another question about how we evaluate the relations between Turkey and northern Iraq

Let me first of all say that we work very hard to ensure that Turkey has a truly freedom-based constitution. The constitution that was passed during the time of the military coup was changed during the (inaudible) government, 65 articles were amended. And more recently, there was a constitution commission, reconciliation commission, which was established in this current parliament. And they reached an agreement on changing, amending 60 articles of the current constitution. If the second, third, and the fourth rounds of these meetings continue, and

if the AKP withdraws their proposal on the presidential system, we could achieve more consensus on a greater number of articles.

Today in Turkey there is a lot of political polarization. And to have achieved agreement on 60 articles in the constitution against this backdrop is, in fact, very important.

With respect to using the mother tongue, we are against any kind of prohibition in that regard. And our party is the first party that tabled a draft for lifting this ban on using the mother tongue.

With respect to solution of the Kurdish issue, we have taken very sincere steps, but we were told that we were not sincere for the solution of the Kurdish issue. We published a manifesto on freedoms and democracy made up of 17 articles, which include, for example, turning the Diyarbakir Prison into a museum, and cleaning up, or de-mining the area on the border of Syria. Or we have also stated that special authority courts ought to be removed, abolished, and the threshold has to be removed.

But none of these proposals were accepted by the government. We were told that we were not sincere on these points, whereas we presented draft laws in these areas, but the governing party did not work with us.

Our biggest criticism with respect to the process is the following. We do not believe that any process that takes place outside the parliament will be successful. The parliament has to be part of this process. That is why we told the government that there should be a conciliation commission established in the parliament for the solution of this issue. And we suggested that there should be a committee of wise men outside the parliament at the same time. And we believe that the committee of wise men should make the talks, instead of the parliament. And we believe that this will pave the way for a social agreement. But some parties did not accept this proposal.

We cannot say anything about the process, because nobody knows how the process is moving forward. We, as the main opposition party, do not know about it. Other political parties do not know about this. The members of the parliament from the governing party do not know about it, either. So there is a lot of uncertainty there.

With respect to Iraq, Turkey must establish good relations with all of its neighbors, and also with northern Iraq. People who live in northern Iraq are our relatives, because their relatives live across the border in Turkey, as do the relatives of those who live in Turkey across the border in Iraq. So we have to have good relations.

And, as I said in my speech, there is the concept of the rule of law. And we need greater respectability in our foreign policy. Iraq is an independent country. It has its constitution. If you establish relations with the administration in the northern part of Iraq at the expense of the relations with the central government, this would not be in line with the rule law, and with the respect for rule of law. We have to therefore be more comprehensive in this approach.

Iraq is not a part of Turkey. It's not a province in Turkey. It's an independent country. And our relations with Iraq must take into consideration the central government, and the constitution of the country, and the territorial integrity of Iraq.

We are in favor of doing this. I went to Iraq with my colleagues, and we held meetings with the government there. And we heard the same suggestions and criticisms which I just was -- from them, from the central government in Iraq. They said that they are an independent country, and that Turkey, in its relations with Iraq, should never forget that we are an independent country. This was what they told us.

Now, with respect to foreign policy, our friend from Pakistan was asking me about the way we would be different, where we would

make a difference with respect to foreign policy compared to the policies of the government.

Well, it's an interesting question. Let me tell you the following.

On the issue of Iraq, for example, we would take into consideration the territorial integrity of Iraq, and we would not make any distinction, discrimination, between the north and the central government of Iraq. We are in favor of developing sound relations with Iraq in this way.

Second, on the issue of Syria, we should never take on the responsibility of intervening in the internal affairs of Syria. There shouldn't be conflict clashes, war, going on in Syria. They must be prevented, stop. These are deep, they are deep traumas, because of the war that is going on there. But it's important that an international conference convenes on this issue. We -- our party is the party that would like to see such a conference convene.

In this process, Iran, Russia, the U.S., the Arab League, the European Union can all play an important role. And this we have referred to many times. We don't want radical elements to be established in Turkey. We don't want to see radical elements coming to Turkey and going to Syria to become part of the civil war there. We would like to live

in peace with all of our neighbors. We'd like to see peace prevail in Syria. We would like to see a solution of the problem through diplomatic means, which we believe is possible.

Steps have been taken in this respect, and we place a lot of importance on those steps. Especially the steps taken by the U.S. and Russia in Geneva, with respect to solving problems in Syria, are important. And we do not find it right to intervene in the internal affairs in Syria. This would be one of the basic differences we would have with the government.

On Egypt, as a political party defending democracy, we have always been against coup. We believe -- well, I want you to know that it's the CHP which has suffered most from military coup. After every coup, its assets were frozen, its chairmen were arrested, it's archives had to be handed over so that they could be destroyed. So we're against coups.

In Egypt, there was a coup. And I am one of the first chairmen that criticized that coup. In Tahrir Square, there were people who were demonstrating, defending democracy and freedoms against the government that existed. And their voices have been silenced as a result of the coup, whereas we were always with the thousands of Egyptians in Tahrir Square who wanted more freedoms and democracy.

Then the coup took place. And Turkey became directly a party in the internal political affairs of Egypt. We do not accept this. We do support a speedy transition to democracy in Egypt. We'd like to see that happen. But Turkey should not directly be a party in internal domestic politics. So, as the CHP, we do not support any policy which effectively renders Turkey a party to the domestic politics. After the coup, two of my colleagues, former diplomats, we sent them to Egypt so that they can communicate our messages, and we could listen to our counterparts.

We would also be different in terms of our relations with Israel. We would not opt to in any way intervene in the internal affairs in Israel, or have bad relations, or have a diplomatic difficulty with Israel, because we have a deep-rooted history, past, to our relations with Israel.

We believe that Israel is a very important country in the Middle East, and the mutual recognition by the Palestinians and the Israelis is important, and it's important that the Middle East peace process go on. And we always defend that Turkey should -- it's best to contribute to that Middle East process.

Also, the *Mavi Marmara* incident, we wish this never happened. And if the CHP were in power, I think everybody would know that an incident like the *Mavi Marmara* would not have happened, because we believe in the importance of diplomatic relations, and we believe that

relations have to be developed within diplomatic means. We're always for peace and harmony in the Middle East, and we want Turkey to contribute to achieving that peace in the Middle East. And we do not want to see support for a culture of conflict and clashes. This is very detrimental to the region. We see it before our eyes. And, therefore, we would pursue a policy with respect to our relations with Israel in a different way.

On Iran, we do not want any country in the Middle East to have, possess, nuclear weapons. We believe this would constitute a significant risk. And this we have said to our Iranian friends. If we are for peace, if we want to achieve stability in the region, then the path to achieving that would be to have a consistent, sound, egalitarian, diplomatic course of relations. And this is what we have told our Iranian colleagues.

With respect to the moderate messages between the U.S. and Iran, we think that these are very important. We hope that they will be, these messages will be important, and the United States has taken important steps. Steps taken in Geneva are also important in this regard. And I hope that in the coming period there will be a healthier relationship there, as well. And we believe that it's important that Iran will allow inspection by international organizations.

Now, there was another question about what is our message to the youth.

More than half of our population in Turkey is young, but they are not sufficiently represented in political circles. Students in the universities do not have a say on campus, and one of our suggestions during the constitutional discussions was to remove (inaudible), the Supreme Education Board, because this board was established after the military coup in 1980, and it puts pressure on universities. Therefore, it should be eliminated, because all ideas and thoughts should be freely expressed in universities. That's why we place a lot of importance on universities.

After the Gezi events, the young people and their perspective on the CHP changed. They had a different perspective on the CHP before the Gezi events. What I told the young people was that if they wanted to change CHP, if they wanted CHP to renew itself in the truest sense of the word, I suggested that they should come and work with us. Because our party is open to change, open to innovation. To us, young people are important.

With respect to the young people, we want the students in the universities to take part in the management and administration of the universities, as is the case in many other countries. And we also want to

see more young people in politics. In the last general assembly we held as a party, after I became chairman, we introduced a 10 percent youth quota. The chair of the youth branch of the party is directly a member of the board, executive board, and so is the head of the women's branch. And we also introduced a 33 percent gender quota.

These are all very important, because if the young people take on responsibility and want to be a part of politics, our door is open to them. And we also made an appeal to different parts making up the Gezi movement. Gezi is in the Taksim area, in the Beyoğlu district. And we suggested that they nominate a candidate for mayor for that district, and that we would appoint that candidate as our candidate for major.

MR. KIRIŞCI: Kemal Bey, what about us? The ones who are losing hair, the older generation?

I'll start in the front and make my -- (inaudible). We need the micro here.

SPEAKER: Welcome. Good morning. I am the founder of the America Ataturk Association. I am someone who visits Turkey frequently, and I see that the current government and the Gülen movement are acting to rapidly and systematically change Turkey from a modern, contemporary, secular country, respecting Ataturk's principles, into a different kind of state which bases itself on Sharia law.

As the CHP, what will you do to prevent these dangerous developments, which would be dangerous for the rest of the contemporary world, as well?

MS. COFMAN: Oya Cofman. We are very pleased to see Kemal Bey, and to have a chance to talk to him directly. I'm very pleased to have that opportunity myself.

What is very worrying to us is not, of course, the thoughts of CHP based on Ataturk. We are sure that CHP will move along those lines. But we do have concerns based on what the previous speaker said.

My greatest worry is the kinds of illegal actions that may take place during elections. How can you prevent this? It happened to my family. There were people in my family who had passed away, but for two elections, they actually had a voting right. And we found out, and then we corrected this. But these are all very important. These are very important.

We are sure of your vision, we are sure of your pervasive efforts. We support them. But, what happened to our family, or what happens elsewhere along these lines, are really nightmarish.

How will you go down to the grassroots? How will you be able to, say, give your message to the grassroots? And how will you prevent such illegal actions from taking place during times of election?

And we wish you success, and hope we can help you.

MR. KIRIŞCI: Kemal Bey, allow me to say a few words in English, so that we get some questions from English-speaking audience.

(Inaudible) in English -- reflecting the ethnic diversity in this town, ethnic, cultural diversity.

MR. GHANEM: Thank you. Mohammad Ghanem.

Chairman Kemal Bey, you talked about responsible foreign policy, promotion of freedoms, liberty, human rights. Today, the human rights chief of the United Nations, Navi Pillay, said -- quote -- "A U.N. commission of inquiry has uncovered massive evidence," to the effect that war crimes and crimes against humanity have been authorized at the highest levels, including the head of state, in Syria.

CHP, to all intents and purposes, has been somewhat supportive of Assad. Some members of parliament from your party have organized rallies in support of Assad. You've sent five high-level delegations to Damascus.

I have a yes-or-no question: Would you be willing to go on the record today, in clear, unambiguous, and explicit terms, denouncing the crimes that Assad has committed against his own people -- like the rest of the world?

Thank you.

MR. KILIÇDAROĞLU: Well, the first two questions from Turkey about the situation in Turkey, let me first of all say the following.

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was very important, not just for us, but for all who have gotten to know him. Because what he left is modern civilization. He has always been very rational in his policies, and we support that approach.

Any practice which would take us away from contemporary civilization, any actions which would in some way harm a secular social state, respecting the rule of law, is a threat. And we are against such situations and practices. And we continue to fight them. And you should rest assured that this continues to be our policy.

Making Turkey a medieval state is not something that we would accept. The reason why women are so worried in Turkey is because they are fully aware of the fact that they have much more to lose.

As the CHP, we talk about reaching out to the people. You asked me how we would reach out to the people? Well, we are the people. We are with the people. We used to be criticized, in the past, because the CHP would never travel beyond the city of Sivas in Turkey. But we go to all the provinces in Turkey -- not only in Turkey, we go to other countries around the world. I've been to London, Iraq, Paris,

Brussels, Beijing, and now I'm here in D.C. And earlier, before, I was in Baghdad, as well.

So we explain ourselves to the rest of the world. We also want to find out what people expect from the CHP.

For the last 200 years, Turkey has been working to westernize itself. And this is an effort that will be ongoing. It's an effort which has to grow even more. No one should think that a second-class democracy would fit Turkey. In our country, every citizen deserves first-class democracy, and has a right to ask for it. And we will continue to believe in this, and support this.

Now, whether or not there could be foul play in elections, there is, on the internet website of the CHP, a lot of detailed information about elections. You can check your own registration -- in other words, when you punch in your ID, you can see not only yourself, but who else in your apartment building will be voting. So, all of that information is available on our website.

We do our best, and the citizens have to be very responsible, and they really should check whether they are properly registered, or the other people living in their building are properly registered -- because that information is available on our website.

Mr. Mohammad had an interesting question. These crimes against humanity committed in Syria -- yes, these are, indeed, true. We did send delegations to Syria a few times, two or three times, that is correct also.

We wanted to find out what's going on in Syria, because we have a right to find out what's going on in Syria. And our political party is the only political party in Turkey which speaks to both sides, we talk to both sides.

In Istanbul, we organized an Arab Spring conference. The opinion leaders, political parties, of the Arab world were invited. From Syria, we invited both sides, because we believe that this problem can only be resolved through diplomacy.

No one, never, defended Assad. It was never the case that a member of CHP would support a leader who is putting pressure on his people. It doesn't matter who that person is, but we would never support such people, because we support freedom and democracy. And we never think it right to support someone who does not provide that democracy and freedom.

What the Syrian people need is freedom and democracy. More than 1 million Syrians are in Turkey right now. You go to 81 provinces in Turkey, you would find some Syrians in all of them. Do you

know what is very sad for us? We see Syrian children who are begging on the streets in Turkey. These are our children, too. We try to help them.

We want to see an end to the war in Syria. If you give arms to one of the parties and tell them to go to Syria and kill their brothers, we're against that. If you defend some elements receiving arms from Turkey to go to Syria, we would be against that.

We don't want to see bloodshed in Syria. We don't want to see radical elements from other countries coming to Turkey and moving through Turkey to Syria, to the bloodshed. Our views are very clear on this. Bloodshed in that geography is sad for all of us.

Important steps have been taken in diplomacy. Russia and the United States, the meetings and the agreement between the two foreign ministers in Geneva on Syria is important. So let's hope that there will be, first of all, a cease-fire in Syria, and then peace prevails in Syria.

The next stage, after the guns are silenced, would be, hopefully, a sounder process resolving the problem.

Yes, please?

SPEAKER: First of all, welcome, Chairman, to Washington. I would like to ask you a question about a different subject.

There is an authoritarian structure which is affecting education institutions, and the education policies in Turkey are changing

maybe every month. There are new laws, regulations, which keep changing the education system. There's pressure on the education system. And the opposition parties have expressed their views, but they don't really affect any change.

What is your view on education policy in Turkey recently? And because it is also a topical issue, I'd like to ask this question: The issue of the private and the preparatory schools, grammar schools -- I am Gutan Cosca, by the way.

MR. KIRIŞCI: I'm going to try to try to implement an affirmative action policy -- (inaudible).

SPEAKER: (Inaudible), I am at the American University, member of the faculty. Welcome, Kemal Bey. We're very pleased to see you with us. I have a short question to you.

Prime Minister Erdoğan has been referring to the "Shanghai-5" recently. What is the view of CHP on this?

MR. KIRIŞCI: Cathy -- in the back, behind the (inaudible).

SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your speech.

My question is regarding to the next election in Turkey. As I know, the AK Party is going to change the electoral system -- election, I mean, for representing the -- I mean, someone from the parliament.

I want to know what's your position in this situation, and are you -- what's your vision for the next election in Turkey? Do you think that you can get more representatives in the parliament, or not?

Thank you.

MR. KIRIŞCI: Thanks.

MR. KILIÇDAROĞLU: Now -- education policy, the question by Mr. (inaudible).

Education policy is a strategic area, of course, for all countries, because you educate your young people through this policy. In our country, education policies are not policies which are debated at great length. What happens is, you come in one morning, and all of a sudden there is a new model which is suggested, a model which does not exist in development models, a model which is not part of the strategic plan of the Ministry of Education, or is not part of the government's program, or a model which is not discussed in the Council of Ministers. You have, say, five members of parliament who make that proposal, but they are not -- they don't have any background in education.

So this is the kind of thing that happens. And we have had such a law passed. And we use our children as a test lab. You know, we try things out on them.

What is important is to provide education to the children so that they ask questions, they are more analytical, because that's very important in catching up with the modern world. We all believe that this is important in achieving our goals. But if the educational model is only based on a certain perspective or thinking, then what you end up with is a failed policy.

Our education policies are diametrically opposed to the education policies of the government.

With respect to the recent discussions about these primary schools, or the private test preparation schools, I think I have to refer to what I said in earlier remarks. When you have a soundly functioning government, they have to seek information from pedagogues, they have to question the existing system, they have to look to see what is not running properly in that system, and then consider ways of correcting the -- and then test them. They test them, they should test them, and then implement them.

But this model with respect to the primary schools all of a sudden happened, because one morning we woke up and we heard that the prime minister decided to abolish them.

The current system makes it compulsory to have such institutions in place. Parents do not want to send their children to these preparatory schools, but the system is such that they have to.

We would like to see the education system restructured in the way so that we do not have a need for these other schools. We would support such an idea. But if you don't make any changes to the education system, but you want to at the same time remove these educational institutions, this is wrong. This also doesn't make commercial sense. And it's also wrong to (inaudible) proper systems, because someone else may decide the next day to shut down some other business.

I think we need to have a more rational approach which would contribute to the solution of the problems.

You asked me a question about the Shanghai-5. As I said earlier in my remarks, Turkey has been in a process of westernization in the last 200 years. We don't want to be part of authoritarian groups. We want to be part of the civilized world, in the contemporary world.

Now, what about the election system and our vision for the elections? Well, of course, the goal of any political party in the world would be to become the government -- if this is a general election, to be government, or to win more positions in the local elections.

The government is not intending to change the election system. They want to keep the election system that was introduced after the military coup. I have already said that we are against that current system. We say that it should be changed. And I also have stated that it's important to have greater justice in the system, the election system. The election system has to be fair.

We will have municipal elections in March. We would like to have more mayors win seats, and we would like to be more successful in the municipal elections. We have work ongoing in this area. Other political parties have similar efforts, we do the same. We all work towards that election. And we will continue to work to be successful in the upcoming elections.

MS. AYDOGAN: Hello. First of all, welcome. My name is Nihal Aydogan. And I'd like to ask you a question about minorities.

When AKP came to power they said -- or the prime minister said -- I will not be the prime minister of only our grassroots, but all the Turkish nation. But we saw, unfortunately, that that didn't happen, and they are trying to raise a certain generation.

Now, as a citizen that is a member of minorities in Turkey, I'd like to ask the following: How would you find a solution, if you become the ruling party, to this social injustice?

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Mr. Kiliçdaroğlu, first of all, I'd like to thank you for coming here, because it's been a long while. I'm very excited -- I'm sorry.

I'd like to ask a question about education. My name is, actually, (inaudible). And many questions have been asked about the education field in Turkey but, in my opinion, the most important question about this matter in Turkey is in side streets and small corners of different apartment blocks, you have unofficial religious courses that are providing religious sort of education or training.

And do you have any plans against this anti-secular type of education that's going on?

Thank you.

MR. KIRIŞCI: All the way in the back. Standing. Yes. I'll come back to you shortly.

MR. ALIRIZA: Hi. My name is Bahri Aliriza. I am the president of Northern Cyprus Cultural Society. And I'd like to, first of all, welcome you to Washington. I think it's very, very important for you to be here as the leader of the opposition. And I also want to take this opportunity to thank your party for opening a chapter here.

My question, sir, is with regard to Northern Cyprus. We, as the Turkish Cypriot people, and the government, have done everything we can to work with the United Nations, and have accepted the Annan U.N. plan, peace plan. Unfortunately, the Greek Cypriots have refused it.

You're here right now having several meetings with government officials. What is your message to America as far as trying to get the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus recognized? And what would you do different than the current government?

Thank you.

MR. KIRIŞCI: Well, there was a question, another question. Let us have that one, too.

MS. ISKANDAR: Mr. Kiliçdaroğlu, thank you, first of all, for coming to our visit. And I would like to thank Mr. Yurter Ozcan, the representative of CHP here in the United States, here in Washington. And I'd like to welcome all members of the delegation.

Now, in addition to (inaudible)'s question, my question would be the following: Especially when it comes to students in primary schools, what is CHP's policy? What differences will there be from the ruling party? And how do you see the place of women -- especially in the economy, but also in society?

So, both in the short term and in the long term, what will your priorities be?

Thank you. By the way, apologies, my name is (inaudible) Iskandar.

MR. KILIÇDAROĞLU: Now, let's begin with the minorities. They do have rights, therefore these rights need to be protected. We need to come up with a regulation about hate crime. Harsh declarations against minorities are damaging our society, are damaging when it comes to what the minorities feel. So their rights need to be preserved and protected. And to that end, we will fulfill any responsibility. No one should have any concerns about that. If the legislation, if the law on hate crime is adopted, is passed, then some of the declarations against minorities which are really hurtful will be dealt with, in our opinion.

Now, secularism is actually the cement that binds the society together. In Turkey, we have people of different faiths, and we have to respect everyone's faith, and faith should not be a matter for politics. And this is one of our fundamental rules. From time to time, the ruling party -- we know it for a fact -- comes up with practices that are against the principle of secularity, and there is a ruling by the Constitutional Court on that, as well.

Now, if you're defending the idea of setting minds free, then it means we're actually defending the idea of secularism: respecting people's rights, and do not intervene in their spiritual world, spiritual realms, but also, at the same time, making science and technology inseparable parts of the education system. That's what we need to do.

Now, about Northern Cyprus, there was a question -- the Greek side of the island refused the Annan plan, whereas the Turkish Cypriots, the northern side of the island, had actually approved it. So the problem, unfortunately, could not be solved on the island.

Let me say the following: The European Union is actually implementing double standards about this issue because the EU have actually promised that if the Turkish side said yes in the referendum, and implemented the Annan plan, if the Greek side of the island refuses the plan, then we will, they said, improve commercial ties with the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, and we will start implementing the direct commercial provisions.

Now, I remind them of this fact each time I visit Brussels, and I ask them why they haven't honored this promise. Now, the West has this high moral value of abiding by, or fulfilling one's promise. And we remind them every time that this principle should not be neglected.

Now, the United Nations, if they step in again, and if they start producing solutions to the situation on the island, we'll be supportive of those solutions. But, of course, it cannot be solved overnight. I know it for a fact, and you know it for a fact. It will take determination, it will take patience -- and, hopefully, all sides will deploy their best efforts towards this solution. Shortly, this is my response.

MR. KIRIŞCI: Now, Mr. Kiliçdaroğlu, I'd like to bring the focus of our discussion a bit closer to the United States, because Brookings is an American institution, at the end of the day.

Now, if this is not going to be interpreted as meddling in internal affairs, I'd like to remind everyone that you have extensive experience in the field of social security. And I'm sure that you have been keeping a close eye on it, on the developments in the United States extending the coverage of health insurance here in this country. The White House and President Obama have been doing their best towards this end, but they are finding it difficult to make progress.

How do you see this debate these days? That's one question from me.

And a second question would be the following: In terms of strengthening the relations between Turkey and the United States, deepening trans-Atlantic ties, you have done a lot. You have given this

matter a lot of importance. And 2015 is coming up, it's approaching fast. And, as you know, there is this bad experience by Armenians during the First World War, which is seen in Turkey as deportation, but which is regarded as genocide over here in Washington, D.C.

Now, this subject is likely to come up in the discussions between Turkey and the U.S., and it's a very difficult subject, I admit. But, as the chairman of CHP, Republican People's Party, how do you -- what's your take on this matter?

And there's another question, I think, from the back? And let us then give the floor to you. And we're about to use up all of our time.

MR. POLAT: Now, there was a question about primary school students and the place of women in a modern society. My name is Yilmaz Polat. I am the Washington representative of *Yurt Newspaper*.

Mr. Kiliçdaroğlu, my question would be about the freedom of press. A couple of months ago, *Yurt Newspaper*, my newspaper, chief editor of our newspaper, Merdan Yanardağ, was imprisoned because of what had been written by the individual. He (inaudible) serving a prison sentence. On top of that, you have Mustafa Balbay, Tuncay Ozkan, and many other colleagues which are serving prison sentences because of the things they had written.

Now, my question is, about the freedom of the press, freedom of media, what are your thoughts? What kind of a struggle will you carry out in this field?

And, on top of that, maybe an additional question is how do you see the policy of the Obama administration vis-a-vis the AKP government up until today?

Thank you.

MR. KIRIŞCI: Okay, Kemal Bey, now let us begin with the question from the last round. That was a question about primary school children and women's place in the society, asked by (inaudible).

MR. KILIÇDAROĞLU: Primary education is the sort of education that teaches children about cohesion and unity. When children start going to school, they learn about this idea about -- the idea of being one, like the stem of a tree. They do not discern, at that point in time, if they're boys or girls. They learn how to coexist. For instance, you are supposed to stop at the red light and then continue when the green comes up. So, these are the basic notions that they are taught in primary school.

After primary school, however, they come to perceive the fact that they are living in a different kind of world. They start to find out about differences.

Now, primary education has to be built on such a model that children will actually start questioning basic concepts. And that will be a major decision for Turkey's future. Now, in primary school, children should get to learn about being one, existing peacefully in the same society, and harmony. If we take that step, it will be a very important step for Turkey's future and education.

There are significant problems with the primary education system as it stands. There are wider problems, having to do with the wider education system. And this ruling party changes the Minister of National Education five times -- the same party, unfortunately, changed the minister five times, and each minister changed, or brought along his or her own policy. And this is, of course, problematic.

Now, when it comes to education, be it primary education, secondary, or university or college-level, without talking to the specialists, experts, of this field, and without consulting with the individuals, and coming up with programs based only on political ideology and trying to raise next generations in line with that kind of thinking has been one of the weaknesses, the main weaknesses of our country.

Our party has been critical of this approach. And, unfortunately, Turkey has been condemned to this type of mentality. The

education system has to be changed. It has to be modernized. But, as I mentioned, doing that will only be possible where CHP coming to power.

When it comes to the education field, the education system, there are very experienced, very prominent non-governmental organizations, academicians, and experts, and they have some serious, tangible recommendations. But it gives me great pains to say that these recommendations are not taken into consideration, unfortunately. And this is a tremendous risk for the future of our country.

Now, women know that they stand to lose a lot in a suppressive, authoritarian regime. So we see that women have been the most sensitive part of our society recently. You see demonstrations mainly led by women, sometimes in groups of 5, 10, hundreds, or even thousands. They are more courageous than men, they say more things, and they are more resistant.

And the reason, as I've explained, is their awareness that they stand to lose more.

Now, we've been carefully watching and following the health policy applied by President Obama. He wants to extend the coverage, the scope. But, of course, we know that this comes with a price. And we are not fully knowledgeable about the costs that will be involved in doing so.

Now, I asked the question to an American diplomat about the costs involved, and this diplomat told me that there will be no costs and it would, in fact, represent savings. But I, for one, am curious how those savings will come about, to be honest.

Now, international labor organization acknowledges eight fields for insurance -- one is health insurance. And it's a very costly type of insurance. And if you manage to collect level of premium, then that kind of a system can function. Because otherwise, the state has to chip in at a very high level. But in developed nations, the state, the governments, make contributions to health insurance, and the same holds true of our country, as well. The health model over here in the United States, I think, will be discussed in a sounder setting, if you will, in the future, because it will give us time to weigh the pros and cons of it.

Now, relations between Turkey and the EU are very, very important. And we want Turkey to remain at the table. And also, the agreement to be concluded between the EU and the United States, if it excludes Turkey, then Turkey will lose a lot. It will be very costly for Turkey. And this is something we have been explaining to our American friends, as well as to our friends over in Europe.

Now, the events of 1915 -- there was a question about that. Now, in the upcoming period, I do believe that this issue will be taken up

again, and there will be a lot of emphasis on it. We acknowledge that serious, dramatic events took place in 1915. It is not possible to not acknowledge this fact. But, beyond the discussion about who is right and who is wrong, I think this is an event that needs to be evaluated by historians in an objective way. And Turkey has actually taken a very significant step towards this. Turkey has opened all of its archives, and Armenia should do the same thing, should make all of its archives available for the scrutiny of historians. Because no one denies the fact that there were dramatic events, there were dramatic events. But if the archives are bilaterally opened, then I think we will have better changes of analyzing what had happened in a more objective manner.

There was a question by Mr. Yilmaz -- the freedom of the press is among the major problems in Turkey. Lots of journalists are jailed. Merdan Yanardağ is one. And Merdan may be imprisoned, is something that none of us can accept. And it's not limited to that. We wouldn't want to see any journalist jailed, serving a prison sentence.

And something more dramatic -- if a university student is sentenced to 16 years in prison simply because he wore a piece of cloth, then there is nothing that you can defend about it.

Now, that's mainly the reason I underlined the concepts of democracy and freedoms in my speech. Turkey wants to be part of

contemporary societies and nations. No one should be blamed and should be jailed for his or her thoughts. But, if in a country, a prime minister makes it clear, and says it clearly, that he sees the book to be more dangerous than a bomb, then that means you do have, certainly, a problem of democracy and freedoms.

Now, under military rule, books were collected and banned, and we all know this happened. But we, for the first time, something happened outside a military rule. A book that was not yet published was banned. And it simply defies logic.

And this is not only a problem of the intellectuals in Turkey, but people and intellectuals in other countries, as well. They need to start thinking about what is going on in Turkey, because advancing democracy in Turkey, and expanding the scope of freedoms and rights in our country will be beneficial not only for our country, but for the whole region.

Now, I alluded to the separation of powers -- the executive, the legislative, and the judiciary. And in modern democracies, the fourth power is the media. And we have, unfortunately, covered the fourth power with a veil, and that has to go away.

A society without a free press cannot be free itself. You have to ensure freedom of the press so that the living society can also feel free itself. In a society where you don't have a free media, then there is no

way of accessing the right kind of news and information. So, hence, the importance we attach to freedom of the press, not only in our country, but in other countries, as well.

Now, we have prepared brochures and flyers in English, French, and German, about what's going on in Turkey. We have collected the figures, the numbers of journalists currently jailed in Turkey. We have held joint meetings with NGOs and professional organizations in the field in our country. We want to open a larger debate about this issue, not limited to CHP, our party, but also shed light on these issues, and attract other people's attention.

MR. KIRIŞCI: Now, this must have been somewhat tiring, but we still have a couple of minutes left, so let us have a couple of quick questions.

SPEAKER: My question will be the following: There are, of course, members of the press present here, but this criticism is not against them. And, unfortunately, AKP has placed media under its control, as they have done with many other fields. So, unfortunately, they reveal as much as they want to, and that's what the people learn about.

And our citizens, however, can verify news or information using different tools. But, unfortunately, in some parts of the country, the

education level is not really high, and they may not always have access to these tools.

I think CHP has to go to the remotest villages and provinces, and all parts of the society, to explain their positions about this issue. What are your plans about that? What kind of an organization do you envisage?

MR. KIRIŞCI: Very short, please.

SPEAKER: Hello. Welcome. My name is Minut Ocum. My question will be about military officials taken hostage in Turkey.

MR. KIRIŞCI: Now, if you'll allow me, Mr. Kiliçdaroğlu, we have a question in English. Let us have that, too, and that will be the final question.

MR. SCHLEIFER: Welcome to Washington. Yigal Schleifer. I write for the EurasiaNet website.

One of the main criticisms that's been leveled against your party, especially under your predecessor, was that it's a party that doesn't really want to be a ruling party, but is happy to stay in the opposition.

So the question to you is: Is the party ready to be a ruling party? And, if so, what are some of the main changes that you feel the party has made to show that it really is ready to be a ruling party?

MR. KIRIŞCI: Yes, (inaudible). Now, a question by (inaudible).

MR. KILIÇDAROĞLU: So, "Do you have a strong organizational structure which will convey CHP's message?"

Now, let me put it this way: I made a very -- we made a very significant change after I became the chairman. We've created a new organization which will consist of individuals who will be responsible for ballot boxes. We have about 100,000 ballot boxes. And there will be two people, a minimum of two people, who will be responsible for the ballot boxes. And they will not only be serving during election times, they will be working throughout the year.

Now, CHP's internet site, when it's accessed by a party official, for instance, they will be able to see information pertaining to the ballot box number 75110 in Istanbul. The individual will get a map of the area, of the district, as well as the name and ID information, and birth dates of the people in that region. And they will also be able to see if there are party officials, party members, in that district.

Similarly, they can access information pertaining to CHP volunteers. They will also see the distribution of votes in previous elections for that particular district.

Now, these units cover a maximum of 750 households, and we ask these people to drop by each household at least two times in these four years, and you will tell them that you're coming from the CHP. So we now have this type of organization -- the organization's structure hasn't been completed for all ballot boxes, but this, I believe, is an important step. And, as I mentioned, they will not only be active during election times, but throughout the year.

Now, anyone who applies to our provincial or sub-provincial directorates saying that they want to work for CHP, then we register them, and we enable their access to this internet website, as I mentioned, and they will be responsible for a part of the constituency, as I have described. Of course, they receive initial training, and then they become active.

Now, this level of organizational structure is unique to CHP. No other political party possesses it.

The question about military officials taken hostage in Turkey -- now, the proceedings going on in the Silivri court are not correct, are not right. And we have made this clear at various occasions. The judiciary has become politicized to a great extent and, in such a country, you cannot ensure that justice is delivered, because the judiciary makes rulings in line with the expectations of the ruling party in that type of a country, and that's one of the major problems our country experiences.

Now, as I mentioned a couple of minutes ago, we are against coups. We wouldn't want to see any coup, by anyone. And this is a main rule that we need to defend if we claim to believe in democracy. Can anyone and everyone be judged, be tried? Of course -- but in line with the rule of law, not based on doctored or fake evidence, not if you limit the right to defense. You have one of the individuals tried, for instance, saying, "Well, I was abroad, at this particular address, on that date you claim I did something." But, no, they refused, and they condemned the individual anyway. It's like the story between the sheep and the wolf.

That's why we need to get rid of special authority courts, and that's why we need to see a retrial of these cases. We do not want to have secret witnesses in adjudication. These cases will have to fulfill the conscience of the people of the public opinion. If any case is actually very damaging to the public opinion, then it's not justice that is being delivered.

That's why, in my speech, I said that we will reconstruct justice in Turkey, the judiciary in Turkey. So anything and everything can be accepted by the society, but injustice cannot be accepted and welcomed in any society in the world. That's why we have always had a distance from those trials going on. We have not accepted those.

And let us put an ordinary suspect aside. We have lawyers being taken into custody and being sentenced, and courts dish out judgments and rulings that prohibit lawyers from accessing evidence. That's the kind of judiciary we have. Even medieval times did not experience such a situation.

So we think that those trials are not right. And these Silivri trials, we call them "Silivri concentration camp." We have been highly critical of this process.

And I said the following; The prosecutors -- the judges who will be serving in Silivri cases, they're actually leaving a very grave legacy to their children. Those children will never be able to openly say that "my father used to be a judge at Silivri." No father should leave this type of a legacy to his children.

Now, are we ready to become a ruling party? Of course we are.

We used to be criticized. People said the Republican People's Party only criticizes, they even criticize the right things. They do not produce any projects, because they do not want to be a ruling party. That was a criticism we received.

But let me assure you that after I became the chairman, we produced projects for each and every problem in our country, ranging from the economy, national education, defense, maritime affairs, agriculture, animal husbandry -- all walks of life, really -- universities, solutions for women, the youth, climate change. We have prepared projects about all of those.

Are we ready to govern? Yes, we are. Our organization is indeed very experienced. We have academics, we have successful bureaucrats who served long years in the public field, in the public sector. We have the industrialists and merchants and housewives, academicians, women academicians. So we have people, successful people, from all walks of life.

Now, in the latest elections, we have not been able to explain our projects in great detail, because we had very limited time. We had to first train provincial and sub-provincial directors of our party, but we barely had time to do that. But, after many years of hiatus, we reopened our party, our political party schools, and we have trainers in all 81 provinces of the country at the moment.

We have come a long way. There have been significant transformations within the party. Now, I referred to the 33 percent gender

quota we have. We have a 10 percent youth quota. These are very important for us. And we have our colleague, our friend Kader, who set up a unit for the EU. We have now done the same thing over here in Washington. And there are demands to the effect that we do the same thing over in Russia.

So we have been developing our international relations significantly. We've been extending a hand to China, to Iraq, to Syria, to Egypt. We are working on our relations with the EU. We have developed them. And via our office, our liaison office with the EU, we now have the opportunity to discuss matters as they emerge. So we're doing all of that.

So, we do want to become the ruling party.

But let me underline one specific point: If, in a society, freedoms are restricted, if the main opposition part is forced to be the only source of opposition, if universities are silenced, if media is muffled, if labor unions are shut down, then it's no easy task. And I know it for a fact.

However, this will not be an impediment in our struggle. We will carry out this struggle. Because Turkey needs a full democracy and more freedom. Turkey needs the freedom of thought, the freedom of the press. It needs an independent judiciary. We know the society is under

pressure, is oppressed, and you are observing the same situation, I guess. Our friends in Europe, especially, they know all the details of this.

Now, there is question they ask us: Are you ready to govern? We are ready to govern. We will carry Turkey into the realm of contemporary civilizations. This is a struggle that has been going on for the past 200 years. Let me tell you this: There have been three main revolutions in the history of the Turkish republic. And CHP, Republican People's Party, has always been part of those revolutions. The people who established our party actually founded the republic in Turkey. And two, 1946, we transitioned into multi-party political life as a necessity of democracy, obviously. And, three, the Republican People's Party has brought social democracy to Turkey.

Now, there is something we tell our grassroots in Turkey: Turkey needs the fourth revolution towards full democracy and freedom. Let us undertake that revolution all together. That's our objective. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MR. KIRIŞCI: Now, you've been patient, very patient with us, answering all questions. We are grateful to you, and we hope to see you again in Washington, D.C., and at our institution, at Brookings Institution.

And I would also like to thank all participants for your contributions.

And we're terribly sorry that we went a little bit beyond time, but I suspect we could attribute this to Kemal Bey's performance.

Thank you. (Applause.)

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Carleton J. Anderson, III

(Signature and Seal on File)

Notary Public in and for the Commonwealth of Virginia

Commission No. 351998

Expires: November 30, 2016