



## **OPEN LETTER**

March 6, 2017, New York

**To:**

**H.E. Mr. Antonio Gutierrez, Secretary General of the United Nations;**

**H.E. Mr. Peter Thomson, President of the United Nations General Assembly**

**H.E. Mr. President of the United Nations Security Council, United Kingdom (March) and United States (April 2017)**

**H.E. Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs**

**H.E. Mr. Frederick Musiiwa Makamure Shava, United Nations Economic and Social Council**

**H.E. Mrs. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of the UN-Women**

**H.E. Ms. Christina Gallach, Under-Secretary of the United Nations Department of Public Information,**

**The Member States of the United Nations,**

**Mr. Massimo Tommasoli, Permanent Observer, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance**

*Specialized Agencies:*

**Mr. Filippo Grandi, the 11<sup>th</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Director of the UNICEF;**

**Director of UNESCO**

**and**

**[Relevant] Intergovernmental Organizations of the United Nations:**

**Dear Secretary General,**

**President of the General Assembly,**

**President of the Security Council,**

**President of the ECOSOC of the United Nations,**

**Your *Excellences*, and**

**Heads of Intergovernmental Organizations and Specialized Agencies:**

**Subject: Referendum in Turkey should not be conducted under a "State of Emergency" in which Turkish Citizens' *lives* and "Right to Choose" are under attack**

**Summary:** This is a plea for UN support towards repealing of the *State of Emergency* in Turkey prior to the upcoming scheduled Referendum on Sunday, April 16, 2017, as well as for UN monitoring of the vote, while we attempt to raise awareness for the situation right now in Turkey that threatens its constitutional foundations.

**References 1: Open Letter: Repeal request on Referendum, Not Under State of Emergency, and should citizenship and voting rights be provided to the Syrian and Iraqi Refugees** (prior to the Referendum)? *"Açık Mektup: OHAL'siz Referandum Talebi ile Suriye ve Iraklı Göçmenlere "Vatandaşlık" Verilsin mi? Üzerine..."*

<http://www.turkishlibrary.us/ohalsiz-referandum-talebi-ile-suriye-ve-irakli-gocmenlere-vatandaslik-verilsin-mi-uzerine/>

On February 26 and 27, 2017, the above referenced Open Letter was sent to the majority members of the Turkish Parliament, the Chair of the Turkish Parliament, the Office of the Prime Minister, as well as Turkish-American community representatives, and Turkish media representatives within the U.S. and Turkey.

**2. "Former ECtHR judge says Turkey cannot hold referendum under state of emergency**

*"Either the referendum must be postponed, or OHAL (state of emergency) must be lifted to create a democratic environment,"* he said. (See Annex II)

<https://www.turkishminute.com/2017/03/05/former-ecthr-judge-says-turkey-cannot-hold-referendum-state-emergency/>

**3. "Turkey 'on the road to autocracy,' Venice Commission watchdog says"**

*A body of constitutional law experts has warned of a "one-person regime" in Turkey, a German paper has reported. Proposed constitutional amendments seek to establish an executive-style presidential system.*

*"The parliament's approval paves the way for a [nationwide referendum](#) on the amendments, which would give the president, a traditionally more ceremonial role, the power to dismiss ministers and parliament, issues decrees, declare emergency rule and appoint figures to key positions, including the judiciary.*

*It would also allow the president to be a member of a political party, which is currently prohibited under the constitution as the presidency is expected to exercise impartiality."*

<http://www.dw.com/en/turkey-on-the-road-to-autocracy-venice-commission-watchdog-says/a-37756991>

We, as the Turkish, American, and global citizens and representatives of Non-Governmental Organizations are writing to you, to request your immediate attention and support towards repeal of the *State of Emergency* before the upcoming Referendum, the outcome of which could drastically change the power structure the Turkish Government and in effect create a regime change. We also call for monitoring by the United Nations Election Observer team due to the great voter intimidation and strong armed tactics that are currently being imposed on the Turkish public, where it is a crime even to express one's opposition to the proposed changes.

After the 'failed coup' attempt on July 15, 2016, the Turkish Government had declared a "**State of Emergency**" which is still in place today (first instated *July 21, 2016 for a three-month period, then extended twice*). As a result, the President of Turkey removed the "separation of powers" under the "State of Emergency," while completely undermining the legislative and judicial branches.

The President of the Turkish Republic, H.E. Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Prime Minister of the Turkish Republic, H.E. Mr. Binali Yildirim, members of the Governing Justice and Development Party (AKP) along with the leader of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), Mr. Devlet Bahçeli, openly threatened the Turkish citizens, who have participated in demonstrations with #HAYIR

"NO" posters, or who indicated that they were opposed to the enforced "regime change" masked by this upcoming referendum.

In our opinion, *the State of Emergency* is being used as a civic "coup" to change the existing Constitution, Civic Rights, Women's Rights, Education, Academia, legal entities, media, and all public sectors in Turkey. In particular, the state of emergency was extended unlawfully the second time and used to undermine the current *Constitution of the Republic of Turkey* and all forms of democratic and human rights which are protected on the global level by the United Nations. With that, *-we fear that-* through the upcoming Referendum, the President of Turkey and his party, AKP, aim to remove the secular democratic and parliamentary political system and replace it with a "**One-Man**" "**fundamentalist Islamic**" government.

Furthermore, we are deeply concerned that the Syrian and Iraqi refugees currently residing in Turkey are provided with citizenships and voting rights to influence the outcome of this upcoming referendum. Given these refugees will vote "YES" to a regime change as proposed by the government, under the leadership of AKP, the government is currently playing a dirty trick to shift the balance of the voters in favor of a "YES" outcome.

### **H.E. Mr. Antonio Gutierrez,**

In your speech on December 12, 2016, you underlined the huge disconnect between voters in many parts of the world and their governments, stating:

*"It is time to reconstruct relations between people and leaders — national and international." "Time for leaders to listen and show that they care, about their own people and about the global stability and solidarity on which we all depend. "And it is time for the United Nations to do the same: to recognize its shortcomings, and to reform the way it works. This organization is the cornerstone of multilateralism, and has contributed to decades of relative peace. But the challenges are now surpassing our ability to respond. The UN must be ready to change."*

Your view of how the UN should support the world in a constructive way to prevent crisis and maintain peace encouraged us to request your support in repealing the *State of Emergency* in Turkey before the scheduled referendum.

### **Kind requests to the UN:**

Considering the current environment in Turkey as described above and in the attached background report, we kindly ask your immediate attention and support towards repeal of the *State of Emergency in Turkey*, which poses a constant threat to our society as a whole. A referendum that will have such deep consequences on the balance of power should not be held under any kind of duress. With that in mind, please kindly consider channeling available UN power and capacity towards REPEAL of the *State of Emergency*, in particular, prior to the Referendum. Turkish voters should be able to vote in a secure and peaceful environment.

Our ultimate goal is the continuous protection and support of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, all forms of democratic and civic rights, and the Parliamentary and Secular political system, which is essential, if Turkey is to move towards achieving the 2030 Sustainable

Development Agenda, in particular, in connection with the SDG# 16: **“Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies”**, which will also have a ripple effect in the Middle East and Islamic Countries.

We, THANK YOU, Your Excellences, for your very valuable time, attention and support in this matter.

**Most respectfully,**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Unver', enclosed within a simple, hand-drawn oval shape.

(Ms) Bircan Unver, Founder-President and Head  
NGO Representative to the United Nations Department of Public Information  
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**Attachment: 1 ANNEX** (I, II and III)

- a) I Background | **News, Reports and Facts**
- b) II **Sources**
- c) III Brief **Profile of The Light Millennium**