

PRESS RELEASE

AIS condemns the coup and Turkish President's accusations of the Hizmet Movement

On Friday 15 July, Turkey witnessed a coup attempt by sections of the military, which has left hundreds dead and over a thousand injured. The attempt has been successfully thwarted with the government back in control.

As the Australian Intercultural Society, we condemn, in the strongest terms, the attempted military coup in Turkey and reiterate that there is no place for military interventions in a democracy. We express our heartfelt condolences for the loss of lives and pray for a quick recovery for those who are injured.

While admitting the scarcity of information at the early hours of the night, President Erdogan and figures close to him were quick to lay blame on the [Hizmet \("service"\) Movement](#), a global faith-inspired civic movement inspired by the teachings of Turkish Muslim scholar Fethullah Gulen.

This is not surprising as President Erdogan has previously blamed oppositional developments in Turkey on the Hizmet Movement and, as a pretext to purging state and civil society, claims that the Hizmet is acting as a "parallel state" aiming to take over the country.

Hizmet-affiliated or supporting organisations and persons have been targeted as a result with media organisations and schools being shut down, journalists jailed and many others arrested without sufficient evidence.

As the Australian Intercultural Society, we have always [stated](#) that the founding of our organisation was inspired by Gulen's teachings. We aim to promote social harmony locally and condemn any attempts to bring further discord into our already conflict-fraught world.

While we can not speak on behalf of the movement, we can clearly state that the AIS and our affiliated organisations in Australia have never had nor have any such political agendas or aims.

We hope those accused with trying to overthrow the government will be tried in courts of law and this incident becomes a source of motivation for strengthening Turkey's democracy.

We praise the people of Turkey who took a stand against a violent takeover, some at the cost of their own lives. We can only hope and pray for a peaceful resolution to this matter.

We are also concerned that Turkey's domestic troubles may become a source of polarisation of the Turkish-speaking communities overseas.

Response from Fethullah Gulen and the Hizmet Movement

Fethullah Gulen issued a statement early in the night condemning this coup in the strongest terms, adding *“as someone who suffered under multiple military coups during the past five decades, it is especially insulting to be accused of having any link to such an attempt. I categorically deny such accusations.”*

Gulen has since backed this statement with an opinion piece published in the [*New York Times*](#) denouncing accusations of his involvement in the plot.

Gulen also called for an independent international [inquiry](#) into the coup attempt implicating his involvement and was willing to accept the findings.

Leading Hizmet NGOs in Turkey and [abroad](#) also issued condemnatory statements almost immediately as news broke out of the coup.

Hizmet participants have consistently demonstrated categorical condemnation of such anti-democratic and violent practices and showed strong commitment to the rule of law and functioning democracy.

Both Gulen’s teachings and the Hizmet participants’ activities around the world in dialogue, democratic engagement, active citizenship and social cohesion are the embodiment of this commitment.

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