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A Democratic Turkey for All” in Bern, Switzerland, September 11th, 2019**



I welcome you with respect and gratitude, dear members; I was delighted to be welcomed to such a magnificent, meaningful organization. I would like to thank the President, executives, and representatives of the Swiss Social Democratic Party for preparing this valuable conference.

I have brought you the messages of solidarity of Republican People's Party (CHP) Chairman Mr. Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu and our organization. We are delighted about collaboration and co-operation with the Republican People's Party by the Swiss Social Democratic Party, which is a part of the Socialist International.

I am the Deputy Chair of the Party, serving as a CHP Ankara Deputy in Turkey's parliament in a political party which represents one of the world's longest-established democratic traditions, having just celebrated our 96th year this week.

CHP founded the Republic of Turkey, which is bringing out the revolution, enabling the transition to a multiparty era. CHP is a revolutionary party with deep roots, providing women the right to vote and to be elected long before all other European countries had done.

CHP has struggled for universal human rights since its foundation. Democracy, peace, freedom, equality, liberties, independent judiciary CHP is a party fighting for secular, democratic and scientific education. A party that was closed down during coup periods, when democracy was suspended, getting our politicians captured and brutalized.

Despite all these problems we came through, we are still standing!

Turkey is under the dominance of AKP for 17 years; that is a party believing that "Democracy is not the goal. It is a means to achieve power."

In this process, the "Presidential Government System" was enforced rather than to the parliamentary democracy. The President, who ought to be neutral on the page, is also the leader of AKP; he's not impartial. President owns the Legislative, executive and judicial authority and this institution may only be called a "One man rule and dictatorship." The Turkish Grand National Assembly was crippled, and our democracy was seriously injured throughout this period.

On 15 July 2016, Gülen Organisation's bloody coup attempt was suppressed together by the people of Turkey and the parliament. However, AKP then made another coup, a civil one, on the 20th of July. The entire opposition were labeled as terrorists and threatened. AKP suspended democracy by declaring a state of emergency. Legislation, executive and judiciary powers were granted to the AKP leader.

After the coup attempt, everyone that opposes AKP were declared as terrorists, on the grounds that supportive in the coup attempt. People who had nothing to do with the coup attempt were expelled from their duties, they were detained and even imprisoned. University professors were expelled from universities and prosecuted for signing a "Peace Declaration."

The freedom of the press was under immense stress; newspapers and websites were closed, and oppositional journalists were detained. MPs of the opposition parties were also proclaimed as terrorists and imprisoned. The elected mayors were arrested after being announced as terrorists, being replaced by appointed trustees from the state, who were assigned for their position.

After the 31 March elections this year, Diyarbakır, Van and Mardin's mayors were dismissed, and again the government appointed trustees to replace the elected mayors. The President and interior minister continue to threaten opposing party mayors that they may appoint trustees to replace anyone.

In this process, as the CHP, we fought for independent judiciary and universal law standards.

However, I'm sad to say we didn't get the support we predicted from our European friends. Neither fellow Europeans did openly support our fight for democracy in Turkey nor through the European Court of Human Rights. We believe that we had to receive support the European Union and the European Parliament; however, what we received was not enough.

In their first years in power, European Countries were having hard time to find superlatives for the AKP leader and supported him to take power. Now they are still supporting him by bargaining over refugees.

Regrettably, our European friends are forcing Turkey out of Europe with these policies. As our democracy was destroyed, we have received another hit by Europe. However, we are one of the founding nations of the Council of Europe, and this should not be neglected. Europe should not forget that we are among the first members of the European Economic Cooperation Organization either. As a party, despite our disappointments, we have not left our vision of full membership with the European Union.

Election security and the people's will in Turkey is also under tremendous pressure. The most dramatic example was the local elections on 31 March 2019. Ekrem İmamoğlu, who won the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality by a difference of 14,000 votes, was drawn away unjustly. Pressing the Supreme Election Board, the AKP decided to renew the election. Our people had elected Ekrem İmamoğlu as Istanbul's mayor, this time by a difference of 806,000 votes, which was a huge political success.

In the last local elections, democratic powers were united in the ballot box. Turkey's people used their vote to show their support for democracy, liberty, and peace. CHP, which has assimilated universal values and struggles for justice, is now very close to gain the power in Turkey. Turkey's political conjuncture shows that CHP will be elected for government by the people's free will in the near future.

Turkey is among the countries that is effected most profoundly by the Syrian conflict. We are undergoing a hard test because of AKP's mistakes in foreign policy. As CHP, we have always put our hands under the stone. Today, by organizing an "International Syrian Conference, we are attempting our best to promote peace in the region. We continue to strive to implement the policy of "peace at home, peace in the world" a phrase that guides us by the founder of our republic and party, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

We are ready, as CHP, to work together with the Swiss Social Democratic Party in the framework of a shared approach for democratic government, peace, human rights, and liberties.

Having the cooperation of the Swiss Social Democratic Party with CHP's Switzerland Union will add a big value to our coordinated work.

Non governmental organizations are under pressure in Turkey. Their actions are treated as terror acts. Civil society organizations, foundations, and trade unions are being closed down; their executives and employees have been arrested.

We believe in the power of international solidarity. The cooperation and mutual support between Swiss and Turkish CSOs will be at utmost importance in this process.

The participation of our teens and young citizens in art, music, and education in joint projects, supporting university research projects with funds, and the implementation of joint projects are the subjects we very much desire.

We expect our Swiss colleagues to support the democratic constitutions in Turkey. In the name of democracy, human rights, peace, and universal values, we can be much more effective with a common struggle.

We should also cooperate in implementing peace policies, against the war. We need a peace policy to end the international civil wars, especially the one in Syria, which killed hundreds of thousands of people and displaced millions from their motherland.

Defenders of democracy and freedom must jointly fight against racism and right populism around the world.

On this occasion, I also would like to wish the Swiss Social Democratic Party great success in the upcoming elections.

Thank you.