
MEPS URGE FREEZING TURKEY MEMBERSHIP TALKS

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A vast majority of the political groups in the European Parliament yesterday (22 November) said the Commission should temporarily freeze the accession talks with Turkey because of its post-coup purges – while the Commission warned that cutting ties would be a lose-lose solution.

Our message to Turkey is very clear: accession negotiations should be frozen immediately, said Manfred Weber, the head of the largest faction in the European Parliament, the centre-right European Peoples Party.

Weber also insisted that should Turkey reintroduce the death penalty, the EU needs to make it very clear as well that such a country cannot become a member of the European Union.

Turkeys President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has hinted at the return of death penalty which he said was a matter of peoples will.

ERDOGAN VOWS TO REINTRODUCE DEATH PENALTY IF TURKS WANT

Turkeys President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday (7 August) hinted at the return of death penalty which he said was a matter of peoples will.

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He further said that the failed coup attempt of 15 July should not be misused by the authorities.

Thousands of civil servants have been fired. Press freedom is limited. Media outlets have been closed down. Politicians, freely-elected MPs, are in prison. These developments are very worrying, Weber said.

We want to make this appeal: Turkey is a friend and a partner. Turkey should change its course □ in the interest of its own citizens, Weber stated.

Gianni Pittella, leader of the Socialist group, the second biggest in the European Parliament, also called Turkeys EU accession talks to be temporarily frozen.

Pittella said this would send a political message to Erdoğan to stop the mass detention, accusation of political leaders and MPs, repression of judges and journalists.

ERDOGAN SAYS COUP WAS GIFT FROM GOD TO RESHAPE COUNTRY, PUNISH ENEMIES

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said that Friday's failed coup (15 July) was a gift from God, giving him the chance to re-shape the country, and purge the country's elite from enemies, who accuse him of creeping Islamisation in the traditionally secular state.

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Turkey under Mr Erdoğan is more and more drifting towards an authoritarian regime, said Pittella, adding: Our political message towards Turkey is that human rights, civil rights, democracy are non-negotiable if you want to be part of the EU.

He was echoed by others, including Guy Verhofstadt, leader of the liberal ALDE group.

The European Union loses credibility by looking away from Erdoğan's attempt to install an authoritarian regime. Therefore, we should end the accession negotiations with Turkey immediately. Anything else than approving this resolution would be fooling our citizens and betraying the Turkish citizens, especially those who look to Europe as their future, Verhofstadt said.

European Parliament's Vice-President Alexander Lambsdorff, ALDE shadow rapporteur on Turkey, called the accession talks with Turkey fundamentally dishonest.

Neither Turkey nor EU member states are actually interested in the success of negotiations, he said, adding that ALDE not only calls for the immediate suspension of the negotiations, but also for the freezing of the pre-accession funding.

Syed Kamall, the leader of the European Conservatives and Reformists group (ECR), also called for the EU to have a new and more honest relationship with Turkey. Erdoğan's AKP is an associate member of the ECR family.

ERDOGAN'S AKP PARTY JOINS CAMERON'S CONSERVATIVE POLITICAL FAMILY

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) has joined the European Conservatives and Reformists political family, the Turkish government announced yesterday (12 November).

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He said that the Turkish governing AK Party still contains many elements that are seeking to marry together Islam, democracy and economic liberalisation, but that Erdoğan's actions have raised sufficient concerns for most MEPs to unite in saying, enough is enough.

Whilst recognising that the EU has to consider wider geo-political factors, Kamall said the EU should focus more on an honest partnership with Turkey, rather than trying to apply pressure to Erdoğan under a prospect of membership that is unlikely to be realised.

Across this Chamber today, I believe many of us are now united in saying enough is enough, Kamall said. He added that he fully understood why some politicians in national capitals were reluctant to criticise Erdoğan, mentioning the EU-Turkey migrant deal and the wish to engage with Turkey geopolitically.

But we need to be honest with each other. And in wanting to be honest with Turkey, we need to be honest with ourselves, the ECR leader said.

On behalf of the leftist GUE/NGL group, Takis Hadjigeorgiou, Vice-Chair of the European Parliaments delegation to Turkey, said his group urged EU leaders to immediately halt the controversial migrants deal and to re-examine all ties with the Erdoğan regime.

The European Parliament would have risked losing its last shred of dignity had it not proceeded to having this debate on Turkey and a vote on the resolution this Thursday, he said.

Indeed, a resolution is in preparation, calling for the freezing of negotiations.

Hadjigeorgiou also condemned the recent arrest of the leader of the pro-Kurdish HDP party Selahattin Demirtaş. Turkey recently blocked a delegation of national and European Parliament lawmakers from visiting Demirtaş, who has been held in jail for almost three weeks.

TURKEY BLOCKS MEPS FROM VISITING IMPRISONED KURDISH LEADER

Turkish authorities on Monday (21 November) blocked a delegation of national and European Parliament lawmakers from visiting the leader of Turkey's main pro-Kurdish party, who has been held in jail for almost three weeks.

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But the EU's foreign affairs chief Federica Mogherini urged caution.

I think the best way to strengthen Turkish democracy * is by engaging with Turkey, keeping channels open, she told the parliament session.

If the accession process came to an end, I believe we would both find ourselves in a lose-lose scenario, she added.

We need full clarity from our Turkish partners on what they want. In that regard, it's clear that moving from rhetoric to action on the issue of the death penalty would be a clear signal that Turkey does not want to be a member of the European family, neither a member of the Council of Europe, which it is now, nor of the EU. Membership means sharing the values Europe stands for □ capital punishment is for sure not one of them, Mogherini stated.

On 14 November, the EU foreign ministers criticised Turkey's crackdown on alleged supporters of the failed military coup, but Austria's call to suspend Ankara's EU membership bid failed to garner enough backing.

EU MINISTERS CRITICISE TURKEY BUT NOT READY TO HALT MEMBERSHIP TALKS

European Union foreign ministers yesterday (14 November) criticised Turkey's crackdown on alleged supporters of a failed military coup in July but Austria's call to suspend Ankara's EU membership bid failed to garner enough backing.

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Neighbourhood Commissioner Johannes Hahn, who is also responsible for enlargement negotiations, recently said that faced with the pressure of some political groups and some

member states to freeze the negotiations with Turkey, he wants a clear mandate to discuss the issue with Ankara.

HAHN WANTS CLEAR MANDATE TO DISCUSS IF EU-TURKEY RELATIONS HAVE A FUTURE

Neighbourhood Commissioner Johannes Hahn, who is also responsible of enlargement negotiations, said today (9 November) that faced with the pressure of some political groups and some member states to freeze the negotiations with Turkey, he wants a clear mandate to discuss the issue with Ankara.

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EU heads of state and government are due to discuss Turkey again when they meet in Brussels on 15-16 December for their last summit for the year.

Kaynak/Source: