



## Press Release

### **Charges against 4 suspected Turkish agents – Involvement of the Turkish authorities**

Four people will be prosecuted for participating in an association of criminals and in the activities of a terrorist group. The case is being heard by the 23<sup>rd</sup> Criminal Chamber of the Brussels court of first instance on Friday 11 March 2022.

The case is exceptional; the 4 people accused belong to a group that planned an assassination attempt in Belgium against 2 Kurdish prominent figures: Remzi Kartal, the co-chairman of Kongra-Gel and Zubeyir Aydar.

It all started early 2017. A Kurdish construction worker was approached by his Turkish employer asking if he could gain access to Kurdish public figures, in particular Aydar and Kartal. He would of course be rewarded for his cooperation.

When the construction worker agreed, his employer puts him in touch with his brother-in-law, who is a former security officer of the Turkish embassy in Paris and ex-police officer within the political department of the Istanbul police. This man is described by his family as "a hunter of Kurds" and is known by the nickname "the Colonel". It became rapidly clear that the real plan is to commit an assassination attempt, in Belgium, on Aydar and Kartal.

A little later, a second person appears on the scene taking the lead of operational management for this case. It concerns a Turk based in Reims.

After Aydar and Kartal heard rumours of the plans and filed a civil suit at the hands of a Belgian investigating judge, the police services followed the group's doings. The Colonel, the man from Reims and the Kurdish construction worker are observed as they make reconnaissance trips around the offices of the Kurdish National Congress (KNK) in Brussels where Aydar and Kartal are staying. While checking their vehicle, carried out under the guise of a traffic stop, the Colonel pulls out a Turkish police service card to impress "his local colleagues".

During tapped conversations it becomes quite clear that the group is indeed preparing a terrorist attack. The Kurdish construction worker and the man from Reims discuss how the KNK building in Brussels can be penetrated to carry out "the work". But the Kurdish construction worker is worried about how to escape. When the man from Reims cannot give a clear answer, the Kurdish construction worker accuses him of being asked "to cause a massacre" without there being a workable plan to escape after the attack.

Both the Colonel and the man from Reims have ties with France. Therefore, an investigation was conducted in France at the request of the Belgian judicial authorities. That research yielded very interesting results. The 2 who pulled the strings in the planned attack in Belgium are part of a group of about 5 people in France.



The investigation reveals that this group not only collects intelligence about opponents but also maintains very close contacts with the Turkish embassy and even directly with President Erdogan's immediate environment in Ankara. When Erdogan travelled to Paris in 2018, this group was in charge of hosting 2 members of the Turkish National Security Council. One of them is Adnan Tanriverdi, a retired army general who recycled himself as head of Sadat, a highly controversial private military company modelled on the 'American Blackwaters' or the 'Russian Wagner'. The Colonel, the man from Reims and another member of the group in France were received during this period at the Presidential Palace in Ankara and have their picture taken with another member of the National Security Council, Seyit Sertçelik. Sertçelik specializes in the denial of the genocide against the Armenians and is active in the Turkish-occupied areas of Syria.

Despite overwhelming indications that this is indeed a plan sent from Ankara to prepare a terrorist attack in Belgium, the Belgian prosecutor takes the position that there is insufficient evidence.

However, this plot is entirely in line with decades of covert Turkish operations in Europe to incapacitate, spy on and intimidate opponents.

*During a press conference on March 1, witnesses from various European countries will report on these facts and will present a well-documented report prepared by a journalist and the KNK with examples of activities of Turkish agents in Europe.*

*Following speakers will attend the press conference:*

- *Jan Fermon, Belgian lawyer; defending Aydar and Kartal in the Belgian case. He will provide information and answer questions related to the criminal proceedings.*
- *Antoine Comte, French lawyer; he testifies about similar facts in France and was very closely involved in the trial of the murders on 3 Kurdish women in Paris (2013).*
- *Hayko Bağdat and Erk Acarer; Turkish journalists living in Germany. Both have been following this particular case for years.*
- *Zubeyir Aydar and Remzi Kartal; the 2 Kurdish prominent figures being threatened*